In sharp contrast to the absence of economic discrimination, the Magyars exerted a rather stubborn pressure for assimilation in the field of education. It was of course in this area that the most sensitive and manifold problems arose. In considering Hungarian nationalities policies and their effect on schooling, first a brief account will be given of Hungary's national minorities legislation and governmental regulations in the years between 1868 and 1944. The crux of the matter, namely how these laws and decrees were put into effect, will be discussed immediately following this part.

Act XLIV of 1868, which came in the wake of the *Ausgleich* of 1867,\(^1\) bore the liberal tint of the day and that of its designer, the enlightened philosopher-statesman Baron Joseph Eötvös. Its outstanding merit was that it fully guaranteed the right of the nationalities, considering these people equal in every respect to the majority nationals.

Paragraphs 14–17 contained the Act's pivotal provisions, those which regulated the language of the churches. The latter were given freedom to choose the language of their business and protocol, and, above all, their schools and educational institutions. What this really meant can be fully appreciated only by the student of the field, who knows, of course, that the very crux of all nationalities problems in Europe has been traditionally education, that is, *schooling in the mother tongue*. The freedom of the churches becomes even more significant in the light of the

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\(^1\) Hungary's reconciliation with Austria, and the commencement of the new dual institution, the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.
fact that in Hungary, at the time of the issuance of the Act of 1868, 95.4 percent of all schools were conducted by the churches and only 3.8 percent by the State or municipalities.

In the same year (1868) the long existing autonomies of the churches of the Rumanian Greek Catholics and the Rumanian and Serbian Greek-Orthodox in Hungary were guaranteed by Law. A similar autonomy was also enjoyed by the Lutheran church of the Transylvanian Saxons. In contrast, the Roman Catholic Church in Hungary, which was the Church of the State and long enjoyed in this capacity a privileged place and excessive prerogatives, had no specific autonomy and needed none, nor had any one of the Protestant churches with the above-mentioned exception of the Transylvanian Saxons. This distinction favored again the nationalities, because only the Greek Orthodox and to a great extent the Greek Catholics were lined up according to nationality; to the former practically no Magyar belonged, to the latter only a very few. The Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Churches harbored the majorities and minorities of the Magyars, Germans, and Slovaks. They were never regarded as the national churches of a particular folk group as was the case, for instance, with the Greek Orthodox Church for the Serbians and for the majority of the Rumanians. From this it followed that the nationalities who belonged to the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant denominations were incomparably more prone to be assimilated than the ones in the Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholic Churches.

That all the churches of the nationalities chose the mother tongue of their respective flocks and not Magyar for the medium of education goes without saying. Especially the Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholic Churches made a point of this, since the strengthening of the national consciousness of their faithful was equivalent to the furthering of their religious and church interests. Moreover, by counteracting assimilation, it also secured the natural growth of these people.1

1 In the last year before World War I, in 1913, the Greek Orthodox Church operated 1,436 schools in Hungary. Annabring (op. cit., p. 3) points out very correctly the controversial character of Hungary’s nationalities policies by noting what large amounts of subsidies were granted to these churches by the Hungarian government. The central administration of the Rumanian Orthodox Church alone enjoyed a yearly allocation of 100,000 Kronen; the 2,300 Orthodox priests another annual 1,200,000 Kronen. And all this took place in a time when the vulnerability arising from the mostly peripheral placement of the nationalities in Hungary became, with the dis-