

# Liberalism and Nationalism in Alexandru Mocsonyi's Parliamentary Activity (1865–1871)

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*“The autonomous right  
of the individuals subjected  
to the state derives from  
natural liberty and  
not from state power.”  
(Alexandru Mocsonyi)*

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**A**LEXANDRU MOCSONYI (Mocioni) was one of the most iconic personalities of Romanian liberalism in Hungary. He was born in Pest on 4 November 1841. He received his primary education in private, under the direction of the prefect of studies Atanasie Marienescu, who was then a student at the University of Pest, a doctor of law, and then a counselor at the Court of Appeal in Oradea. He did his secondary education with the Piarists, in Pest, and then studied law in Pest, then in Vienna for three years, completing his studies in Graz, where he received a doctorate in law. Although he was tempted to study philosophy, he remained a law student. He continued, however, to study philosophy, being concerned with developing his own philosophical system. His legal and philosophical background, supplemented by his study trips to Belgium and Switzerland, gave his parliamen-

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tary speeches a solid doctrinal foundation. He was a member of the Hungarian Chamber during the legislatures of 1865–1868, 1869–1872 and, partly, during the following one, between 1872 and 1874.<sup>1</sup>

In the elections for the 1865–1869 legislature, the following were elected as M.P.s for Hungary and Banat: Vincențiu Babeș, Sigismund Borlea, Ioan Faur de Teiuș, Emanuil Gojdu, Iosif Hodoș, George Ioanovici, Dimitrie Ionescu, George Ivacicovici, Aurel Maniu, Andrei Medan, Petru Mihályi, Alexandru Mocsonyi, Andrei Mocsonyi, Anton Mocsonyi, Ioan Pap, Sigismund Papp, Grigore Pop, Simeon Pop, Sigismund Popovici, Ioan Popovici Desseanu, Alexandru Roman, Florian Varga, and Aloisiu Vlad de Săliște. The M.P.s elected in Transylvania were: Ioan Aldulean, Ioan Balomiri, Simeon Balomiri, Alexandru Bohățiel, Iosif Hossu, Ilie Măcelariu, Grigore Moisil, Ioan Moldovan, Constantin Papfalvi, Lazăr Petco, Matei Pop de Grid, Ioan Pușcariu, Ioan Rațiu, Avram Tincu, Ioan Tulbaș, and David Urs de Margina. The total number of successful Romanian candidates was 38, but G. Moisil's mandate was invalidated and Ioan Rațiu did not make it into the Diet.<sup>2</sup> The political conceptions and attitudes of the Romanian representatives in the Hungarian Diet were different, often contradictory. With a view to undertaking unified action in the dietal debates, the Romanian M.P.s organized themselves in a national parliamentary club, with Anton Mocsonyi as president and Aurel Maniu as notary. The program of the club envisaged acquiring national rights for the peoples of Hungary on the basis of equal entitlement with the other nations and respect for the territorial integrity of Hungary. The Romanian club decided to collaborate with the Serbian deputies so that the address to the crown would specify the manner of solving the national question in Hungary.<sup>3</sup>

During his first term, Alexandru Mocsonyi's parliamentary activity focused on the Bill of Nationalities, announced in the message issued by the Throne. Given that the parliamentary committee delayed drafting the bill, the representatives of the nationalities and some representatives of the opposition in Hungary filed, through the Serbian Deputy Emil Manojlović, a draft resolution calling on the parliamentary committee to submit its report by the end of January 1868.<sup>4</sup> It was not until 1 April 1868 that the committee's report on the national question was presented, without being subjected to debate in the Chamber. The Romanian and Serbian M.P.s Vincențiu Babeș, Iosif Hodoș, Svetozar Miletić and Emil Manojlović drafted a joint bill on the nationality question, dated 25 January 1867,<sup>5</sup> which was endorsed by the intelligentsia of Timiș and the neighboring counties in the assembly held in Timișoara on 16 April 1868.<sup>6</sup> Alexandru Mocsonyi submitted the memorandum of this assembly as a petition to the Diet in the Chamber session of 20 April 1868. In support of this petition, the Romanian M.P. demanded that urgent solutions should be brought to the problem

of nationalities, in keeping with the principles formulated by the Romanian and Serbian deputies.<sup>7</sup>

In the session of 6 May 1868, in the debate on the hierarchical separation from the Serbian Metropolitan See, Alexandru Mocsonyi gave a speech in which he advocated replacing the word “establishment” with “reactivation” in the case of the Romanian Metropolitan See, because it had never been abolished *de jure*. Since Law IX on the matter of the Greek Oriental Church provided for its autonomy, Mocsonyi had another viewpoint on the Parliament’s duties in this regard, presenting it in relation to human rights: “The autonomous right of the individuals subjected to the state derives from natural liberty and not from state power. Therefore, the state has the right and even the duty to ensure and recognize this autonomous right, but it does not have the competence to create such an autonomous right, either for the individuals or for the community . . . Parliament has the right and the duty to recognize and guarantee, though not to grant, this ecclesiastical autonomy.”<sup>8</sup> Individual autonomy, stemming from the natural right to personal freedom, was extended to the church community; he would frequently resort to this strategy in his subsequent interventions, illustrating an original conception on the origin and applicability of human and civil rights as an extension of natural rights, which could not be conditioned by any factor.

On 12 November 1868, the parliamentary committee presented two drafts bills on the nationality question: the bill of the majority and the bill submitted by the Romanian and Serbian deputies,<sup>9</sup> entitled Draft Bill Regulating and Ensuring the Regnal Nations and their Languages in Hungary.<sup>10</sup> In the same session, Alexandru Mocsonyi presented the bill of the minority as his own proposal.<sup>11</sup> Discussion on the bills began on 24 November 1868, in a session in which Francis (Ferenc) Deák presented his own draft. On the same day, Alexandru Mocsonyi supported his bill. His speech represented an important contribution to the national doctrine of the Romanians in Austria-Hungary.<sup>12</sup> He perhaps best illustrated the synthesis of liberalism and nationalism on which the Romanian doctrine was based, inspired by the new ideas about the national question that Pasquale Mancini had introduced in European thought. On 22 January 1851, Mancini delivered the inaugural lecture of his course on international law at the University of Turin, entitled “Nationality As the Foundation of the Right of Peoples.” His theory elevated the idea of nation to the rank of state-founding principle, formulating the legal bases of the principle of nationality. Mancini defined the nation as “a natural society of people, a unity of territory, origins, customs, language adapted to a community of life and social conscience.”<sup>13</sup> To him, these were not sufficient enough for a nation to exist, because it still lacked the vital breath, the spirit of being. In Mancini’s conception,

this was the national consciousness, the sentiment and the will to be the same. He stressed the idea that, in international law, it was the nation and not the state that represented the “elementary unity, the rational monad of science.”<sup>14</sup> He supported a new understanding of law, based on two key terms, nationality and humanity, contending that the old theory of the state was insufficient to define international relations. He founded a school of Italian law on the issue of nationality. His ideas influenced Johann Kaspar Bluntschli in Switzerland, Carl Menger in Austria, József Eötvös in Hungary, Pierre Barthélémy in France, and Vladimir Solovyov in Russia.<sup>15</sup> He also influenced the Romanian political thinkers in Banat and Transylvania, including, among others, Simion Bărnuțiu, Vincențiu Babeș, Alexandru Mocsonyi, A. C. Popovici, etc.

To a greater extent than Pasquale Mancini, Mocsonyi combined his conception of the nation with a broad liberal background, justifying nation and nationality from the standpoint of citizen rights and freedoms. In the speech he delivered in the Hungarian Chamber, he made a distinction between the sentiment of nationality, which was “as old as the nationalities themselves,” and the idea of nationality, which he considered to be new, as illustrated by the peoples’ movements from that century, regarded as the reflux, “the application in time and place” of this idea. These movements reflected a general phenomenon in world history, even though they were seemingly isolated or contradictory. They illustrated a general idea, “ensuring the existence and development of national individuality,” deemed to be a fundamental idea for all the peoples of that time. This idea reflected the aspirations of the peoples, which aimed to obtain equal entitlement or independence, based on the right of nations, or through legal or revolutionary means, within the frameworks of constitutionalism, or in an alliance with the absolute power.<sup>16</sup>

Alexandru Mocsonyi advocated the genetic nation, defined as a complex of people, “closely bound together by genetic, geographical, historical and therefore language connections, because it inherently comprised the spirit of morality and because it possessed self-consciousness, being a personality, a legal person.”<sup>17</sup> Mocsonyi emphasized the spiritual character of the nation, the moral value of the concept, advancing, in line with Mancini, a new idea, the self-consciousness of the nation, acknowledged to a lesser degree by previous Romanian thinkers. The idea of the nation as a legal person had been consecrated in Romanian political thought by Eftimie Murgu and Simion Bărnuțiu, starting from the theory of the person in Wilhelm Traugott Krug’s philosophy. Mocsonyi’s contribution lay in his systematic valorization of the self-consciousness of the nation through a coherent political doctrine, realigning the Romanian doctrine to the voluntarist, rationalist and liberal outlook. Such an interpretation made it possible to extend the principles of liberalism onto the national community, establishing

a relationship of interdependence between nation and freedom, between the national community and its civil or political rights. For this reason, Mocsonyi maintained, the nation's foremost interest was to ensure its own existence and individuality, and secondly that of the individuals composing it, an idea Simion Bărnuțiu expressed in a speech made in Blaj on 2 May 1848.

According to Alexandru Mocsonyi, the national idea was a product of the Modern Age. In his view, it had four causes, two internal and two external. The external causes were the principles of the people's equality and sovereignty, while the internal causes resided in "the greater progress accomplished on the ground of civilization, and on the other hand, the democratic direction of constitutionalism."<sup>18</sup> In Mocsonyi's view, the nation was a result of spiritual development, instruction, education, enlightenment, and moral progress. The self-consciousness of the nation was a reflection of these cultural factors, it was a spiritual element. Constitutionalism and democracy constituted a framework for the manifestation of the national idea and the movements triggered in its name. In Mocsonyi's theory, there was a conditionality between these factors. In his liberal outlook on the nation, the national idea had its cause in the democratic direction of constitutionalism. If individual freedom and the development of human personality were possible only in a democracy, it was clear that "the primordial condition, the prerequisite of democracy was precisely the national idea."<sup>19</sup> He justified the national idea from a liberal perspective, because it equally satisfied the aspirations of the individual as a person and as a member of the national community. It was justified because it provided the possibility "of both individual freedom and the development of the human race." For him, the nation was an element that promoted democracy, becoming possible when "not only the isolated few, but the people as a whole are civilized and the people as a whole are qualified to exercise their political rights." For this reason, Mocsonyi stated, "national development is the chief condition of democracy."<sup>20</sup>

In his view, the nation was justified not as an end in itself but as a contribution to the progress and development of humankind, since "every nation is like a natural organ of the human race."<sup>21</sup> The development of the nations and, through them, of humankind was based on the "infinite diversity that exists among the individual nations."<sup>22</sup> His liberal conception of the nation repudiated the offshoots of this idea, which, in his opinion, were the tendencies towards supremacy and national isolation. His theory on the nation relied on the individuality and diversity of nations, as opposed in political practice to the idea of a sole political nation in Hungary, upheld by the governmental bill. The modern idea of the nation was an argument against isolation and for the equal rights of nations. Mocsonyi argued that the brotherhood of peoples and nations, their union in the name of the supreme ideal of humanity would be possible only

“when the individual nations were recognized as legal persons, as subjects of law.”<sup>23</sup> Mocsonyi resumed Mancini’s ideas about the individuality of the nation and its quality as a subject of law, in terms of both internal and international public law.

For him, the first and foremost national postulate was ensuring the existence and development of national individuality. From this perspective, in his discourse he developed the nation–state rapport, the quality of the nation as a subject of internal public law. He argued that the existence and development of the nations’ individuality had to be guaranteed by a political authority, because the idea of a political nation had solely a political character. The subject was valid only in the states where there were several nationalities. Even if only one could be a political nation, the law could not rule out that “there are several nations in the country, understood in the genetic sense, and this is the true meaning of the concept of nation.”<sup>24</sup>

Mocsonyi rejected the governmental thesis whereby the state could not recognize such collective individualities, but did acknowledge various forms of association established by criteria other than the national one. Such associations, based upon the right to free association, had their foundations in the “will of the state.” They formed a “subject only to the rights won,” but the state also had the power to withdraw those rights.

For Mocsonyi, the nation represented another type of association. The nation was a product of natural laws; it did ground its existence in the will of the state, but on the higher order of things. It was the “subject of original, that is, fundamental rights.” Therefore, the state could not deny “the legal recognition of the original rights of the nations” but, on the contrary, it had to ensure the “conditions for their development.”<sup>25</sup>

The governmental Bill of Nationalities did not recognize the genetic nations in the country, and did not provide them with conditions for their development, denying them even the right to exist. “To recognize the original rights of the nation,” Al. Mocsonyi said, “to defend the nation’s cardinal rights is the very duty of the state.”<sup>26</sup>

In his view, nationality was an innate quality in man and, because it could develop morally, it was an inalienable right. The national right was a natural right and, as such, it could not be conditioned, for it demanded unconditional legal guarantees. From this position, he considered that the exclusion of the national languages from education, justice and legislation was a violation of individual rights, of the equal entitlement of the people.

**T**HESE WERE the main ideas on nation and nationality that Alexandru Mocsonyi supported in his discourse during the general debate surrounding the Draft Bill on Nationalities. In the session of 29 November 1868, the debate began on the bill's articles, but the M.P.s who endorsed the Bill of Nationalities withdrew from the debate.<sup>27</sup> The Nationalities Law (Article XLIV of 1868) was passed in the session of December 1868.<sup>28</sup> The bill submitted by Francis Deák was adopted with 267 votes in favor, 24 against, 113 deputies being absent.<sup>29</sup> Mocsonyi's speech in the Chamber was very highly appreciated; among those who congratulated him was Minister Eötvös, himself the author of a work on the subject, which Mocsonyi had referenced.

In an open letter addressed to the Romanians on 15/27 January 1869, after the dissolution of the Diet,<sup>30</sup> Mocsonyi declared that the Nationalities Law denied the legal existence of the non-Magyar nations, refuted the principle of equal national entitlements, recognizing the existence of only one political nation, the Hungarian nation, and ensuring its legal supremacy. He justified thus the national M.P.s' non-participation in voting the law, claiming that the law had been made without their collaboration, against their will and against the vital interests of the non-Magyar nations. The letter pleaded for the Romanians' organization in a national party. "The establishment of the National Party should be the foundation, because it is the sine qua non condition of any national struggle," Mocsonyi said, emphasizing that "in a state with a parliamentary regime, the citizens' right to vote is arguably the most important legal means of political struggle."<sup>31</sup> Under the political circumstances of that time, as long as the Press Law did not ensure the freedom of speech and the freedom of assembly and association was not regulated by positive law, he argued that the only chance for the non-Magyar nations was to manifest themselves in the legislative body. From the beginning of his campaign, Mocsonyi was the supporter and advocate of parliamentarianism and constitutionalism. This outlook led him to support the adoption by the Romanians of modern forms of political organization, such as political parties, making it possible for them to activate within a legal, parliamentary framework. There was full compatibility between his doctrinal beliefs and his concrete manifestations in political life.

In the meeting of 26 January/7 February 1869, held in Timișoara, which laid the foundations of the National Party of the Romanians from Banat and Hungary, Alexandru Mocsonyi advocated the organization of a national party and formulated its program. In the speech delivered on this occasion, he held that in constitutional life, the battle for ideas, reforms and rights was waged through political parties.<sup>32</sup> The program proposed for the new party endorsed the principle of solidarity with the nations of the country, upheld the bill on the nationality question submitted by the Romanian and Serbian M.P.s and the

Transylvanian Romanians' viewpoint on the union between Transylvania and Hungary, disavowed Law XII of 1867 on dualism, because it denied equal rights among nations, and supported the Croats' autonomy and the reorganization of the municipalities "on the broadest foundations of democracy and autonomy." The last point of the program stipulated "the adoption of the principles of liberalism and democracy in all spheres and organizations of public life."<sup>33</sup>

In the new legislature of 1869–1872, 25 Romanian deputies were elected: Ioan Antonelli, Vincențiu Babeș, Vincențiu Bogdan, Sigismund Borlea, Vasile Buteanu, Ioan Eugen Cucu, Lazăr Gruescu, Iosif Hodoș, Iosif Hossu, George Ioanovici, Dimitrie Ionescu, Lazăr Ionescu, George Ivacicovici, Vasile Jurca, Aurel Maniu, Petru Mihályi, Alexandru Mocsonyi, Anton Mocsonyi, George Mocsonyi, Iosif Pap, Sigismund Papp, Sigismund Popovici, Al. Roman, Miron Romanul, and Aloisiu Vlad. Ioan Antonelli was also elected, but he renounced his mandate. After the by-elections caused by the demise or withdrawal of some deputies, those who entered the Diet included Eugen Mocsonyi, Mircea B. Stănescu instead of Miron Romanul, who had been appointed royal inspector, Iuliu Petricu instead of Aloisiu Vlad, who had been appointed supreme court judge, Mihail Pavel instead of I. E. Cucu (deceased), Dimitrie Bonciu instead of Sigismund Popovici, appointed as tribunal president. Among the deceased was also Lazăr Gruescu. Alexandru Mocsonyi won the constituency of Lugoj against Béla Szende, the Minister of Defense. The political orientations of the 25 elected Romanians were diverse. Those who opted for activating in a solidary manner in the Romanian national club were I. Hodoș, Sigismund Borlea, Lazăr Ionescu, Alexandru Mocsonyi, Alexandru Roman, George Mocsonyi, Ioan Eugen Cucu, Sigismund Popovici, Vincențiu Babeș, 10 deputies of national orientation. The ones who joined the club later were Lazăr Gruescu, Vasile Buteanu, Eugen Mocsonyi, Mircea B. Stănescu, and Dimitrie Bonciu.<sup>34</sup>

The opening of the Diet took place on 22 April 1869. In the session of 20 May 1869, the Romanian, Serbian and Slovak M.P.s submitted an amendment to the discussion of the draft articles, whereby they demanded the revision of the Law of Nationalities. Moreover, the 16 Romanian M.P.s also proposed a new article to the Diet regarding the union of Transylvania with Hungary. Both amendments were signed by Alexandru Mocsonyi, among others.<sup>35</sup> In the session of 12 February 1870, he supported the proposal to establish a Romanian national theater, and on 23 February, he signed the draft resolution on the right to receive education in the national language.<sup>36</sup> He also intervened in the debate on the budget of the Ministry of Religion, endorsing V. Babeș's amendment on assisting the Romanian Orthodox Church to sustain its cultural autonomy and mission.<sup>37</sup> In the session of 27 April 1870, proposals were made for the exclusion of Svetozar Miletić from the Chamber for press offences. Alexandru

Mocsonyi spoke in his defense, highlighting the need for a law that would grant the right to immunity.<sup>38</sup>

In the session of 30 June 1870, discussion started in the Chamber on the project of municipal organization.<sup>39</sup> Alexandru Mocsonyi spoke about this project on 2 July 1870, in one of his most highly appreciated parliamentary speeches, giving full expression to his liberal beliefs.<sup>40</sup> Mocsonyi pleaded for the representation of the people in the provincial assemblies. In his view, “political responsibility now, in principle, excludes the independence of the executive power from the parliamentary majority and imposes itself upon it in the highest degree.”<sup>41</sup> His statement started from the idea that the executive was a party government, that there was identity between the government and its party in terms of the fundamental and most important principles of the entire legislation and administration. In practical life, Mocsonyi stated, the government is the head not only of the executive, but also of the legislative power: “In practice, a parliamentary government simply means that the supreme legislative and executive power are in the same hands . . . that in the use of that power, held by the same hands, the government is only restricted from one side and that one side is not the law, but the party interest.”<sup>42</sup> In conclusion, “political responsibility, which in principle excludes the independence of the government from the parliamentary majority, also excludes the rule of law.”<sup>43</sup> For these reasons, he considered that the parliamentary government system meant, in practice, only “that the state power, organized as perfectly as possible, holds the supreme legislative and executive power in its hands.”<sup>44</sup> Any absolute power, he said, whether exerted by individuals or the majority, excluded, in principle, the rule of law, even though, he believed, “this rule of law did not necessarily lack and formed the first condition, both for individual freedom and for the freedom of corporations and for the entire free development.”<sup>45</sup> He accepted that the limitation of responsibility to the legal sphere would take parliamentarianism back to its beginnings and that the annulment of political accountability could generate possible conflicts between the executive and parliament. Only a healthy and full form of parliamentarianism could rise up to its mission, only thus could it serve as a guarantee of constitutionalism: “The purpose of the system of a parliamentary regime and of ministerial responsibility is to ensure the freedom of individuals and corporations, because the purpose of a parliamentary regime and of ministerial responsibility is solely to exclude, in principle, the rule of dynastic interests.”<sup>46</sup> The purpose of a parliamentary regime—he concluded—was to replace the absolute reign of a dynasty with the absolute reign of the majority.<sup>47</sup>

Referring to the relationship between the powers in the state, he believed that “the judicial power does not come above the executive, but beneath it,”<sup>48</sup> that through the petitionary system the people could demand that Parliament should

issue legislative provisions for removing certain elements from the administration, that the parliamentary majority was not entitled to judge whether something was legal or not, but only whether the government abided by the policies of the majority.

He supported the free election of government officials and contended that the representative bodies of corporations should be set up “on the basis of general, fair, secret ballot by the communes.”<sup>49</sup> In this context, he stated that “universal suffrage was the only one that corresponded to the concept of law,”<sup>50</sup> a first in the Romanian political thought in Hungary because the mandatory income threshold came in contradiction to the law. He held that “any matter of income level is entirely social,” that the aim of the threshold was “to make all those pertaining to the ruling class a part of state power.”<sup>51</sup>

While recognizing the role of the middle class in developing the country, he did not agree with the monopoly of one class: “I recognize a single element in society which deserves to be in the government and in power: intelligence,” because “the basis of intelligence is the equality of rights, the air of intelligence is freedom, equality . . . Where there is freedom, the natural reign of intelligence is ensured.”<sup>52</sup> In the conclusion of his speech on the draft Law on Municipalities, he supported “universal, direct and secret suffrage.” His speech reflected his liberal conception of the state, of the relations between the state powers, of parliamentarianism, ministerial responsibility and the electoral system, being highly appreciated in the Chamber as a plea for the autonomy of municipalities. Moreover, both the government and the opposition press of that time commended the political culture, original thinking, and balanced nature of his discourse.

In this legislature, Alexandru Mocsonyi also participated in the general discussion on the budget (23 January 1871),<sup>53</sup> presented the petitions of the Banat communes in favor of France (27 February 1871),<sup>54</sup> and intervened in the matter of the Greek Church of Braşov (30 March 1871). In the session of 3 November 1871, he questioned the President Minister on the matter of the political crisis in Cisleithania, considering it a state crisis, engendered by the supremacy of one nationality. In this context, he asked Gyula Andrásy to table the nationality issue and the Transylvanian matter for discussions in the Diet. Having been appointed foreign minister of the monarchy, the latter did not reply to him.<sup>55</sup> In the session of 5 December 1871, S. Miletić proposed a draft resolution, also signed by Alexandru Mocsonyi, requiring that the 1872 budget should not be voted.

On 22 February 1872, the general discussion began on the draft bill amending the Election Laws in Hungary and Transylvania.<sup>56</sup> Alexandru Mocsonyi delivered a comprehensive speech on this bill on 26 February 1872.<sup>57</sup> He criticized the governmental draft because it limited voting rights to even stricter levels of income, stating that “universal suffrage is the only one that fully meets the requirements of free development,”<sup>58</sup> that any income requirement in principle

was bad, because the theoretical regulation of the threshold was without any foundation, and that the income requirement was the simplest and most natural means to achieve this purpose, namely, to seize state power. The criticism leveled at the income requirement started from the idea that it was not based on principles of law, and that it would consequently always serve the interests of the ruling class, being contrary to the idea of the state. He disavowed the idea that an income requirement could offer guarantees against large social upheavals, stating that it could, instead, contribute, through class domination, to the aggravation of social contradictions and that it could cause convulsions. Based on the existing reality in Hungary and Transylvania, where the theory of the income requirement postulated the political capacity of the voters, he showed that three quarters of the inhabitants were barred from voting because they were denied political capacity. Aware that no electoral system could guarantee that the best candidates would be elected to Parliament, that the income-based system ensured an artificial predominance in Parliament in the service of private interests, he considered that the best electoral system was the one that allowed “all the interests in society to be represented in Parliament according to their force and importance.”

This could only be achieved through universal suffrage, which, as Mocsonyi said, “is related solely to conditions of morality, age and ownership.”<sup>59</sup> He criticised the division of Transylvania into circles and excluded the idea that it had a representative system, because of the total of 110,000 voters, 67% exercised their right to vote based on the prerogatives of birth. In the 28 electoral circles—he argued—the nobility had the majority of two thirds or even three quarters of all voters, while three quarters of the population were excluded. Mocsonyi rejected the governmental draft and supported the bill proposed by Deputy Dániel Irányi.<sup>60</sup> In the debate on the draft articles, on 27 March 1872, Mocsonyi rejected the objections brought against universal suffrage: the low cultural level of the people, the strong contradictions in society, which he regarded as mere “empty words.” With such arguments—he said—even constitutionalism and all the guarantees of freedom could be attacked, any rule of interests being contrary to the interests of free development. For Mocsonyi, the income requirement was a means of providing one party with favors and removing the other party from the constitution.

In his view, the mission of any constitutionalism was to ensure, “according to possibilities, the natural balance between contrasting interests arising in society,” and this was possible only on the basis of universal suffrage,<sup>61</sup> the only one capable of eliminating the artificial domination of one party over the rest, which was inconsistent with the very idea of constitutionalism, with the essence of freedom. Through the proposed election bill—Mocsonyi claimed—the government divested constitutionalism, as well as constitutional and political rights, of their

very essence. He considered that only one politics was correct, the politics of law, equality under the law, and to this end, he upheld the idea of universal suffrage.<sup>62</sup>

In the session of 8 April 1872, Alexandru Mocsonyi presented the petition signed by 43 students in Budapest, demanding that the Diet should discuss the draft law on the establishment of the University of Cluj (Kolozsvár) and approve that all the disciplines should also be taught in Romanian in all the faculties of this university.

Following criticisms brought against the governmental bill, the government withdrew the draft Electoral Law in the session of 12 April 1872. The parliamentary session ended on 16 April 1872.<sup>63</sup>

In light of the coming elections, the parliamentary club convened the Romanian M.P.s in Arad, on 9 May 1872, to discuss the national program. The program proposed by Alexandru Mocsonyi was adopted, although there were conflicting views on some of its points.<sup>64</sup> This program was the political platform on which Mocsonyi ran in the elections of 1872, and it was presented in his letter to the people of Lugoj on 12 June 1872. The main slogan envisaged equal national rights in the context of the country's political-territorial integrity, and progress in the spirit of true democracy. Mocsonyi advocated achieving these ideals by legal constitutional means.<sup>65</sup> He condemned any artificial supremacy of one party over the majority as being contrary to the essence of true constitutionalism; he made reference here to the supremacy of the Hungarian political nation, considering that each constitutional right, each new guarantee of freedom in the hands of the nationalities would be a powerful weapon, which could naturally lead to equal national entitlement. He criticized dualism, the alliance with Austria, which ensured the supremacy of the Hungarian political nation over the non-Magyar nations in Transylvania under the Nationalities Law, the feudal electoral law in Transylvania, which restricted, to the point of cancelation, the autonomy of municipalities and limited the constitutional rights and freedoms because of its distrust of nationalities, and he characterized the government's policy as reactionary.

In the elections for the 1872–1875 legislature, Alexandru Mocsonyi was defeated in the Lugoj circle, but then was elected in the Radna circle.<sup>66</sup> The elected Romanian M.P.s were Mihai Beșan, Vichentie Bogdan, Dimitrie Bonciu, Sigismund Borlea, Alexandru Buda, Vasile Buteanu, Partenie Cosma, Ioan Gozman, Iosif Hodoș, George Ioanovici, Vasile Jurca, Ilie Măcelariu, Petru Mihályi, Alexandru Mocsonyi, Anton Mocsonyi, Alexandru Roman, and Mircea B. Stănescu. Of these, Vasile Buteanu relinquished his mandate, and Ilie Măcelariu never entered the Diet. Later, after by-elections, the ones who entered Parliament were Ioachim Murășan, Traian Doda, Vincențiu Babeș and Ioan Popovici Desseanu, following the withdrawal of Alexandru Mocsonyi. The number of Romanian

M.P.s amounted to 22.<sup>67</sup> In 1873 Ioan Hodoş renounced his mandate. Alexandru Mocsonyi never attended the sessions of the Diet, and on 18 April 1874, he relinquished his mandate, stating that his further presence in the Diet would serve no purpose, because the circumstances no longer allowed him to fulfill his mandate as he desired and as his voters expected.<sup>68</sup>

**H**E ENDED thus a brilliant parliamentary activity, in which he had demonstrated great oratorical talent, and an exceptional political culture displaying the modern conceptions of the time, to which he had been attuned from an early age. He was the theorist of nationalism and liberalism, which he viewed in their organic relationship, demonstrating convincingly that there could be no nationality without freedom, that the individual liberalism of the period also had a collective aspect, which referred to the rights and freedoms of nations. He was the Romanian thinker who showed the greatest allegiance to the liberal values and principles, upholding them not only in theory but also in political practice. He was an exceptional politician amongst an entire generation of self-proclaimed liberals in Hungary, such as Eötvös, Deák, or Andrásy, distinguishing himself through the complexity and consistency of his liberal beliefs and, especially, through his intellectual and theoretical background. The political culture of European standing exhibited by this Banatian political leader placed him in the gallery of the most representative personalities of liberalism in Hungary during that period. His original political outlook managed to merge nationalism and liberalism, associating nationalism and civil rights with the person and the individuality of the nation. He was the partisan of the parliamentary regime, of constitutionalism, of citizens' rights and freedoms, of equal rights, and he placed the principles of law at the basis of his entire political activity, whose keystone was freedom of any kind. Against the background of the Romanian political thought of the time, his was the most radical and profound liberal voice, which he displayed in his activity even after his retirement from Parliament. □

(Translated by CARMEN-VERONICA BORBÉLY)

## Notes

1. For Alexandru Mocsonyi's biography, see Teodor Botiş, *Monografia familiei Mocioni* (Bucharest: Fundația pentru Literatură și Artă Regele Carol II, 1939), 111–375; Valeriu Braniște, *Pagini năzlețe* (Lugoj: Ed. autorului, 1910), 147–375.
2. Teodor V. Păcățian, *Cartea de aur sau luptele politice naționale ale românilor de sub coroana ungară*, vol. 4 (Sibiu: Tip. Henric Meltzer, 1906), 8–9.
3. *Ibid.*, 14.

4. Ibid., 200.
5. The text of the Romanian-Serbian project was published in Păcățian, 4: 441–445.
6. Branișce, 159–160.
7. Ibid., 160.
8. Botiș, 121.
9. Branișce, 171.
10. Păcățian, 4: 458–459.
11. Ibid., 413.
12. The speech delivered by Alexandru Mocsonyi in *ibid.*, 473–482.
13. George Sofronie, “Transformările doctrinare ale conceptului de națiune,” *Transilvania* (Sibiu) 74, 7–8 (offprint 1943): 8–9; Federico Chabod, *L’idea di nazione* (Bari: Laterza, 1962), 9–11; Dimitrie Gusti, *Opere*, vol. 4 (Bucharest: Ed. Academiei R.S.R., 1970), 14.
14. Pasquale Stanislao Mancini, *Il Principio di nazionalità* (Rome: La Voce, 1920), 15.
15. Sofronie, 8.
16. Păcățian, 4: 474.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid., 475.
19. Ibid., 476.
20. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid., 477.
24. Ibid., 478.
25. Ibid., 478–479.
26. Ibid., 479.
27. Ibid., 771.
28. Ibid., 790.
29. Botiș, 138.
30. Alexandru Mocsonyi’s open letter to the Romanian public in Teodor V. Păcățian, *Cartea de aur sau luptele politice naționale ale românilor de sub coroana ungară*, vol. 5 (Sibiu: Tip. Arhidiecezană, 1909), 26–37.
31. Ibid., 31–32.
32. Ibid., 51.
33. The program of the National Party, in Botiș, 151–152.
34. Păcățian, 5: 132–134.
35. Ibid., 150.
36. Ibid., 294, 314–316.
37. Ibid., 319.
38. Ibid., 364.
39. Ibid., 382.
40. Ibid., 383.
41. Ibid., 386.
42. Ibid., 387.

43. Ibid.
44. Ibid., 388.
45. Ibid., 389.
46. Ibid.
47. Ibid.
48. Ibid., 391.
49. Ibid., 399.
50. Ibid.
51. Ibid., 400.
52. Ibid., 402.
53. Ibid., 459.
54. Ibid., 502–503.
55. Ibid., 596.
56. Ibid., 651.
57. Botiș, 213.
58. Ibid.
59. Ibid., 220.
60. Ibid., 221–223; Păcățian, 5: 686.
61. Păcățian, 5: 719.
62. Ibid., 724.
63. Botiș, 235.
64. Teodor V. Păcățian, *Cartea de aur sau luptele politice naționale ale românilor de sub coroana ungară*, vol. 6 (Sibiu: Tip. Tipografiei Arhidiecezane, 1910), 10.
65. Ibid., 93.
66. Ibid., 100.
67. Ibid., 103.
68. Ibid., 279.

### **Abstract**

Liberalism and Nationalism in Alexandru Mocsonyi's Parliamentary Activity (1865–1871)

This study presents the parliamentary activity of Alexandru Mocsonyi (Mocioni), a political leader in Banat and a member of the Hungarian Parliament between 1865 and 1874. He was a remarkable politician and one of the most prominent personalities of Romanian liberalism in nineteenth-century Hungary. His parliamentary activity was very complex before 1872; he was well known for his speeches in the debates on the Law of Nationalities, the Law of Municipalities and the new Election Law in Transylvania, where he brought his contribution to the ideology of the national movement, based on a synthesis between liberalism and nationalism.

### **Keywords**

Alexandru Mocsonyi (Mocioni), Hungarian Parliament, nationalism, liberalism