

The Nationality Problem in Hungary: István Tisza and the Rumanian National Party, 1910–1914

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Beginning in the last decade of the nineteenth century down to the outbreak of the First World War relations between the Hungarian government and its large Rumanian minority¹ steadily deteriorated. On the one side, the leaders of the principal Magyar political parties and factions intensified their efforts to transform multinational Hungary into a Magyar national state. On the other side, Rumanian leaders tried to shore up their defenses by strengthening existing autonomous national institutions such as the Greek Catholic and Orthodox churches and schools and by creating new ones such as banks and agricultural cooperatives. The most perceptible result of this struggle was the continued isolation of the Rumanian population as a whole from the political and social life of Greater Hungary.

Rumanian leaders had set forth their position at a series of conferences of the National Party, which had dominated Rumanian political activity since its founding in 1881. At the heart of successive formulations of a national program lay unbending opposition to the new, centralized Hungarian state created by the Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 along with the demand for wide-ranging political, cultural, and economic autonomy.

Characteristic of the Magyar nationalist position in these years was the policy pursued by Dezső Bánffy, Prime Minister from 1895 to 1899. A consistent champion of the "unitary Magyar national state" and of the forcible assimilation of the minorities, he rejected the whole idea of national equality as merely the first step in the dissolution of historical Hungary. To counteract the "centrifugal tendencies" of the minorities he demanded a greater concentration of power in the central organs of the state and, concomitantly, a drastic curtailment of the autonomy of all minority institutions which served contrary ends.² Rumanian churches and schools were the prime

¹ In 1910 the Rumanians of Greater Hungary (excluding Croatia-Slavonia) numbered 2,932,773, or 16.2 percent of the total population.

² Dezső Bánffy, *Magyar nemzetiségi politika* (Budapest, 1903), pp. 29–31, 62, 69–70, 117, 121, 124.

targets of this campaign of assimilation which, moreover, showed no sign of slackening under Bánffy's successors. The high point was undoubtedly the so-called Apponyi Law of 1907, which imposed severe penalties on minority church schools whose teachers and pupils failed to attain the prescribed level of competence in Magyar. This law probably contributed more than any other single act between 1900 and 1914 to the poisoning of relations between the Hungarian government and its Rumanian citizens.³

Despite this heritage of hostility and suspicion, there were men on both sides who believed that a compromise between the Hungarian government and the Rumanian National Party was not only possible but, in the long run, was inevitable. An opportunity for reconciliation presented itself with the coming to power of a new government in the spring of 1910.

This paper will examine what turned out to be the final effort at compromise: the negotiations between the Hungarian government and the Rumanian National Party from July 1910 to November 1914. The direction they took offers considerable insight into the nature of the nationality problem in Hungary and suggests why it had become intractable.

I

To István Tisza (1861–1918),⁴ the dominant Hungarian political figure of the period, belongs the merit of having initiated discussions with Rumanian leaders. As the head of the National Party of Work from 1910 on and as prime minister from 1913 to 1917, he exercised a decisive influence on Hungarian political life. In the elections of June 1910 his party had won an impressive victory (258 seats in parliament to fifty-five for its nearest rival), and he thought the time had come to effect a comprehensive settlement of the nationality problem on his terms. This matter had preoccupied him for many years, but his hopes for a rapprochement with the Rumanians and Slavs during his first prime-ministership (1903–1905) had been dashed by the unexpected defeat of his party in the parliamentary elections of 1905 and his

³ István Dolmányos, "Kritik der Lex Apponyi," in *Die nationale Frage in der Österreichisch-Ungarischen Monarchie, 1900–1918*, ed. Péter Hanák (Budapest, 1966), pp. 246–288.

⁴ There is no satisfactory biography of Tisza. See Gusztáv Gratz, *A dualizmus kora*, vol. 2 (Budapest, 1934) for a sympathetic view. A contemporary Hungarian assessment of his policies may be found in *Magyarország története, 1890–1918*, ed. Péter Hanák (2 vols; Budapest, 1978). This is volume 7 of *Magyarország története tíz kötetben*, in course of publication under the auspices of the Institute of History of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

temporary withdrawal from active politics.⁵ Nonetheless, a solution of the nationality problem remained high on his list of priorities, and during the spirited election campaign in 1910 he discussed Magyar-Rumanian relations in a frank and conciliatory manner unusual for a Hungarian political leader of the period.⁶

Tisza embarked on his mission to settle the nationality problem not, in the first instance, to satisfy the minorities, but to strengthen the Hungarian state. In his view, the future of Hungary as a sovereign state was dependent upon the continued viability of the dualist system and the maintenance of Austria-Hungary as a major European power. It seemed axiomatic to him that a *modus vivendi* between the Hungarian government and the Rumanians and Slavs would promote these ends by ensuring internal tranquility and by consolidating existing constitutional structures. Then, too, such a demonstration of the inner strength and cohesiveness of the state would discourage irredentist tendencies among the Rumanian and Serb minorities and convince the neighboring Rumanian and Serbian kingdoms just how fanciful their hopes were of satisfying their territorial ambitions at the expense of Hungary.⁷ Finally, as he saw the process unfold, a strong Austria-Hungary would enhance the prestige of the Triple Alliance and would draw Rumania and Serbia out of the Russian and into the Austrian orbit once and for all.

Although Tisza's aim was a general peace with all the nationalities, he decided to concentrate his efforts on the Rumanians because he regarded them as the key to any enduring settlement. They impressed him as better organized politically than the Serbs and more resistant to assimilation than the Slovaks. Moreover, the Rumanians were the largest minority (over 16 percent of the population of Hungary, excluding Croatia). Hence, if they could be brought into the mainstream of public life, Tisza was convinced that they could play a crucial positive role in the development of Hungary. But if they remained alienated, then, he feared, their role could have only "negative consequences." It was precisely the failure of the Rumanians to participate fully in Hungarian political and social life that most disturbed him. In his view, they presented special obstacles to assimilation: their Greek Catholic and Orthodox faiths kept them apart and

⁵ Zoltán Szász, "A román kérdés Tisza István első kormányának politikájában," *Történelmi Szemle* 11, no. 3 (1968): 254-293.

⁶ István Tisza, *Képviselőházi beszédei*, vol. 4 (Budapest, 1937), pp. 367-368: Speech in Arad, May 19, 1910.

⁷ Magyar Országos Levéltár, Budapest: Miniszterelnökség, 1904. XV. 3266: Tisza to Foreign Ministry, July 6, 1904. (Henceforth, OL.)

prevented the "normal" influences of Hungarian Roman Catholicism from working as it had on the Slovaks, and the great mass of the population was agricultural and rural, while the commercial and industrial middle class, urban dwellers most exposed to cosmopolitan influences, remained small and parochial. Tisza was also disturbed by the relations of the National Party with politicians in Bucharest and by the strong sense of national solidarity that united Rumanians on both sides of the border—all, for him, potential threats to the territorial integrity of Hungary. Yet, he discerned a special bond between Magyars and Rumanians. He regarded the two peoples as natural allies who over the centuries had been drawn together to defend each other against the "Slavic threat," especially Russian "Pan-Slavic designs." Although the alleged Russian threat to Eastern Europe was a convenient ploy that both sides were to use to try to gain concessions, the idea of the Magyars and Rumanians as "an island in a Slavic sea" had had a long and not unimportant history in the nineteenth century.⁸

As a method of settling differences with the Rumanians Tisza favored persuasion rather than the force and intimidation used by Bánffy and others among his predecessors. But he was no less determined than they to bring the Rumanians firmly under the control of the state. Despite several decades of the steady curtailment of their activities, Tisza thought the Rumanians still enjoyed too great political and cultural autonomy. He was alarmed by their open hostility to the government, which, in his view, could only stir irredentist ambitions. He cited as an example the two Rumanian churches, which seemed to him to behave almost like states within a state, because of the administrative and school autonomy they exercised. It worried him that their links with the state were so "tenuous" and that they "interposed themselves" between their faithful and the state, a situation fraught with danger in times of international crisis when the whole population might easily "fall into Rumania's lap."⁹ Nor was independent political activity by the Rumanians to his liking. He complained that by running its own slate of candidates in parliamentary elections the Rumanian National Party simply drove Magyars and Rumanians farther apart, and he looked forward to the time when minority political parties would fuse with one or more Magyar parties.¹⁰ His reluctance to contact leaders of the National Party

⁸ Keith Hitchins, "The Rumanians of Transylvania and the Congress of Nationalities," *Slavonic and East European Review* 48, no. 112 (1970): 389-391.

⁹ Szász, "A román kérdés," p. 286; Tisza to joint Foreign Minister Agenor Goluchowski, April 29, 1904.

¹⁰ Tisza, *Képviselőházi beszédei*, vol. 3 (Budapest, 1937), p. 522.

stemmed from a determination to eliminate all political organizations based upon nationality as incompatible with the unity of the state and the principle of the single Magyar political nation.

For Tisza, then, the main tasks at hand were to reverse the trend of alienation and to integrate the leading elements of Rumanian society into the structure of Hungarian social and political life. He turned his attention to the business and professional classes and the higher clergy, for he judged that they were far more susceptible to the attractions of modern society than the compact, patriarchal rural masses. He was certain that once the educated had been won over, the peasantry would quickly fall into line, since, given the largely undifferentiated nature of Rumanian society, class antagonisms hardly existed. He was no less aware than Rumanian leaders of the fact that when class antagonism manifested itself, it usually pitted Rumanian peasantry and petty bourgeoisie against Magyar landlords and great bourgeoisie, thereby reinforcing national antagonism.

To accomplish his goals Tisza intended to listen to Rumanian grievances and to grant modest concessions. But he never wavered in his adherence to the fundamental principles that had guided all his predecessors. His devotion to the conception of Hungary as a Magyar national state and his determination to maintain Magyar political supremacy as the guarantee of the unity of that state are the keys to an understanding of his handling of the Rumanian question (and the nationality problem in general).

Tisza chose to begin his dialogue with the Rumanians with Ioan Mihiu (1854–1927), a large landowner and banker. Mihiu was acceptable to Tisza because he was a respected moderate who had remained apart from political groupings and had shown a willingness to work within the existing constitutional system.¹¹ Mihiu had first attracted Tisza's attention in 1902, when in an open letter that caused a sensation he called for the elimination from the National Party program of 1881 of articles demanding the restoration of Transylvanian autonomy and opposing the dualist system.¹² By dealing with Mihiu, Tisza could avoid direct contacts with the Rumanian National Party and any recognition of it as the legal representative of the Rumanians. Yet Mihiu, through his extensive relations with Rumanian politicians, could keep Tisza fully informed of the state of Rumanian public opinion and could, if necessary, serve as an intermediary between him and the National Party.

¹¹ OL: Miniszterelnökség, 1904.XVI. 152–3384: Report of the főispán of Hunyad (Hunedoara) County, July 29, 1904.

¹² *Libertatea* (Orăștie), February 23/March 8, 1902.

For his part, Mihiu was receptive to Tisza's offer because he saw in the prospective *modus vivendi* with the government an opportunity at long last to make significant improvements in the cultural and economic situation of his people. He thus represented a growing element within the National Party leadership which advocated the abandonment of the maximum program of 1881 in favor of short-term, attainable goals. Mihiu and his associates prided themselves on being realists; they could perceive neither in the political and economic resources of the Rumanians nor in the international situation any hope of achieving the ideal of national autonomy or of a federalized Austria-Hungary. Although Mihiu could appreciate why Rumanian leaders had pursued an intransigent policy since 1867, he pointed out that they had nothing substantial to show for their efforts. Instead of forever pursuing the unattainable, he urged them to turn their attention to creating the conditions necessary for cultural and economic advancement; he was certain that an improvement in their political status would follow in due course.¹³

Despite the commanding political and economic position of the Magyars, Mihiu entered the negotiations with Tisza convinced that the Rumanian bargaining position was far from hopeless. He noted that the Magyars had had no greater success than the Rumanians in achieving their national ambitions, for they were no closer now to transforming Hungary into a Magyar national state than they had been a half-century earlier. Mihiu saw no possibility of their doing so in the future, either, because the "tide of history" was running against ethnic assimilation. Democracy and the national ideal, which, in his view, now determined the standard of political behavior in Europe, would not permit the "annihilation" of minorities. As for the Rumanians in Hungary, he did not doubt for a moment that they would survive all attempts to deprive them of their "national being" because they had awakened to a full self-consciousness of their unique character and destiny and because they did not stand alone, but formed part of a greater ethnic community led by the Kingdom of Rumania.

At their first meeting on July 23, 1910 in Budapest, Tisza and Mihiu spent nearly three hours laying the groundwork for more detailed negotiations later. Tisza emphasized the timeliness of a Magyar-Rumanian rapprochement. He drew Mihiu's attention to the "Slav problem" in Austria-Hungary, which had been "exacerbated" by the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908, and in Eastern Europe as a whole, which was threatened "as never before" by Russia's

¹³ Ioan Mihiu, *Spicuri din gândurile mele*, ed. Silviu Dragomir (Sibiu, 1938), pp. 4-6, 17.

expansionist ambitions. He warned that only an alliance of Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Rumania could check the Slavic advance, and he admitted that sustained cooperation among the three would be impossible so long as the Rumanians of Hungary remained disaffected. But he left no doubt that domestic problems were his overriding concern. He recognized that an understanding with the Rumanians was essential for the consolidation of the Hungarian state, a goal, he informed Mihiu, he was determined to achieve at all cost. He professed to see no reason for the intransigence of the Rumanians because in essence the Magyars were asking only that they accept the existing form of the Hungarian state, in return for which the government would do everything in its power to assure their "normal" development.

We do not know precisely what Mihiu's response was. In any case, it is unlikely that he made specific proposals because he regarded his role as that of a factfinder and middleman and he did not presume to speak on behalf of the National Party or anyone else. Two days after his meeting with Tisza he discussed a Magyar-Rumanian accord with Prime Minister Károly Khuen-Hederváry. More cautious than Tisza, Khuen-Hederváry made no commitments, but in concert with Tisza he asked Mihiu to submit a list of Rumanian grievances as a basis for further discussion and possible government action.¹⁴

Mihiu spent the rest of the summer consulting with the leaders of the National Party. He found them willing enough to continue the dialogue with Tisza and Khuen-Hederváry but extremely skeptical about the possibility of a genuine rapprochement. Of greatest importance were his discussions with Alexandru Vaida and Iuliu Maniu, both influential members of the party's executive committee and both suspicious of Tisza's motives.

Vaida (1872-1950),¹⁵ a National Party deputy in parliament since 1906, rejected out of hand the idea of Hungary as a Magyar national state, for the creation of such an entity, in his view, would mean the complete subjugation of the minorities. Deeply influenced by the writings of Aurel C. Popovici, an advocate of the federalization of Austria-Hungary, a process he had described in his famous *Die Vereinigten Staaten von Gross-Österreich* (1906), Vaida looked to Vienna

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

¹⁵ There is no biography of Vaida. One may consult: Georg Franz, "Alexander Vaida-Voevod und die Reformpläne Erzherzog Franz Ferdinands," *Südost-Forschungen* 12 (1953): 178-191, and Keith Hitchins, *The Nationality Problem in Austria-Hungary. The Reports of Alexander Vaida to Archduke Franz Ferdinand's Chancellery* (Leiden, 1974), pp. ix-xvii. (Henceforth, *Vaida*.)

for support against Magyar nationalism. He could even contemplate the eventual amalgamation of Rumania and the Balkan states with the Dual Monarchy into a vast Danubian federation, as a means of guaranteeing the free development and economic prosperity of all its members. He thought Austria was the ideal choice to head this new entity, because of her economic and cultural attainments, her relatively tolerant nationality policy, and her close ties to Germany.¹⁶

Like many representatives of the minorities, Vaida placed great hopes for a revision of the dualist system in the heir to the throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand. Convinced that he would rein in the Magyars and introduce, if not federalism, then at least some form of national autonomy, Vaida became a faithful member of that small group of national leaders who regularly supplied Franz Ferdinand with information and advice about conditions in Hungary. Vaida's reports relentlessly exposed the undemocratic character of the Hungarian political system and the "chauvinism" and "disloyalty" of Magyar politicians, including Tisza.¹⁷ He held Tisza responsible for the crushing defeat of the National Party in the 1910 elections, action he attributed to Tisza's contempt for democratic processes and to his refusal to deal with the Rumanians as equals.¹⁸ It is little wonder, then, that he thought Tisza and Khuen-Henderváry were engaged in a charade and wished merely to persuade Vienna and European public opinion that a new era in nationality relations in Hungary had begun. Painfully aware of Rumanian weakness, Vaida intended to coordinate the actions of the National Party with the broader objectives of Franz Ferdinand and his entourage. Accordingly, in August 1910 he wrote to the Archduke's chancellery seeking advice on how he and his colleagues should react to Tisza's initiative.¹⁹

Iuliu Maniu (1873–1950),²⁰ the legal counsel for the Greek Catholic diocese of Transylvania and a National Party deputy in parliament from 1906 to 1910, shared the views of his friend Vaida on the

¹⁶ Peregrinus [Alexander Vaida-Voevod], "Die vereinigten Donaustaaten," *Österreichische Rundschau* 18 (February 1909): 257–260.

¹⁷ Hitchins, *Vaida*, pp. x–xiv; 91–93: Vaida's report of July 5, 1909.

¹⁸ Arhiva Istorică Centrală a Statului, Bucharest. Fonduri personale: Vaida, p. 116: Audience with Franz Ferdinand, November 23, 1910. This document, consisting of 154 typewritten pages, contains Vaida's recollections of his association with Franz Ferdinand.

¹⁹ Hitchins, *Vaida*, pp. 174–5: Vaida to Alexander Brosch von Arenau, August 8, 1910; Mihū, *Spicuirii*, p. 157: Vaida to Mihū, August 19, 1910.

²⁰ There is no up-to-date biography of Maniu. One may consult: Viorel V. Tilea, *Iuliu Maniu. Der Mann und das Werk* (Hermannstadt, 1927), and Sever Stoica, *Iuliu Maniu* (Cluj, 1932).

prospects of a Magyar-Rumanian accord. He was skeptical about the intention of the government to offer the Rumanians substantial guarantees of their national existence and cited its behavior in the recent elections, "a campaign of extermination" against the National Party, as evidence of its true feelings toward the minorities.²¹ He thought that the impetus for negotiations had come from Vienna and that Tisza was simply using peace overtures to the minorities to deflect criticism of the government's traditional nationality policy.

Maniu's own goal was national autonomy, and, like Vaida, he thought a federalization of the Monarchy was one way to achieve it. But unlike Vaida, he looked beyond questions of immediate tactics to the underlying political and social structure of Hungary. He found it wanting in most respects. Among the reforms he deemed essential was universal suffrage. The right to vote seemed to him the key to a solution of the nationality problem because it would allow each ethnic group proportional representation in parliament and would enable each to organize itself on an autonomous basis in those areas where it formed a majority of the population. He thought that universal suffrage would also lead to an improvement in living standards and an acceleration of social development because it would enable the minorities to gain a larger share of economic power than they could ever hope to have under a system dominated by the "Magyar oligarchy."²²

Mihu's conversations with Tisza and Kluen-Hederváry had not changed Maniu's overall assessment of the situation, but he hesitated to reject Tisza's overtures outright in deference to "important persons" in Vienna, who, he had it on good authority, had intervened on behalf of the Rumanians. He urged Mihu to ascertain as quickly as possible if the government were seriously interested in a rapprochement. If it were not, he wanted to bring the whole affair to a close at once in order to prevent the government from using long, drawn-out negotiations to sow dissension among the Rumanians.²³

Mihu tried to persuade Maniu, Vaida, and other National Party leaders to base their policies on a pragmatic assessment of existing circumstances, not on some abstract ideal or on expectations of what others might do for them. In particular, he thought it foolish to count

²¹ Biblioteca Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, Bucharest. Fondul corespondența: Iuliu Maniu to Valeriu Braniste, June 12, 1910. (Henceforth, BARSR.)

²² Ibid. Fondul corespondența: Maniu to Braniste, July 14, 1910; Iuliu Maniu, *Discursuri parlamentare 29 maiu-31 iulie 1906* (Blaj, 1906), pp. 7-8, 10; Speech in parliament, May 29, 1906.

²³ Mihu, *Spicuri*, pp. 131-133; Maniu to Mihu, August 3, 1910.

upon the intervention of Franz Ferdinand to improve their lot, for, as he saw it, the Archduke could not alter the structure of the Monarchy to suit himself or to please the Rumanians. Moreover, he had said as much at an audience for two Transylvanian Rumanian churchmen, Miron Cristea, a member of the Orthodox metropolitan consistory, and Augustin Bunea, a canon of the Greek Catholic metropolitanate, in March 1908. He had urged them to persevere in their loyalty to the dynasty and promised that when he was in a position to do so, he would attempt to gain more equitable treatment for the minorities and introduce universal suffrage.²⁴ For Mihiu, such vague expressions of good will could not possibly form the basis of a national program. He also dismissed as fanciful the often-expressed hope that foreign states would come to the aid of the Rumanians. He saw no immediate prospect of changes in the international situation that would benefit their cause.²⁵

Instead of "chimeras," Mihiu urged party leaders to accept his own formula: recognition of the unity and indivisibility of the Hungarian state and a commitment to make it strong and prosperous in return for the enactment by the government of all necessary measures to protect and foster the development of the Rumanian nationality. Once these principles had been agreed to, he was certain that the Rumanians would be able to organize a strong political party and enter into "productive relationships" with Magyar parties. In the final analysis, he argued, the future of the Rumanians of Hungary did not depend upon their intransigence but upon their vitality.²⁶

In August the National Party executive committee decided reluctantly to participate in further discussions with Tisza and Khuen-Hederváry. On September 5 it approved the text of a memorandum drawn up by several committee members and Mihiu, which the latter presented to Khuen-Hederváry on the 12th. Its twenty-three articles had but one objective—national autonomy—and represented the most extreme formulation of that idea the Rumanians had ever presented to higher authority (either Hungarian or Austrian). There was no long preamble containing historical and legal justifications for their demands as in previous documents of this sort. Rather, its authors went directly to the heart of the matter. They demanded: 1) Political autonomy—the right to organize and manage a political party on the same basis as all other parties; the introduction of universal suffrage,

²⁴ Gábor G. Kemény, *Iratok a nemzetiségi kérdés történetéhez Magyarországon a dualizmus korában*, vol. 5 (1906–1913) (Budapest, 1971), pp. 234–239.

²⁵ Mihiu, *Spicuirii*, pp. 33–35.

²⁶ Hitchins, *Vaida*, p. 175; Vaida's report of August 8, 1910.

or if that were not possible at once, an end to electoral abuses and a broadening of the franchise; and the creation of fifty Rumanian electoral districts; 2) Administrative autonomy—the appointment of Rumanian functionaries in Rumanian-inhabited areas, and the use of Rumanian in all administrative and judicial bodies having direct contact with the citizenry; 3) Church autonomy—the management of internal affairs in accordance with norms guaranteed by civil and church law, and state financial support in the same proportion as that accorded Protestant churches; 4) Educational autonomy—the right of churches and communities to establish and maintain elementary schools; the use of Rumanian as the language of instruction in all elementary schools that catered to Rumanian pupils; the construction at state expense of three middle schools in Rumanian-inhabited areas with Rumanian as the language of instruction; and the establishment of a Rumanian section in the Ministry of Education and Cults; and 5) Economic autonomy—the granting of regular state subsidies to develop Rumanian-inhabited areas.²⁷

The memorandum was the main topic of discussion at Mihiu's second meeting with Tisza on September 24. The prospects for a breakthrough were slim, for Tisza had already informed Mihiu that certain points were unacceptable.²⁸ Nonetheless, he went through the memorandum with Mihiu point by point. By and large, he approved the items calling for state support for churches and education as they stood with a few minor changes, and he agreed in principle to support Rumanian economic aspirations. But he refused to commit himself to any action that would recognize the Rumanians as a separate political entity entitled to proportional representation at all levels of government. He said nothing about the fifty Rumanian electoral districts and rejected universal suffrage, proposing instead an extension of the franchise to favor the educated and well-to-do. He also insisted that the language of administration and of the courts must continue to be Magyar, but agreed that Rumanian could supplement it in local bodies and that officials who had regular contact with the people should possess the necessary language competence. He declared that Rumanians would be welcome at all levels of administration, but he refused to set quotas. He agreed to the appointment of Rumanian councillors in the Ministry of Education and Cults, but he thought a Rumanian section was unnecessary. Finally, he accepted in principle the demand of the Rumanians to have their own political organization, but he did not mention the National Party.²⁹

²⁷ Mihiu, *Spicuri*, pp. 159–164.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 177–8: Tisza to Mihiu, September 10, 1910.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 179–180.

Mihu replied that the concessions Tisza was contemplating would not satisfy the Rumanians completely, but he expressed the belief that if carried out fully and with dispatch, they would reduce the "extreme hostility" felt by Rumanians toward the government and would eventually lead to a comprehensive settlement. That seemed acceptable to Tisza, who suggested that remaining differences could be worked out at a conference of representatives of both sides. The two men agreed that the future of the negotiations depended upon what the Rumanian side was willing to offer in exchange for the government's concessions, but they clearly harbored doubts about the outcome of the process they had set in motion. Mihu advised Tisza that Rumanian leaders would consider making a final settlement only if they obtained solid guarantees of their nation's existence and future development. For his part, Tisza warned against the raising of "exaggerated demands" and urged the Rumanians to remember that Magyar public opinion, extremely sensitive to any diminution of the Magyar character of the state, had to be won over to the idea of a rapprochement.³⁰

The response of the National Party executive committee was not in the least encouraging. At a meeting on October 4 its members debated Tisza's offer at length, but concluded that no substantial change in the government's attitude toward the Rumanians had occurred. They were particularly upset by Tisza's failure to recognize the legal status of their party and bitterly recalled the idea he had raised in the past about the eventual amalgamation of the National Party with one or more Magyar parties once the terms of a comprehensive agreement had been carried out. Although aware of their own weak bargaining position, they were confident that Rumania's attachment to the Triple Alliance would eventually prove decisive in persuading the Magyars to come to terms.³¹

Mihu continued his work of persuasion, but slowly lost hope of an agreement. He received little encouragement from anyone. The National Party refused to give him a clear mandate to proceed with his negotiations. Maniu was undecided; Vaida, who thought Mihu naive in believing that the Magyars would willingly give up any of their privileges, would not move without instructions from Franz Ferdinand;³² and other party leaders awaited tangible signs of the gov-

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 48-51.

³¹ BARSR, Cluj. *Arhiva Istorică*: Collection of Documents from the Hungarian Ministry of the Interior: Report of the Mayor of Cluj to the Ministry of the Interior, October 6, 1910.

³² *Arhiva Istorică Centrală a Statului*, Bucharest. *Fonduri personale*: Vaida, pp. 116-118, 123: Audience with Franz Ferdinand, November 23, 1910.

ernment's sincerity. No support came from Vienna either. Nor did Mihi expect any. He had never given any credence to the idea, entertained by many of his colleagues, that the court was behind the negotiations. The whole manner in which the undertaking had been conducted had convinced him that it had come about through Tisza's personal initiative.³³

Increasingly discouraged, Mihi nevertheless persevered because he was convinced that a settlement of Magyar-Rumanian differences was both necessary and inevitable. Owing to the mixed nature of the population in almost all areas inhabited by the Rumanians, the nationality problem, in his view, simply would not go away by itself whether the territory remained a part of Hungary or fell under the control of Rumania the next day; both Magyars and Rumanians had awakened to a full consciousness of themselves and neither, therefore, could be subjugated or assimilated by the other. The final blow to his hopes was a letter from Khuen-Hederváry on October 27, informing him that the memorandum of September 12 did not offer a "suitable basis" for further discussions.

At the beginning of November the executive committee of the National Party decided to suspend further contacts with Tisza. Maniu's arguments apparently carried the day: the Rumanians could not recognize the existing constitutional system of Hungary, which was the fundamental condition set by Tisza for an agreement, until the government had granted them "institutional guarantees" of their national existence.

Although a majority of the committee supported Maniu, some of his colleagues were more flexible. Among the latter was Vasile Goldiș (1862-1934),³⁴ a respected social theorist who belonged to a circle of liberal Magyar political thinkers and sociologists. He thought, as Mihi did, that a settlement of the nationality problem must come eventually and then only by compromise. As he saw the situation, Magyar politicians would have to give up the notion that Hungary could ever be a national state, and the Rumanians would have to realize that they could never form a state within a state. He therefore urged his colleagues to abandon the intransigent policy they had pursued since 1881 because it had proved ineffective as a means of achieving the only goal that mattered—the preservation of their national existence.³⁵ To keep the lines of communication open to Tisza

³³ BARSR, Bucharest. Fondul corespondența: Mihi to Braniște, October 28, 1910.

³⁴ On Goldiș's role in the national movement, see: Gheorghe Șora, *Vasile Goldiș, militant pentru desăvîrșirea idealului național* (Timișoara, 1980).

³⁵ Mihi, *Spicuri*, pp. 211-213, 218, 223-224; Goldiș to Mihi, November 9, 12, and

and Khuen-Henderváry while party leaders reexamined their position, Goldiș urged Mihu to seek recognition of the National Party "in a constitutional sense." He was certain that such a concession would allay the suspicions his colleagues harbored about Magyar sincerity and would bring them closer to a general peace.

Although Mihu had decided to terminate his mission after the receipt of Khuen-Hederváry's letter, he continued to sound out opinion from all the parties concerned. In December 1910 he visited Bucharest where he met leaders of the Liberal and Conservative parties and was received by King Carol. All of them encouraged him to persevere in his efforts to find a solution to the Rumanian-Magyar impasse.³⁶

Mihu had two more conversations with Tisza, on January 14 and February 28, 1911. Neither revealed any change of position since the previous September. At the latter meeting Mihu advised Tisza that there could be little hope of a reconciliation until the franchise had been modified sufficiently to allow the Rumanians proportional representation in parliament and until specific measures had been taken to satisfy their church, school, and economic grievances. Tisza thanked him for his straightforward representation of the Rumanian position, but declined to accept his views.³⁷ With this, Mihu's role in the Magyar-Rumanian negotiations came to an end.

II

Direct contact between Tisza and the Rumanians remained suspended for nearly two years. For most of this period the National Party was beset by an internal struggle for power, which left it temporarily in disarray and incapable of pursuing serious negotiations with the government.³⁸ Another reason for inactivity was the lack of urgency felt by Tisza and other Magyar leaders to settle the Rumanian question. Moreover, no particular pressure was exerted on Tisza by Vienna to negotiate, a situation that bears out the assumption of Mihu (and others) that the original impetus had indeed come from Tisza.

The new round of negotiations, which began in January 1913 and lasted, with interruptions, until February 1914, coincided with important changes in the balance of power among the states of southeastern Europe and intensified diplomatic activity on the part of the great

16, 1910; BARSR, Bucharest. Fondul corespondența: Goldiș to Braniște, November 9, 1910.

³⁶ Mihu, *Spicuri*, pp. 79–82.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 91

³⁸ Lucian Boia, "Contribuții privind mișcarea națională a românilor din Transilvania în anii 1910–1914," *Studii. Revistă de Istorie* 25, no. 4 (1972): 783–794.

powers. A growing estrangement between the Dual Monarchy and Rumania, and the emergence of the latter as an independent force in Balkan affairs could not but have repercussions on Magyar-Rumanian relations. The participation of Rumania in the Balkan Wars had brought both military and diplomatic prestige. With enhanced self-confidence her leaders became more receptive to overtures from Russia and the Entente, a new departure in foreign policy nourished by Austria's failure to support Rumania in the recent Balkan crisis.³⁹

In the fall of 1912 Tisza began to explore ways of reviving the negotiations. Although the joint foreign minister, Leopold von Berchtold, urged him to use his influence with the Hungarian government to improve its relations with the Rumanian minority in order to keep Rumania from "slipping out of our hands,"⁴⁰ foreign policy objectives were of secondary importance to him. Tisza's aim remained what it had been in 1910—the internal consolidation of Hungary.

Although it had been evident in his dealings with Mihu that the participation of the Rumanian National Party was essential if his initiative was to succeed, Tisza was reluctant to treat directly with its representatives. He much preferred to reestablish contact with Mihu or negotiate with the Greek Catholic and Orthodox bishops. He finally accepted a compromise suggested by Ion I. C. Brătianu, the leader of the Liberal Party in Rumania. Brătianu, who preferred France to Austria, but whose interest in the nationality problem in Hungary warmed as his perception of political and diplomatic advantages to be won became clearer, proposed that Teodor Mihali (1855–1934), a National Party deputy in the Hungarian parliament since 1905 and a member of the party's executive committee, serve as an intermediary. After some hesitation Tisza agreed because Mihali enjoyed the respect of his colleagues and, hence, could speak with authority, and because he was a moderate who, like Mihu, had shown a willingness to reach a *modus vivendi* with the government. Tisza thus made an important concession that seemed to suggest official recognition of the National Party and a renunciation of his plan to dissolve political parties organized on the basis of nationality. On December 18 he informed Mihali that he was ready to begin discussions.⁴¹

The prospects for success were dim, as Rumanian leaders maintained their distance from the government. Maniu and Goldiș con-

³⁹ For a recent assessment of Rumanian foreign policy during this period, see: Gheorghe Nicolae Căzan and Șerban Rădulescu-Zoner, *România și Tripla Alianță, 1878–1914* (Bucharest, 1979), pp. 298–389.

⁴⁰ Ferenc Pölöskei, "István Tisza's Policy toward the Romanian Nationalities [*sic*] on the Eve of World War I," *Acta Historica* 18, no. 3–4 (1972): 274–275.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 277.

tinued to insist upon the complete restructuring of the Hungarian state as a prerequisite for any lasting solution of the nationality problem. In Maniu's view, a rapprochement between Magyars and Rumanians could occur only when parliament had been reconstituted on a democratic basis and when Magyar leaders had abandoned their "megalomania" and had recognized certain hard truths about the ethnic character of Hungary.⁴² He pointed out that the Hungarian state daily disregarded the natural political and cultural rights of its Rumanian citizens and that in its present form it lacked the institutions necessary to satisfy their needs and aspirations. Under these circumstances, he assumed on behalf of the National Party the solemn obligation to transform the whole existing apparatus of the state into one based upon respect for the unique attributes of every people and general human rights.⁴³ As he saw the problem, such radical changes could be brought about only through close cooperation between the Court of Vienna and the non-Magyar nationalities. Their first task would be to destroy the power of the Magyar "ruling oligarchy," which task, he thought, could best be accomplished by abolishing the dualist system itself and by granting broad powers of self-government to the minorities, powers that would have their source and justification in universal suffrage.⁴⁴

Goldiș also advocated the democratization of Hungarian political life as a means of solving the nationality problem, but he saw little chance of that happening immediately because it would tip the balance in favor of the minorities, a turn of events the Magyar ruling parties would never tolerate.⁴⁵ He characterized as "illusory" and "destructive of human progress" attempts by these parties to create a unitary Magyar state. Moreover, he was certain that they would fail because fundamental economic changes such as the growth of capitalism had already initiated an "economic democratization" that in time would establish a just balance among the various nationalities. For the present, however, Goldiș showed little inclination to make binding commitments to a government that violated its own constitu-

⁴² "Declarațiuni asupra chestiunilor actuale politice. Un interview cu dl. Dr. Iuliu Maniu," *Revista politică și literară* (Blaj) 3, no. 4-6 (1910): 112.

⁴³ Iuliu Maniu, "Scopul politiceii naționale românești," *Revista politică și literară* (Blaj) 3, no. 8 (1911): 272-3.

⁴⁴ L. Bianchi, "Listy Milana Hodžu šéfovi vojenskej kancelárie následníka trónu Františka Ferdinanda v rokoch 1907-1911," *Historický Časopis* 18, no. 3 (1970): 443-447; Promemoria of Milan Hodza and Iuliu Maniu to Franz Ferdinand, December 25, 1911.

⁴⁵ László (Vasile) Goldiș, *A nemzetiségi kérdésről* (Arad, 1912), p. 32.

tion by obstructing the political and cultural development of its non-Magyar citizens.⁴⁶

Alexandru Vaida was as distrustful as ever of Tisza. He continued to rely upon a strong Habsburg Monarchy led by Austria as the only means of thwarting Magyar ambitions and assuring minority rights.⁴⁷

Despite misgivings, the leaders of the National Party agreed to resume the dialogue with Tisza. On January 12 and 13, 1913 the executive committee chose a subcommittee of ten members, including Mihali, Maniu, Vaida, and Goldiș, to coordinate policy and tactics, and designated three among them—Mihali, Maniu, and Valeriu Braniște (1869–1928), the editor of the newspaper *Drapelul* of Lugoj and a moderate—to conduct the actual negotiations.

The first meeting between the Committee of Three and Tisza, which took place on January 21, was devoted to a recapitulation of the latter's views on Magyar-Rumanian relations. Tisza raised again the idea that the two people were natural allies and that they must stand together with the Germans to prevent the expansion of Russia. It followed, so he reasoned, that a strong Magyar national state was the best guarantee not only of the free cultural and economic development of the Rumanians of Hungary but also of the independence of the Rumanian Kingdom. Although his manner was thus conciliatory, he offered his listeners few practical inducements to abandon their reserve. He rejected as groundless the accusation that the government was pursuing a policy of magyarization, admitting only that occasional abuses had been committed and would be corrected. Although he expressed a willingness to work with the National Party to achieve mutually beneficial aims, he intimated that as soon as the demands of the Rumanians had been satisfied its reason for being would have ceased. In parting, he asked the Rumanians to give him a new list of desiderata in writing.⁴⁸

Two days later, on the 23rd, Maniu and Goldiș presented an eleven-point memorandum to Tisza. It went over essentially the same ground as Mihai's of September 12, 1910, but it sharpened the concept of autonomy: the language of instruction for Rumanian students in both state and church schools at all levels was to be Rumanian; in areas inhabited by "compact masses" of Rumanians the language of administration and the administrators was to be Rumanian; and the

⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 42, 45, 64.

⁴⁷ Alexander Vaida-Voevod, "Slawen, Deutsche, Magyaren und Rumänen," *Österreichische Rundschau* 34 (January 1913): 11, and "Jos Austria perfidä," *Österreichische Rundschau* 37 (October 1913): 14.

⁴⁸ BARSR, Bucharest. Arhiva Valeriu Braniște, III, 2 a-c: Braniște's typewritten summary of the discussions with Tisza.

political influence of the Rumanians in public life was to be guaranteed by direct, secret universal suffrage and by the assignment to them of one-sixth of the seats in the lower house of parliament, a number corresponding to the percentage of Rumanians in the population of Hungary.⁴⁹

Tisza sent his reply to Mihali on February 7. His position on the Magyar character of the state and on autonomy for the minorities had not changed. He rejected the demand for instruction in Rumanian in state schools as incompatible with the idea of the Magyar national state. Yet, he was willing to promote the study of Rumanian and other languages in the middle schools and to continue state aid to church schools. As for education at the university level, he insisted that it be under state auspices and that the language of instruction be Magyar, but he predicted that once "good relations" between the government and the Rumanians had been restored, the study of the Rumanian language and literature would become more "intensive" than before. He rejected the use of Rumanian as the language of administration and the exclusive appointment of Rumanian officials in Rumanian-inhabited areas as contrary to the best interests of the Magyar national state. Although Magyar must remain the primary language of state functionaries at all levels, he promised that they would have the necessary competence in the languages of the minorities whom they were to serve. He thought it desirable that Rumanian intellectuals fill administrative positions as their numbers and experience warranted, a process he was convinced would accelerate as hostility and suspicion on both sides gradually dissipated. Although he did not refer specifically to universal suffrage or a quota for Rumanian deputies in parliament, he was disposed to extend the franchise to include more Rumanians, in accordance with "true power relationships." The latter phrase referred to the Rumanians' lack of economic development and modest cultural attainments, which, in Tisza's view, disqualified them from enjoying voting power or seats in parliament in proportion to their numbers. Nonetheless, he assured the Committee of Three that the situation would inevitably change in favor of the Rumanians as the masses "advanced in culture." As for the Rumanian National Party, he appeared to give a little. He repeated his ideas on its eventual dissolution, but agreed that in the final analysis it was up to the Rumanians themselves to decide whether they wanted a separate party. On church autonomy, economic development, and state support for cultural activities, he accepted the Rumanian position in principle, but here, as with the highly sensitive political and language

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* The memorandum is dated January 23, 1913.

questions, he made concessions dependent upon a general and vaguely defined "restoration of good relations" between the government and the Rumanians.⁵⁰

The Committee of Ten discussed Tisza's reply on February 8 and 9 and concluded that no basis for an agreement existed that would reconcile the idea of the Magyar national state with their own demand for institutional guarantees of their national existence. A few days later Mihiu met with Mihali, Maniu, and Braniște and confirmed their assessment. He could discern no change in the principle Tisza had enunciated in 1910 that the Magyar political nation alone had created and sustained the Hungarian state.⁵¹

There were also other, public, signs that National Party leaders were little disposed to make binding agreements with Tisza. In January and February the party organ, *Românul* of Arad, under the editorship of Goldiș, kept up an unrelenting drumbeat of criticism of Tisza and the government. Accusing the government of gross violations of its own laws, *Românul* castigated its refusal to amend the Apponyi education law of 1907 and its continued efforts to extend the use of Magyar in minority schools. Even more harsh were the editorials attacking the government's failure to introduce universal suffrage or some other kind of electoral reform that would benefit the minorities. *Românul* declared that in matters of the vote the Rumanians continued to be the victims of "political brigandage," and it labeled Tisza's views on the franchise "reactionary" and "Pan-Magyar" and denounced him personally as a "sophist" and "hypocrite."⁵²

In a strained atmosphere hardly conducive to an accord Mihali, Maniu, and Braniște met Tisza for a point-by-point review of the Rumanian memorandum on February 13 and 15. Mihali suggested that they divide all the outstanding issues into two categories—the first consisting of those matters that could be settled relatively simply and the second of those that would require further negotiation and concessions by both sides. In this way he hoped to use an agreement on secondary questions to create an atmosphere of trust in which fundamental disagreements might be overcome. Tisza rejected the idea. He wanted a single, comprehensive agreement and therefore refused to settle any one point in dispute separate from all the others.

Cultural questions were taken up first. The Rumanians had little

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.: Valeriu Braniște's typewritten notes on the deliberations of the Committee of Ten, February 8-17, 1913.

⁵² *Românul*, January 6/19, February 2/15, and February 23/March 8, 1913.

success in budging Tisza from his position on the role of Magyar in instruction. Although he agreed to "study further" such matters as the revision of the Apponyi Law, he went no further than to express a hope that solutions could be found if "insurmountable difficulties" on other points did not intrude.

Political matters were paramount. Maniu posed a question that went to the very heart of national aspirations: How could the Rumanians exert an effective influence on the political life of their country? How, in other words, could they be assured of a continuous say in determining their own future? First, he reviewed the solutions already offered by the National Party—electoral reform (he had little hope for the passage of a law that would benefit the Rumanians); the restoration of the autonomy of Transylvania (he recognized the impossibility of such an act in the face of government opposition); and national autonomy (he admitted that its implementation would lead to the federalization of Hungary and put an end to the dual hegemony of the Germans and Magyars in the Monarchy, consequences totally unacceptable to the Magyars)—and then proposed to solve the problem by redrawing county boundaries on the basis of nationality and by appointing a Rumanian to the cabinet as minister without portfolio.⁵³ The plan was endorsed by his colleagues, who once again argued strenuously in favor of the use of their language in administration and justice in those counties where their people formed a majority of the population.

All their arguments were to no avail. Tisza rejected out of hand the administrative division of the country on the basis of nationality and the notion that Rumanians should be administered and judged by Rumanians. His position on the language of administration was similar. To diminish the role of the Magyar language in the life of the state struck him as "incompatible" with the evolution of Hungary during the preceding forty years. As for electoral reform, he hinted that a "rounding-off" of electoral districts in favor of the Rumanians would be possible, but only within the context of a general agreement. Matters were thus at an impasse, and by mutual consent the discussions were adjourned on February 16.

III

Bargaining between Tisza and the Rumanian National Party resumed in October 1913. The same Committee of Three represented the

⁵³ BARSR, Bucharest. Arhiva Valeriu Braniște: Braniște's notes on the conversation between the Committee of Three and Tisza.

Rumanians, who decided that the eleven-point memorandum of the previous January would form the basis of their negotiating position. Teodor Mihali sent word to Tisza through the latter's good friend, Vasile Hosszu, Rumanian Greek Catholic bishop of Gherla (Szamosújvár), that he and his colleagues sincerely desired to end the differences between themselves and the government.⁵⁴

Such assurances notwithstanding, other evidence suggests that the mood of the National Party had hardened and that its estrangement from the government and from Hungarian society generally had deepened. During the summer of 1913 *Românul* continued its no-holds-barred attacks on the existing political structure and the motives of Magyar political leaders. In parliament Mihali himself attacked the program of the new Tisza government (Tisza had become prime minister on June 10) as "noxious" to the welfare of the country because it had failed to endorse universal suffrage and to acknowledge the right of the minorities to protect their ethnic and cultural individuality.⁵⁵ Editorials in *Românul* warned the Rumanian public against entertaining false hopes that Tisza as prime minister would do any more to loosen the reins of Magyar domination than he had done out of office. Even more ominous for the future of Magyar-Rumanian relations were admonitions to Rumanian electors to shun political contacts with all Magyars, no matter what their particular orientation was. *Românul* declared a vote for a candidate of any Magyar party to be a vote for the destruction of the Rumanian nation. According to this line of reasoning, not even the Hungarian Social Democratic Party had anything tangible to offer the Rumanians because it, too, in the final analysis, was bent upon maintaining the supremacy of the Magyar race. Nor did Oszkár Jászi, the well-known sociologist, provide any acceptable alternatives. Even though his moderate, democratic views on the nationality problem were widely respected by Rumanian intellectuals, *Românul* warned that he and his colleagues supported language and educational rights for the Rumanians merely for "scientific reasons," that is, to raise them to a higher cultural level in order to facilitate their assimilation.⁵⁶ Undoubtedly, much of this was rhetoric designed to show the public the combativeness of the party and to relieve it of the stigma of negotiating with a regime whose policies it had unrelentingly denounced. Public intransigence,

⁵⁴ Református Egyház Központi Levéltára. Budapest. Tisza iratok: Vasile Hosszu to Tisza, October 13, 1913. Henceforth, the citation for material from this archive will be REKL, followed by the description of the document. All citations will be from the Tisza iratok.

⁵⁵ *Românul*, June 1/14, 1913. Mihali delivered his speech on June 12.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, May 30/June 12 and May 31/June 13, 1913.

then, was good politics.⁵⁷ Nonetheless, the editorials in *Românul* indicate the extent of Rumanian dissatisfaction and suspicion and show how little Tisza had been able to modify deeply entrenched mental attitudes.

Of crucial importance for the success of the latest round of negotiations was the attitude of Maniu. According to Mihali, he wanted to end the discussions with Tisza as quickly as possible, so that the "great action" could begin.⁵⁸ Although it is unclear exactly what Maniu had in mind, the "great action" probably referred to some sort of coordinated undertaking by Vienna and Bucharest to force the Hungarian government to make substantial concessions to the National Party. Yet, these were questions of tactics, which could change as circumstances warranted. Maniu never wavered in his commitment to his ultimate objective—national self-determination. He set forth his ideas on the subject and, in effect, announced his rejection of Tisza's program in unequivocal terms in a front-page editorial in *Românul* a week after the signing of the Treaty of Bucharest on August 10, 1913, ending the second Balkan War. With unconcealed pride he declared that the successes of the Rumanian Kingdom in the recent conflict had given the Rumanians of Hungary renewed faith that they had been born for something higher than service to a master race. He qualified the victory of the Balkan allies over the Ottoman Empire as a reaffirmation of the principle of nationality and a step forward in the free development of European peoples, and he predicted that the Rumanians of Hungary would not have to endure the status of "helots" much longer.⁵⁹

A meeting between the Committee of Three and Tisza on October 23 brought no substantive changes in the position of either side. Tisza had modified his earlier stand on the eleven points to the extent that he was now prepared to discuss the allocation of a certain number of "safe" electoral districts to the Rumanians. He estimated the number of districts with solid Rumanian majorities at thirty, but declined to name them. Instead, he made this and all other concessions dependent upon "changes in the behavior of the Rumanians": first of all, the "national movement," by which he meant opposition to the government and the isolation of the Rumanians from Hungarian society, would have to cease; second, if a general agreement were reached, the National Party would have to make a public declaration

⁵⁷ REKL: Vasile Hosszu to Tisza, September 19, 1913.

⁵⁸ BARSR, Bucharest. Fondul corespondența: Teodor Mihali to Braniște, October 14 and 17, 1913.

⁵⁹ *Românul*, August 6/19, 1913.

accepting the terms offered by the government as fully satisfying its demands; and finally, the party would have to eliminate from its program all articles incompatible with the agreement and would have to restrict all future activity to the carrying out of its terms.⁶⁰ These conditions suggest that Tisza did not grasp the depth of the commitment of Maniu and his colleagues to the idea of self-determination. His main goal was clearly to neutralize the National Party as an independent political force and, by depriving the Rumanians of its leadership, to prepare the way for their integration into Hungarian society.

Not surprisingly, exchanges of views between Tisza and the Rumanians during the next few months were unproductive. Maniu declared the conditions Tisza had set forth totally unacceptable,⁶¹ while Tisza persisted in thinking that the Rumanians could in the end be brought around by his offer of electoral districts.⁶²

In the fall of 1913 new elements had entered the peace process as the Rumanian question in Hungary assumed growing importance in international relations. Primarily from Vienna and Bucharest strong pressure was brought to bear on Tisza and the Rumanian National Party to settle their differences in the interest of regional peace and stability. On the Austrian side, Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his associates, especially the Austro-Hungarian minister to Rumania, Count Ottakar Czernin, used all their influence to preserve Rumania's links with the Monarchy and the Triple Alliance. Both men were convinced that one of the main obstacles to good relations between the two countries was the abiding discontent of the Rumanian minority in Hungary.

Czernin, who attributed his appointment as minister to the "initiative" of Franz Ferdinand, served the cause of a rapprochement between the Rumanians and the Hungarian government with great skill and devotion.⁶³ Upon his arrival in Bucharest he was shocked to discover the extent of the hostility of public opinion toward the Dual Monarchy. The effect of widespread public indignation at the alleged mistreatment of the Rumanians of Hungary on Rumanian government policy had, in his view, been nothing short of disastrous for Austria; even King Carol, who had remained firm in his attachment to the alliance with the Central Powers, and a number of leading pro-

⁶⁰ BARSR, Bucharest. Arhiva Valeriu Braniște, III, 2 a-c: Braniște's summary of the discussions between the Committee of Three and Tisza.

⁶¹ Ibid. Fondul corespondența: Iuliu Maniu to Teodor Mihali, November 26, 1913.

⁶² REKL: Tisza to Count Leopold Berchtold, January 15, 1914, no. 1.

⁶³ Ottakar Czernin, *Im Weltkrieg* (Berlin and Vienna, 1919), pp. 101-147.

German politicians, could no longer afford openly to pursue a policy of friendship with Austria. To defuse this hostility and suspicion and to restore friendly relations between the Monarchy and Rumania he urged that no effort be spared to placate the Rumanians of Hungary. The matter was urgent. He feared that delay would merely encourage the expansion of an irredentist movement on both sides of the Carpathians that would make any discussion of a rapprochement academic. As matters stood, he reported in December 1913, the alliance between Rumania and Austria-Hungary "was not worth the paper it was written on," and in the event of a crisis the Monarchy could not count upon the military support of Rumania.⁶⁴

Czernin kept Franz Ferdinand regularly informed of the situation in Bucharest and pleaded for his personal intervention both in Vienna to counteract opposition to a Magyar-Rumanian agreement and in Bucharest, where he enjoyed some popularity, to persuade the government to discourage intransigence on the part of the National Party.⁶⁵ Franz Ferdinand's efforts may have had some effect in Bucharest, since an agreement between Tisza and the National Party fitted in with the foreign policy objectives of both the King and (for the moment) the Liberal opposition. The Archduke even seems to have influenced policy in Budapest where he persuaded Tisza (through Berchtold) to increase the number of electoral districts to be assigned the Rumanians from twenty-four to twenty-seven.⁶⁶

Franz Ferdinand also tried to soften the intransigence of Rumanian leaders in Hungary. He kept himself informed of their negotiating position through Aurel C. Popovici, who transmitted copies of documents from the Committee of Ten to the Archduke's chancellery.⁶⁷ Through Braniște he repeatedly impressed upon Rumanian negotiators the necessity of an early and comprehensive agreement with the Hungarian government.⁶⁸

The efforts of outsiders, however, had little effect on the course of events, and by the end of January 1914 the executive committee of the National Party had decided to reject Tisza's latest proposals. Braniște's motion to accept them as the basis of a preliminary under-

⁶⁴ *Österreich-Ungarns Aussenpolitik von der Bosnischen Krise 1908 bis zum Kriegsausbruch 1914*, ed. Ludwig Bittner and Hans Uebersberger (9 vols.; Vienna and Leipzig, 1930), 7: 611-12, 628.

⁶⁵ REKL: Czernin to Tisza, January 13 and 14, 1914.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*: Tisza to Berchtold, January 15, 1914, no. 1.

⁶⁷ BARSR, Bucharest. Fondul corespondența: Aurel C. Popovici to Teodor Mihali, November 24, 1913; Iuliu Maniu to Teodor Mihali, November 26, 1913.

⁶⁸ *Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette, 1871-1914*, vol. 39 (Berlin, 1926), p. 472; Julius von Waldthausen, German minister to Rumania, to Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg, January 1, 1914.

standing was voted down. The majority could not shake off the bitterness and distrust caused by decades of arbitrary treatment at the hands of the government.⁶⁹

As a last resort Tisza turned to the Rumanian clergy. Over the years he had cultivated friendly relations with Greek Catholic and Orthodox prelates and had planned to use their good offices in 1905 to overcome the resistance of Rumanian political leaders.⁷⁰ In February 1914 in letters to all metropolitans and bishops he declared his willingness to do everything within his power to further understanding between their two peoples, but cautioned that he could make no significant changes in the terms he had already offered the National Party. In requesting their aid, he urged them publicly to support "moderate elements" against the continued obstruction of "radicals."⁷¹

The prelates replied in general terms that they welcomed any attempt to restore good feelings between Magyars and Rumanians, but they took no position independent of the National Party. In the course of the negotiations party leaders had kept them fully informed and had sought their approval for demands relating to church and school affairs.⁷² Such cooperation was natural because the clergy had serious grievances of its own against the government, which it had not hesitated to express on numerous occasions, often in blunt terms.⁷³ Tisza's appeal to the clergy to challenge the National Party for leadership thus had no chance of success. Gone were the days when the Greek Catholic and Orthodox bishops had served as national political leaders. When in the summer of 1913 Orthodox Metropolitan Ioan Meşianu had tried to organize a general conference of church and lay leaders to discuss Magyar-Rumanian relations, he was reminded by Teodor Mihali that the National Party alone represented the nation in its dealings with the government.⁷⁴ The conference did not take place.

In the middle of February the negotiations between Tisza and the National Party came to an end. In a letter to Mihali on the 12th Tisza

⁶⁹ REKL: Miron Cristea to Tisza, January 26, 1914; Czernin to Tisza, January 26, 1914.

⁷⁰ Ibid.: Orthodox Metropolitan Ioan Meşianu to Tisza, January 18, 1905; Greek Catholic Bishop Ioan Szabo to Tisza, January 19, 1905; Orthodox Bishop Ioan Papp to Tisza, January 26, 1905.

⁷¹ István Tisza, *Összes munkái*, vol. 2 (Budapest, 1924), pp. 156-158: Tisza to the clergy, February 6, 1914.

⁷² BARSR, Bucharest. Fondul corespondența: Iuliu Maniu to Valeriu Braniște, September 12, 1913.

⁷³ REKL: Miron Cristea to Prime Minister László Lukács, April 1913; Metropolitan Ioan Meşianu to Tisza, January 31, 1914.

⁷⁴ BARSR, Bucharest. Fondul corespondența: Teodor Mihali to Valeriu Braniște, August 6, 1913.

expressed the hope that he and his colleagues would not react to the "temporary failure" of their efforts in such a way as to prevent a permanent accord.⁷⁵ On the 18th the executive committee of the National Party, citing Tisza's failure to provide firm guarantees of their "ethnic individuality," announced its rejection of his proposals.⁷⁶

The task of explaining the committee's decision fell to Maniu, its leader. As he saw it, the immediate cause of the collapse of the negotiations had been Tisza's insistence upon maintaining the Magyar national character of the Hungarian state. In the final analysis, according to Maniu, he had failed to harmonize the legitimate interests of a unitary state with the equally legitimate strivings of diverse ethnic groups to preserve their character and further their political, economic, and cultural development. His refusal to admit that Hungary was a multinational state and his recognition of the Magyars as the sole creators and sustainers of the state, who could not be "degraded" to the level of the other nationalities, had emptied his concessions of any real substance. In a state where the constitution placed one people above all the others there could be no genuine equality of nationalities; there could be only concessions to individual citizens and groups, such as language rights, in exceptional circumstances and at the pleasure of the government in power. Consequently, throughout the negotiations Tisza had made no attempt to alter the existing constitutional structure and provide the political and judicial institutions necessary to guarantee the rights of the minorities in perpetuity. Under these circumstances, Maniu concluded, the National Party could not accept Tisza's offer, could not change its program, and could not acquiesce in the passive role he had reserved for it.⁷⁷

IV

The outbreak of the First World War and subsequent events on the diplomatic and battle fronts in the fall of 1914 did not change the direction of Magyar-Rumanian relations. Neither diplomatic pressures from Vienna, and now Berlin, on Tisza, nor persuasion from Budapest and Bucharest directed at the Rumanian National Party could resolve the central issues in dispute.

⁷⁵ REKL: Tisza to Teodor Mihali, February 12, 1914.

⁷⁶ *Românul*, February 6/19, 1914.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, March 7/20, 1914. Maniu published a similar critique in *Pester Lloyd* of Budapest on March 18, 1914. It is reproduced in Stoica, *Iuliu Maniu*, pp. 72-84.

The main concern of Austrian and German diplomats was not the welfare of the Magyar national state, let alone equality of rights for the Rumanians. Rather, with mounting desperation, they bent their efforts toward persuading the Rumanian government to join the Central Powers or at least maintain a benevolent neutrality. Czernin in Bucharest continued to serve as the chief mediator between Vienna, Bucharest, and Budapest. Conversations with the king and various politicians had convinced him that the position of the Dual Monarchy in Rumania had become so critical that, to avert a "catastrophe," Tisza must be persuaded to make immediate far-reaching concessions to the Rumanian minority in Hungary.

Czernin had the support of Prime Minister Ion I. C. Brătianu, who, though he was pro-French and harbored long-range plans for the acquisition of the Austro-Hungarian provinces of Transylvania and Bukovina, had no intention of alienating Austria until her collapse had become a certainty. In the interest of "normal relations," therefore, he proposed that Tisza grant further concessions to the Rumanian minority and that he publicly acknowledge their patriotic response to the call to arms and promise that their loyalty would be suitably rewarded.⁷⁸ He persuaded Czernin that the key to the success of such an initiative would be the approval of Rumanian leaders in Hungary. Czernin agreed and pleaded with Tisza to do whatever was necessary to elicit such a declaration of support. Of crucial importance, in his view, would be a statement from Maniu that the Rumanians of Hungary were satisfied with what they had obtained from the government and looked forward to their future development in Hungary with complete confidence.⁷⁹

The role of the Rumanian government did not stop with Brătianu's suggestions for a Magyar-Rumanian accord. Fully aware of the importance of Rumania to the war effort of the Central Powers and playing upon fears of a Rumanian tilt toward France and Russia, Brătianu (and King Carol and various Liberal and Conservative politicians) sought to enhance their influence over events and to acquire territory at no sacrifice to themselves. They came up with such imaginative proposals as a "political statute" for Transylvania,⁸⁰ or, in plainer terms, autonomy for the Rumanian minority; a "readjustment" of the border with Bukovina, justified as a way of blunting the effect on public opinion of an offer by Russia of Austro-Hungarian territory;

⁷⁸ REKL: Czernin to Tisza, August 26, 1914.

⁷⁹ Ibid.: Czernin to Tisza, September 25 and 26, 1914; Czernin to Berchtold, October 2 and 21, 1914.

⁸⁰ Tisza, *Összes munkái*, 2: 125: Czernin to the Foreign Ministry, September 7, 1914.

and an occupation of Transylvania by the Rumanian army on the pretext of defending the province from a Russian attack.⁸¹ Although Austro-Hungarian officials gave them short shrift, Rumanian claims against Hungarian sovereignty had a chilling effect on Magyar-Rumanian relations.

Tisza responded to the intense diplomatic pressure by improving slightly the terms he had offered the National Party in January. He also saw the wisdom of eliciting public declarations of support from leading Rumanians of Hungary. Although he agreed with Czernin that such statements might curtail anti-Austrian "agitation" in Bucharest, his main purpose was to prepare both Rumanian and Magyar public opinion in Hungary for a final attempt to settle the nationality problem. He reasoned that patriotic declarations from leading Rumanians would not only mobilize broad Rumanian support for his program, but would also persuade the Magyars that the Rumanians were loyal citizens and that concessions would not, therefore, endanger the unity of the state.⁸² But Tisza soon gave up hope of obtaining the endorsement of the executive committee of the National Party. He blamed its recalcitrance on the "radicals" led by Maniu, whom he accused of using the critical military position of the Monarchy to "extort more and more" from the Hungarian government.⁸³

Tisza turned again to the clergy. He asked Bishop Hosszu to solicit declarations of support for Hungary's war effort from the Greek Catholic clergy, a task Hosszu readily accepted because, as he put it, the victory of the "Muscovites" would mean death for his church and the Rumanian nation.⁸⁴ Tisza also wooed the Orthodox clergy. His letter to Metropolitan Meşianu on September 22 formed the centerpiece of a final effort to placate the National Party. He had warm praise for the loyalty and "incomparable" bravery of the Rumanians and declared his readiness to institute fundamental improvements in the status of the Rumanians, including the amendment of the electoral law to give them more equitable representation in parliament and changes in the administration and funding of church schools. Meşianu replied that he welcomed the government's decision to satisfy the "just desires" of the Rumanian people and promised to do his utmost

⁸¹ Miklos Komjáthy, ed., *Protokolle des Gemeinsamen Ministerrates der Österreichisch-Ungarischen Monarchie (1914-1918)* (Budapest, 1966), p. 179: Session of the Ministerrat for September 20, 1914.

⁸² REKL: Tisza to Bishop Vasile Hosszu, August 26, 1914.

⁸³ *Ibid.*: Tisza to Czernin, September 22, 1914; Tisza, *Összes munkái*, vol. 2, pp. 244-5: Tisza to the Foreign Ministry, October 22, 1914.

⁸⁴ REKL: Vasile Hosszu to Tisza, August 30, 1914; Tisza to Hosszu, September 2, 1914.

to foster harmony between their two peoples. This was a fairly routine statement, but it was the kind of exchange Tisza thought would be useful.⁸⁵ He wrote at once to other prelates and prominent laymen, urging them to arrange a favorable reception for his proposals in their respective localities. The same message went out to the prefects of all the counties of Transylvania and Hungary with a large Rumanian population instructing them to use their powers to the fullest to gain the support of leading Rumanians and, no less important, to guide Magyar public opinion in the "proper direction." Tisza was clearly worried about the effect the contemplated liberalization of the franchise would have on Magyar sensitivities, since it would all too visibly enhance the political power of the Rumanians in many districts.⁸⁶

Despite professions of confidence in the loyalty of the Rumanians, Tisza realized how volatile the public temper could become under wartime conditions. In the first months of the war he judged the behavior of Rumanian civilians "praiseworthy" and had no fault to find with Rumanian troops at the front.⁸⁷ This assessment was, on the whole, correct. The Rumanians had fulfilled their civic responsibilities in keeping with their traditional patriotism and attachment to the dynasty. Even Maniu considered the actions of his people "natural," and dismissed Tisza's call for formal declarations of loyalty as superfluous because the Rumanians had already expressed their sentiments by deeds.⁸⁸ Nonetheless, Tisza found the mood of certain elements of the population, notably the parish clergy and seminaries, unsettling, a presentiment confirmed by Bishop Hosszu, who warned that he could not vouch for their actions in the event of a Rumanian attack on the Monarchy. Tisza thought that a Rumanian military occupation of any part of Transylvania would have "incalculable" effects on the local Rumanian population and might, if it lasted more than a few months, render the situation "uncontrollable."⁸⁹

Such thoughts reinforced Tisza's determination not to weaken the authority of the government over the Rumanians. As at the beginning of his negotiations in 1910 with Mihu so now national autonomy was,

⁸⁵ Ibid.: Tisza to Metropolitan Meşianu, September 22, 1914; Tisza to Czernin, September 24, 1914.

⁸⁶ Ibid.: Tisza to Czernin, September 24, 1914; Tisza to the főispáns, September 25, 1914.

⁸⁷ Ibid.: Tisza to Vasile Hosszu, August 26, 1914; Tisza to Czernin, September 22, 1914.

⁸⁸ BARSR, Bucharest. Fondul corespondenţa: Iuliu Maniu to Valeriu Branişte, August 11, 1914.

⁸⁹ REKL: Vasile Hosszu to Tisza, August, 30, 1914; Tisza to Hosszu, September 2, 1914. Komjáthy, *Protokolle*, p. 181: Session of the Ministerrat for September 20, 1914.

for him, a dead issue. He rejected outright any suggestion that he add a Rumanian as minister without portfolio to the cabinet and that he appoint Rumanians as prefects in counties of predominantly Rumanian populations. He became thoroughly irritated with Czernin for discussing with officials in Bucharest the establishment of a separate administration for Transylvania. He minced no words in expressing displeasure with the notion that Transylvania was an area peculiarly suited to the realization of Rumanian autonomy as advocated by Maniu and his supporters. While admitting that there was indeed a Rumanian question in Hungary, he denied that it could be a Transylvanian question because 40 percent of the population of Transylvania was composed of Magyars and Germans, who in "cultural attainments" "far outweighed" the Rumanians, and because almost one-half of the Rumanians of Hungary lived outside Transylvania.⁹⁰

In contrast to Czernin and German officials, who worked desperately to placate the Rumanian government, Tisza exhibited a studied coolness toward Rumania. In the first place, he regarded the status of the Rumanians of Hungary as a domestic matter, which he intended to regulate in accordance with the best interests of the Hungarian state and which, therefore, could never become the object of international barter.⁹¹ Secondly, he was convinced that concessions to Rumania (or to the Rumanian minority in Hungary) would have no significant effect on her behavior because she would act in accordance with her own best interests, which, in the final analysis, would be determined by events on the battlefield. Tisza branded the idea that Rumania be allowed to occupy Transylvania in order to block a Russian invasion an utter absurdity, merely a trick by which Rumania hoped to increase her territory without shedding any blood. He concluded that the more inducements the Monarchy offered Rumania to join the Central Powers the more she would ask, taking concessions as a sign of weakness. Certain that the Rumanian government feared a serious war, he recommended to Berchtold that the Monarchy openly declare its intention to fight for Transylvania and Bukovina and to call upon Bulgaria and Turkey for assistance.⁹²

In early November Tisza published his correspondence with Metropolitan Mețianu in newspapers throughout the country. Publication

⁹⁰ REKL: Tisza to Czernin, September 24 and October 10, 1914; Tisza, *Összes munkái*, vol. 2, pp. 134-135, 232-3, 239; Tisza to Czernin, September 13 and October 17 and 20, 1914; Komjáthy, *Protokolle*, p. 181.

⁹¹ REKL: Tisza to Berchtold, January 15, 1914, no. 2 and November 1, 1914; Tisza to Czernin, October 7, 1914.

⁹² REKL: Tisza to Berchtold, September 11, 1914; Tisza, *Összes munkái*, vol. 2, p. 126; Tisza to Czernin, September 7, 1914; Komjáthy, *Protokolle*, pp. 180, 181, 183.

was accompanied by a proclamation from Emperor Francis Joseph of amnesty for Rumanians convicted of political crimes in Hungary and by an order of the Hungarian Ministry of the Interior permitting the display of the Transylvanian Rumanian tricolor alongside the Hungarian national colors. Tisza regarded his present initiative as the culmination of all his efforts since entering public life to bring about a reconciliation between Magyars and Rumanians and as the final step in the series of negotiations that had begun in 1910.⁹³ Although "heartened" by the "restraint" of Magyar public opinion and by expressions of support from Rumanian prelates and a few prominent laymen, he soon recognized that his latest proposals had fallen on barren ground. Those Rumanians whose opinions really counted had maintained their reserve.

A few days after the publication of the Tisza-Meşianu correspondence, Iuliu Maniu set forth the position of the National Party on the front page of *Românul*. He yielded nothing to Tisza in firmness and consistency. Although he found reason to hope for an improvement in relations between the Rumanians and the government in the latter's recognition of its obligation to satisfy the needs of all its citizens, he could not cite a single area of public life in which any tangible improvement in the status of the nationalities had occurred. How, he asked, could anyone seriously contemplate an agreement between the government and the Rumanians without institutional guarantees of a continuous Rumanian influence on legislation and administration, without the appointment of Rumanians to public office in proportion to their numbers, without full respect for the Rumanian language in public administration and the courts, and without instruction in Rumanian in educational institutions of all levels? He restated his faith in national autonomy as the "most efficient way" of handling these matters, but he could find no trace of such an idea in Tisza's letter to Meşianu. He concluded that Tisza's latest proposals offered no greater possibility than his earlier initiatives of settling the differences that separated their two peoples.⁹⁴

Tisza stuck to his final offer. He refused to jeopardize the Magyar national state by fostering self-determination among the minorities, and he rejected the entreaties of German leaders in the fall of 1914 that no price was too high to pay to gain the military cooperation of Rumania and thus ensure final victory.⁹⁵

⁹³ REKL: Tisza to Berchtold, November 1, 1914.

⁹⁴ *Românul*, November 1/14, 1914.

⁹⁵ REKL: Tisza's notes on his conversations with German leaders in Berlin, November 19-23, 1914.

Direct contacts between Tisza (he left office in May 1917) and his successors and the Rumanian National Party were not resumed until November 1918, by which time historical Hungary was already disintegrating into a number of national territories. The Rumanian nationality problem was settled a few weeks later on December 1, 1918 when a National Assembly numbering some 100,000 Rumanians from all parts of Transylvania and Hungary met at Alba Iulia (Gyulafehérvár) to proclaim the union of Transylvania with the Kingdom of Rumania.

V

The negotiations between Tisza and the Rumanian National Party were symptomatic of the impasse that had arisen between the "master nations" and the minorities of Austria-Hungary after 1890. In both halves of the Dual Monarchy, whether in Cisleithania in the Austro-Italian or Austro-Czech relationship, or in Transleithania in the Magyar-Croat or Magyar-Rumanian relationship, a similar irreconcilability is discernible between the efforts of one side to enhance the powers of the central authority and those of the other to stretch that authority to the limit in the interest of national self-determination.

The issue between Tisza and the Rumanians, at one level, was clearly centralism versus federalism. Had the dispute remained strictly constitutional, a workable solution might have been found. Maniu and his colleagues were, after all, not revolutionaries who sought to overthrow the existing political and social order in Hungary. Rather, as their dealings with Tisza showed, they stood for gradual change through the extension of democratic political and economic institutions. Nor can they be described as irredentists. As long as the hope of a federalization of the Monarchy existed, Maniu and company were prepared to accept a solution to national aspirations within existing frontiers. Tisza himself was not averse to compromise; he went farther than any of his predecessors in putting together a combination of concessions that might weave the Rumanians (and, later, the other minorities) into the general fabric of Hungarian society.

In the final analysis, the negotiations between Tisza and Rumanian leaders failed because both parties had become convinced that theirs was no ordinary political give-and-take or constitutional touching-up, but that national survival itself was at stake. For Tisza, the supreme goal was to complete the process of Magyar nation-state building; for the Rumanians, it was to ensure the free expression of the national genius. At this level compromise became unthinkable. Neither side could subordinate its "being" to the other, still less to the "simpler"

concerns of Vienna or Bucharest. Consequently, as Tisza and the Rumanians pursued the ideal of the national state, the middle ground between assimilation of the minorities and dissolution of historical Hungary disappeared.