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Going Against the Flow: Sinn Féin's Unusual Hungarian 'Roots'

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Can states as well as non-state political 'actors' learn from the history of cognate entities elsewhere in time and space, and if so how and when does this policy knowledge get 'transferred' across international borders? This article deals with this question, addressing a short-lived Hungarian 'tutorial' that, during the early twentieth century, certain policy elites in Ireland imagined might have great applicability to the political transformation of the Emerald Isle, in effect ushering in an era of political autonomy from the United Kingdom, and doing so via a 'third way' that skirted both the Scylla of parliamentary formulations aimed at securing 'home rule' for Ireland and the Charybdis of revolutionary violence. In the political agenda of Sinn Féin during its first decade of existence, Hungary loomed as a desirable political model for Ireland, with the party's leading intellectual, Arthur Griffith, insisting that the means by which Hungary had achieved autonomy within the Hapsburg Empire in 1867 could also serve as the means for securing Ireland's own autonomy in the first decades of the twentieth century. This article explores what policy initiatives Arthur Griffith thought he saw in the Hungarian experience that were worthy of being 'transferred' to the Irish situation.

Keywords: Ireland; Hungary; Sinn Féin; home rule; *Ausgleich* of 1867; policy transfer; Arthur Griffith

I. Introduction: the Hungarian tutorial

To those who have followed the fortunes and misfortunes of Sinn Féin in recent decades, it must seem the strangest of all pairings, our linking of a party associated nowadays mainly, if not exclusively, with the Northern Ireland question to a small country in the centre of Europe, Hungary. At first glance, the party of Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness would not seem to have anything at all to do with Hungary, or if there were a plausible connection to be made between the two, it might simply be a situational one, in that both the political party and the small country exist in out-of-the-way parts of Europe, and are nothing if not marginal to the great political currents sweeping the planet today. But so to belittle the comparison that serves as inspiration for our article would be to be blinded by a perverse form of 'presentism', one that well-nigh guarantees the miscomprehension of developments that at one time did possess a great deal of significance, to both Irish and European political history. For there was a short time, a century or so ago, when Hungary appeared to matter a great deal indeed to Sinn Féin, and did so at a time when the latter was becoming of more than marginal importance to transatlantic relations, in its own right.

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Our purpose in this article is to recount that brief interlude when the Hungarian experience was being drawn upon by a few Irish activists bent on overturning the political *status quo* in the Emerald Isle. We hope, in what follows, to overcome the bias of presentism, by focusing upon the use that some Irish political figures were making of the Hungarian 'tutorial', in an era when fewer questions in British and even transatlantic political existence could possess greater urgency than the long-running 'Irish Question'[1] As improbable as it might seem today, there existed an interlude during which policy inspiration for a way out of Ireland's impasse with Britain was being sought in Hungarian political developments dating from the mid-nineteenth century. We focus upon that interlude, and the arguments made therein by one political actor in particular, Arthur Griffith, so often heralded as having been the founder of the Sinn Féin party in early twentieth-century Ireland. Griffith had been a leading political activist from the turn of the century on, and had in 1903 formed a National Council, which amalgamated in 1907 with Bulmer Hobson's Sinn Féin League, the new entity being initially called the 'Sinn Féin Organisation', and subsequently, after 1908, simply 'Sinn Féin'. Notes the leading student of the party, '[i]t was soon forgotten that Griffith had not been a member of the first party which called itself "Sinn Féin," and that during the few months of its existence, from April to September 1907, his attitude towards it had been both suspicious and resentful. The title became permanently associated with him.'[2]

In developing our argument, we seek to derive conceptual succor from a phenomenon in which some political scientists have lately been evincing a growing interest – namely the phenomenon dubbed 'policy transfer'. We are going to treat policy transfer as a specific instance of a broader and older process, known alternatively as social or even historical 'learning'. In particular, we seek to determine why and how Griffith and some of his colleagues thought that Irish political activists could have anything to learn from the example of Hungarian political activists a half century before them. Few today would recall that Sinn Féin, a political party founded in the new century's first decade to advance the separation of Ireland from the United Kingdom, took from the outset, if only briefly, specific policy guidance from that earlier (and succesful) Hungarian bid for self-determination. And no one believed more in the merits of this form of 'policy transfer' than did Arthur Griffith, who expounded upon the promise of Hungary for Ireland in an important political tract of 1904, *The Resurrection of Hungary: A Parallel for Ireland*.[3]

So in what follows, we intend to explore those now-forgotten Hungarian 'roots' of Irish independence – roots rendered all the more unusual because of the counter-intuitive notion that the political fate of a part of the United Kingdom might somehow be linked (or at least be *thought* to be linked) with mid-nineteenth-century developments in Central Europe. How could anyone have imagined that the Hungarian quest for autonomy contained lessons for Ireland? And, what, exactly, were those lessons supposed to be? Some four decades ago, there appeared one of the very rare scholarly assessments of the topic upon which we focus here. The author of that earlier study, Donal McCartney, advanced the highly understated though quite accurate claim that '[i]t was evident to his better informed and more critical contemporaries that Griffith's account as a history of Hungary in the nineteenth century left much to be desired …. Some critics also felt that the parallel between the two countries was not nearly so strong as Griffith would have his readers believe.'[4] This author knew whereof he wrote, and we intend to demonstrate, drawing upon Hungarian sources

unavailable to McCartney, just how much more complicated the Hungarian picture was than that idealised by Griffith.

Specifically, Griffith missed three key features of Hungarian political development that, together, would make it highly improbable that much significant 'policy transfer' would be effected from Central Europe to the British Isles. First, there was no elite unity as to the best path for Hungary to take in its quest for greater control over its own fortunes. Secondly, the country's independence thrust was organically linked with its economic modernisation[5], something whose meaning was apparently not fully understood by Griffith. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the international, and European, balance of power would have an impact upon Hungarian developments in a way that could not possibly be duplicated in the case of Irish ones. This was so because Prussia's rising power, as we will show below, necessarily conditioned the responses Vienna would, or *had to*, adopt toward Hungarian demands for greater autonomy.

In our view, Griffith largely erred in assuming that Hungary could serve as a model for Ireland, and this was because he fundamentally misunderstood those three key apects of the Austro-Hungarian compromise, so determined was he to tailor the Hungarian example to Ireland's needs, as he understood these latter. We build this argument in the following manner. The section immediately below constitutes a brief theoretical and conceptual discussion of policy transfer, featuring some commentary upon the manner in which the variant of transfer known as 'conditionality' has figured in recent intra-European developments, an element that speaks to the point to which this article's title alludes, namely the direction in which policy knowledge is thought to flow in Europe. Following this, we turn to the job of contextualising that Hungarian tutorial, firstly by discussing the Irish political situation of the early twentieth century, and then by probing both what Griffith thought he saw in Hungary that could have such relevance for the future of Ireland, and what actually was taking place. We move on to assess some normative considerations that might have been expected to sully the Hungarian model, but which did not. And we conclude by showing how inappropriate – or if not inappropriate, at least terribly incomplete – the Hungarian tutorial turned out to be, in the final spurt for Irish self-determination subsequent to the historic events of April 1916.

II. Policy transfer, 'conditionality', and the ironic Hungarian tutorial

As usual, given that in the human sciences one generally deals with concepts that are nothing if not 'essentially contested' (in W.B. Gallie's well-known formulation)[6], much uncertainty attends the definition of the term that we utilise in this article, *policy transfer*. Also as usual, on closer inspection, it turns out that the object of our conceptual curiosity is not particularly novel. Policy transfer escapes neither of these two problems: there are almost as many ways to define it as there are scholars interested in applying it; and there is not much that is particularly new about the idea that policy initiatives developed in one country might be seen to have transferability to other countries.

Scholars of public administration and public policy whose academic base is in the United Kingdom have emerged as the most prominent champions of the concept. It is no accident that the UK should figure so centrally in the story of how and why policy transfer has entered our vocabulary: its enthusiasts have, in some important measure, become fixated on their reading of the transatlantic experience over the past

two decades, a period when policy innovations that first saw the light of day on the western side of the Atlantic Ocean were said to be getting regularly reproduced on its eastern shores, nowhere more so than in the case of those policies that were 'made in the United States' but that quickly found widespread application in the UK. This fascination with the speed and frequency by which US policy ideas were getting introduced into British debates has characterised the work of David Dolowitz and colleagues, who have become convinced that policy transfer has been important, and that its frequency has been increasing, building upon momentum gathering during the Reagan–Thatcher years of the 1980s and continuing through the Clinton–Blair years of the 1990s and into the twenty-first century. Common language, ideological affinity, personal relationships, and asymmetries in relative capability (power) – these have all been said to account for the tendency, in an inversion of Bishop George Berkeley's famous formulation about empire, which for our purposes here we might paraphrase in this way: eastward the course of policy transfer takes its way. This inverts Berkeley's observation, made at a time in the middle of the eighteenth century when it was easy for British observers to believe, in his own words, that: 'Westward the course of empire takes its way; the four first Acts already past, A fifth shall close the drama with the day; Time's noblest offspring is the last.'[7]

We invoke the Bishop of Cloyne advisedly, because his words demonstrate that when we contemplate policy transfer, it really is, as Dolowitz and his co-authors maintain, 'something old, something new'.[8] Some critics have seized upon this ancient pedigree (even if not under its current rubric) to deny the very utility of the concept. We think this objection can be overdone, for of what proposition regarding international (or other) affairs can it be said that it truly *is* a novel phenomenon? Still, the critics do have a point, and we must not only be extremely careful in distinguishing between the various ways in which 'lessons' get learned and applied across polities, but we need always to keep in mind the *purpose* underlying the attempt to identify and apply lessons across and between polities.[9]

Nor is this all. We also need to be aware that there exists a volitional spectrum along which policy transfer can occur ranging, as Dolowitz and Marsh tell us, from the voluntary pole at one extreme to the coercive one at the other. Neither must we ever forget that not all instances of policy transfer have a happy ending; they can and often do end up failing, and in such cases we may speak of 'inappropriate transfer'.[10] Both qualifications are, as we will demonstrate, of relevance to the argument we develop in this article, but to conclude this conceptual section let us simply tarry a bit upon one pole of that volitional spectrum – the one that has policy getting transferred in a manner that is not totally voluntary. Doing this enables us to appreciate better the Hungarian tutorial's ironic nature.

Simply put, we have become inured of late to the idea that policy transfer involving Western and Central (or Eastern) European countries invariably flows in a 'counter-Berkeleyian' direction, that is, always eastward and never westward. It does so, presumably, because it is only in those more developed polities of Western Europe that ideas worth being exported are generated, and in recent decades this thought has been dressed up under the rubric of 'political conditionality', through which institutions in the western reaches of the continent (or even of the Atlantic world) are able to effect policy reforms suited to the tastes of Western elites. They have been able to do this, as Charles Pentland explains, by making the Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries 'an offer they cannot refuse' – unless, of course, they did not wish to be granted membership in, to take two recent examples, such

Western institutions as the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which nearly all CEE countries sought to join in the aftermath of the cold war.[11] Usually, and certainly in respect of membership in NATO, those Western institutions have applied conditionality as part of their broader agenda of 'security sector reform', in effect getting aspirant members from Central and Eastern Europe to clean up both their civil–military relations and the ways in which they manage their administration of justice so as to make *our* practices *their* practices.[12]

Hence the irony contained in this section's title: we are so used to thinking that the only direction in which intra-European policy transfer can occur is eastward, that it becomes hard to imagine that, in the not too-distant past, there were some policy entrepreneurs in a *Western* European country who delighted in stylising a part of *Central* Europe as the very model for their *own* political development. That it should have been Hungary, which today is widely regarded with suspicion if not disdain by its Western European compeers, only adds to this counter-Berkeleyian irony. For sure, there was never a question of Hungary's imposing, or even musing about, political conditionality; for those Irish who looked in the direction of Budapest, what was appealing about the Hungarian tutorial was its decidedly *voluntary* aspects.

This leads us to the question that prompted us to write this article: How *could* Griffith have imagined Hungary to be an inspiration for the transfer of useful, nay essential, policy ideas of acute relevance to Ireland's own dilemmas of a century or so ago? To begin to answer this question, we need to contextualise the Irish political situation at the time Griffith was gazing so raptly upon Hungary's 'resurrection'.

III. Hungary celebrates, Ireland agitates: a tale of two polities

Despite the strangeness of contemporary Hungary's inspiring policy envy in any other country, much less one located in Western Europe, there really was nothing all that unusual in political observers at the turn of the last century discerning elements of promise in Hungary's recent political experience, that of the period covering the years 1850 to 1900. As the nineteenth century was drawing to a close, Hungary was celebrating its millennium (in 1896), doing so at a moment in which its arts and letters were flourishing, and its capital, Budapest, appeared the very model of architectural splendour. Moreover, ever since the Compromise of 1867, which had given it the kind of freedom from imperial intrusion into its domestic affairs that could only have been dreamed about in Dublin, Hungary was finding itself, from the perspective of both autonomy and security, in its most enviable position since the battle of Mohács, back in 1526, when its army had been routed by the Ottoman sultan, Suleiman II.[13] Indeed, as C.A. Macartney has written: 'In some respects, the nation had never before in its history been so truly master of its own destinies. From Pozsony [Bratislava] to the Iron Gates, from the Tatras to Nagykanizsa, a single law reigned, administered by one government, which was able to express its will, and that of the parliament to which it was answerable, in a far wider field and with far fewer limitations than ever before.' With good reason, the Hungarians had cause for 'extraordinary self-congratulation' in celebrating the millennium of their country's founding.[14]

The contrast with Ireland's own political situation at the time was striking. The long-standing geopolitical interrogation that had become known as the Irish Question continued to defy an easy answer, even if it is true that, for the moment at least, it seemed that the Irish quest for greater self-determination, perhaps even complete

independence, was increasingly going to be a peaceful one, conducted in parliamentary and constitutional fora. That quest for Irish freedom had not always been characterised by peaceful and constitutional means, and at various moments during the lengthy (seven-century) period of English dominance over the island, violence had been a chosen means of liberation, even if never a successful one. The English invasion of 1169 is regarded as the starting date for Ireland's lengthy period of subjugation, though it took a few centuries for English rule to become consolidated, something finally accomplished through the intensification of the campaign to make of Ireland a Protestant as well as an English domain, during the years 1541 to 1691.[15]

No matter the fortunes of the violent road to self-determination – a road always leading to a dead end, until the surprising developments of the half-decade from 1916 to 1921 – the political scene in Ireland would become increasingly dominated by the development of a sense of Irish nationalism.[16] In this respect at least, the Ireland of the second half of the nineteenth century could indeed be said to bear some resemblance to Hungary, for in both places self-determination was going to be won, or so it seemed, through evolutionary, not revolutionary methods, which in the case of both countries had been tried in 1848, and been found wanting.

In Ireland, the evolutionary thrust became part and parcel of the movement known as 'home rule', though as we shall see below, there was always a current within constitutionalism that never did embrace home rule fully. Nevertheless, the latter did serve as the watchcry for the overwhelming majority of constitutionalists, who were bent on reversing the union of 1800 that made of Ireland an integral part of the United Kingdom, and who sought to transfer control over Irish domestic affairs from British to Irish political leadership, albeit with lip service being paid to Westminster as the supreme Parliament, particularly in matters relating to security and defence of the Empire. From the beginning of the 1870s until the latter years of the First World War, home rule was, in the words of one of the movement's leading historians, 'both the single most important feature of Irish political life and a major influence within British politics'.[17]

For sure, home-rule campaigners, including and especially the most inspirational of them all, Charles Stewart Parnell[18], did not have the political field entirely to themselves. On the anti-nationalist right in Ireland were the unionists, arguing for the preservation of the constitutional order established in 1800. On the nationalist left were various wings of revolutionists, committed to what the Irish called 'physical force', as opposed to constitutional nationalism (and what their many critics sometimes liked to label as 'terrorism'). And here emerged the first of two major differences between the Hungarian and Irish cases – namely the larger role staked out for non-constitutional means to an end in the latter country during the second half of the nineteenth century. There had been a failed rebellion of sorts in Ireland in 1848, but the trauma of events there paled in comparison with the implications of revolution's failure in the Hungary of 1848.

True, by the early twentieth century physical-force options in Ireland were being adjudged (quite wrongly) to have become exhausted, and what one English sympathiser with home rule wrote shortly before the outbreak of the First World War seemed accurate enough to many contemporary observers of the Irish scene: 'There is at present a peace in the country such as Ireland has not known for more than a century, largely because of recent land-reform legislation that greatly improved the lot of the country's agrarian population and extirpated the problem of "landlordism".' Sydney Brooks went on to claim – and this a mere four years before

the Dublin Easter Rising of 1916! – that physical-force nationalism had become a spent force, so much so that 'the whole Irish agitation is thoroughly peaceful and constitutional.'[19] This was in sharp contrast with recent decades in Ireland, where the flames of violent revolution had continued to flicker – and sometimes more than flicker – down to the end of the nineteenth century. It was also in contrast with developments in Hungary, where those same flames had been effectively snuffed out since the failed 1848 revolution.[20]

The Irish physical-force tendency would find many enthusiasts during those latter decades of the century, and after 1858 would take institutional shape around an organisation called the IRB – initially standing for the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood, but over time being more widely known as the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and even coming to be enveloped under the more generic category of 'Fenianism'.[21] The IRB was hardly the first, or only, movement dedicated to the violent overthrow of the Irish political order, but it would turn out to be the most effective one. It would dominate among physical-force nationalists until it was itself supplanted by a product largely of its own creation, the Irish Republican Army (IRA), during the civil war of 1922–3.[22] The generic label by which the movement was commonly known had its origins in Irish historical lore, which celebrated a legendary band of warriors, the *Fianna Eireann*, famed for their fighting prowess.[23]

There was a second, huge, difference between the Hungarian and Irish cases: the Irish, in a manner that neither the Hungarians nor very many other ethnicities could ever approximate, constituted a 'diaspora' that, because of its size and the sites to which it was dispersed, was guaranteed to take on powerful political significance. In particular, it was the diaspora's United States-based political activism that would so set it apart at a time when the political fate of Ireland was becoming hotly contested in transatlantic circles.[24] To put the Hungarian-Irish contrast in its starkest terms, let us say simply that while Lajos Kossuth and fellow radical Hungarian nationalists (the closest thing, at best, to a Hungarian Fenianism) might have been able to find at least rhetorical backing from the United States' political class during the mid-nineteenth century, the Irish nationalists from that time on were to discover that they had in the United States not just a model but an incredibly powerful asset, one that would increasingly become invoked in the struggle for the self-determination of their kin country, from the time of the US Civil War down to the 1920s.[25]

The nationalistic sensibilities of so many members of the Irish diaspora in the United States set them apart from other European immigrant groups, even from the German-Americans, until this latter group itself became politicised around foreign policy in the years preceding the First World War.[26] In the main, the Irish considered themselves to have been 'involuntary exiles' from their beloved homeland, forced to take refuge in the New World by a *deliberate* British campaign of starvation during the late 1840s (hence the nationalists' prefererence to label the famine as the 'great starvation' or 'great hunger' – in Irish, *an gorta mór*).[27] Thus the worldwide Irish diaspora, nowhere more so than in the United States, would be marked, in the words of David Doyle, by a 'self-indulgent communal morbidity', one that brought in its wake an unslakeable thirst for revenge.[28]

IV. What Arthur Griffith saw in Hungary: the liberal and nationalist impulses

In light of the above analysis, it might seem that Hungary's experience would be singularly inappropriate as a generator of lessons for Ireland at the dawn of the

twentieth century, and that whatever superficial similarities might have existed between the two countries' independence movements during the revolutionary ferment of 1848 would long since have faded over the intervening decades. This skepticism about a Hungarian tutorial might have been widespread among supporters of the IRB (had they ever bothered to think about Hungary, which they did not regularly do), but matters were otherwise for Arthur Griffith. To him, Hungary's example was excruciatingly relevant for Ireland. Why? Why did Griffith and some of his Sinn Féin associates in the early years of the new century begin to be referred to (not always flatteringly) as that 'green Hungarian band'?[29]

For starters, Griffith was among those who noticed the remarkable rebound Hungary seemed to have made by the beginning of the twentieth century, especially when one considers how downcast its prospects had seemed a mere half-century earlier. Back then, Hungary had been all but bereft of journals willing and able to publish in the 'national' (Magyar) language; it had no national literature, no manufacturers, and even worse, it was 'cursed with an atrocious land-system and ruled by foreign bureaucrats'. What a contrast with the happy situation in which the country found itself by 1904, when Griffith wrote the words quoted in this paragraph. Now, he exulted, Hungary succeeded and did so in its own tongue. 'She possesses a great modern literature, an equitable land-system, a world-embracing commerce, a thriving and multiplying people, and a National Government. Hungary is a Nation.'[30] In order to understand Griffith's adornment of Hungarian accomplishments, we need to spend some time elaborating upon Hungary's liberal legacy and the course of the political, cultural, and economic transformation that so enthused Griffith, even if he did not completely understand it. We start with the liberal legacy.

Hungarian liberalism placed individual freedom at its centre, and its economic-developmentalist corollary similarly accorded a crucial role for the individual's material advancement.[31] Industrialisation, reduction in the reach of the central state, elevation of the role played by municipal and county administration – these were all at the forefront of the liberals' agenda, and had been so ever since the nineteenth century. Enthusiasts sang the praises of the *megye* (the Hungarian county), as the ideal means of reconciling state sovereignty with civic virtue and the rights of individuals.[32] Nothing illustrates the saliency of these ideals better than the writings of the great liberal statesman, Count István Széchenyi, whose programme amalgamated the minimisation of the state, the construction of civil society, and the promotion of civic economic advancement. This programme was to come about through the abolition of serfdom and noble privileges, and the stimulation of grand infrastructure projects aimed at modernising the country.[33] Széchenyi's developmentalist outlook reflected a very negative assessment of those traditional societies elsewhere in Europe, whose economic stagnation guaranteed commensurate retarding of civic virtue and individual advancement, and it was an outlook clearly bearing the stamp of broader concepts about development that had been circulating among European liberals of the time.[34]

But it was not just Hungary's economic profile that so attracted Griffith's attention; he was also smitten with the country's cultural developments. Standing out in particular fashion, and here again Széchenyi is the central referent, was the fostering of a national idiom, the Hungarian language, under the tutelage of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. It is not too much to remark that the founding of the academy was a seminal symbolic breakthrough, paving the way for the creation of the modern

Hungarian national state. National public opinion, though still limited in scope, was being painstakingly fostered through the efforts of poets, writers, and educated members of the nobility, who, since the end of the eighteenth century, had been demanding, and preparing for, the creation of an academy to promote national culture.[35]

It is difficult to overstate the significance of this *cultural* aspect of developmentalism, a central element of which would be the flourishing of the Hungarian language. The cultural components of Széchenyi's programme extended beyond the country's liberal circles, and found numerous adherents among conservatives who themselves were grappling with the dilemmas of modernisation. This meant that liberalisation in Hungary would become imbued with romantic, pro-capitalist, ideals.[36] In Ireland, by contrast, the liberals tended not to be romantics, and the romantics tended to be anti-capitalist. But in Hungary, '[c]ivic virtue was associated both with social and economic equality, which nurtured solidarity among citizens, and with economic independence, which ensured that citizens need not rely on the charity of the others.'[37] Hungarian liberals stylised the entrepreneur almost as a heroic knight, an explorer, or an artist – someone who could expel the Hungarian noble landowners from the ranks of capital-owner classes. Yet it is important to stress that the basis of liberalism in Hungary was not, as it was in Ireland, the merchant, industrial, entrepreneurial citizen, but rather the professional intelligentsia who came to nominate themselves as liberals, in opposition to absolutism.[38]

The second major idea attracting Griffith's attention was the national project. Hungarian nationalism was never more universalist, or richer in what we might term 'human values', than during the era of 'romanticism'. For romantics such as Mihály Vörösmarty, Ferenc Kölcsey, and Széchenyi, humanity and patriotism were one and the same thing. Their most sacred symbol was the nation, and it was only through love of nation that humanity could be served. The Hungarian Academy of Sciences made it its mission to cultivate both the arts and sciences and to promote the Hungarian language.[39] Nor was cultural enhancement seen as something apart from modernisation; to the contrary, it was regarded as the necessary prerequisite of development and for the fostering of a middle class.[40]

Clearly, to Griffith, the Hungarian case provided a number of lessons worthy of being emulated by Ireland. First, there was the nexus between nationalism and romanticism, although it is probably fair to say that the latter, notwithstanding its obvious allure to Griffith, possessed an even greater charm for some of his contemporaries, Patrick Pearse in particular.[41] More inspirational for Griffith was the manner in which Hungarian nationalist aims had been furthered politically, with the most important feature of the tutorial being its stress upon non-violent means to an end. His hero, Ferenc Deák, had illuminated the path to peaceful change, while at the same time shunning that of collaborationism, which is how Griffith interpreted the tactics of Ireland's constitutional nationalists who, to him, reeked of 'parliamentarianism', bent as they were upon attaining, and – even worse – being willing to settle for, 'home rule'. To Griffith, home rule was an anathema, a betrayal of Irish freedom that stood, or so he argued, in direct contradistinction to the Hungarian tutorial and to the precepts espoused by Deák.

Ironically, given Griffith's contempt for them, some home-rule proponents were themselves known to consult the Hungarian tutorial for policy guidance. Prominent among these was the British Prime Minister, William Gladstone, who in the mid-1880s began to ponder whether there might be something in the recent experience of Austro-Hungary that could be incorporated into the British context, though

assuredly not as a means of giving Ireland the kind of co-equal status with Britain that Hungary had won from Austria, but rather to appease its demand for some measure of local control over its affairs without at the same time challenging the integrity of either the United Kingdom or the British Empire. Even more than to Austro-Hungary, however, Gladstone looked to Canada after 1867 as a source of potentially useful ideas.[42]

V. What Arthur Griffith failed to see: political realities of mid-century Hungary

In our view, the inapplicability of the Hungarian tutorial had a great deal to do with Griffith's fundamental failure to understand, and contextualise, Deák's part in the Hungarian drama. In retrospect, it is obvious that Griffith could not appreciate, when he examined those Hungarian political events of a half-century before, how signficant had been Széchenyi's earlier efforts, which in reality did so much to foster the environment wherein statesmen such as Deák could later come to the fore. In riveting his gaze upon Deák's legislative accomplishments, Griffith gave the shortest of shrift to Széchenyi, who had been a trailblazer on matters relating to constitutionalism, popular education, and political freedom – all at the heart of the liberals' agenda.[43]

Deák has been described as a clever tactician. He was furthermore convinced that the blossoming of Magyar nationality would be in the interests of Austria, because a completely developed Hungarian nation could become the kind of moral stronghold capable of protecting Austria from the giant power to its north, Prussia. Throughout his career, Deák believed that there were only two possibilities for relations to develop between the Habsburg court and the Hungarians: either the dynasty would respect Hungary's constitution and laws, and reign accordingly (in which case Hungary would remain loyal); or Hungary's constitution and laws would be suppressed, and the Hungarians would be forced to adopt a policy of unyielding passive resistance. This latter, of course, became Deák's default option, which he embraced in 1861 when the crown continued to refuse to restore Hungary's constitutional rights, and it was the essence of his approach leading to the Compromise of 1867.[44]

The political contest between Hungarian liberalism and imperial rejectionism involved political, administrative, and economic issues. In the guise of economic reforms, the crown set out to repeal tariffs between Hungary and the other Habsburg provinces, a move that would expose Hungary to an unrestricted flow of manufactured imports, and reverse much of the country's recent progress in industrialisation. Hungary, along with other parts of the Empire, had developed a manufacturing capability thanks to tariff barriers, and even committed liberals could show themselves to be fond of protectionism. Kossuth himself had worked hard to create the Protection Association, in the process coining for it this instructive slogan: 'Every patriot should raise a protective tariff at his own doorstep.' Deák, though he could and did find fault with the project, felt its merits outweighed its demerits and gave Kossuth his backing.

In the 1840s, Deák held out little hope of the liberals achieving their goals anytime soon, in the teeth of stubborn Habsburg reaction. For sure, some might have thought otherwise, imagining that those goals could be attained by violent means, if need be; but Deák, abhorring violence, was not among them. Nor, initially, was Kossuth, who at this time was also championing a peaceful path to reform, to which end he summoned, in late 1846, a liberal constituent convention scheduled for, and held,

in March 1847. The assembly produced a 'Statement of Opposition', drafted by Deák, that reflected a consensus among the moderates, the centre, and the left-wing radicals. This manifesto set out the reforms deemed essential for transforming feudal Hungary into a modern state, and in it Deák took pains to reassure the crown that the aim was only to modernise Hungary, not to break with the dynasty. While offering to harmonise Hungary's interests with those of the Habsburg hereditary provinces, the manifesto nevertheless sent a clear signal that the Hungarians would never agree to surrender their fundamental interests, especially their constitutional ('ancient') right of self-government.

The question has been raised by historians as to whether Deák and Kossuth were really so politically compatible after all. As we have seen, both originally did want to transform Hungary peacefully into a modern state with a liberal governmental system, a bourgeois society, and a free and equal citizenry. But a parting of ways came when Kossuth accepted leadership of the faction promoting armed defiance of Vienna in 1848; henceforth, Kossuth would be committed to a policy Deák rejected. After the Hungarian revolution had been forcibly suppressed (which we discuss in the following section), the two men came to represent diametrically opposed paths to self-determination. Deák would remain fixated upon the re-establishment of parliamentary government in an autonomous Hungary. So as not to jeopardise this objective, he would ally himself with conservative forces, and come to abandon, or at least downplay, his earlier vision of social reform. Kossuth, meanwhile, continued to embody the more radical aspiratons associated with the failed revolution – of a democratic Hungary at peace with, and in some ill-defined sort of federal association connected to, its neighbours in the Habsburg space. Over time, Kossuth's social policies grew more and more progressive. Deák, by contrast, remained in Hungary after the revolution, and became the master of *Realpolitik*. He could not divorce himself from the realities of life, nor did he wish to. For his part, Kossuth fled his homeland, and like so many other exiles through the ages ended up losing touch with the domestic political scene. He became the captive of maximalist dreams whose ability to be realised would come to depend increasingly upon Great Power politics.[45]

Henceforth it would be Deák who mattered the most to Hungary's political future. Commencing in the parliamentary session of 1861, he gradually emerged as the country's undisputed national leader, the essence of whose programme was to be the goal of self-determination. In 1861, and under the threat of arms, Deák began to advocate a policy aimed at the defence of Hungary's laws and constitution by passive resistance to Vienna. Believing that 'we cannot resist armed might but we solemnly protest against whatever may be perpetrated by force and declare that we affirm all our laws inclusive of those promulgated in 1848'[46], Deák urged Hungary's deputies to refuse to take their seats in the imperial parliament in Vienna. This, of course, is what Griffith most liked about his Hungarian hero's tutorial. But what the Sinn Féin organiser failed completely to appreciate is how much the workability of Deák's agenda depended upon events beyond the control of Hungarians themselves.

In a word, Prussia was to prove the *deus ex machina* in this drama for Hungarian autonomy. The empire's defeat at the hands of its northern neighbour at Königgrätz (also known as Sadowa) in July 1866 brought a fundamental softening in the position of Emperor Franz Josef toward the restive Hungarians. So long as it appeared that Vienna might emerge in a strengthened position *vis-à-vis* the Prussians, it had been possible for the court to imagine a hard line could be taken against Hungarian aspirations for greater autonomy. But the July defeat changed the calculus, to the

advantage of the Hungarian reformers, whose support for the Empire had suddenly become more essential than ever. And to gain that support, the Emperor showed himself open to taking the measures that would become known as the Compromise of 1867, which in practice, 'restored to Hungary her own laws, as agreed between King and Parliament, in all areas except those designated "common affairs" and those that continued to be expressly reserved to the sovereign's prerogative'.[47] This 1867 settlement, called in German the *Ausgleich* and in Hungarian, the *Kiegyezés*, would guarantee for Hungary what Griffith would later seek for Ireland: constitutional independence.

VI. My Hungary, right or wrong?

Griffith's reading of Hungarian experience during the second half of the nineteenth century was a highly idealistic one, and he often found it necessary to bend the Hungarian past to the purposes of his preferred Irish future. His fixation upon making Hungary into what a sympathetic biographer termed a 'parable', and an 'arousing myth'[48], blinded Griffith to some of the less admirable portions of Hungary's record in between the Compromise of 1867, giving it self-determination, and the publication in 1904 of Griffith's panegyric on the country's 'resurrection'. Among the blots on the escutcheon of the restored Hungary one stood out (though not to Griffith), namely the Magyars' handling of the 'minorities' question post-1867, when a succession of Hungarian leaders would undertake to 'Magyarise' the country's politics and culture even though, or perhaps precisely *because*, the Magyars were themselves a minority (albeit the largest such) among Hungary's 15.5 million people in 1867. As Hoensch has noted, from that year until the very end of Habsburg rule after the First World War, the 'uncompromisingly defended fiction of a Magyar nation state on the western European model led to a denial of the political existence of the non-Magyar nationalities' – nationalities that together would, until 1890, comprise the *majority* of the country's population.[49] Only in the century's final decade did Hungary's Magyars become the majority of the population, and even then they were but a bare majority of 51%.[50]

Now, the liberal that he was, and erstwhile defender of the rights of small nations (he had been a strong partisan of the Boers during their recent war with Britain), might have led Griffith to experience some qualms about the Magyars' treatment of Hungary's minorities, but this did not deflect him in the slightest from the conviction that Hungary resided on the side of the angels in international politics. Indeed, Griffith's Hungary was universally praiseworthy, not only because of the leadership of the saintly Deák, but also because of its cultural nationalism. Griffith himself, as a young man in the Dublin of the mid-1890s, had fallen in with Maud Gonne's circle of political and cultural nationalists, among whose ranks were William Butler Yeats, Douglas Hyde, James Connolly, and John O'Leary.[51]

Because he saw great virtue in the resurgence of 'Gaelic' pride at the turn of the century, Griffith could hardly have found in 'Magyarisation' campaigns much that was either reprehensible or incomprehensible, so long as these were conducted non-violently.[52] After all, was not the whole point of the *fin-de-siècle* cultural nationalism precisely to liberate the dominant group from the sullying impact of other languages and cultures, so that it might realise its 'true' collective self?[53] Thus it hardly required any effort on Griffith's part to come around to the position that Hungary's minorities warranted the treatment that was doled out to them by the dominant

Magyars, for those minorities were nothing other than a collection of 'Slavic hordes'.[54]

Another feature of Griffith's idealisaton of the Hungarian experience, adumbrated in the preceding section, was his sublime inattentiveness to certain political facts, and in particular his myopia when it came to assessing the political interactions between Hungarian elites who had bent their labours to achieving self-determination. To put it mildly, these politically energised elites were a pugnacious lot, individuals who could and did disagree profoundly over the desired course Hungary's transformation should take. It is true that prior to 1848, elite dissenson was more pronounced than it would become in the aftermath the failed revolution. Still, the earlier fault lines continued to be consequential, and would have bearing upon Deák's politics. In this regard, the controversy between the two giants of the Hungarian reform period, Széchenyi and Kossuth, stands out, and warrants a brief discussion here (and in this discussion, it bears emphasising that Deák's views were much more closely aligned with those of Széchenyi than with those of Kossuth).

Széchenyi realised at the outset of his public career that the co-operation of crown and the Diet was necessary for throughgoing and peaceful reforms. Accordingly, he reasoned that the first reforms must be initiated in relatively neutral areas of policy, free from notable rivalry between the court and the constitutional opposition. Vienna's tactics created the illusion in Széchenyi's mind that the government had finally given up its reactionary stance, and that in future it would be willing to grant to the Hungarians most of their cherished national and political goals. He certainly overestimated the degree to which Vienna regarded him as a trusted interlocutor, the Emperor finding his activism unsettling enough to warn the Hungarian Chancellor, Count Reviczky, about Széchenyi. Reviczky, after informing himself more fully about the latter's agenda, commented sourly that it bore the hallmarks of the 'pestiferous political mentality of the modern age'. Still, the Chancellor doubted that this 'alien' influence had any chance of establishing itself in Hungary, because it was in such contradiction to the principles of the ancient monarchic constitution and the cardinal privileges of the nobility.[55]

Széchenyi noted the support given by many members of the Diet to the cause of the Magyar language, and hence indirectly to the 'revival of the national spirit', and thus took this as a hopeful sign that the regeneration of Hungary was going to be possible to attain without violence. His subsequent rapprochement with the Habsburg imperial government would lead to his alienation from the more radical and less trusting Kossuth, touching off a long and bitter struggle between them.[56] What ensued from this alienation testifies to the inability of Griffith to have accurately taken the measure of Hungarian history in the middle of the nineteenth century.

Two days after revolution broke out in Vienna on 13 March 1848, Pest found itself also in the grip of upheaval. Things did not end peacefully, nor was the outcome of the struggle a happy one for Kossuth and his followers. But at the outset the intent had been to foment peaceful change – an intent signalled through Kossuth's above-mentioned draft of an address to the throne, which was approved by both houses in Hungary. What was proposed was a programme of rapid liberalisation of the country's political system, along with a fundamental modernisation of what was still a feudal society. The omens appeared favourable enough, for with the Habsburg possessions in Italy, to say nothing of the imperial capital of Vienna itself, in rebellion, the court simply could not afford to oppose the basically peaceful changes the Hungarians sought – or so it was thought by the reformers.

The story did not end there, for the country's national minorities were also organising, and advancing goals of their own. Hungarian liberals offered to share all the newly won liberties with them as co-citizens of Hungary, but the minorities were not satisfied with this, and instead aspired to their own territorial self-government. In the end, Hungary's revolutionary forces were defeated by the Imperial Army (with a bit of help from Tsarist units invading Hungary from the north), in the midst of an armed insurgency mounted by the national minorities. Kossuth and many other revolutionaries took refuge abroad, at first in the Ottoman Empire, subsequently in a variety of Western European capital cities, whence they continued their political struggle against the Habsburg dynasty.[57]

Griffith found it easy enough to overlook the less pedagogically useful aspects of Hungary's strivings for self-determination – aspects that were decidedly secondary in his reading of the Hungarian tutorial. After all, what counted most to Griffith, when he contemplated the Hungarian experience of fifty years before, was that the country had managed to free itself from imperial control, and to do so eventually without violence, by the patient application of 'passive resistance' *and* (this was the crux of the tutorial) by a steadfast refusal of elected officials to participate in the imperial parliament in Vienna. Moreover, and here we come to perhaps the most bizarre of the Hungarian tutorial's offerings, the foundation of Hungary's self-determination had been erected upon the political institution of the 'dual monarchy', whereby the self-same Habsburg monarch who prevailed over imperial fortunes from Vienna would be the crowned head of the Hungarian state, in Budapest.

This was bizarre because the party over which Griffith would come to preside in 1911, the party he had helped to create a few years before, took as its name Sinn Féin, from the Irish *Sinn Féin amhain*, generally translated as 'ourselves alone'.[58] But if the Hungarian tutorial's dual monarchy is any indication, then the party name might better have been rendered into the Irish equivalent of 'ourselves *maybe* alone', or perhaps 'ourselves more or less alone', for how truly separate *could* Ireland be if it was to remain linked constitutionally to Britain through the monarchy? Even more surprising is that at the very moment Griffith saw in the dual monarchy a solution to Ireland's problem (of being subservient to England), a little bit to the northward in Europe, the Norwegians were voting to separate from Sweden, with which they had been connected in a monarchical union since 1814, because the dual monarchy was held by them to be *too* constraining upon Norwegian autonomy.[59]

There was yet another peculiar aspect about Griffith's plumping for a dual monarchy along Austro-Hungarian lines, and it related to the normal penchant of Irish 'separatists' at the time to go the whole hog of republicanism, and to style the new Ireland of their dreams upon the experiments of the United States or France. Griffith was certainly a separatist, as were the vast majority of his fellow Sinn Féiners, but among the latter, the pull of republicanism was also strong, even if it did not tug at the heartstrings of the man widely thought to have been the party's founder. Griffith was aware of this anomaly – a situation made to seem even more anomalous by his having been for a few years after 1907 a member of the IRB himself – but he sought to explain it away by appealing to pragmatism, on the basis of the logic (not ill-founded) that most Irish were not inclined to complete separation from a country, Britain, on whose behalf more than 200,000 of them were soon to be fighting in the Great War. And while it is true that many of those Irish soldiers were Ulster Protestants seeking to preserve the union, more of them were Catholics either from the south or living in Britain itself, whose enlistment had been encouraged by John

Redmond, leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP), on the grounds that Irish service in the war effort would be compensated by Brtiain's granting of home rule.[60] Moreover, the only prospect of enticing Protestant Ulster into participating in an all-Irish parliament inhered, or so Griffith argued, in keeping a connection with Britain alive via the monarchy.[61]

VII. Conclusion: the demise of the Hungarian tutorial

In the end, developments in Ireland would fundamentally and rapidly alter the context of self-determination, and to do so in such a way as to make the Hungarian tutorial appear to have been singularly ill-chosen for the purposes of policy transfer. There would be – indeed, could only have been – limited appeal in the dual-monarchy model, and eventually the proto-republican elements of Irish self-determination would yield a full-fledged Irish republic, albeit after a period of some ambiguity in the 1920s and 1930s, during which Ireland's southern counties (along with three from the province of Ulster) would exist as a 'Free State' with a tenuous institutional connection to a newly named 'British Commonwealth'.

More significantly, the Hungarian tutorial's emphasis upon nonviolence and passive resistance, to both of which Griffith had clung tenaciously, would become eclipsed during the events of the half-decade following the Easter Monday rising of 1916, the suppression of which set in train a new dynamic in the struggle for Irish freedom. In this new dynamic, physical force would emerge as the dominant means for securing the transformation of the status quo. In a way that few would have been able to predict just a decade previously, Ireland's self-determination would now be attained not by the evolutionary methods espoused by Griffith but by the revolutionary ones championed by the IRB, the Irish Volunteers, and eventually the IRA. It is more than a little ironic that the 1916 Easter Rising itself should have so quickly been styled, by its opponents, both among unionists and home rulers, as the 'Sinn Féin Rising', for violence was emphatically *not* the preferred means of Arthur Griffith, and there is no evidence of any party involvement in the planning of the insurrection. Yet because it became so widely (if incorrectly) associated with the Rising, the party was able to benefit from a surge in popularity in 1917 and 1918, fuelled by the widespread conviction among a suddenly radicalised Irish nationalist public that it had become a champion of the revolutionary struggle, if not its principal organiser. In the well-chosen words of one sympathetic biographer, apropos the characterisation of the 1916 events as a Sinn Féin Rising (*inter alios* by IPP leader John Redmond): 'Mr. Redmond did more for Mr. Griffith's organisation in one year than Sinn Fein could have accomplished in several years. It was a case again of one's battle being won by one's enemy.'[62]

And this leads us to a further observation, namely that in at least one important respect, there was something to be derived from the Hungarian tutorial. It was to be found in the instruction Griffith took from the refusal of Hungarian representatives to sit in the Diet in Vienna, and their insistence upon the reconstitution of the Diet in Budapest. Although it would be unwise to argue that, in the absence of the half-decade or so of violent struggle culminating in the Anglo-Irish treaty of 1921, Irish self-determination would have been so quickly attained, it remains that at least one aspect of the Hungarian tutorial did find application, if only briefly. Starting with a series of by-election victories in 1917 and culminating in the general election of December 1918, the newly reinvigorated Sinn Féin was able to

enjoy the kind of electoral success that, prior to 1916, would have been utterly inconceivable.

By the time all the ballots had been counted on 28 December 1918, Sinn Féin had completely routed the once-dominant Irish Parliamentary Party, capturing seventy-three of the 105 Irish seats, and reducing the IPP to a rump of six. Sinn Féin took all but two of the seats in Ireland's three southern provinces (Leinster, Munster, and Connaught), with their unionist rivals registering comparable success of their own in the fourth province, Ulster, where they carried twenty-six seats, enabling them to place second overall in the election.[63] Just as Deák had urged upon his Hungarian colleagues, so too did Griffith counsel his Irish ones with the advice that they refrain from sitting in the imperial (i.e., the Westminster) parliament and instead reconstitute the national parliament, in Dublin. And with that gesture, soon to be overrun by the cascading pace of violent events beyond the control of Sinn Féin or any other party in the UK, the period of infatuation with the Hungarian experience came to an end, even and especially for Arthur Griffith. Sinn Féin's Hungarian roots turned out to be shallow, and were no longer capable of providing sustenance even to those few, such as Griffith and his coterie, who had ever taken the tutorial seriously in the first place.

Notes

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