

The Reaction of Hungary's German Minorities to Oscar Jaszi's Plan for an "Eastern Switzerland"*

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On October 26, 1918, the newly-formed Hungarian National Council replaced the defunct royal government and soon proclaimed its programme for a reconstituted Hungary. This seven-point directive was the work of Oscar (Oszkár) Jaszi, leader of the Radical Bourgeois Party, and soon to be minister of nationalities in the Hungarian "People's Republic" under the presidency of Count Mihály Károlyi, wartime leader of the radical section of the pacifist Independence Party.¹ The Károlyi government was aware of Hungary's precarious situation after the defeat of the Central Powers. The Austro-Hungarian dualist partnership was dead. Czechoslovakia, Rumania, and the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (the future Yugoslavia), the new and enlarged states that materialized from the ruins of the Habsburg Monarchy, had detached the bulk of Hungary's non-Magyar inhabitants even before the fighting had stopped. Károlyi and Jaszi hoped that it might still be possible to recover some of these territorial and human losses before the impending peace treaties ratified this situation. The two statesmen proposed to transform the hitherto Magyar-dominated Hungarian state into a voluntary federation consisting of autonomous nationalities governed by liberal principles — an East Central European replica of the Swiss Confederation — or a virtual "Eastern Switzerland."² This plan was in harmony with Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points, a peace proposal that the American president presented to the joint session of the two Houses of Congress on January 8, 1918. Point 10 stipulated that "The peoples of Austria-Hungary . . . be accorded the freest opportunity of autonomous development."³ Jaszi agreed that the destiny of Hungary's non-Magyar nationalities "had to be settled on the basis of the Wilson Principles."⁴ This paper investigates why Hungary's German-speaking people, often referred to as Swabians, refused to accept the Károlyi regime's far-reaching cultural and administrative autonomy offers, or, as Jaszi expressed it, to accept an

“endeavor to democratize Hungary and to remold the old feudal state into a confederation of free nations.”⁵ The Germans’ reluctance to cooperate with Károlyi’s government may be ascribed to the socialist tinge of the new regime, the social, religious and political arch-conservatism of the predominantly rural Swabians, and Hungary’s Magyar-oriented minority policies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In 1910, Hungary’s German-speaking citizens totaled about 2,037,000 out of the country’s population of nearly 21 million.⁶ The mainly Protestant Transylvanian Germans (Saxons) numbered about 234,000; the largely Roman Catholic Swabians numbered about 1,667,000.⁷ By the early 20th century the Saxons had become urbanized, politicized, and many were well-educated. Most Swabians, however, clung to their ancestral German peasant culture. Swabian majorities lived in 330 small villages and a few towns scattered throughout Hungary. Many communities were clustered in strategically insecure areas: in West Hungary adjoining Austria, surrounding Budapest, and next to the Serbian (later Yugoslav) frontier.⁸ While Hungary was part of the powerful Dual Monarchy, the Germans’ distribution pattern did not matter. But when Hungary became a small and vulnerable independent state after World War I, the presence of these enclaves in sensitive regions became a source of concern and set the tone for a cautious Hungarian minority policy.

At first, Hungary treated the non-Magyars evenhandedly. The 1867 Compromise had granted the country equal partnership in the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy, and for the first time since the Middle Ages, the Magyars could formulate domestic policy without interference from Vienna. The Nationality Law of 1868 was a liberal document that granted Hungary’s non-Magyar citizens the right to establish elementary and middle schools in their mother tongue, permitted a limited number of ethnic higher institutions, national churches, use of the vernacular in rural administration and opportunities for non-Magyar cultural development.⁹ However, these benevolent measures failed to stand the test of time. In the fifty years preceding World War I, the Magyar public and the governments grew increasingly more nationalistic, partially in response to the rising consciousness of Hungary’s non-Magyars. During these decades, Hungary’s minorities, especially the Swabians, lost most of their indigenous cultural facilities.¹⁰ By war’s end in 1918, the formerly well-organized German-language village school system had virtually ceased to exist.

The rural Swabians’ ultra-conservative culture centered around churches and clerically-dominated elementary village schools. The Swabian literacy rate of 82 percent was the highest in Hungary,¹¹ yet few of these Swabian villagers desired to expose their children to higher education or embark them on professional careers in Hungary’s Magyar urban centers. They distrusted and disliked such “progressives” as liberals, socialists and com-

munists, and particularly Jews. Before World War I, the Swabians were the only non-politicized ethnic group in Hungary, with the possible exception of the Ruthenes. They voted for Magyar or Magyarized conservatively-minded Christians to represent them in the Hungarian Parliament. They did, however, acquire a self-appointed informal leader in the person of Dr. Jakob Bleyer, professor of philology at the University of Budapest. Bleyer's humble peasant origins in the Bácska region of southern Hungary and ultraconservative Roman Catholic credentials gained the confidence and support of the Swabian peasantry.

Bleyer preached a simple homily of German cultural nationalism, dynastic Habsburg loyalism and traditional Hungarian patriotism. Bleyer and his Swabian supporters saw no contradiction between simultaneous devotion to the German cultural *Nation* (the Habsburg Emperor-King was a German) and loyalty to the Hungarian fatherland representing the political state. Bleyer explained these complex issues in terms the average Swabian villager could easily comprehend. The Hungarian state, he wrote during World War I, had every right to assimilate the ethnic intelligentsias into the Magyar lingual and cultural stream, provided the government preserved the sanctity and high quality of the German-language rural school system. In the urban centers, however, the fusion of the ethnic intelligentsia into the Magyar ethos was inevitable. Particularly for this reason German culture had to remain pure in the Swabian rural environment. To Bleyer, secession from the Hungarian fatherland or autonomy on the basis of ethnic peculiarities was tantamount to treason. He maintained these views firmly throughout the brief postwar period leading to the 28 June 1919 Treaty of Trianon.¹² By then, nearly all of Hungary's ethnic minorities, including the Saxons of Transylvania, had seceded and joined one or the other of the fledgling successor states.

Since 1908, Jaszi had been considering how to remedy the real or alleged injustices the Magyars inflicted on Hungary's non-Magyar minorities. At that time, he was still uncertain how exactly to counteract the centrifugal forces imperiling polyethnic states. He criticized the Magyar nationalists for refusing to grant the non-Magyars a more favourable franchise. It was untrue, Jaszi asserted, that if given the opportunity these peoples would betray the Hungarian state. Peasants of all nationalities had much more in common with each other than Magyar peasants with Magyar officials. Jaszi accused the Magyar ruling classes of keeping national animosities alive for selfish reasons.¹³ In a real democracy, he maintained, "the loyalty of the ethnic minorities is ensured by letting them have their legal rights and permitting them to succeed in their aspirations."¹⁴

Within four years, Jaszi had systematized his thinking on the grievances suffered by Hungary's nationalities. He classed minority violations into three principal categories: (1) administrative and judicial grievances; (2)

economic grievances; and (3) educational and other cultural grievances.¹⁵ Because the heterogeneity of Hungary's population confounded him, a concrete, universal solution still eluded Jaszi. Hungary's nationalities differed culturally, historically and numerically. He considered certain improvements mandatory—in Hungary's schools, for example, in the public administration and in jurisprudence. Moreover, sooner or later the government would have to allow the nationalities to use their languages and culture.¹⁶

By 1918, Jaszi's ideas on how to solve the nationality question had matured. In March of that year, he wanted to "liberate the nationalities from the assimilationist drill that is unable to Magyarize effectively but which keeps our ethnic fellow citizens in an eternal state of dependency, and makes bitter enemies of them."¹⁷ To remedy these evils involved invoking Point 8 of Jaszi's National Bourgeois Radical Party programme: "The creation of peace with the nationalities, in order to ensure the unity and flowering of the Hungarian state. Non-Magyar citizens must have all their legal lingual and cultural demands satisfied in the spirit of the Deák and Eötvös Nationality laws [of 1868]."¹⁸ Jaszi would most likely have agreed with Bleyer that adequate minority-language schools formed the bulwark of non-Magyar privileges.¹⁹ Unlike Bleyer, however, Jaszi wanted to establish limited minority language instruction in Hungary's middle schools, academies and universities.²⁰

Near war's end, Jaszi published his definitive plan for a Danubian confederation.²¹ The new political-economic unit would include the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in addition to the various Danubian Balkan states. Jaszi's scheme may be summarized as follows. The dual monarchy would be replaced by a pentarchy, a polity consisting of one sovereign Magyar state (Hungary); one German state (Austria with its German possessions only); and three Slavic states (composed of Czechs, Poles and Illyrians or South Slavs). The new commonwealth would have a common defence and foreign policy, and a customs union would make it economically viable. Each national unit would include minority populations of varying size and composition. Most of these ethnic groups would be related to the nationality dominating one or more of the states. For practical reasons alone, member states would not persecute each others' ethnic minorities, whose rights would also be protected by laws and constitutional arrangements. Disputes would be adjudicated by an inter-state arbitration board and by a hereditary dynastic ruler, presumably a Habsburg.²²

Jaszi's book did not explain how ethnic autonomy would be practiced within each unit. He did, however, criticize Austrian Chancellor Karl Renner for opposing the division of the Austrian Empire into four autonomous units based on their populations' language differences. Jaszi believed that autonomy would alleviate minority grievances in the Austrian part of the monarchy, whose four major peoples—the Czechs, Poles, Germans and

South Slavs, had the expertise to establish and maintain viable autonomous governments.²³ Jaszi cited the excellence of Louis Kossuth's 1860 nationality plan formulated in exile for the reconstruction of the Austrian monarchy. Although Kossuth's eight-point plan never used the word "autonomy,"²⁴ many of these ideas eventually cropped up in Jaszi's autonomy schemes while Jaszi was serving as Károlyi's minister of nationalities.

Jaszi soon had the opportunity to translate his nationality theories into action. On November 16, 1918, the Károlyi regime proclaimed a republic in Hungary. Jaszi immediately initiated action to prevent or reverse the defection of Hungary's non-Magyar nationalities by offering each of them the opportunity to become administratively autonomous units in a federated Hungary. He was too late. On October 12, the Rumanian National Party, composed of Hungarian-Rumanian politicians, had opted for self-determination and forbade Hungary to represent Rumanians at the impending peace conference. By December 1, Hungary's Rumanians formally attached Transylvania and the Bánát of Temesvár to the Rumanian Kingdom. On October 29, Croatia joined the newly constituted Yugoslav National Council and participated in proclaiming Yugoslav independence. On October 30, the Slovak National Council unified Slovakia (Felvidék) with the Czechs of Bohemia and Moravia. The Ruthenes of Kárpátalja (Ruthenia) followed suit shortly thereafter.²⁵ On January 2, 1919, the Saxons of Transylvania formally joined their Rumanian fellow citizens in the Kingdom of Rumania. The Swabians of southern Hungary (Bácska) put up no resistance when Yugoslavia overran their territories.²⁶

By the end of 1918, the Swabians living in Hungary remained the only sizable non-Magyar group to remain loyal to Hungary. Only the approximately 300,000-strong Swabian enclave adjacent to the Austrian frontier in West Hungary still had the opportunity to secede.²⁷ Numerous complex factors persuaded these Germans to remain with Hungary, although their minds were by no means made up. Strong secessionist sentiments flared periodically in response to specific incidents and shifting economic and political conditions.²⁸

In the closing days of the war, Bleyer tried to guide Hungary's Swabians through the difficult days ahead. At heart a Hungarian patriot, he wanted to prevent West Hungary's secession to Austria, remedy the loss of southern Hungary to Yugoslavia, and insulate his people against the persuasive and sophisticated secessionist rhetoric of his rival for the leadership of Hungary's Germans, Transylvanian Saxon Rudolf Brandsch.²⁹ The Bleyer-Brandsch leadership struggle profoundly influenced not only the unity of Hungary's Germans but the relationship of Bleyer's Swabians with the Károlyi regime and later governments. The newspaper *Neue Post*, edited by Canon Johannes Huber, a close Bleyer collaborator, served as Bleyer's principal propaganda forum. In an October 24 editorial, Bleyer questioned

Brandsch's credentials to represent the Swabians. In his view, Brandsch's demands exceeded the bounds of propriety, and ignored Magyar sensibilities. In contrast, he pointed out, the Swabians desired a package containing cultural, political, administrative, and economic reform short of autonomy. But the most important task was the restoration of German elementary schools. Bleyer insisted, however, that all decisions would have to be reached in perfect amity with the Magyars.³⁰

Bleyer was determined to outmaneuver his Saxon adversary. On November 1 Bleyer, with the support of sixteen other Swabian intellectuals, founded and became the leader of the political organization *Deutschungarischer Volksrat*. The Party gained the immediate support and blessings of the newly installed Károlyi regime.³¹ Bleyer apparently enjoyed the government's confidence from the start because of his well-known pro-Magyar stance before and during the war, and because only a few days earlier, Huber had pleaded with Swabians languishing under Yugoslav occupation in southern Hungary to foil enemy attempts to annex the region. In his view, the Slavs constituted a mortal danger to Germans.³² Such attitudes linked Bleyer's Swabians with the new government in a patriotic cause against common foes. As a gesture of good will, the government permitted Bleyer to be the first to announce the formation of his party and reveal its programme. The Swabians, Bleyer pledged, would defend Hungary's territorial integrity and not demand any rights that Hungary's other non-Magyars did not possess. Moreover, the Swabians had no desire for autonomy, he declared.³³ A few days later, Huber loosed a broadside that virtually accused Brandsch of plotting secession. Huber claimed that the Saxon leader considered the Magyar people as aliens, and wanted to promote a frigid, even hostile, relationship with them.³⁴

The fear that Hungary's Swabians might desert to Brandsch prompted Bleyer to chart a more defiant course with the government, lest he be accused of being a collaborator. As a result, hearty relations barely survived the first week of Károlyi's tenure in office. On November 8, Huber rejoiced that the Swabians' national consciousness had been finally aroused. After being on the edge of national oblivion, Huber asserted, the Swabians demanded the revival of their German language.³⁵ The day before, Bleyer jolted Jaszi with a revised version of his *Volksrat* inaugural speech. In a November 7 Budapest declaration to the *Volksrat*, Bleyer informed the audience that he had just transmitted a copy of an appended Point 4 of his November 3 three point programme to Jaszi: "Our pledge of allegiance to the political Hungarian state stands only so long as it is not limited to the Magyar people alone, and only if the integrity of the Hungarian state can be maintained in its entirety. In all other instances we reserve the right of unconditional self-determination." Bleyer also firmed up an earlier demand: "We expect for German-Hungarians all those rights in politics, adminis-

tration, justice, economics, education and cultural life which the newly constituted Hungary has already vouchsafed for all its other non-Magyar peoples.”³⁶

The speech might have prevented many lukewarm Bleyer supporters from deserting to Brandsch, and it might have rescued Bleyer’s credibility as a vigorous Swabian leader; but the altered scenario for would-be Magyar-Swabian cooperation dismayed the Károlyi government and injured the Swabian cause. In effect, Bleyer was threatening the Károlyi regime in its most difficult hour. Hungary’s minorities were deserting in droves, and the Entente was ready to invade Hungary. On one hand, Bleyer was professing fidelity to Hungary and swearing solidarity with the Magyars, while on the other hand he seemed to be undermining the country’s security by demanding the right of Swabians to exercise self-determination. The Swabian cause might have been better served had Bleyer forthrightly called for autonomy, an arrangement Jaszi was prepared to grant at that time. Although, in his view, every people had the legal and moral right to demand self-determination, shortly after war’s end, “self-determination” served as a euphemism for “secession.” Claiming such a privilege at that particular moment was a grave error. In vain did Franz Bonitz, a Bleyer colleague in the *Volksrat*, urge Swabians to “march shoulder to shoulder with Magyardom,” because simultaneously he also advocated “a united [German] front [to be demonstrated] to the public both at home and abroad, with respect to our cultural, linguistic, political and economic aspirations.”³⁷

Bleyer’s political instincts regarding Brandsch’s quest for the leadership of Hungary’s Germans had been sound. On November 10, the Saxon leader founded a rival organization, the *Deutscher Volksrat für Ungarn (DVU)*. Unlike Bleyer, Brandsch was a liberal with a large following among Transylvanian Saxons and Hungarian-Swabian urban working classes and miners. The *DVU* boasted several influential Social Democrats among its leaders, such as the Jewish Heinrich Kalmár and the Swabian Viktor Knaller. Here was a paradox. The ultra-conservative Bleyer was willing to cooperate with the leftist Károlyi, whereas the ideologically congenial Brandsch wanted to wrest as many concessions from the hard-pressed Károlyi as possible. All the while he was secretly negotiating with the Rumanians. The *DVU* demanded cultural autonomy and the right to exercise self-determination, and refused to swear unconditional allegiance to Hungary. Its leaders merely pledged to maintain Hungary’s territorial integrity as long as possible.³⁸

Stiffened Swabian resolve, fears of Saxon defection, and mounting signs of Austrian annexationist designs in West Hungary (Moson, Sopron and Vas counties) with its sizable German population³⁹ prompted Jaszi to promulgate a flood of regulations to prove the Hungarian government’s honourable intentions to the non-Magyar minorities. On November 16, Magyar-language instruction terminated in the first two elementary school grades in

predominantly German-speaking regions. The *Neue Post* rejoiced. Apparently, the new government meant to deal honourably with Swabians after all, and this was a good omen for the future. In an emotional outburst, Bleyer characterized his sentiments for Hungary as love for mother, those for Germandom as love for father. This easily-won victory prompted new demands. On November 20, the *Volksrat* clamored for exclusively German schools in Swabian districts, and demanded German as an official language in the courts and in the administration of predominantly Swabian areas. The *Volksrat* also wanted non-Germans barred from interfering in Swabian affairs. As the *Neue Post* expressed it, "we desire to be represented in public life only by men who stand close to us."⁴⁰

Hungary's diplomatic and military position deteriorated steadily, yet Bleyer and his associates maintained their patriotic air. They steadfastly urged West Hungarians to remain loyal to Hungary in the face of increasing Austrian efforts to annex West Hungary's Germans. They cautioned fellow Swabians that the loss of a quarter-million Germans to Austria would weaken the German cause in Hungary, because the few remaining Swabians would be cut off from the German-speaking world.⁴¹ The government and the Magyar public, however, believed that the Bleyer group was less interested in maintaining Hungary's territorial integrity than in preserving German influence in Hungary.

In order to purchase Swabian loyalty, Minister of Education and Religion, Márton Lovászy, offered more concessions. As of November 21, German would become the mandatory language of instruction in the first two grades of Swabian elementary schools. Magyar would be taught as a subject, but only in subsequent years. The regulation would apply not only in state-sponsored schools, but be valid in church-run institutions as well.⁴² This was a major concession. Nearly six out of seven Swabian schools were confessional institutions. Normally, legislation involving state schools had minimal impact on Swabian education, because church institutions were not obliged to obey. Three days later, Lovászy promised Bleyer additional reforms. German instruction would be provided in Swabian kindergartens, and in all Magyar middle schools located in Swabian-inhabited areas.⁴³ Lovászy's generosity was an empty gesture, however. All Swabian schools suffered from a critical shortage of teachers, and German instructors and textbooks in particular were in short supply.⁴⁴

Swabian disillusionment with Károlyi's regime and Jaszi's minority policies became acute by year's end. The new school laws were not being enforced. The Swabians could not be certain whether the Károlyi government lacked the means or the desire to implement them in any meaningful way. Soon complaints began filtering into *Volksrat* headquarters that local officials were violating the education ordinances.⁴⁵ Even under normal peacetime conditions, village and county officials enjoyed considerable freedom

in the exercise of their authority, and frequently ignored directives from the central government. In the chaotic postwar environment, conservative functionaries, many of them patriotic Magyar refugees from the successor states, or fervent ethnic proselytes, assumed greater importance and influence than ever before.⁴⁶ Pointing to the alleged perfidy of the seceded ethnic minorities, these officials frequently obstructed the Károlyi regime's attempts to introduce German instruction in the schools. Károlyi and Jaszi could claim with some justification that they had sincerely endeavoured to serve the cultural needs of the Swabian minority. It was not their fault if local and church authorities failed to comply with the central government's directives.

The Swabians became even more disillusioned when they discovered that the new regulations regarding the adoption of German in their schools were invalid, because Count Albert Apponyi's restrictive 1907 minority school law was never repealed.⁴⁷ Despite Károlyi's and Jaszi's good intentions, the Swabians were worse off now than before. Magyar instruction was curtailed for them, while an effective German education seemed barred.⁴⁸ Friedrich Lang, a Bleyer follower, explained how this situation affected Swabian youngsters. Swabian children attending Magyar schools were merely taught to parrot Magyar phrases without gaining the benefit of true comprehension, Lang asserted. This malpractice caused many children to become functionally illiterate, and, in addition, they frequently forgot their German mother tongue.⁴⁹

In view of these disappointing developments, the era of Magyar-Swabian good feelings rapidly terminated. On December 27, Géza Zsombor, a Magyarized Swabian of Jaszi's radical party, announced in Sopron that unless West Hungary was granted immediate autonomy, the Swabians would proclaim an independent German republic. The crisis deepened when, a few days later, Brandsch's Saxons defected to Rumania.⁵⁰ Bleyer could not resist gloating. In an open letter addressed to Jaszi he noted that Jaszi's excessively permissive nationality policy had led to disaster, whereas his own views had been vindicated. "Whose judgment on the Brandsch crowd had been more accurate, yours or mine?" Bleyer taunted.⁵¹ Bleyer had few reasons for rejoicing. Despite valiant efforts to discredit Brandsch and the *DVU* with Hungary's German public, Bleyer only partially succeeded. Hungary's rural Swabians stuck to him. Many leftist Swabians abandoned the *DVU*, remained in Hungary and supported the Károlyi regime, but disliked Bleyer and were in turn ostracized by him.⁵²

The Saxon desertion embarrassed Károlyi and cast serious doubt on the viability of Jaszi's approach to solving Hungary's nationality problems. If Hungary's non-Magyars were indeed patriotic Hungarians as Jaszi claimed, then why did the ideologically compatible Saxons desert so lightly? Could Jaszi hope to persuade the arch-conservative, ideologically hostile Bleyer

and his Swabians, Hungary's sole remaining Germans, to accept terms that the far more congenial Saxons had rejected? This turn of events propelled both the government and Bleyer to pursue defensive, opportunistic tactics. Károlyi no longer trusted the Swabians, and Jaszi soon became disillusioned with them as well. For now, he stuck to his earlier nationality programme. Both men still wished to introduce fundamental social and economic reform to benefit Hungary's remaining German-speaking citizens. But these measures would have to be entrusted only to ideologically dependable individuals.⁵³ The thoroughly isolated Bleyer, now the sole leader of a vastly shrunken Swabian following that lacked an effective intelligentsia, wished to salvage from the ruins some ethnic privileges that might preserve the unique Christian and ultra-conservative nature of Swabian rural society. Bleyer's and Jaszi's clashing objectives bred the distrust and eventual enmity that poisoned relations between Bleyer's *Volksrat* and the Károlyi government. In turn, this impasse rendered the Jaszi formula for obtaining ethnic peace in Hungary impossible to achieve.

To many Magyars, Brandsch's betrayal was proof positive that all Germans were opportunists and potential traitors, and that Jaszi had bungled by negotiating with them.⁵⁴ The politically inexperienced *Volksrat* mistakenly assumed, however, that with Brandsch gone, the remaining Swabians' relatively moderate demands would not be honored. Bleyer's followers hinted that unless the government met their claims in full, they too might threaten secession. On January 11, 1919, the *Volksrat* added German middle schools and teacher academies to its list of demands, and insisted that Hungary provide Swabians with German primary education even in predominantly Magyar-speaking areas.⁵⁵ On January 20, Swabians in Sopron again demonstrated for immediate autonomy, otherwise, they threatened, West Hungarians would secede and either proclaim an independent German republic or join Austria.

The hard-pressed Károlyi government thereupon commissioned several conservative and moderate Germans, notably Peter Jekel, Guido Gündisch, and Otto Herzog, to draft a new statute that would grant Swabians extraordinary privileges. However, Károlyi and Jaszi took no chances. A Magyar, Ödön Berinkey, and the Jewish Heinrich Kalmár participated in the preparation of the document, and the final draft underwent modification by Jaszi before being approved by the Ministerial Council. By then, the Cabinet had serious misgivings about the wisdom of dispensing constitutional largesse to non-Magyars, and Jaszi protested that the Swabians did not merit special consideration.

Despite growing reservations in government circles regarding special treatment for minorities, Law VI of January 29 granted cultural and political autonomy to Swabians in Hungary's predominantly German-speaking areas. This included control over administration, justice, education and

religion. Political authority was vested in *Deutschwestungarn* (German West Hungary), although Hungary's entire Swabian community became a legally distinct corporate body. In addition, the Swabians obtained a national assembly, a German ministry in the cabinet, district councils, and commissioners. János Junker became Minister of German Affairs, and Géza Zsombor emerged as governor of the autonomous district.

After this, Jaszi's active involvement in the Károlyi regime terminated. Jaszi realized that granting the minorities special privileges sounded good on paper, but that translating theory into practice had not produced a solution of the nationality question, and might even have caused the alienation of some of the minorities.⁵⁶ Even this generous new autonomy law failed to satisfy Swabian aspirations. Bleyer and his supporters considered the regulation a government tactic designed to discourage further German defections, as in West Hungary, and to lure back Swabians and others who had already seceded, as in southern Hungary and Transylvania. Although the concessions were generous, the manner of their enactment and application displeased the *Volksrat* and hence sharpened rather than soothed Magyar-Swabian conflicts. Bleyer was offended, for example, because Kalmár, Károlyi's State Secretary for German Affairs, had a major share in drafting the autonomy statute. Bleyer objected no less to Kalmár's Judaism and ideological incompatibility than to the government's alleged impudence in foisting an "outsider" on the Swabians. A similar stigma clung to Berinkey, another non-Swabian architect of the law. Bleyer's followers insisted that only Christian Swabians could be involved in their new jurisdiction, and complained strenuously when Zsombor, an alleged Magyar, became governor of *Deutschwestungarn*. Bleyer scorned the new autonomy law because it conflicted with his own views on the meaning of loyalty to the Hungarian nation. In his opinion, Hungary's destiny had to be resolved by the peace conference, hence Swabian autonomy was premature. Finally, Bleyer declared, cultural autonomy was the most far-reaching concession the Swabians ought to accept.⁵⁷

Following these major disagreements, Magyar-Swabian relations reached a breaking point. The *Neue Post* accused Károlyi of trying to sabotage his own autonomy statute, and of attempting to subvert Swabians by introducing Social Democratic officials and ideas into their midst.⁵⁸ An editorial condemned Minister of Education Zsigmond Kúnyi for having forbidden religious instruction in the schools, and pilloried him for planning to nationalize education. This would enable the government to assume ideological control over the education of Swabian youth, the newspaper charged.⁵⁹ The Swabian anti-government press campaign raged with great intensity, when Bleyer unexpectedly resigned from the *Volksrat* and terminated all contact with the Károlyi regime. On March 12, the *Neue Post* hinted that secession might be the only plausible alternative Swabians had in West

Hungary, now that the government had mismanaged the autonomy decree. The newspaper complained that home rule had not brought economic security to West Hungary. Swabians there needed Austrian markets for selling their produce, whereas Swabian industrial workers were used to being employed in well-paying jobs in Lower Austria. The *Neue Post* pleaded with the government to reverse its decision to isolate Austria from Hungary by erecting trade barriers, or by imposing excessively onerous criteria in the granting of border passes to Swabians. Moreover, the newspaper declared, autonomy was unworkable because Zsombor staffed his office exclusively with fellow Magyars and Magyarized Swabian radicals.⁶⁰

In the final weeks of Károlyi's incumbency, secessionist activities increased in frequency and intensity on both sides of the Austro-Hungarian border. Austrian agitators infiltrated West Hungary in the guise of private citizens. Oscar Charmant, Hungary's envoy in Vienna, identified the Vienna-based *Fremdenblatt* as the chief funder of anti-Magyar propaganda in West Hungary. The Austrian government refused to curb the extremists, particularly since the Germans of West Hungary appeared to favour Austrian intervention. For example, the mayor of Fürstenfeld, an East Austrian town, pursued his pro-Austrian annexationist campaign with undisguised enthusiasm. Now that Bleyer's moderating influence was gone, all thoughts of compromise had ceased. On March 21, the Károlyi regime fell, destroyed by the combined weight of a multitude of issues, one of which was its inability to resolve the Swabian ethnic minority crisis.

When Jaszi conceded several years later that creating a Danubian "Eastern Switzerland" had been premature and would have to await a time when both nationalism and communism had disappeared as primary social forces from the world scene, he was still hoping for the eventual fulfillment of his dreams.⁶¹ The behaviour of Saxons and Swabians certainly confirmed the accuracy of Jaszi's judgment that nationalism played a major role in spoiling the blueprints for a supranational federation of autonomous states. As the war ended, the Swabians and Saxons were both swept by mighty nationalistic currents. With the Saxons, nationalism had reached a fully mature state, overruling both ideological and patriotic considerations. The Saxons ignored their liberalism and their long-standing affiliation with the Hungarian nation and state because they were convinced that even under conservative Rumanian rule they would still be able to preserve their German national essence. Jaszi had no success with the Swabians because, although they had been exposed to the same nationalistic tide as the Saxons, they had not yet matured sufficiently as a people to be a nation. Had the Swabians reached the nationalistic stage of the Saxons, they probably would not have hesitated to accept the far reaching autonomy package even from a donor they despised, and whom they considered politically, socially and ideologically reprehensible. But the Swabians did mind that the views

of their alien masters clashed with the standards they revered, which they considered more important than even the needs of the German nation. The Saxons and Swabians thus both rejected Jaszi's autonomy plans, but for entirely different reasons. If the Swabian and Saxon behaviour is a typical reaction of two branches of the same nation at different stages of development, then the application of Jaszi's autonomy scheme for the pacification of polyethnic states may have a long wait, possibly even beyond the putative demise of nationalism and communism.⁶² Perhaps only a basic change in human nature itself, or possibly an imposed conformist Age of Religion would ensure the success of a scheme as complex as Jaszi's.

NOTES

- * I wish to acknowledge with gratitude the financial aid provided by the University of Prince Edward Island Senate Research Fund.
- 1 Stephen D. Kertesz, *Diplomacy in a Whirlpool. Hungary between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia* (Notre Dame, IN: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1953), pp. 12–13.
 - 2 Oszkár Jászi, *A nemzeti államok kialakulása és a nemzetiségi kérdés* (Budapest: A Nap nyomdája, 1912), pp. 529–534. For a detailed exposition of this plan, see *idem*, *Magyarország jövője és a Dunai Egyesült Államok* (Budapest: Az Új Magyarország R.T., 1918). Also see *idem*, “Középeurópa és a demokratikus fejlődés,” (Feb. 13, 1916) in *idem*, *Múlt és jövő határán* (Budapest: Pallas Irodalmi és Nyomdai R.T., 1918).
 - 3 United States Serial 7443. Doc. #765, Jan. 8, 1918.
 - 4 O. Jászi, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Hungary* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1969), p. 35. Original English edition by P.S. King & Son, 1924 .
 - 5 O. Jászi, *The Dissolution of the Hapsburg Monarchy* (Chicago and London: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1929), p. vi.
 - 6 C.J.C. Street, *Hungary and Democracy* (London: T. Fischer Unwin, Ltd., 1923), p. 8.
 - 7 The rest, about 136,000, lived in Croatia and Slavonia. All statistics gathered from M.K. Belügyminisztérium, *Az 1910. évi népszámlálás* (Budapest: 1912). Also see Wilhelm Winkler, *Statistisches Handbuch des gesamten Deutschtums* (Berlin: Verlag Deutsche Rundschau, 1927).
 - 8 “Előszó,” M.K. Belügyminisztérium, *Az 1920. évi népszámlálás* (Budapest: 1923). Also see Heinrich Schmidt, *et al.*, *Das Deutschtum in Rumpfungarn*, edited by Jakob Bleyer (Budapest: Verlag des “Sonntagsblattes,” 1928), II, especially 91–99.
 - 9 Jászi, *The Dissolution of the Hapsburg Monarchy*, p. 315.
 - 10 See, for example, Paul Somassa, *Der Völkerstreit im Habsburgerstaat* (Leipzig: Dieterich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung Theodor Weicher, 1910), pp. 105–122, especially pp. 116 and 118–120; Otto Bauer, *Die Nationalitätenfrage und die Sozialdemokratie* (Vienna: Verlag der Wiener Buchhandlung Ignaz Brand, 1907), p. 372; and propaganda literature sponsored by the *Alldeutscher Verband*, such as Guntram Schultheiss, *Der Kampf um das Deutschtum. Deutschtum und Ma-*

- gyarisierung (Munich: J.F. Lehmann, 1898).
- 11 Francis Deák, *Hungary at the Paris Peace Conference* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1942), pp. 539–549.
 - 12 Jakob Bleyer, “A hazai németiség,” *Budapesti Szemle* (March 1917), 10–11, and *idem*, “A hazai németiség kérdéséhez,” *ibid.*, 4.
 - 13 Oszkár Jászi, Gyula Rác and Zoltán Zigány, *A választójog reformja és a magyarság jövője* (Budapest: Deutsch Zsigmond és Társa, 1908), p. 17.
 - 14 *Ibid.*, p. 70.
 - 15 Jászi, *A nemzeti államok kialakulása*, p. 458. Also see *idem*, *A nemzetiségi kérdés és Magyarország jövője* (Budapest: A Galilei Kör Kiadása, 1911).
 - 16 *Idem*, *A nemzeti államok kialakulása*, p. 497.
 - 17 *Idem*, *Mi a radikalizmus?* (Budapest: Az Országos Polgári Radikális Párt Kiadása, [March] 1918), p. 19.
 - 18 *Ibid.*, back page, inside cover.
 - 19 *Idem*, *Die Krise der ungarischen Verfassung. Eine Denkschrift* (Budapest: Sigmund Politzer Buchhandlung, 1912), pp. 18–19.
 - 20 *Idem*, *A nemzeti államok kialakulása*, p. 500.
 - 21 *A monarchia jövője*, the second edition of which appeared in October 1918 as *Magyarország jövője és a Dunai Egyesült Allamok*. Also see *idem*, “Középeurópa és a demokratikus fejlődés” (Feb. 13, 1916), in *idem*, *Múlt és jövő határán*, pp. 143–147.
 - 22 *Idem*, *Magyarország jövője*, pp. 49–51.
 - 23 *Ibid.*, pp. 99–117.
 - 24 *Ibid.*, p. 48.
 - 25 Arthur J. May, *The Passing of the Hapsburg Monarchy 1914–1918* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1966), ii, 790–793.
 - 26 For Jaszi’s views of these events, see Jaszi, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Hungary*, pp. 57–61, or the German version, *Magyariens Schuld, Ungarns Sühne. Revolution und Gegenrevolution in Ungarn* (Munich: Verlag für Kulturpolitik, 1923), pp. 59–63.
 - 27 Carl Petersen and Otto Scheel, eds., *Handwörterbuch des Grenz und Ausland-deutschums* (Breslau: 1933), I, 668; and Winkler, *Statistisches Handbuch*, p. 103.
 - 28 For background and consequences see T. Spira, “The Sopron (Ödenburg) Plebiscite of December 1921 and the German Nationality Problem,” Béla K. Király, ed., *War and Society in East Central Europe* (New York: Brooklyn College Press and Columbia University Press, 1982), VI, 321–344.
 - 29 Hedwig Schwind, *Jakob Bleyer. Ein Vorkämpfer und Erwecker des ungarländischen Deutschtums* (Munich: Verlag des Südostdeutschen Kulturwerks, 1960), p. 57, on Brandsch’s popularity.
 - 30 Jakob Bleyer, “An die Deutschungarn,” *Neue Post (N.P.)*, Oct. 25, 1918.
 - 31 Bleyer stressed the full name of the party: *Volksrat der Deutschen von diesseits des Königssteiges*, to stress the exclusion of Transylvanian Saxons from membership. Schwind, Bleyer, pp. 58–59.
 - 32 *N.P.*, Oct. 27, 1918.
 - 33 *N.P.*, Nov. 3, 1918.
 - 34 *N.P.*, Nov. 9, 1918.

- 35 *N.P.*, Nov. 8, 1918.
- 36 *N.P.*, Nov. 3, 1918.
- 37 "Deutsch-Ungarn, rasche Organisation!" *N.P.*, Nov. 12, 1918.
- 38 Schwind, *Bleyer*, pp. 63–67. Also see T. Spira, *German-Hungarian Relations and the Swabian Problem from Károlyi to Gömbös 1919–1936* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, dist. Columbia University Press, 1977), p. 22; and Ludmila Schlereth, *Die politische Entwicklung des Ungarländischen Deutschtums während der Revolution 1918–19* (Munich: Verlag Max Schick, 1939), pp. 38–40.
- 39 The first public mention of Austrian plans to annex the region appeared in the Nov. 18, 1918 issue of *Wiener Mittag*.
- 40 *N.P.*, Nov. 16, 19 and 20, 1918.
- 41 J. Huber, "Ein Mahnruf an die Deutschen Westungarn," *N.P.*, Nov. 20, 1918.
- 42 *N.P.*, Nov. 21 and 24, and Dec. 22, 1918.
- 43 Telegram of Nov. 24, 1918.
- 44 *N.P.*, Mar. 5, 1919.
- 45 *N.P.*, Dec. 22, 1918.
- 46 Observers had complained for years that most local officials did not know the local non-Magyar languages, and that thousands of central government directives were ignored. See, for example, Mercator, *Die Nationalitätenfrage und die ungarische Reichsidee* (Budapest: Móritz Ráth, 1908), p. 64.
- 47 *N.P.*, Dec. 22, 1918.
- 48 László Konksek, "A bécsi és Sopron megyei ellenforradalom kapcsolatai 1919-ben," *Soproni Szemle*, X (1956), 107. Also see C.A. Macartney, *Hungary and her Successors* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1937), p. 50. Even conservatively-minded observers believed in Jaszi's fundamental honesty. See, for example, Schwind, *Bleyer*, p. 56; and E. Treumund [Edmund Steinacker], "Die deutsche Bewegung in Ungarn," *Österreichische Rundschau*, V, No. 1 (1919), 107.
- 49 "Die deutsche Schule," *N.P.*, Dec. 8, 1918.
- 50 *N.P.*, Jan. 5, 1919; J. Huber, "Was trennt uns von Herrn Brandsch?" *N.P.*, Nov. 9, 1918, is a good comparison between Brandsch and Bleyer.
- 51 *Budapesti Hírlap*, Jan. 15, 1919.
- 52 Schwind, *Bleyer*, pp. 67–69.
- 53 "Eine Erklärung des Ministers Oskar Jászi," *Pester Lloyd*, Jan. 4, 1919. Jaszi believed fervently that Socialism would cure extremist nationalism, which he considered the cause of all ethnic hatreds and problems. O. Jászi, *Új Magyarország felé. Beszélgetések a szocializmusról* (Budapest: Deutsch Zsigmond, 1907), pp. 186–187.
- 54 "Oskár Jászi verhandelt," *Pester Lloyd*, Jan. 3, 1919.
- 55 *N.P.*, Jan. 11, 1919.
- 56 Országos Levéltár, Miniszter Tanács, Jan. 27, 1919, Point 67; *Pester Lloyd*, Jan. 4, 1919; and *N.P.*, Jan. 30, 1919, for full text of the Law. Also see G. Katalin Soós, *A nyugatmagyarországi kérdés (1918–1919)* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1962), p. 20.
- 57 *Budapesti Hírlap*, Jan. 25, 1919; *N.P.*, Feb. 1, 1919 (editorial); and "Was sagt Professor Bl[eyer]?" *Deutsches Tageblatt*, Feb. 13, 1919.
- 58 *N.P.*, Jan. 30 and Feb. 1, 1919.

- 59 "Christen, zur Rettung der Kinderseelen," *N.P.*, Mar. 7, 1919.
- 60 *N.P.*, Mar. 12, 1919.
- 61 Jászi, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution*, pp. 57–60.
- 62 See N.F. Dreisziger, "Central European Federalism in the Thought of Oscar Jászi and his Successors," in Steven Bela Vardy and Agnes Huszar Vardy (eds.), *Society in Change. Studies in Honor of Béla K. Király* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, distr. Columbia University Press, 1983), pp. 539–556.