

Between Volk and Staat – The Hungarian German minority under Károlyi, Kun and Bethlen, 1918-1924

by Sebastian Garthoff

Submitted to
Central European University
History Department

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

Supervisor: Prof. András Gerő

Second Reader: Prof. Viktor Karády

Budapest, Hungary

2008

Statement of Copyright

Copyright in the text of this thesis rests with the author. Copies by any process, either in full or part, may be made only in accordance with the instructions given by the Author and lodged in the Central European Library. Details may be obtained from the librarian. This page must form a part of any such copies made. Further copies made in accordance with such instructions may not be made without the written permission of the Author.

Abstract

The main purpose of this paper is to investigate the time of the Hungarian revolutions of 1918 and 1919 in regard to the German minority and thus show how this laid the basis for the future interaction between Hungarian German leadership and state. In this sense, I will answer the question to what extent the future radicalization in the 1930s on both sides – state and minority – were rooted in this time and which factors stood behind this development.

Being bound to both *Volk* and *Staat*, it is also of interest regarding how the political awakening Swabians tried to achieve their goals, together with or against the government. My focus lies on the period between 1918 and 1924, i.e. from the time of the Hungarian revolutions till the Sopron plebiscite, the abolishment of the Ministry for Nationalities and the consolidation of the Bethlen regime, when the future directions on both sides, minority and state, seemed already clear. Moreover, this paper widens the context of the Hungarian-Swabian problem in order to get away from the short-sighted victim-traitor rhetoric.

Table of contents

Introduction	1
1. Nationalizing Hungary	12
1.1 Nationalizing a state	12
1.2 Creating a state of Magyars	15
1.3 The case of Gyula Szekfü	18
2. First steps	25
2.1 Károlyi, Jászi and the minority issue	25
2.2 Jászi's legacy	30
3. The long 1919	34
3.1 Post-war Hungary from Germany's point of view	34
3.2 Communism and nationalities	36
3.3 Bleyer in Jászi's footsteps	40
3.3.1 Impact of Hungarian refugees on domestic politics	44
3.4 Trianon and the Sopron plebiscite	45
4. The metamorphosis of Jakob Bleyer	50
4.1 For state and people	50
4.2 Between state and people	53
4.3 Opponents or united on one way – Bleyer and Gratz	56
5. Bethlen's tactical moves	60
5.1 Dead end after Trianon	60
5.1.1 Victory of opportunism – The case of György Steuer	63
5.2 The Ungarländische Deutsche Volksbildungsverein	65
5.3 The school problem	68
Conclusion	72
Bibliography	76

Introduction

“We are Hungarians, but not Magyars. A difference has to be made”, argued a guest of the scientific conference “The *Volksbund* of the Germans in Hungary 1938-1945” which took place on February 24th, 2007, in Budapest. He went further and asked: “Who is Hungarian, who is German and who is Hungarian German?” Maybe without intending it, this guest brought the problematic of this ‘people with the two souls’ to the point.

The history of the so-called Swabians, of whom just a minor percentage was really of Swabian origin, is widely seen in the context of their expulsion from Hungary after the Second World War. Furthermore, the history of German minorities in Eastern Europe has remained one of the most controversial topics in modern German and European history. In West Germany, as late as the mid-1980s, during the so-called *Historikerstreit*, the expulsion of Germans from the East was still used to relativize the crimes of the Nazi regime. In Eastern Europe, on the other hand, the official line was that the ethnic Germans deserved their fate, because they had acted as a ‘fifth column’ before 1939 and as true Nazis during the war. It was due to this fact that I started researching on the topic and finally published a three piece series under the title “German history in Trianon-Hungary” in the German speaking weekly *Pester Lloyd*¹. My ongoing contacts with the Hungarian Germans, mainly in the context of my journalistic work and resulting in a boat trip from Budapest to Mohács in the summer of 2007², only convinced me more to make this the topic for my MA thesis.

While doing research on the issue I contacted Norbert Spannenberger. Spannenberger wrote his dissertation about the “The *Volksbund* of the Germans in Hungary

¹ Sebastian Garthoff, „Deutsche Geschichte in Trianon-Ungarn.“ *Pester Lloyd*, 25 October; 10 November; 8 November 2006.

² Sebastian Garthoff, „Donaugebunden. Eine ungarndeutsche Spurensuche.“ *Pester Lloyd*, 30 May 2007.

1938-1945 under Horthy and Hitler”³ and thus filled a gap in the history of the Hungarian Germans. While asking him for advice he mentioned that the whole issue “is only to understand with a look on the times of the revolutions 1918/19, because Horthy⁴ and the minority policies of Bethlen⁵ were a sole result of this”. He argued that after having drawn a lesson from the destruction of traditional Hungary, i.e. the national tragedy was the result of too much liberalism and too much respect for minority rights, the Hungarian political elite was determined to assimilate the approximately 550.000 Germans, the largest of the country’s surviving minorities after the war. It comes out that no Hungarian government departed from this assimilation line. Ironically, the Hungarian state failed to recognize the contradiction between its policy towards ethnic Germans, whom they were quick to brand as traitors whenever they raised the issue of minority rights, and its own support of Hungarian organizations in the neighbouring states and the mobilization of international public opinion in order to maximize their rights. In the 1920s and early 1930s, Hungarian politicians and public figures vilified the leader of the German *Kulturverein*, Jakob Bleyer⁶, even though Bleyer demanded only cultural rights and though he and his organization supported Hungarian revisionism. At least until 1936, the Hungarian government continued its assimilation campaign: it closed down German schools or merged them with Hungarian ones, prevented the publication of German papers, harassed German community leaders, infiltrated ethnic organizations and forced upwardly mobile Germans to change their names.

³ Norbert Spannenberger, *Der Volksbund der Deutschen unter Horthy und Hitler, 1938-1945* (München: Oldenbourg, 2002).

⁴ Miklós Horthy (1868-1957) was the Regent of Hungary during the interwar years and throughout most of World War II. Horthy was styled “His Serene Highness the Regent of the kingdom of Hungary”.

⁵ Count István Bethlen was born on October 3rd, 1874, in Gernyeszeg. He was – according to the words of Ignác Romsics – “one of the last great figures of Hungarian conservative-nationalistic politics”. From 1901-18 he worked as a local politician, 1918-1920 he acted as main organizer of the counterrevolutionary forces und leader of the Hungarian peace delegation in Paris. As prime minister 1921-31 the ‘consolidation’ of Hungary and the Horthy era were connected to his name. After his resign he acted as the ‘grand old man’ of Hungarian politics till 1945. He was deported to the Soviet Union and died under unsolved circumstances.

⁶ Jakob Bleyer was born on January 25th, 1874 ,in the village Tscheb (Bacska). After his studies in Budapest, Freiburg and Leipzig he taught German as a private teacher at the University of Budapest. In 1919 he became Minister for Nationalities, in 1923 he founded the *Ungarländische Deutsche Volksbildungsverein*. He died on December 5th, 1933, in Budapest.

My main purpose will be to investigate the time of the Hungarian revolutions of 1918 and 1919 in regard to the German minority and thus show how this laid the basis for the future interaction between Hungarian German leadership and state. In this sense, I will answer the question to what extent the future radicalization in the 1930s on both sides – state and minority – were rooted in this time and which factors stood behind this development. As I mentioned in the beginning the term of the ‘people with the two souls’, i.e. being bound to both *Volk* and *Staat*, it is also of interest regarding how the political awakening Swabians tried to achieve their goals, together with or against the government. My focus lies on the period between 1918 and 1924, i.e. from the time of the Hungarian revolutions till the Sopron plebiscite, the abolishment of the Ministry for Nationalities and the consolidation of the Bethlen regime, when the future directions on both sides, minority and state, seemed already clear.

The situation of the Germans was essentially different from that of the other nationalities in Hungary for a various reasons. They did not form a tight community that had developed over a single period. The earliest German settlers came in the time of the Árpáds to Transylvania (the Saxons) and to Upper Hungary in today’s Slovakia (the Zipser Saxons). During the eighteenth and nineteenth century, after the end of the Turkish occupation the Swabians settled the Bánát, the Bácska and the so-called Swabian Turkey, i.e. the western Hungarian counties of Baranya, Pécs and Tolna. This shows that the Germans – in contrast to the Slovaks, Serbs, Romanians and Croats – were dispersed all over the country. Except for the Transylvanian Saxons, they lacked a close settlement area, and common linguistic, cultural and historical traditions. Thus a common conscious could not take place. Furthermore, a strong assimilation process took place after the *Ausgleich* in 1867, forcing a lot of Hungarian Germans to magyarize their names in order to achieve social advance.⁷ Not

⁷ According to Ferenc Szávai (Corvinus) 300.000 applications for changing names were handed in between 1835 and 1956. Together with kinsmen this affected approximately 500.000 persons.

a few turned later into ultranationalists and against their own people as can be seen in the case of Gyula Gömbös with his rambling German origin. Thus, the word Magyar, rather than Hungarian, is used throughout this study whenever the ethnic origin of the group or the persons needs to be emphasized.

Within a few decades, nationality schools disappeared, up to then of significant importance to prevent the culture of the minorities. In 1876 a political movement of the Hungarian Germans (mainly Transylvanian Saxons) emerged, followed by the foundation of the first Hungarian German Party, the *Ungarländische Deutsche Volkspartei* (Hungarian German Peoples' Party), in 1908, one year after the so-called Lex Apponyi⁸. After the First World War the minority treaties could not remove grievances and no means were found in practice of enforcing the executions of obligations assumed. The treaties were resented by the successor states as limitations of their sovereignty.

The political efforts of the traditionally apolitical and rural German minority in Hungary are highly associated with the name of Jakob Bleyer, who stepped on the political stage in 1917 as a newcomer but became the leading figure of the German minority during the interwar period. After participating in the Putsch against the Kun-regime, Bleyer became for a short time a Minister for Nationalities in the cabinet of István Friedrich, a politician from assimilated Swabian bourgeoisie. Highly treated with hostilities Bleyer soon stepped back and the Ministry for Nationalities was abolished in 1922 after the beginning of the Bethlen era. This marks a first turning point in the history of the relations between German minority and the state and led to a radicalization of Bleyer, who till his early death in 1933 kept on fighting for concessions for the German minority. What followed was a period of

⁸ The 'Lex Apponyi' of 1907 was the culmination of the school system in Hungary that forced to achieve assimilation of the minority already in the primary school. Besides curriculum changes, it mandated the teaching of the Hungarian language in elementary schools in which the language of instruction was not Hungarian. It also required the passing of language competency tests of such difficulty that it became almost impossible for minorities to pass them. These regulations were valid not only for state-supported institutions,

promises up to the second half of the 1920s when the following generation, represented by Bleyer's student Franz Anton Basch, later leader of the *Volksbund*, started his work under already radicalized purposes. Gustav Gratz, as further important figure of this time, followed a different path. Both Bleyer and Gratz – though friends in private life – represented a different way of consciousness. While Bleyer stood for the self-consciousness of the minority, Gratz saw identity as a private good that should be cultivated in private, not in public life. Due to the high respect for his person – he was for example finance and foreign minister as well as president of the German *Volksbildungsverein* – as such he served as a mediator between government and minority.⁹

In 1916 Lenin had coined the term 'self-determination' to appeal to non-Russians in the Tsarist Empire. It is of interest to regard to what extent the Hungarian Soviet Republic 1919 under Béla Kun adopted this term, especially in regard of the German minority within disintegrating post-war Hungary. To have a hunch about Hungary's political aims, one should not forget the main goal: preserving the territorial integrity and thus, later, the revision of Trianon. To achieve these goals Hungary was dependent on more powerful allies than herself, i.e.: Germany. The Hungarian leadership tried to bound ties with the German Reich in order to achieve her goal of revision. Knowing of Hungary's aims for revision, Germany could always calculate with the minority issue. Apart from this, a real interest in the Swabians from the German side emerged just after 1933, a topic that was well investigated by Norbert Spannenberger whose *Volksbund* soon turned into a standard work and, according to the wish of the author, is also available in Hungarian translation since 2005.

but also for those under the jurisdiction of the various religious denominations, that supported most of the minority schools.

⁹ Günter Schödl, „Trianon-Ungarn und die deutsche Minderheitenpolitik. Zu den „Lebenserinnerungen von Gustav Gratz,“ *Südostdeutsches Archiv* 26/27 (1983/84): 139-151.

Hungary, however, tried to continue her way as a 'nationalizing state', as Roger Brubaker put it in regard to the states of East Central Europe in the interwar period.¹⁰ If thus a movement of the Hungarian Germans took place they immediately faced two challenges. First, it was necessary to hold up the own national consciousness and, second, overcome the difficulties that emerged from the Hungarian chauvinism. It does not surprise that the anyway rare Swabian intelligence was soon assimilated after moving to the town. The non-compliance of the Nationality Law of 1867 already caused discontent and encouraged German leader like Edmund Steinacker¹¹ and later Rudolf Brandsch¹² to link the single German movements to a more effective web. These modest but ambitious beginnings were finally terminated by the war. Before World War One, most Swabians had no difficulty harmonizing their loyalty to the Hungarian state. But following Hungary's dismemberment after the war, the Magyars began demanding undivided devotion to the Magyar cultural and political nation from all Hungarian citizens, maybe disregarding that much German blood run in the veins of the ruling aristocracy, gentry and clergy.

It is not the aim of this paper to repeat what Norbert Spannenberger already extensively contributed to the issue but to light up the basis for the development of the Hungarian German minority between *Volk* and *Staat* in the framework of national chauvinism which could not achieve anything, but only create new inner convulsions and new war. The Great Powers were convinced that for the new states greater size and larger population would represent greater strength only if the substantial minority populations thus incorporated were loyal to the sovereign power in the land. Otherwise, instead of promoting

¹⁰ Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism reframed. National minorities, nationalizing states and external homelands in the new Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

¹¹ Edmund Steinacker, son of a preacher, was born in 1839 in Debrecen. 1875-1888 he was representative for several Transylvanian districts in parliament. In 1892 he was forced to retire because of his fight against magyarization. In Vienna he kept on working as a publicist and in 1906 founded the *Ungarländische Deutsche Volkspartei*.

¹² The teacher and politician Rudolf Brandsch was born in 1880 in the Transylvanian town Mediasch. 1910-1918 he was member of the Hungarian, 1919-1930 member of the Romanian parliament. 1931-1932 he was

greater stability, the result would be the weakening of these states through dangerous internal strife. However, a chauvinistic tradition among (ethnic) Hungarians believed that it had a patriotic duty to force the externals of Magyarization on the minorities and still imagined that such efforts to denationalize the minorities will really turn Germans or Slovaks into Magyars, whereas all experience proved that they will have precisely the opposite effect.

This paper will further show that the Hungarian German minority plays just a minor role in western historiography. Also Hungary herself is often not more than a footnote in expert press. A focus will lie on the interwar nationalism in Hungary, i.e. the circumstances in which the issues regarded in this thesis took place. It is therefore of interest to consider the connection between politics and historical scholarship, a ‘consciousness of history’, i.e. to think and act in a historical/political fashion, as I will show in the case of the Hungarian scholar, Gyula Szekfű, whose ideas had a huge influence on contemporary thinking in Trianon-Hungary.

In the second chapter my main focus will lie on the first months of the Hungarian Republic till the Communist’s takeover in March 1919. Hungary at this time found herself in a state of war psychosis. In order to save Hungary’s borders the government granted several rights for the minorities. Especially Oszkár Jászi¹³ and his work as Minister for Nationalities will be analysed. As will be shown, the Hungarian Germans on the other side presented themselves in glorious disagreement.

The year 1919 is probably the longest in Hungarian history. It lasted from October 1918 till June 1920. Within this period Hungary experienced democracy, communism,

Under State Secretary for ethnical minorities and founder of the *Verband der Deutschen in Großrumänien*. He died in 1953 in Romanian prison.

¹³ Oszkár Jászi (1875-1957) was a Hungarian Social Scientist and Politician. He founded the progressive journal *Husadik század* (20th Century). Under the Károlyi regime he served as Minister for Nationalities. During the Hungarian Soviet Republic he fled from Hungary and spend most of the rest of his life in the United States.

Romanian occupation and the White Terror of Horthy. Four systems of government were tried out, eight cabinets and two rival governments. Hence, ‘the long 1919’ stands in the centre of my thesis. In this section I will focus on the time between the establishment of the first communist regime on Hungarian soil and the Treaty of Trianon in June 1920 up to the Sopron plebiscite in 1921. My main attention will lay on the time of the Hungarian Soviet Republic under Béla Kun¹⁴. Furthermore, I will regard the Sopron plebiscite that transferred the mainly German inhabited Burgenland to Austria and thus show how this paved the way for the distrust towards any German element in Hungary.

In the fourth chapter of this thesis I move to the difficult task of working out the changes in the conceptual thinking of Jakob Bleyer during the 1920s. Bleyer’s metamorphosis belongs to the most problematic issues of his life. It nevertheless is directly connected to the changes in Hungarian public and social life after the time of the revolutions and the Peace Treaty of Trianon. The changes in his thinking will be evaluated through certain of his speeches at the beginning and the end of his political activity.

In contrast to Károlyi¹⁵ and Kun, the Treaty of Trianon was already a *fait accompli* when Bethlen assumed power. What concerns me in the fifth and last section of my thesis is the time after the Hungarian revolutions of 1918/19 and the first years of the Bethlen regime. The dissolution of the Ministry for Nationalities will be considered as well as the foundation of the *Ungarländische Deutsche Volksbildungsverein* (UDV) and the school question in order to show the difficulties the Germany minority faced as soon as they tried to create own associations or at least demand the fulfilment of their given rights.

¹⁴ Béla Kun (1886-1938) was a Hungarian Communist politician, who ruled Hungary, as the leader of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, for a brief period in 1919.

¹⁵ Mihály Károlyi (1875-1955) was a Hungarian politician, memoir writer and count. As head of his party he fought for ending the War from 1916 onwards. He became Prime Minister of the Government of the successful Bourgeois Democratic Revolution. He lived in exile in France and in England (from 1919) where he tried to establish connections for a Danube Confederation. He returned to Hungary in 1946 and became ambassador in Paris until he turned against the Rákosi regime (1949).

This paper ends with the year 1924. Although the first period of Hungarian German history in interwar Hungary is quiet identical with the cabinet Bethlen, the year 1924 presents a little decisive point in the sense that the government finally allowed the foundation of the *Ungarländische Deutsche Volksbildungsverein*. A turning point in the relations between minority and state did just emerge again in the beginning of the 1930s when other actors stepped on the stage. Similar as Bleyer 1917 a new figure with different and modified conceptions appears in the person of Franz Anton Basch, later leader of the *Volksbund*.

Strangely, the topic concerning me in this paper found rather less attention in historiography. In Hungary Béla Bellér was the first who worked on the issue with a scientific approach. He regards the development of the Hungarian nationality policies at the time of and after the revolutions in 1918/19.¹⁶ He mainly focuses on the German minority and its timid political articulation up to the first years of the Bethlen regime. He refuses common stereotypes and recriminations. Thomas Spira offers a concise view on the Swabian-Hungarian relations in the inter-war period.¹⁷ He describes the interaction between a nationalizing Hungary and a German minority that just awakened to national consciousness. In a Hungary suffering from war psychosis a fair compromise between the two parties was always hindered by the deceitful promises of the Bethlen administration. However, he loses himself in details and describing and does not come to fruitful conclusions. The British scholar, C.A. Macartney, provides an expert's view on Hungary in the inter-war period.¹⁸ While often visiting Hungary in the 1920s and 1930s Macartney relied on his own experiences and thus drew a sharp contemporary picture of the country, including the minority policies of the Bethlen regime and the Sopron plebiscite in which he

¹⁶ Béla Bellér, *Az ellenforradalom nemzeti politikájának kialakulása* (The development of the Nationality politics in the counterrevolutionary regime) (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1975).

¹⁷ Thomas Spira, *German-Hungarian Relations and the Swabian Problem. From Károlyi to Gömbös* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977).

took part. Moreover, the most recent publication of János Gyurgyák reconsiders the creation of Hungarian nationalism from the 19th century to present times.¹⁹ It includes the view on citizenship and the understanding of what is ‘Magyar’ of certain actors in Hungarian history, i.e. Jászi’s radicals or the group around Gömbös. It thus shows the continuities and changes in Hungarian national thinking.

The ‘Hungarian with German origin’, as Gratz himself described his identity, reflects in his speeches and essays during the inter-war period the problems of an effective and honest minority policy in Trianon-Hungary.²⁰ Gratz evaluates Hungarian minority policy as well as German efforts for political articulation and thus shows the increasing radicalization on both sides. Jakob Bleyer’s biographer Hedwig Schwind describes the life and the politics of the Swabian leader.²¹ Written just a few years after Bleyer’s death and bearing in mind the Swabian background of the author the work cannot be expected to be too critical. However, Schwind was the first and only one who had access to the literary estate of Bleyer. She is thus able to throw light on Bleyer’s concept of identity as well as his political convictions. This contains the organisation of a Hungarian German cultural representation and his quarrels with the Hungarian government for cultural rights. Periodicals like *Südostdeutsches Archiv* (1957-2004) or *Suevia Pannonica* are characterized by a wide range of topics but unfortunately just a minor percentage of authors dealt with explicit Hungarian German history.

It lies in the nature of things that scholars of Hungarian German origin, including Spannenberger, worked on the history of their people, merely, but not only focused on the time of their expulsion after the Second World War. Friedrich Spiegel-Schmidt’s essays

¹⁸ C.A. Macartney. *Hungary* (London: Ernst Benn, 1934).

¹⁹ János Gyurgyák. *Ezzé lett magyar hazátok* (This became out of your Hungarian home) (Budapest: Osiris, 2007).

²⁰ Gustav Gratz. *Deutschungarische Probleme* (Budapest: Neues Sonntagsblatt, 1938).

²¹ Hedwig Schwind, *Jakob Bleyer* (München: Süd-Ost-Institut, 1960).

thus were of great interest for me.²² The author offers detailed information about the events behind the ‘big’ events and the role Germans played at the time of the Hungarian revolutions. He thus shows their important role in the counterrevolution that was in no way directed against the state, as can be found later in Hungarian nationalist propaganda.

Numerous published and unpublished conference papers from Swabian historians were of great interest as well but they are often disturbed by a certain grade of *Deuschtiimelei*, i.e. the petty or excessive display of Germanness. It appears further that the Hungarian Germans historiography seems to be pass its existence rather isolated. In nearly no publication I could find a reference to recent nationalism or minority studies. On the contrary, when dealing with these topics the German minority is often worth not more than a footnote. It is also the aim of this paper to link these two approaches.

²² Friedrich Spiegel-Schmidt, „Die Arbeiterbewegung 1918/19 in Ungarn mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Deutschen in Ungarn“, *Südostdeutsches Archiv* 26/27 (1983/84): 100-109; Idem, „Das Deutschtum Ungarns zwischen dem Putsch gegen Peidl und der Ödenburger Volksabstimmung (1919-1921)“, *Südostdeutsches Archiv* 30/31 (1987/88): 78-111; Idem, „Die kulturpolitische Konzeption Jakob Bleyers“, *Sueva Pannonica* (11/1983): 4-18; Idem, „Jakob Bleyer in der neueren ungarischen Geschichtsschreibung“, *Sueva Pannonica* (11/1983): 69-94.

1. Nationalizing Hungary

The aim of this section is to examine Hungarian political thought in the 1920s and thus draw conclusions about the interaction between historiography and contemporary political thinking. The superiority of races serves as a key element. Moreover, I will examine Rogers Brubaker's concept of 'nationalizing states'. This concept serves as a framework of interwar policies for the whole of Central Europe. After the breakdown of the empires, the small countries of Central Europe urged the creation of ethnically homogenized states. In their 'nationalizing' efforts, however, they only created new inner convulsions among the remaining nationalities.

1.1 *Nationalizing a state*

The fear of the 'Herderian prophecy', i.e. the decline of Hungariandom in the sea of Slavic and German tribes, was a key element in Hungarian historiography since the enlightenment. Thus, the principle of the 'one and undividable Hungarian nation' becomes a key element in Hungarian nationalistic thought in the interwar period. By transforming the unitary Hungarian state from a political into a cultural concept and by enjoining the nationalities to become Magyar in language and customs the policy of Magyarization took place. This happened as early as after the compromise from 1867, and aimed to eliminate the danger the nationalism of the nationalities represented for Hungary by 'making similar'. As Marius Turda argued, the idea of national superiority in Hungary between 1880 and 1918 was based not only on racial thinking and Social Darwinism, but also on local cultural traditions that

were ingrained in the intellectual, political and social fabric of Hungarian society.²³ In turn, these traditions provided the vocabulary, imagery and rhetoric with which intellectuals and politicians in Hungary validated their assumptions about national superiority. Seen in terms of the ‘ruling nation’, ideas of race and the struggle for survival ultimately became part of the Magyar definition of the idea of national superiority, re-emerging if not to say continuing in the years following the First World War. According to István Bibó, it was the lesson of 1848/49 that the non-Hungarian speaking nationalities would use democratic freedoms to secede from Hungary.²⁴ Turning away from democratic ideas thus seemed the logical consequence, and with the deforming of the societal character, the political character deformed as well: befitting one’s own nation, national vanity, moral claims and moral irresponsibility combined with a deep inner insecurity. Alongside to the ideas of Péter Hanák and Peter Sugar about Hungarian nationalism and Magyarization, I will also examine the case of the Hungarian scholar Gyula Szekfű, in order to show the interaction between scholarship and contemporary politics and thinking. The overall framework is provided by Rogers Brubaker, whose ideas of ‘nationalizing’ states gives an impression of the domestic situation of the new emerged states in Central East Europe after the breakdown of the old empires.

Brubaker created the term of ‘nationalizing’ countries for the states of East Central Europe in the interwar period. In his definition, these are “states that are conceived by their dominant elites as nation-states, as the states of and for particular ethno-cultural nations”²⁵. According to Brubaker, it involves a target population similar to some reference population, whose putative characteristics are conceived as normative for the citizenry as a whole. On the other hand, nationalization can be directed at spheres of practice rather than groups of

²³ Marius Turda. *The idea of national superiority in Central Europe, 1880-1918* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 2004), 6.

²⁴ István Bibó. *Die Misere der osteuropäischen Kleinstaaterie* (Frankfurt a.M.: Verlag Neue Kritik, 1992), 29.

²⁵ Brubaker, *Nationalism reframed*, 79.

people. In this sense it involves dissimilation rather than assimilation. Far from seeking to make people similar, it prescribes differential treatment on the basis of their presumed fundamental difference. Instead of seeking to alter identities, it takes them as given. Policies and practices of nationalization thus were directed neither at the ethno-cultural assimilation of minorities, nor at turning them into loyal, if culturally unassimilated, citizens of the state. They were directed at the nationalization not of Germans, but of territory and of political, cultural and economic life within it. Thus, Brubaker considers them as differentialist, not assimilationist.²⁶

To compensate and to perceive past discrimination, nationalizing states urge and undertake action to promote the language, culture, demographic preponderance, economic flourishing, or political hegemony of the core ethno-cultural nation. Brubakers distinguishes the characteristics of a nationalizing state using the following seven elements: (1) the existence of a core nation or nationality, defined in ethno-cultural terms, and sharply distinguished from the citizenry or permanent resident population of the state as a whole, (2) the idea that the core nation legitimately owns the polity, that the polity exists as the polity *of* and *for* the core nation, (3) the idea that the core nation is not flourishing, that its specific interests are not adequately realized or expressed despite its rightful ownership of the state, (4) the idea that specific action is needed in a variety of settings and domains to promote the language, cultural flourishing, demographic predominance, economic welfare, or political hegemony of the core nation. In the case of Hungary this, can be seen in the so-called new nationalism, carried out by the Minister for Education, Kuno Knebelberg. He fundamentally changed the education system and supported the foundation of the Collegium Hungaricum in, for instance, Vienna and Berlin.

²⁶ Ibid., 80.

Brubaker further sees an element of a nationalizing state in (5) the conception and justification of such action as remedial or compensatory, as needed to counterbalance and correct for previous discrimination against the nation before it had its own state to safeguard and promote its interests, (6) mobilization on the basis of these ideas in a variety of settings in an effort to shape the policies or practices of the state, of particular organizations, agencies, or officials within the state, or of non-state organizations, and (7) the adoption of formal and informal policies and practices informed by the ideas outlined above.²⁷

Each of these elements can be applied to the states of East Central Europe in the interwar period. The German minorities had the fortune to belong, by ethnic-cultural nationality, if not legal citizenship, to a powerful state not unimportant for Hungary's foreign political aims. Citizenship and nationality, legal membership of the state and ethno-cultural membership of the nation, were seen as sharply distinct among the minorities in the whole of Central East Europe. However, at the end of the 1930s and during the Second World War the German minorities were indeed seen as a 'fifth column' of the Third Reich.

1.2 Creating a state of Magyars

According to Péter Hanák, the Magyarization of the Germans and Jews in Hungary was overwhelmingly voluntary, a transformation of the former Hungarus citizen loyalty into a Magyar national identity.²⁸ He was convinced that Magyarization was inflicted less on the popular strata of the minorities than on their middle class intelligentsia, who were integrated into Hungarian society. Magyarization was manifested more as a social pressure – primarily on the part of the gentry middle class. Béla Bellér pointed out that assimilation in terms of

²⁷ Ibid., 83-4.

²⁸ Péter Hanák, „A national compensation for backwardness,”; available from <<http://repositories.cdlib.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1020&context=cstch>> (accessed 12 January 2008).

language was in first line carried out by the social environment and not from the school.²⁹ The stereotype image in western public opinion of forced Magyarization regarded it as a renewed barbarism.

Peter Sugar mentions the belief of Magyar nationalists that the Magyar nation was the only *political* nation capable of creating and maintaining a state in the Lands of the Crown of Saint Steven and that it was, therefore, entitled to rule the state that was equated with these lands.³⁰ This belief was expressed by referring to the Magyars as a nation and to all others living in their state as nationalities. Nationalism becomes an aspect of politics – embracing both formal policies and informal practices, and existing both within and outside the state – rather than a discrete movement. It is based on pre-existent loyalties. People have to choose between those with whom they want to associate and those whom they want to exclude from their midst. Sugar stresses that the nationalities policy of the Magyar was not based on strength, but on weakness and fear.³¹ The strong can be generous and conciliatory; the weak are afraid to make concessions.

Indeed, between 1880 and 1918 it became clear that the policy of assimilation and Magyarization did not create a homogenized national space, as the liberals had anticipated. It rather radicalized the relationship between the Magyars and the non-Magyars. Faced with assimilation on the one hand, and stimulated by their internal nationalist transformation on the other, the non-Magyars increasingly demanded recognition of their distinct national identity. The capacity to Magyarize and assimilate was seen not only as part of Hungarian openness towards other peoples, but as a consequence of superior racial qualities that enabled their survival as an individual nation.

²⁹ Béla Bellér. “Jakob Bleyer als Minderheitenpolitiker,” in *Jakob Bleyer. Ein Leben für das Ungarndeutschtum*, ed. Wendelin Hambuch (Budapest: JBG, 1994), 33.

³⁰ Sugar. “The more it changes, the more Hungarian nationalism remains the same,” *Austrian Yearbook* (31/2000): 130.

³¹ Peter Sugar, *East European nationalism, politics, and religion* (Brookfield: Ashgate, 1999), 45.

Turda stresses that in the political culture of early nineteenth century Hungary, the concepts of assimilation and Magyarization were not applied interchangeably.³² Assimilation was commonly associated with the process of Jewish emancipation and the liberal ambition of replacing 'Natio Hungarica' with a political nation of citizens. The use of Magyarization referred to a variety of practices such as support for education in the Magyar language, for instance the Lex Apponyi from 1908, and governmental regulation of the social and economic affairs of the non-Magyars. It also referred to a nationalist and cultural programme that emphasized the existence of a single version of national identity – Magyar. Thus, Magyarization was the supreme expression of the ideal of political homogeneity, surviving war, breakdown and revolutions and shaping the image of Hungary in the interwar period.

The idea of a historic mission expresses the idea that the soul of a nation is often seized with the desire to rule over others. In the Hungarian case the mission was seen to be the bulwark against threats from the east. The role of the non-Hungarian nationalities could thus only be subordinated. It is “geographically impossible to create perfectly homogenous national states”³³, stated Count Albert Apponyi in the late 1920s, originator of the law named after him which had introduced the Hungarian language in primary schools two decades earlier and thus focused on the earliest possibility for Magyarization. He further argues that “the non ruling races should, however, enjoy complete freedom, and even adequate encouragement in the development of their own cultural individualities”³⁴.

The Hungary of Bethlen, whom Bibó described as “wrong realist, an administrator and guardian of antidemocratic governmental practices”³⁵, regarded the situation of her

³² Turda, 79.

³³ Albert Apponyi, ed., „The historic mission of Hungary and the states aggrandised to her detriment,” in *Justice for Hungary. Review and criticism of the effect of the Treaty of Trianon* (London: Longmans, 1928), 12.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Bibó, *Kleinstaaterei*, 52-3.

minorities as a merely domestic issue while it steadily interfered in matters concerning the Hungarians abroad. In case of revision, Hungary would have granted certain rights to the minorities in the neighbouring countries but was not ready to do so with regard to the minorities within Hungary. The rhetorical justification of this behaviour derives from Pál Teleki. Teleki distinguished between traditional, voluntary and forced minorities. They latter should – due to historic reasons – receive autonomy rights. According to Teleki's perception of 1928, only traditional and voluntary minorities settle in Trianon-Hungary who were only entitled to limited nationality rights. According to this the Germans fall without doubt under the latter category and as such became 'outsiders within'. Teleki went further and demanded that "no single nationality has the right to cultivate the language and the customs of their voluntarily left home. They have to assimilate and who can not do so is free to go back where he came from"³⁶. Thus compliance and the willingness for cooperation would be judged as a sign of weakness. Hungary, on the other side, was striving to show strength.

1.3 The case of Gyula Szekfű

The Hungarian historian Gyula Szekfű can serve as a special case to the interaction between historiography and political thinking. Throughout his career he drifted from a pro-Dualism to nationalism and later became first ambassador of Hungary to the Soviet Union. Szekfű's work had a huge influence on contemporary thinking in Hungary of the 1920s. His message represented the official ideology of the government. His concept of the decline of the Magyar race is therefore of crucial interest.

In the nineteenth century, the historical tradition portrayed the Magyars as the legitimate ruling elite of the Lands of the Crown of St. Stephen. Two definitions of the

³⁶ Paul Ginder. „Jakob Bleyers Weg vom ungarischen Patrioten zur deutschen Volksgemeinschaft,“ in *Jakob*

nations, political and racial, co-existed. The former was inclusive and incorporated, in theory, every inhabitant of the Lands of the Crown of St. Stephen; the latter was exclusive and contrasted the Magyars to non-Magyar ethnic groups. Faced with the emerging nationalism of other ethnic groups in Hungary, late nineteenth-century Hungarian nationalism often resorted to racial arguments. Nationalizing initiatives sought to build the state as a specifically ‘Hungarian’ state, i.e. as a state that would embody and express the will and interests of the Hungarian nation. Ideas played no minor role. What is thus interesting to consider is the connection between politics and historical scholarship, a ‘consciousness of history’, i.e. to think and act in a historical-political fashion.

The ideas of the Hungarian historian, Gyula Szekfű, had a huge influence on contemporary thinking in Trianon-Hungary.³⁷ He wrote in a political and intellectual context and his writings on past history and contemporary politics reflected the predominant view of the politically influential segment of Hungarian society. Similarly, his books and articles exerted a strong influence on the Hungarian intellectual community. During his early scholarly years up to the end of the First World War, he was much influenced by German intellectual streams, mainly by Wilhelm Dilthey and Friedrich Meinecke, i.e. examining the spirit of an age by examining intellectual currents and ideas of the leading statesmen and thinkers. Thus, the concept of *Geistesgeschichte* became the dominant philosophical orientation in interwar Hungary and Szekfű its master. It believes that “human history is essentially the history of the manifestations of the human soul and it rejects the contention that there are objective laws which govern historical and social evolution”³⁸. The Hungarian language knows the words *beleélés* (live into) and *átérzés* (feel through) for of it.

According to Szekfű, the Hungarian state was the product of a single nation, the Magyar nation, and with St. Stephen it entered into the ‘Christian-German cultural

Bleyer. *Ein Leben für das Ungarndeutschtum*, ed. Wendelin Hambuch (Budapest: JBG, 1994), 67.

³⁷ see: Gyurgyák, 291-312.

community'. In his main work *Három Nemzedék* (Three generations), he reflects his view that the Christian and Magyar ways were irreconcilable with Western ideas carried out and advocated by the Jews. "Three Generations" expressed in a scholarly genre the view of Hungary's recent past that dominated public thought about the nation's circumstances in the aftermath of the Bolshevik revolution and for many years that followed. Szekfű examines three generations of politicians and statesmen who were responsible for political and cultural development in Hungary prior to 1914: Széchenyi, the generation of the *Ausgleich* and the Millenium generation. According to Turda, the Millenium generation adopted 'Herrenvolk' liberalism in order to create a new form of political thinking.

In theory, 'Herrenvolk' liberalism preached a concept of the nation that integrated every ethnic group within its orbit, a feature retained from earlier theories of Hungarian liberalism. In practice, however, it favoured the superiority of the Magyars over non-Magyar national groups.³⁹

This is similarly expressed by Albert Apponyi, one of the representatives of the Millenium generation, originator of the so-called 'Lex Apponyi' of 1907 which forbade non-Hungarian textbooks in primary schools and with high political influence in Trianon-Hungary. He stressed that later German immigrants could hardly be described as the representatives of higher German culture "since they were for the most part simple farmers and traders"⁴⁰. It was exactly Szekfű's belief that the ruling classes of the time themselves, the by then 50-, 60- or 70-year old generation was responsible for the Magyar 'race' still not being equal to the big *Kulturvölker*.

The message of *Három nemzedék* was that the newfangled foreign ideology of liberalism, leading inevitably to revolution, an alien urban culture, atheism and amorality, had to be combated by constant renewal of religion and nationalism. This had a far reaching effect: the blame was fixed. Failure by omission on the part of the Magyar ruling class and

³⁸ Steven Bela Vardy, *Modern Hungarian Historiography* (New York: East European Quarterly, 1976), 63.

³⁹ Turda, 72.

wrong doing on the part of the liberals and Jews were offered as explanation, and the readers were free to conjure up their solution. This expressed the official views of contemporary Hungary. According to Szekfű, liberalism was the foremost cause of disorder. It aggravated, if it did not bring about the nationality conflicts. Trianon was the result. Therefore, the perceiving 'liberal' era was ruinous. While recognizing the merits and commending the ideas of classical liberalism, Szekfű still regarded it as ultimately detrimental to Hungarian national evolution. If, as Szekfű asserted, liberalism was basically inimical to the 'Magyar soul' even in its classical form, in its radicalized form it became totally unacceptable and contributed much to the downfall of the nation. It did this by helping to undermine the position of the Magyar vis-a-vis the national minorities; by contributing to the denationalization of the Magyar culture and national life through superficial assimilation of alien ethnic and cultural elements. In Szekfű's view the Magyar soul was basically traditional, moderately progressive and revolution was fundamentally alien to it. In his estimation it was the alien spirit of pseudo-liberalism and its impact upon the fallible Magyar soul which led to the prostitution of scholarship, art and politics, and to the virtual disappearance of self-criticism and finally to collapse.

Széchenyi and the minorities both rhymed well with interwar Hungary's ideological orientation. Thus, Hungary's dismemberment and the revisionism both of the political regime and of interwar historiography made the study of the national minority question the number one problem of contemporary historical scholarship. *Magyar Szemle*, a journal launched by Szekfű, became an important forum for the discussions of nationality problems. As early as *Állam és nemzet* (State and nation), Szekfű constituted the first serious treatment of the history of the non-Magyar nationalities in Hungary. To him the Swabians, for instance, were the tillers of the soil. He considered neither racial nor the ethnic components

⁴⁰ Apponyi, 14.

of a people to be of deciding importance and considered nationality and nationhood a historic creation. Szekfű saw the modern Hungarian nationality not as a membership in a purely ethnic group, but as a part of a mixture of varied ethnic components. To speak of Magyar race or even a Magyar nationality, he believed is merely to speak of the prevalent culture within the Hungarian state, i.e. a *primus inter pares*.⁴¹ Moreover, he was convinced that modern nationalism as a basis for the state could not be reconciled with the past and it would be dangerous for the future of Hungary. As he stated:

If we want to be the leading nation in the Danubian basin ever again [...] we will want to have other nationalities feel at home in our country. Magyarization is a proof of *Kismagyar* view. If we resign ourselves to a country where there are no other nationalities but the Magyar that is nothing but making the bitter fate of Trianon permanent.⁴²

An aspect of the narrow-minded *Kismagyar* view also included the conviction of making similar. For Szekfű, Magyarization, carried out mainly by the Millenium generation, was unwise and counterproductive. It was rather a *Nagymagyar* idea, i.e. the peaceful coexistence of several nationalities under Magyar leadership that would hinder the decline of the nation. A further point of his critics concerned contemporary society. The 1920s appeared to Szekfű as a time of “neo-Baroque”⁴³, including a new ‘Herrenvolk’ ideology along with a new Christian-national movement quite contradictory to the requirements of that time. This automatically led to a manifestation of neo-Baroque attitudes in society as a whole.⁴⁴ Here again István Bibó comes to mind. He stated that the Hungarians in the key dates of their contemporary history were never able to act appropriate to the circumstances.⁴⁵ It appears that for Szekfű the Millenium generation was an illness par excellence, while re-gaining influence in politics as well as in society after the Treaty of

⁴¹ Gyula Szekfű, *Három nemzedék és ami utána következik* (Three generations and what comes after) (Budapest: ÁKV-Maecenas, 1989), 389.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 393-4.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 402-415.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 405.

⁴⁵ István Bibó, “Deformierter ungarischer Charakter. Ungarische Geschichte auf Abwegen,”; available from <www.akanien.ac.at/beitr/fallstudie/IBiboI.pdf> [(accessed 17 March 2008)].

Trianon, they could only worsen the situation of the country and deepen its xenophobic character.

Gyula Szekfű was no racist in the modern sense of the word but rather a patriot trying to do his best for his country. He agitated by no means against the nationalities but rather blamed Hungarian policies in the past and present for the decline of the nation. However, in a sense of *Staatsnotwendigkeit* (state necessity) Hungary's policies in the 1920s seemed somewhat appropriate. The aim to revise Trianon dominated Hungarian political thought throughout the interwar period. All policies were subordinated to this aim. Hence, in domestic policies efforts were undertaken to reduce the diversity of the Hungarian nation. However, Magyarization, as Szekfű also stated, can be seen as a grievous mistake and achieved nothing but a further polarization of neo-Baroque Hungarian society.

In the minds of contemporary politicians, the trauma of Trianon was fixed and while denying their own responsibility the blame was transferred to minority groups, mainly to the Jews, who served as scapegoats par excellence. Szekfű, one has to admit, gave the scholarly justification for this. However, his anti-Semitism may have rooted more in the *Zeitgeist* than in his own racial convictions, taking into account that he acted as a nationalist throughout the 1920s, but refused to accept Nazi ideology in the decade prior to the Second World War. Although believing in the role of the Magyars as *primus inter pares* in the Carpathian basin, Szekfű pointed out the dangerous impact of trying to 'make similar'. In this sense the leading politicians of the time did not follow him and continued their aim to make Hungary a state for Magyars alone, instead of threatening the modern Hungarian nationality not as a membership in a purely ethnic group, but as a part of a mixture of varied ethnic components.

Before Trianon, concessions towards the minorities could demonstrate the benevolence of the Hungarian government and thus save the integrity of Hungary. When the disintegration of historic Hungary became a *fait accompli*, there was no reason anymore to

grant rights to the remaining nationalities. However, quite the opposite would have been logical. The nationalities, due to their limited number, could not serve as a political power factor anymore. It would have thus been appropriate to grant even more rights than they demanded in order to keep them as a political resource. 'Nationalizing' the state was therefore the wrong step, creating only new inner convulsions. Moreover, it made the fate of Trianon permanent. Trianon as such created a homogenized nation state out of the historical Hungary and could thus have encouraged the formation of a democratic system. Instead, it just strengthened the claustrophobic nature of the country and its xenophobia.

2. First steps

In this section my main focus will lie on the first months of the Hungarian Republic till the Communist's takeover in March 1919. Hungary at this time found herself in a state of war psychosis. In order to save Hungary's borders the government granted several rights to the minorities. Especially the work of Oszkár Jászi as Minister for Nationalities, who formulated his ideas concerning the minority question as early as the eve of World War One, will be analysed. As will be shown, the Hungarian Germans on the other side presented themselves in glorious disagreement in a time, where the opposite would have been necessary.

2.1 Károlyi, Jászi and the minority issue

In order to save the national integrity of Hungary, Mihályi Károlyi, in his speech on October 16th, 1918, demanded a new orientation in foreign policy, democratization of the country and new ways in nationality policies. Soon, the aim of the government became clear to get along with the minorities living within the borders of Hungary and find an arrangement for them. In the long run, this was nothing less than neglecting territorial integrity. Due to the victory of the revolution, this was further pushed by Oszkár Jászi's Civil Radicals. They demanded the realisation of the Nationality Law from 1868. Jászi identified the reason why the Nationality Law was not put into practice lay in the fact that the Magyar nation state and the nationality bugbear became the leading conceptions of Hungarian policy after the compromise. "It was shouted out by the demagogues, defended by the publicists, carried out

even by these statesmen who publicly advocated liberalism toward the nationalities.”⁴⁶ Although in Hungary the law did not recognize nationality *communities* within the ‘indivisible and unitary Hungarian nation’, and did recognize *individuals* whose first language or declared nationality was not Hungarian, additional legislation to regulate the use of languages seemed necessary. Soon, however, Jászi and his “intellectual illusions”⁴⁷ had to face reality when he became Minister for Nationalities under Károlyi.

As early as the beginning of November, Jászi started negotiations with the minorities. He was instructed to establish a ministry that was ordered “to make preparations for the rights to self-determination of the nations living in Hungary”⁴⁸. The rhetoric already implies that in the increasingly hopeless situation Jászi did not wish to promise too much. Litván suggests that however clear Jászi might have been in his mind about the overarching importance of the nationality question, of preparing for the peace negotiations and foreign policy in general, he was not really able to give it his undivided attention.⁴⁹ Indeed, it turned out that this job was even too much for him and October 1918 was a month of senseless waiting.

Jászi’s concept of a ‘Switzerland of the East’, i.e. a federal Hungary with autonomies for nationalities, would have been the only solution that accorded with historical reality and with Hungarian interests alike.⁵⁰ Consequently, Jászi refused political rights but granted wide ranging autonomic rights towards the nationalities and therefore was heavily attacked by the press. The national liberal and respected *Pester Lloyd* describes him as someone who stands in the market square of a village that is going up in flames, and instead of doing

⁴⁶ Oszkár Jászi, *The Dissolution of the Habsburg monarchy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 327.

⁴⁷ Gyurgyák, 192.

⁴⁸ György Litván, *A twentieth-century prophet. Oscar Jászi* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2006), 167.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 159.

⁵⁰ For a detailed description of Jászi’s minority conceptions see: Gyurgyák, 179-192.

anything he holds a talk on the importance of being able to differentiate parish parties.⁵¹ In the opinion of the newspaper, a theorist is allowed to think about the far future, a minister instead, who is responsible for the fate of his country, has the duty to work on the given facts. The flourishing future would be worthless for the country if it never reaches it. So Jászi was blamed predominantly for his lack of *Realpolitik*.

When, on November 16th, 1918, the *Deutsche Volksrat* (German People's Council) was founded, the possibility appeared to unite all German people of Hungary for the first time under one institutional umbrella. The *Volksrat* was founded by representatives of numerous German groups, among them the *Deutsche Volkspartei*, *Deutscher Bauernbund*, *Siebenbürgisch-Sächische Volkspartei*, German social democratic workers etc. The Saxon, Rudolf Brandsch, as a then leading figure among the Germans in the Carpathian basin, claimed that no difference should be made anymore between Germans and Germans. The task of the *Volksrat* was to represent the demands of the Hungarian Germans towards the government. It is interesting to consider that the issue of self-determination could not be applied due to the fact that the Germans did not settle in one community. Therefore, it was important for them to follow their own consciousness (*sich nach seiner Eigenart voll ausleben*).⁵² On the same occasion they claimed the integrity of the Hungarian fatherland “as long as it is possible”⁵³ and demanded the democratization of the country, total autonomy in the cultural, especially in the educational sector, the unlimited use of the German mother tongue in administration, courts and other spheres of public life, as well as laws which would guarantee their rights. Brandsch furthermore invited Jakob Bleyer and his adherents to join the club. Some weeks earlier, Bleyer had founded his own *Volksrat* with

⁵¹ *Pester Lloyd*, 21 December 1918.

⁵² *Pester Lloyd*, 12 November 1918.

⁵³ *Pester Lloyd*, 12 November 1918.

the addition “*von diesseits des Königssteigs*”⁵⁴. This geographical term automatically excluded the Transylvanian Saxons. He claimed that with them and their ‘pan-German’ leader, Rudolf Brandsch, no common policy could be made.⁵⁵ However, it was not only personal disgust. Taking into account the unpopularity of Brandsch in Hungarian nationalist circles, Bleyer feared serious inner political problems as a result of this joining together. Even some years later the Saxons were still characterized eager to separate Hungariandom and Swabiandom from each other in order to make every cooperation between them impossible.⁵⁶ As Bleyer stated, “the Brandsch wing is hostile towards Hungariandom and that is why they keep silent when one is talking about the sincere friendship towards Hungariandom”⁵⁷. Hence, it was the position towards Hungariandom that separated both. Moreover, Bleyer compared the Swabians and the Saxons with a just born girl that should get married to a grown up man. Hence, he made the difference between the two directions clear and while Bleyer’s priority lay in the acceptance of Hungarian interests, the representatives of the Brandsch movement demanded a modern minority policy based on the principles of Woodrow Wilson.

Bleyer believed in the vitality of German rural culture. Even if the Hungarians limited German exclusively to private use, the Germans would survive, provided their ethnic village school system remained vigorous. As the war wound down, Bleyer clung to his views of 1917. He attacked the Transylvanian Saxon leader, Rudolf Brandsch, several times for urging Hungary’s Germans to demand full autonomy.⁵⁸ Bleyer conceded certain legitimate grievances, but rejected autonomy on patriotic grounds. Restoration of German elementary schools was his only really significant demand, but only in total harmony with

⁵⁴ It is not clear how strong this *Volksrat* really was. Due to the fact that Bleyer excluded the Saxons as well as the Social Democrats one can certainly not speak of a ‘breakthrough’. Brandsch’s *Volksrat* on the other side had more followers from the beginning.

⁵⁵ *Pester Lloyd*, 13 November 1918.

⁵⁶ OL K26, XXII, Report from György Steuer 1921.

⁵⁷ Schwind, 58.

the Hungarians. When, on November 1st, 1918, Károlyi officially recognized Hungary's first German administrative organization, the *Deutschungarische Volksrat*, Bleyer announced its program and pledged that all Germans would defend Hungary's integrity, reject autonomy, but demand full national privileges.

Since the day of the establishment of the *Volksrat*, November 16th, 1918, Germans obtained the right to abolish Hungarian instructions in the first two elementary grades in predominantly German regions. But shortly thereafter, the *Volksrat* insisted on separate German schools, on official German in the courts and the administration of predominantly German areas, and that non-Germans should be excluded from German affairs. In order to satisfy these demands, Marton Lovaszy, the Minister of Education and Religion, ordered on November 21st, 1918, that the educational concessions granted a few days earlier be expanded to include church-run institutions.⁵⁹ This was important because nearly 86% of German schools were confessional. Signs of German discontent with Károlyi soon appeared. Obviously, the new government had neither the means nor really any strong desire to implement properly the minority policies. Throughout Hungary, village and county officials effectively blocked the regime's attempt to provide at least some improvement in the German school system. The Germans also discovered that Count Albert Apponyi's 1907 school law, the 'Lex Apponyi', which forbade non-Hungarian elementary textbooks in elementary schools and thus targeted Magyarization on the first educational level, was still in effect.

For Bleyer, 'Hungary' was not just a geographical term but the expression of a spiritual boundary and he tried systematically to bring the Protestants into discredit, charging them with pan-German activities. One decade later, Bleyer, already in a bad mental health condition, found a more moderate tone and just named a certain foreignness between

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 63-4.

the Saxons and the Hungarian nation, which would not exist in the case of Swabians.⁶⁰ However, the Saxons did not want to subordinate under a nationalistic and chauvinistic political *Zeitgeist*. Bleier on the other hand propagated his patriotic ideas via his newspaper *Neue Post*. But when he mentioned the creation of a *Kulturverein* it seemed too much because this would have meant the practical realization of Bleier's national political course, a course directed offensively against the Saxons.

2.2 Jászi's legacy

Following the wish of Minister Oszkár Jászi both German councils united on January 1st, 1919, in the so-called *Deutsch-Ungarische Politische Verband*. But this unified institution lost its influence due to the resignation of Jászi and the decision of the Transylvanian Saxons in Mediasch on January 8th, 1919, to join Romania. The Saxon leader, Rudolf Brandsch, gained far reaching promises from the Romanians concerning local self-administration and free cultural development of the Germans. Brandsch justified this step to join Romania by pointing towards the hitherto suppression by the Hungarian government. However, the limits of governmental tolerance became obvious on January 27th when the autonomy law for the Germans in Hungary was accepted, mainly because of the secessionist tendencies in Western Hungary. This law, however, had more a symbolic than a practical meaning due to the weakness and disagreements within the German minority that made a realization more or less impossible. But even politicians did not really consider putting the law into practice. The election districts disregarded the German population and also the expressions of politicians convinced Brandsch in July 1919 that “it is superfluous to say that

⁶⁰ Gustav Gratz, *Deutschungarische Probleme* (Budapest: Neues Sonntagsblatt, 1938), 13.

the new autonomy law till now only exists on paper and that the first cheating took place with the new election system”⁶¹.

It was not an easy task serve as minister in the time of the revolutions, especially as Minister for Nationalities. Hence, Jászi’s minority policies were heavily attacked by the liberal press. *Pester Lloyd* blamed him for granting too extensive concessions to the minorities and tried to prevent him from continuing this policy in the negotiations with the German minority that took place in this time in early 1919.⁶² Jászi refused to accept the restrictions propagated by the newspaper and claimed that he does not carry out his policies on a stock market basis.⁶³ He further pointed out that “disregarding a weak irredentism by the west Hungarian Germans, the German element is our most reliable nationality”⁶⁴. Soon afterwards he resigned. Jászi gave up his ministry, but in the opinion of the contemporary press this should not affect the minority policies of the government. These still should be based on the self-determination of the people in regard to the nationality question as well as in foreign policies.⁶⁵

Jászi’s brief ministership achieved substantive success in just two areas. The first of these was to elaborate and gain acceptance of an arrangement for an autonomous ‘Ruska Krajna’, or ‘Subcarpathian Rus’, that was to be embodied in People’s Law 1918/X at the end of the year. This was also the model for a People’s Law 1919/VI ‘On the right to Self-Determination of the German people of Hungary’ that the government ratified and published at the end of January for those groups of ethnic German, primarily in the Burgenland region of Western Hungary, that formed a majority in a contiguous area of the country.⁶⁶ Despite the cabinet’s objections that the Germans should not merit special treatment, the law VI of

⁶¹ Spannenberger, *Volksbund*, 24.

⁶² *Pester Lloyd*, 3 January 1919.

⁶³ *Pester Lloyd*, 4 January 1919.

⁶⁴ *Pester Lloyd*, 4 January 1919.

⁶⁵ *Pester Lloyd*, 20 January 1919.

⁶⁶ *Pester Lloyd*, 29 January 1919.

January 29th, 1919, granted cultural and political autonomy to Germans in Hungary's predominantly German-speaking areas.⁶⁷ This included administration, justice, education and religion. This law recognized the Germans in Hungary as a nation and thus breaks with the traditional terminology which knew only one Hungarian nation in the country. The central organ of the German nation was the minister, its autonomy covered jurisdiction, administration, school and education; special tasks had to be worked out together with the government. The German sensed that these regulations were merely designed to forestall further German defections. Concessions to the Germans of Hungary paradoxically exacerbated the nationality conflict. Bleyer now scorned the new law because he claimed that political autonomy conflicted with his own patriotic views.⁶⁸ The Germans also wondered why their cherished goals should have been achieved so easily. For Jászi it was much more than an extra solution for the Germans. To him "the lucky future of Europe depends on our ability to unite every nation of Central and East Europe in such a confederation that guarantees unlimited economic and cultural development".⁶⁹ It should also serve as a sign for the Entente that Hungary fundamentally changed. Bleyer was not willing to follow anymore and called Jászi's concept "an adventure, blind eagerness, an operetta, a tragic comedy"⁷⁰. He stepped back from the *Volksrat* before it accepted the law. However, Hungary was sliding into crisis with the Communists in wait. In his memoirs published in 1920 Jászi said the following about his activities as a Nationality minister in late 1918:

My politics could have only three rational goals: to save the idea of the plebiscite and eventually favourable adjust the final borders of the new Hungary; to protect national traditional economic and transportation cooperation between the motherland and territories to be disconnected; to prepare an anticipated confederative union of states that would assure the complete autonomy of each state within a vast federation based on territory or personal

⁶⁷ Schwind, 69.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 70.

⁶⁹ Spiegel-Schmidt, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 131.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

land-register, whichever is possible. Namely, my policy is rather for the future than for the present.⁷¹

Jászi's ideas should remain on theoretical nature. Hungarian opinion, conscious and unconscious, underwent a violent and perhaps a-natural reaction to the old ideas and practices. It felt that concessions to the nationalities were not only futile but wrong in principle. Thus, the lessons of 1918 were that if the nationalities had only been magyarized they would never have been lost. Hence, the fault was too less, and not too little, Magyarization. A repetition of this 'mistake' should not be made.

⁷¹ György Litván, "Oszkár Jászi's Danube Federation Theories," in *Geopolitics in the Danube region. Hungarian reconciliation efforts 1848-1998*, eds. Ignac Romsics/Béla Király (Budapest: CEU-Press, 1998), 231.

3. The long 1919

In the following section I will focus on the time between the establishment of the first communist regime on Hungarian soil and the Treaty of Trianon in June 1920 up to the Sopron plebiscite in 1921. My main focus is on the time of the Hungarian Soviet Republic under Béla Kun. This includes also the standpoint of Germany towards the Communist's policies. Furthermore, I will examine the Sopron plebiscite that transferred the mainly German inhabited Burgenland to Austria and thus laid the foundation for the future distrust towards the German minority.

3.1 Post-war Hungary from Germany's point of view

The year 1919 is probably the longest in Hungarian history. It lasted from October 1918 till June 1920. Within this period Hungary experienced both democracy and communism, Romanian occupation and the White Terror of Horthy. Four systems of government were tried out, eight cabinets and two rival governments. During this time, German diplomacy's standpoint towards Hungary's national integrity remained ambiguous. A report from 1919 indicates that "it is questionable if a renewed power of Hungary complies with German interests"⁷². The larger Hungary, the bigger would have been her influence in Germany's Middle East policies. A small Hungary, on the other hand, meant the necessity of following Germany. Despite this, Germany shared sympathies with Romania because of the approximately one million Germans living there. With the help of the politicians of German descent – so the calculation – Romania could break away from its boundaries with France towards a more German friendly course.

⁷² Gyula Tokody, *Deutschland und die ungarische Räterepublik* (Budapest: Akadémiai kiadó, 1983), 14.

Hence, the minority issue was regarded from the aspect of a Great Power. The most important basis and the best organized force were represented by the Transylvanian Saxons. Their cooperation with the Hungarian government excluded them from cooperation with the other nationality groups but from their midst sprung politicians, like Rudolf Brandsch, who kept the national consciousness in South Hungary awake. The future of the South Hungarian Swabians who just awoke to national consciousness was seen with sorrow in Budapest and Berlin. The economic situation was still rural but “in the future national state of Hungary they would, saved by the autonomy laws⁷³, through their culture and industriousness [...] gradually achieve a magnificent importance”⁷⁴.

The declaration of the Hungarian Soviet Republic on March 21st, 1919, brought a new situation for German foreign policy. Berlin’s opinion was in first line declining due to the ideological closeness to the Soviet Union, but it also offered the possibility to influence the conference at Versailles that took place during this time. Paradoxically, also the Hungarian elite turned their head westwards. “Leading persons of the actual regime suppose that they can save their rule best in approaching both states (i.e. German and Austria) and not to Russia.”⁷⁵ This found its reason in Hungary’s economic situation. The country faced an essential lack of coal and the economic blockade that existed since the beginning of the war was still not ended at this time. Foreign dependencies thus did not seem to affect Hungary’s treatment of the nationalities. The German general consulate described Hungary’s nationality policies as ‘National Chauvinism’. It made the district administration responsible for the hostile measures against the minorities. So we face a contradiction between the “principles of Bolshevism and Nationality policy”, a fact that was also

⁷³ These laws were accepted at the end of January 1919, followed by the foundation of the *Deutsche Landesregierungsrat* (German State Council) which was entitled to control the Minister for Nationalities

⁷⁴ Tokody, 16.

⁷⁵ *Ibd.*, 37.

condemned by the government.⁷⁶ Lenin in his note of 1916 pointed out that it would be a „betrayal of socialism to renounce the realisation of the self-determination of the nations”⁷⁷. As will be shown, the German minority played a paramount role in this issue.

3.2 Communism and nationalities

When Kun assumed power on March 21st, 1919, only the Ruthenians and West Hungary's Germans remained firmly under Hungarian rule. The German general consulate, disregarding the radical political changes, did not expect political changes in the movement of the Hungarian Germanism.⁷⁸ Finally, the Treaty of Versailles was signed on June 28th, 1919 and sealed Germany's international isolation. These affected also the East European Soviet movements in an unfavourable way. Soviet Russia and Hungary now finally stood alone.

According to Tőkés, national self-determination was inconceivable to Kun without the establishment of an international Soviet Republic, which would eliminate all sources of nationality problems.⁷⁹ He maybe ignored the minority situation entirely because of this. Soon, however, foreign policy considerations, especially Austrian intrigues in Burgenland, prompted a more pragmatic reappraisal of the German problem in Hungary. Spira describes the Communists' ventures into minority politics and diplomacy as “dogmatic and amateurish”⁸⁰. Kun deemed nationality problems a major nuisance, a bourgeois affectation, and hence just another obstacle to communism. “Far from entertaining seriously the

⁷⁶ Ibid., 47.

⁷⁷ Lenin, Wladimir, „Die Ergebnisse der Diskussion über die Selbstbestimmung,“; available from <www.mlwerke.de/le/le22/le22_326.htm#Kap.1> (accessed 3 April 2008).

⁷⁸ Tokody, 47-8.

⁷⁹ Rudolf Tőkés, *Béla Kun and the Hungarian Soviet Republic: the origins and role of the Communist Party of Hungary in the revolutions of 1918-1919* (New York: Praeger, 1967), 107.

⁸⁰ Spira, *Swabian problem*, 28.

Swabians' ethnic and cultural aspiration, he wished to conduct Hungarians of every race, nationality, or creed, into a Communist nirvana.”⁸¹

From the founding of the Communist Party on there existed no peculiar nationality programme. Hence, the nationality decrees of the Soviet Republic seemed quiet generous, but were in first line propaganda that could not hinder the continuation of the Magyarization policies similar to the Russification of the national minorities in Soviet Russia. Nationalism did not vanish from one day to another and the Germans recognized that Kun had no interest in their ethnic survival; that concessions were to court their support to counter Austrian and Allied diplomatic measures detrimental to Hungary's integrity. Indeed, Kun had cause for concern. Although publicly Austria's Social Democrats pledged non-interference in Hungary unless Kun was deposed, their subversions dismayed Hungary's new leaders. Partly, this explains why Kun meant to block German minority rights. He was far more interested in staffing vulnerable West Hungarian border posts with reliable Marxists than with pleasing suspected German nationalists.⁸²

Although a *Gaurat für Deutschwestungarn* (District Council for West Hungary) functioned as a virtually sovereign body, the government failed to clarify the constitutional status of Germans residing outside *Gaurat* jurisdiction. After prolonged procrastinations, the regime finally limited German autonomy to Burgenland, and blundered again by deferring to the regime's influential and determined Hungarian minority. Bowing to their nationalistic pressures, Kun removed Sopron from the *Gaurat's* jurisdiction. The Germans resented this, because Hungarians comprised only about one-half of Sopron's population. The Germans resented even more their new leaders and lesser executives, who all turned out to be Hungarian or Hungarian Jewish Marxists. The Károlyi regime had only recently incurred

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid., 30.

German disaffection by using non-German higher officials in German-inhabited areas. The Communists committed the same blunder, and suffered the same consequences.

Communist Hungary's self-appointment and Moscow-inspired task as the centre for the spread of world revolution in Eastern Europe was buttressed by Kun's own version of nationality policies inside the proletarian state. Kun hoped to win over the Slovak, Ruthenian and German minorities by transforming Hungary into a federated Soviet Republic. Drawing on the appropriate section of the 1918 Russian constitution, Kun, in return for a Hungarian-run system of centralized administrative controls, was willing to grant local economic autonomy to nationality groups, except for the right of secession from Hungary.⁸³ To demonstrate his concern for minority rights, Kun maintained the fiction of a bona fide German cultural association. The *Deutscher Volksrat* metamorphosed into the *Deutscher Kulturbund für Ungarn*.⁸⁴ The *Volksrat* declared to hand over the German interests to the hands of the People's Commission Officer.⁸⁵ Heinrich Kalmár, the newly appointed Commissioner, also managed the cultural bureau *Deutsches Volksamt* (German People's Bureau) and its official journal, the *Volksblatt*. The government ordered all authorities to communicate with minority people in their native tongue.⁸⁶

Within Kun's biggest mistakes, the nationality issue seems the most striking. He repudiated the principle of self-determination of the proletariat. Kun's attempts to solve the nationality problem on this basis deepened the growing Hungarian-German gulf, and terminated any further meaningful dialogue. On June 23rd, 1919, the Kun regime, still soliciting German support, unveiled its long-heralded final constitution, with certain favourable provisions for the minorities. But German public opinion in Hungary had already spurned Marxism. The confusing directives, German disaffection bordering on civil war and

⁸³ Tőkés, 144.

⁸⁴ Schwind, 74.

⁸⁵ *Pester Lloyd*, 25 March 1919.

⁸⁶ Schwind, 75.

a regime of Red Terror in Burgenland against secessionists, finally undercut Kun. His regime fell on August 1st, 1919. One of Kun's last official acts was to disapprove on July 21st, the provision of the Treaty of St. Germain, which had allocated Burgenland to Austria the previous day.

Kun bequeathed to Gyula Peidl, his short time Social Democratic successor, an aggravated Burgenland crisis, a German nationality policy in shambles and a thoroughly alienated German public in Hungary. The rule of Kun's successor Peidl lasted only five days. Next, István Friedrich, a Károlyi Independence Party renegade, became prime minister through a coup backed by the Austrian archduke Josef. His ministry went through three turbulent cabinet changes and had neither power nor authority. This *coup d'état* was thus as a further set-back for the suffering country. However, Jakob Bleyer re-emerged by having been one of the chief anti-Soviet conspirators in league with Friedrich and other ultra-conservatives. The two men shared a similar *Weltanschauung*. Both professed pro-Habsburg sentiments, they hated bolshevism and republicanism, and they favoured moderate concessions for Hungary's German minority. Bleyer enjoyed such influence at the moment with Hungarian and Germans alike that, in the middle of August 1919, he accepted the portfolio of Minister for Nationalities in the second Friedrich cabinet.

Concluding, what did the Hungarian Soviet Republic contribute to the solution of the nationality problem? As Tilkovszky correctly indicates, the revolutions broke with the nationality policies of former Hungarian governments and offered a wide range of nationality rights.⁸⁷ On the other side, these rights were without doubt connected to the hope of preserving the integrity of Hungary. Hence, there is no reason to believe that the Magyarization on the local level ceased to exist. Also the nationality policies of the Communists are not free of contradiction. In theory the Communists shared the same

standpoint as Soviet Russia, i.e. the self determination of nations up to secession. Practically it fought for every meter of Hungarian soil and tried to defend even the Western border. According to Spiegel-Schmidt, the whole issue was complicated, when Kun brought in Lenin's and Bucharin's debate whether self determination is for the proletariat only or for nations as a whole.⁸⁸ The autonomy laws already existed since the times of the Károlyi government. The Soviets could only exchange the personal staff. Under pressure of secessionist tendencies, Western Hungary was built up to an autonomous region, elsewhere (i.e. Swabian Turkey) only approaches took place. Now the question emerges if the awakened consciousness of the Hungarian Germandom just remained an episode or if it went on after the revolutions?

3.3 Bleyer in Jászi's footsteps

Hajdú argues that the failure of the Hungarian Soviet Republic in fact meant the failure of the 1918 October revolution as well, and of any sort of democracy. The new regime now considered even the pre-1918 times as too liberal.⁸⁹ After the downfall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, Oszkár Jászi also complained that "all leading positions of the countries are in the hands of an uncultivated company"⁹⁰. The Swabian bourgeoisie (Friedrich, Huszár, Bleyer etc.), whose anti-Semitism and narrow-minded nationalism was always the strongest, played a major role in this issue. On August 8th, 1919, the Friedrich government abolished all laws since the October 30th of the previous year. Bellér claims that this did not include autonomy but he admits that the *Deutsche Landesrat* and the Western Hungarian

⁸⁷ Lóránt Tilkovszky, "Die Nationalitätenpolitik Ungarns und das heimische Deutschtum zwischen 1919-1945," in *300 Jahre Zusammenleben – Aus der Geschichte der Ungarndeutschen*, ed. Wendelin Hambuch, Vol. 1. (Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1988), 114.

⁸⁸ Spiegel-Schmidt, *Arbeiterbewegung*, 136.

⁸⁹ Tibor Hajdú, *The Hungarian Soviet Republic* (Budapest: Akadémiai kiadó, 1979), 169.

⁹⁰ Gratz, *Deutschungarische Probleme*, 37.

German self-administration immediately disappeared in practice.⁹¹ The question of autonomy still served as a problem due to the fact that it was highly connected to the Burgenland issue. Thus, the Hungarian Germans found themselves in a kind of jurisdictional vacuum and to the same extent in a state of a just awakened consciousness.

The communist rule just sharpened the national contrasts, mainly through the creation of the minority territories. Bleyer sought to find a compromise. Several days after he became Minister for Nationalities he issued a position paper. In its spirit it resembled the Nationality Law of 1868. Its fairness could attract the minorities, whereas its moderation would not offend the Hungarians. By stressing the rights of individuals rather than those of groups, Bleyer sought to balance Hungarian elitism and German ethnic particularism.⁹² It is more than by chance that this law came at the same time as the debates about the Burgenland took place, an issue discussed in the next section.

Communism had injured the Germans by exacerbating nationalistic passions in Hungary which his ministry would heal. Germans would integrate themselves into the Hungarian state, but retain their national identity, within linguistic and ethnic boundaries. Bleyer demanded an effective German elementary school and cultural program and a modest political action plan. The use of German in all official transactions was essential; but Bleyer remained discretely silent on autonomy.⁹³ Yet other contradictions emerged. According to Tilkovszky, the achievements of the nationality policies during the revolutions were not without influence on the minority.⁹⁴ If now the Germans were to be offered inferior concessions to those they had enjoyed before, then they would reject accommodation. If, on the other hand, they obtained concessions equalling or surpassing those of the radical era, then they would confront an outraged Hungarian public.

⁹¹ Bellér, *Bleyer als Minderheitenpolitiker*, 31.

⁹² Schwind, 80ff.

⁹³ Spiegel-Schmidt, *Das Deutschtum Ungarns*, 85.

⁹⁴ Tilkovszky, *Nationalitätenpolitik*, 115.

His new course intended to convince the Hungarians that the Germans' loyalty for Hungary was sincere, and would restore their somewhat tarnished image. Bleyer addressed the task of recapturing the allegiance of Hungary's seceded nationalities. It was a convenient way of demonstrating that the Germans were Hungarian patriots. But Bleyer no longer thought in terms of Hungary ruled only by the Hungarians, as he had when Hungary was still part of the Dual Monarchy. Bleyer felt loyalties both to Hungary and to Germandom. He and his aides tried to stem the anti-Hungarian tide sweeping embittered German public opinion. Under State Secretary György Steuer, whose role will be examined in the fifth chapter of this thesis, the German Section attempted to reach a *modus vivendi* of sorts with the Hungarians. They also sought to persuade Burgenland's Germans to remain true to Hungary, to insulate them against pan-German influences and to safeguard their cultural interests.

The law designated non-Hungarian ethnic groups as national minorities. It thus went beyond the 1868 statute, which merely acknowledged racial (i.e. national or ethnic) distinctions. The new law also established non-Hungarian languages in public life. Unfortunately, many regulations were cumbersome and the local offices enforcing them were predominantly Hungarians or 'reliable' magyarized individuals. The law also aroused exaggerated hopes for the establishment of a comprehensive minority education system, from kindergartens to chairs in the universities. But obviously, the largely magyarized German clergy would insist on pure Hungarian schools, so the provisions had little more than publicity value. What is more, the ministry itself did not have any competences to carry out the rights. Thus it could be easily sabotaged by the local offices. Second, the churches and the local communities could decide which language they wanted to use for teaching. Thus the majority of schools were not affected by the law. As it indeed turned out, the Germans had to face the hate of a newly rising Hungarian chauvinism that manifested itself

in an irrational opposition to everything that was not ‘magyar’. “This was more a process of intimidation than open violence”, as Spiegel-Schmidt indicates.⁹⁵

Whereas Friedrich apparently had no intentions, or the means, of expediting the Nationality Law, Bleyer and his followers took the statute very seriously indeed. Their rationale rested on form ground. Greater Hungary could be restored, but only if the Hungarian propitiated the minorities. Once more, Bleyer and the government faced opposite poles on a fundamental issue. Should Hungary’s minorities receive far-reaching cultural and moderate administrative concessions, or should the Law be ignored and the ethnic groups be magyarized? As on previous occasions the government maintained that the frontiers of the Hungarian state were sacred and the domination of the Hungarians exclusive and paramount. Hungary’s obduracy on the minority issue undercut Bleyer’s honeymoon with the Hungarians. At the Ministerial Council on September 20th he complained that his law was being systematically undermined by Hungarian officials, especially in Western Hungary where German functionaries stood accused of pan-German sympathies. When Friedrich’s short-time successor Karl Huszár took office in the beginning of December 1919, he for the time being agreed with Bleyer and claimed that “the actual government will respect the rights of all races. I consider the Germandom as the most faithful, hard-working and most worthy race in the country. There is no danger to respect the laws of the German people and to support their cultural progress [...]”⁹⁶.

At the same time Count Apponyi in Paris tried to save what could be saved, if not the territorial integrity then at least a jurisdictional framework that granted more rights for the minorities – of course they were thinking in first line of the Hungarian minorities – than the official minority treaties offered. It is quite ironical that the draft speaks of a “special cultural person of right” that is thrown to the wastebasket at home at the same time. Of

⁹⁵ Spiegel-Schmidt, *Das Deutschtum Ungarns*, 85.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

course there was no power that shared any sympathies with Hungary on the eve of the peace talks – and Hungary had to expect the worse.

3.3.1 Impact of Hungarian refugees on domestic politics

A further reason for radicalization was the stream of refugees coming into the country. As early as in the end of March 1919 the numbers of refugees were around 150.000. By 1924 their number rose to 426.000.⁹⁷ Furthermore the homecoming prisoners of war had to be taken into account, faced with an uncertain future. Most of the refugees came from higher circles. Partly they lost their property and status in society due to nationalistic reforms; partly they were civil servants, especially teachers, who served as the main defenders of Magyarization. Now they demanded compensation for their losses and as a prerequisite “national awakening and spiritual rebirth”⁹⁸.

The Hungarian Soviet Republic was defeated, but the sense of national crisis remained which aided the counterrevolutionary course. While the Friedrich government in Budapest published orders the real power in Hungary could be found in Transdanubia, where the majority of Germans lived, in Horthy’s National Army. Here, in Szeged as well as in Vienna, nearly all kinds of counterrevolutionary forces came together and formed a new form of extreme nationalism and national prejudices. Mócsy points out that “from this group and from other radicalized elements of the middle and upper classes the regime wove an interlocking network of political and social, public and secret, military and civilian associations, which, throughout the interwar period, dominated the political life of the

⁹⁷ Ibid., 87.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 88.

country and assured the survival of the radical right”⁹⁹. Indeed, with the victory of the right the refugees became a major political factor in Hungary’s political life and one of the columns of the Horthy era.

3.4 Trianon and the Sopron plebiscite

The ethnic minorities were already seen as scapegoats responsible for the disintegration of historic Hungary when the minority law 4044/1919 was delivered on August 21st, 1919. Jakob Bleyer said at the peak of the debates about West Hungary’s secession that, provoked this way, “the Hungarian nationalism after the numerous bitter humiliations of the last years burns more than ever and will try to transform the small Hungary to a homogenous national state. A Magyarization of the Germandom will take place”¹⁰⁰. This seemed already prophetic.

However, the Germans of Western Hungary were still brave enough to insist on their autonomy. In mid-December of 1921 the citizens of the West Hungarian border town of Sopron voted on whether the area should remain with Hungary, or join the newly created Republic of Austria. The Sopron Plebiscite ranks as a relatively minor incident in post-war history, but it has attracted considerable attention. The Swabian problem had by then become imbedded in foreign policy and the Burgenland question had progressively forced the Swabian predicament. As Spira points out, the Hungarians considered the prospects of harbouring so many disillusioned Swabians (around 270.000) a great danger for the internal security of Hungary. “Years of cultural abuse, capped by the notorious anti-Swabian exploits of the dreaded paramilitary units, had driven Burgenland’s small but militant

⁹⁹ István Mócsy, *The effects of World War I. The Uprooted: Hungarian refugees and their impact on Hungary’s domestic politics, 1918-1921* (New York: Social Science Monographs, 1983), 6.

¹⁰⁰ Schödl, *Land an der Donau*, 460.

Swabian minority emotionally far closer to the Austro-German brethren than to the alien Magyars.” Moreover, Swabians, “at the time perhaps the least politicized German minority in Europe”¹⁰¹, generally inclined to be German Hungarians rather than *volksdeutsch*. However, they would have remained Germans, no matter if they live in Austria or in Hungary.

Responding to Austrian diplomatic pressure, petitions by Austrophile elements in West Hungary, and as a result of the dismay over Hungary’s Marxist government, the Paris Peace conference reversed its original position to let the Burgenland remain with Hungary. The peace-makers in France were obviously not willing to tolerate the existence of a Bolshevik government system in the centre of Europe. On July 20th, 1919, Hungary was ordered to evacuate the larger, predominantly German-inhabited portion of West-Hungary. Spira points out that this incident laid the foundation for the mutual distrust that stigmatized Magyar-Swabian relations ever after in the post-war era.¹⁰² Finally, Hungary agreed to exchange the region for Sopron. A compromise agreement (October 11th, 1921) called for an internationally supervised plebiscite to determine the destiny of the town and its hinterland. Hungary won it and on January 1st the town was handed over to Hungary. The Hungarians could thank Jakob Bleyer and his followers for this. They barely tolerated Károlyi’s government and boycotted Kun’s regime’s attempts to pacify the Germans. But throughout, they made ever effort to persuade their followers to support Hungary’s claims for West Hungary, notwithstanding Hungarian harassment of German cultural institutions that occasionally bordered on intolerance. Colonel Lejár, a high ranking officer of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, even praised Bleyer for not having reigned from Budapest but

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 57.

¹⁰² Ibid., 16.

travelling throughout Western Hungary in order to inform the population about the new ways after the communist experience.¹⁰³

However, on the eve of the plebiscite, Hungary's treatment of Burgenland's Germans had indeed deteriorated. German-speaking Hungarians were disturbed by press reports revealing gross neglect in their minority schools. For decades, the Germans of Hungary had enjoyed the highest literacy level in the nation. This hegemony was now clearly in danger. German leaders called on Prime Minister Bethlen, assured him of their loyalty to Hungary, but regretted the frustration and diminished prospects of Hungary's German minority. They demanded the immediate implementation of the existing minority laws, especially in education, administration, and justice, and solicited Bethlen's protection against the arbitrary obstruction of the statutes by local officials. Bethlen blandly reassured the delegation. But the non-Magyarized German intelligentsia remained just as true to the Crown of St. Stephen as their magyarized brethren, even while deploring the anti-German prejudice and short-sightedness of the Hungarian establishment and public. They hoped that nationalistic passions would eventually subside, and Hungarian-German amity would resume. These unassimilated German leaders welded aggressive ethnic nationalism with Hungarian patriotism. They urged Burgenlanders to remain loyal to Hungary. But they also feared that losing some 300.000 West Hungarian Germans to Austria would weaken the German cause in Hungary. The remaining Germans would be isolated from the German-speaking world, and be submerged in the Hungarian multitude. Hence, partly for patriotic reasons as Hungarians, and partly for the sake of long-range German preservation, a small but decisive majority of Germans in the Sopron area heeded the pleas of their leaders, and finally threw their support behind Hungary.

¹⁰³ OL K26, XLII 1920/2035.

With the solution of the Sopron question Trianon came to its official end. Within Burgenland the situation was accepted very soon. Foremost in the rural society an unreflected coexistence of German and Magyar-Hungarian elements took place¹⁰⁴. Only intellectual circles faced a crisis of their identity but above this a certain Burgenland identity emerged relatively fast.

East of the Leitha, however, the Hungarian government now had no reason anymore to grant certain rights for the German minority. The unsolved Burgenland issue was insofar of concern for the whole Germandom in Hungary. After the Burgenland incident “the Swabians were to lose whatever shred of credibility they still had within the Magyars”¹⁰⁵ and “the entire year 1921 was marked by a steady deterioration in Magyar-Swabian relations”¹⁰⁶. It may be true that even had Austria and Germany shown greater consideration for Hungary, her Swabians would still have been persecuted as a distinct ethnic group. It was thus not surprising that the new Huszár government (24th November 1919-15th March 1920) did not offer more than just pleasant rhetoric for a progressive minority policy. The Simonyi-Semadam government (15th March-19th July 1920) did not even work out a nationality programme.

Guido Gündisch, the last remaining Saxon in Budapest in the inter-war period, stressed that the humiliations of the war and the peace strengthened the racial consciousness in Hungary. Therefore he regarded the nationality questions “more urgent than the question to have a king or not”¹⁰⁷. It was, however, in the interest of the neighbouring states that the extreme nationalism persists because that served as the best way to save the Trianon borders. The Treaty of Trianon from June 4th, 1920, created an atmosphere that would not have tolerated a friendly minority programme at all. In the years prior to 1918 Hungarian

¹⁰⁴ Peter Haslinger, *Der ungarische Revisionismus und das Burgenland, 1922-1932* (Frankfurt a.M: Peter Lang, 1994), 64.

¹⁰⁵ Spira, *Swabian problem*, 76.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibd.*, 92.

defenders of the nation and state knew who the enemy was: the unassimilated nationalities. After Trianon the number of minorities was negligible. Could the Magyars be blamed for the third major catastrophe in their history?¹⁰⁸ It was easier to find scapegoats than to admit that they might have at least some responsibility for the failure of the defence of nation and state. For Bellér the reason for the ‘political catastrophe’ was not seen as a result of the lost war but in the too liberal nationality policy.¹⁰⁹ Born out of the experiences of 1918/19 Hungarian would never again trust a non-Magyar group residing within Hungary. Indeed, the Swabian history of the succeeding two decades may be constructed around the struggle between the German-conscious but culturally weak rural masses on the one hand, and thoroughly magyarized Swabian triumvirate – clergyman, teacher and notary – on the other, not to speak of the numerous opportunists, careerists and demagogues. Backed by them and by a hostile Hungarian society, it was only a question of time till the old-new elite showed her real face.

¹⁰⁷ *Pester Lloyd*, 3 March 1922.

¹⁰⁸ The first catastrophe was the Mongol invasion, 1241-42, and the second was the long Ottoman occupation of central Hungary, 1526-1699.

¹⁰⁹ Bellér, *Bleyer als Minderheitenpolitiker*, 37.

4. The metamorphosis of Jakob Bleyer

In the following section I move to the difficult task of working out the changes in the conceptual thinking of Jakob Bleyer in the early 1920s. Bleyer's metamorphosis belongs to the most problematic issues of his life. It nevertheless is directly connected to the changes in Hungarian public and social life after the time of the revolutions and the Peace Treaty of Trianon. To present a counterpart, I will also examine the views of Gustav Gratz, another chief protagonist in the Swabian-Hungarian relations in the inter-war period, in order to show a different path of understanding the minority issue.

4.1 *For state and people*

Bleyer's work as Minister for Nationalities brought him into a dilemma. He imposed his will, mainly against the Saxons, to become the representative of German interests but, on the other hand, he was blamed by the public for his failure in Western Hungary as well as for his aim to realise his political minimal programme concerning the minorities. Soon he found himself in the role of the German minority's protagonist and faced not only hostilities by the group around Gyula Gömbös, but also a new enemy in the person of his State Secretary György Steuer, and by the press. Steuer opposed Bleyer's plan to found a German *Kulturverein* as early as in 1918. Now, in the 1920s, he should become one of Bethlen's jackals. Moreover, the attacks of the press could only take place with the passive agreement of the government. Thus, they were somewhat legitimized. Bleyer took his consequences from this political lesson and metamorphosed some of his early ideological convictions. He distanced himself from the thesis that the Hungarian state would guarantee out of political reason the framework for the continuance of the Swabians. Above this, he saw the necessity

for an organized community of interests, first and foremost on the cultural level. As early as in 1918, when Bleyer addressed a memorandum to Károlyi which I have already mentioned in chapter two, the Swabian saw the greatest mistake in the minority policies of former years in the fact that no representatives were included to stabilize the system and who were willing to cooperate. In Bleyer's eyes it was due to this that the minorities could not organize themselves on a 'patriotic basis'. Bleyer himself was seen as the leader of the clerical orientated part of the Hungarian Germandom, i.e. in first line Magyar and chauvinist. His one-sided concentration on the peasantry consequently limited the possibilities of his movement. It did not, however, save him from hostilities.

In November 1920 the *Budapesti Hírlap* writes as follows: "We do not have any nationalities but a ministry for national minorities which artificially creates nationalities."¹¹⁰ According to Spannenberger, the ideal model from Hungarian side included three components. First, the ethnic minorities were not understood as political subjects (i.e. on a collective basis acting as individuals). In this form, second, they should become instruments for the consolidation of the regime and, third, the leadership should be recruited by 'ideological reliable' persons.¹¹¹ Thus, the minorities seemed to be nothing more than a political resource. Bleyer himself slowly saw that he was used as a figurehead and instrument by his counterrevolutionary comrades. It seems only logical that after the final loss of the Burgenland Bleyer was forced to resign on December 16th, 1920. Before this he issued a position paper on the nationality question. In his view, the recent upheavals had created a new national awareness among Hungary's minorities. Consequently, the government could no longer pacify them with mere bagatelles. The Hungarians would have to decide soon if they really wanted to regain their lost peoples and territories and maintain their grip on those still wavering. Oddly enough, he remained very uncritical between his

¹¹⁰ Norbert Spannenberger, *Die katholische Kirche in Ungarn 1918-1939. Positionierung im politischen System und „Katholische Renaissance“* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2006), 141.

love for the fatherland and the nationalistic *Zeitgeist*. Bleyer was always praising the German-Hungarian community of destiny (*Schicksalsgemeinschaft*). He considered the Swabians as part of the Hungarian nation and in an ethnic-cultural sense to the same extent as part of the German *Kulturgemeinschaft*. According to him, both were dependent on each other and thus cooperation with other nationalities was not part of Bleyer's agenda. Bleyer defended the policies of amalgamation as an element to keep the state alive. His opponent, the Saxon Rudolf Brandsch, represented a different way. For him Hungariandom needed Germandom and has to get used to this one-sided dependence.¹¹² Others, like Endre Bajcsi-Zsilinsky, found that "the whole Hungarian history is a heroic fight against Germandom"¹¹³. According to his opinion, the Germans have "never stopped to eradicate and chase" the Hungarians and finally led them to the "slaughterbank of the World War"¹¹⁴. Considering the low politization of the German in Hungary this opinion stands on rather weak ground. However, the German minority seemed to lack support from outside as well as unity from inside due to the fact that the spirit of the time at the beginning of the 1920s was highly anti-German. Zsilinszky's paper *Szózat* more than once attacked Bleyer personally and Spiegel-Schmidt speaks now of the "spirits of the counterrevolution that turned against Bleyer"¹¹⁵.

As I pointed out previously in chapter two, the battle between these two convictions and between the two persons, Bleyer and Brandsch, took place in a time when all other nationalities came together and spoke with a united voice. Brandsch, the Protestant Saxon, could come to agreements with the Social Democrats and the Liberals. The Catholic Swabian Bleyer, on the other side, presented a clerical standpoint, including a nearly radical anti-Semitism and anti-Socialism. It is an irony of history that the Saxons achieved their privilege status by the same tactic used by Bleyer, i.e. concentrating merely on the own

¹¹¹ Ibid., 139.

¹¹² Spiegel-Schmidt, *Kulturpolitische Konzeption Jakob Bleyers*, 8.

¹¹³ Gratz, *Deutschungarische Probleme*, 34.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 34.

group. The group building process of the Hungarian Germans took place not earlier than at the turning point of the 18th and 19th century. In contrast to other nationalities, this development was rather late and the German minority was in a “pre-national state of development”¹¹⁶. A similar delay can be found in questions of identity. Hungarian Germandom not earlier than after the First World War felt the necessity to defend their ethnic identity in order to save it against the re-emerging chauvinism. The disintegrating country just created a feeling of consciousness, of belonging together. Step by step the faith towards the own people was exceeding the faith towards the state. And often the experience had been made that decrees, whose aim was to oppress national consciousness, just created such a kind of consciousness.

4.2 Between state and people

“Hungary was from the beginning a unified national state, founded by the Hungarians and led by them for more than one century.”¹¹⁷ The historical truth in this quotation from Bleyer is highly doubtful. Hungary was from the beginning a multinational state and Germans were involved in its foundation as well as in keeping it alive. However, from the beginning Jakob Bleyer’s conception was based on two nationalities but only one nation.

We want and have to help to strengthen the Hungarian national superiority toward all directions and were a ready for sacrifices without protest. We do not want to create a state in the state and in equal measure to detach the Hungarian Germans from Hungariandom, neither politically, nor socially, nor culturally.¹¹⁸

The main task of the Hungarian Germans, according to Bleyer, was to strengthen the national Hungarian rule to all sides. In this sense, he supported the assimilation of the

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 102.

¹¹⁶ Gerhard Seewann, ed., “Das Ungarndeutschtum 1918-1988,” in *Ungarndeutsche und Ethnopolitik* (Budapest: Osiris, 2000), 102.

¹¹⁷ Spiegel-Schmidt, *Kulturpolitische Konzeption Jakob Bleyers*, 6.

intelligentsia. In one of his early essays he stated that “Hungariandom would never allow the voluntary stream of German skills into the basin of Hungarian strength by creating artificial barriers”¹¹⁹. Also Bleyer’s cultural-political program throughout the interwar period was limited to prevent the German mother tongue and culture in the Hungarian German villages. In the eyes of contemporary minority politicians this more than modest program did not seem a progress at all. Just, in Hungary a chauvinistic opinion emerged with the aim to ban the mother tongue from the *Volksschule*. This was the exact counterpart regarding the times of the Hungarian Soviet Republic, where the right to teach in the mother tongue was not only guaranteed but also applied in the areas mainly inhabited by the minorities.

Tilkovszky argued that the Hungarian government did not want to know anything about secondary schools, let alone higher schools, clubs or parties for the minorities, because no word was mentioned about this in the peace treaties.¹²⁰ It was due to this and to the development of the German minorities in the neighbouring countries that the impression of a nation’s death (*Volkstod*) took place. In Czechoslovakia (the so-called Sudeten Germans) and in Yugoslavia the German minority founded political parties and was even present in parliament. However, in Hungary the construct ‘Hungarian German minority’ remained a governmental concept. This is confirmed by Bleyer himself in his speech in parliament in 1928. As he pointed out, he wanted to prevent the Swabiandom that just achieved consciousness during the World War, from taking a position *against* the Hungarian state and, parallel to this, be abused by Germany’s interest for the Germandom abroad as an irredentist movement. A reasonable cooperation between Germans and Magyar, a *Gesellschaftsvertrag*, would have called for a mutual relationship between the two parties and the denial of nationalism on both sides. However, Bleyer’s belief in the reasonability of Hungarian politicians concerning the necessity of a minority compromise and thus creating

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 9.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 7.

a long term loyalty of ‘his’ Swabians towards the state turned out to be illusionary. Without intending it, he drifted between the parties. According to Spira, Bleyer’s whole political concept was based on false premises, mainly his aim to establish friendly relations between Swabians and Magyars instead of the Magyar hegemony.¹²¹ Bleyer’s belief in achieving this seems rather naïve. His disappointment soon transformed him into a bitter accuser of Hungarian national policy.

In his last speech in parliament, shortly before his death in 1933, he once more claimed that the question of the Hungarian revision is connected to the nationality policy carried out in Hungary. By quoting Count Apponyi, he pointed out that every popular outrage caused by the suppression of Hungarians in the neighbouring states would lose its moral justification if Hungary did not treat her minorities in another way.¹²² By now means he stood alone with this opinion. A similar view was shared by Gustav Gratz, as will be shown in the next section, as well as by the influential Hungarian historian Gyula Szekfű. I already pointed out Szekfű’s views in the first chapter of this thesis. Moreover, it seems important to mention that both men, Bleyer and Szekfű, shared friendly relations with each other. Among other things, Bleyer even arranged the translation of the historian’s works into German. On the other side, Szekfű never changed his friendly position towards the Swabian, even not in 1933, when Bleyer was highly attacked by Hungarian chauvinist circles. In a personal conversation with Bleyer’s biographer Hedwig Schwind in 1935, Szekfű found only warmest words for the deceased.¹²³

However, at his parliamentary speech Bleyer also admitted the failure of his ambitions. It was now in the early 1930s when he realized the exploited and intransigent character of this policy and when a new generation under the future leader of the *Volksbund*,

¹²⁰ Loránt Tilkovszky, *Zeitgeschichte der Ungarndeutschen seit 1919* (Budapest: Corvina, 1991), 51.

¹²¹ Spira, Swabian problem, 117ff.

¹²² Jakob Bleyer, “Über die Frage der deutschen Minderheit in Ungarn,”; available from <<http://www.jbg.n1.hu/keret.cgi/sub.cgi-redeung.htm>> (accessed 8 February 2008).

Franz Anton Basch, emerged. Bleyer's concept of a double identity, i.e. Hungarian *and* German, now slowly ceased to find support any longer.

4.3 Opponents or united on one way – Bleyer and Gratz

Gustav Gratz's path from the son of a preacher to the Minister of Foreign Affairs is exemplary for the minority and assimilation problematic. A career without integration in the nation was not possible. A similar view was shared by Gratz himself who did not find it offensive if somebody with German origin climbed the ladders of society by slipping off its boundaries to Germandom. Gratz saw a good relation between the minority and the government as most important task. Just after this came – in his opinion – the protection of interests. Thus, he regarded himself not as a Hungarian German minority politician, rather as a Hungarian politician of German origin. He stated that there would be no problems in the minority issue as long as there is no difference between the demands of the minority and the willingness of the majority to give.¹²⁴ In a letter to Gratz from 1928, Bleyer was convinced that the youth of all German minorities tried to achieve a lively relation to the great German culture and this would not affect the patriotic, Hungarian friendly tradition of the Hungarian Germandom “if the issue by one or the other side will not be poisoned and abused as a fighting object (*Kampfobjekt*).¹²⁵ Gratz considered the solution of the minority question “a work for generations”¹²⁶, but obviously, every side lacked some patience and progress did not take place. At the beginning of the 1930s the school situation was still totally unsatisfying and lacked any progress. The local offices regarded Magyarization as a ‘patriotic deed’. As a consequence, the tone from Germany became rough while Bleyer sank

¹²³ Schwind, 32.

¹²⁴ Gratz, *Deutschungarische Probleme*, 7.

¹²⁵ *Ibd.*, 11.

into depression. He was also convinced that there were only two ways for the Hungarian Germandom: to accept the assimilation tendencies “or to believe in the great Germandom”¹²⁷.

Gratz knew well that he touched a wasp’s nest when accepting the presidency of the *Volksbildungsverein*. As he pointed out later, he did not do it out of ambition, knowing that nobody is considered *volkstümlich* who identifies himself with the aims of the German minority.¹²⁸ He rather believed in the aims of Bethlen to grant possibilities to the Germans to prevent their education, language and customs without sliding into opposition to the traditional love for one’s fatherland. Hence, he and Bleyer shared the same convictions, i.e. to grant rights for language and to hold up the good relation between Germandom and Hungariandom. Speaking of *Volksgemeinschaft*, as Bleyer used to, seemed rather as a disturbance of the harmonic connection to the Hungarian political nation. According to Gratz, a new minority policy would have been one of the most worthy deeds of Bethlen as a politician – provided it was successful.

“It would be the crest of political impotence and barrenness, if we would not be able to find a new formulation on this issue, instead of being forced to rehash a 55-year old law”¹²⁹, as Gratz stated in 1923 referring to the Nationality Law of 1868. In contrast to many Hungary-centric views, Gratz openly spoke of Hungary’s obligations after the Treaty of Trianon and did not keep quite on Hungary’s hitherto insufficient deeds in this issue.¹³⁰ Moreover, taking into account the numerical triviality of the national minorities they did not represent a factor of power anymore. Gratz therefore supported the idea of granting more rights than the minorities themselves claimed “in regard of our biggest and highest

¹²⁶ Vince, 51.

¹²⁷ Gratz, *Deutschungarische Probleme*, 13.

¹²⁸ Vince, 47.

¹²⁹ Gustav Gratz, “Nationale Minderheiten” *Pester Lloyd*, 19 May 1923.

¹³⁰ *Ibd.*

interests”¹³¹, i.e. nothing more than the revision of Trianon. The prerequisite of an attractive Hungary would thus be a country that attracts nationalities instead of battering them. According to this, Gratz’s views seem very similar to those of Gyula Szekfű, as I showed in the first chapter of this thesis. As will be shown in the next chapter, Hungary’s official view did not go along with Gratz’s convictions and indeed decided for the rumination, consequently affecting the German minority’s possibilities for development in Trianon-Hungary. Both views, those of Gratz and Bleyer, undertook changes during the 1920s while being confronted with a certain kind of hopelessness in the minority question. The optimism of the first years had to come to an end and face the reality of Bethlen’s stalling minority politics. Gratz remained a reliable person for Bethlen and fulfilled his role as mediator. In his official speeches throughout the inter-war period one can hardly find a tone of critique. Furthermore, he assured to Bethlen that the UDV stands apart from any politics, especially daily politics.¹³² Bethlen’s mistrust rather derived from György Steuer, who expressed his sorrows that the work of the UDV could lead to the awakening of a radical German spirit.¹³³

However, taking into account some of Gratz’s early statements outlined above it is assumable that his private and official views were not always congruent with each other. It nevertheless turned out that Gratz’s concept on the long run would lead to assimilation. Bleyer worked for an alternative, to represent the German minority with the help of press and organisations. His concept, in contrast to Gratz, would lead to tear out a closed minority from Hungarian public life. This seems a paradox, considering that his argumentation from the beginning tended towards a cooperation together with the state nation and not working against it. Both options, however, remained highly dependent on outside factors and which could be influenced by neither Gratz nor Bleyer, i.e. the diaspora character of the German minority without direct ties to Germany, the agrarian social structure without a peculiar

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² OL K28 130/210, Gratz to Bethlen.

political position and the influences from outside, be it from the Hungarian or – later in the 1930s – from the German side.

Bleyer himself and his concept turned out to be of a transitional character. The following generation under Bleyer's former student and the later leader of the *Volksbund*, Franz Anton Basch, acted under already radicalized premises. What Bleyer wanted to avoid, was later forced upon him. After the fall of Hungary's liberal minority policy, when he lost his illusions in joining loyalty to Hungarian state with German minority identity, he dedicated himself to the representation of the interests of German minority. Bleyer was not the father and awakener of the Hungarian Germans as the legend wants to tell us. In these years he was rather a pawn in the game between self-determination and revisionism, between assimilation and dissimulation, between loyalty and disloyalty and, last but no least, between *Volk* and *Staat*.

¹³³ OL K28 130/210, 2423, 47/1925, Steuer to Bethlen.

5. Bethlen's tactical moves

In contrast to Károlyi and Kun, the Treaty of Trianon was already a *fait accompli* when Bethlen assumed power. What concerns me in this section is the time after the Hungarian revolutions of 1918/19 and the first years of the Bethlen regime. The dissolution of the Ministry for Nationalities will be considered as well as the difficult foundation of the *Ungarländische Deutsche Volksbildungsverein* (UDV) and the school question in order to show the contrast between the official rhetoric and real minority practices in the 1920s. While regarding State Secretary György Steuer a further conception of identity appears, nearly typical for the time after the revolutions. His role can serve as a perfect example for a career based on assimilation.

5.1 Dead end after Trianon

When, at the beginning of 1922, István Bethlen promised a German delegation from Sopron to carry out the Nationality Law and the Decree on national minorities from 1919, it seemed he was indeed determined to solve the nationality question in Hungary “honest and without any ulterior motive”¹³⁴, well aware of the critics on the Hungarian minority politics in the neighbouring states. On the contrary, Béla Bellér, criticizing such kind of phrases, saw in every club, association or school in the nationality regions “a political instrument of the counterrevolutionary government”¹³⁵. He described Bethlen's tactic as “promising everything and giving nothing”¹³⁶. If the nationalities supported or opposed the policy of the government the result in any case would be the limitation of their rights. Anton Szentfülöpi,

¹³⁴ *Pester Lloyd*, 5 January 1922.

¹³⁵ Friedrich Spiegel-Schmidt, Jakob Bleyer in neuerer Geschichtsschreibung, “*Suevia Pannonica* (11/1983): 82.

son of one of Jakob Bleyer's aides, even goes further: "The Hungarian nationality policies were reactionary and canting."¹³⁷ He claimed that forced Magyarization and forced assimilation of the nationalities were the main aims of the government. Furthermore, "it was canting because every law, every decree was just a sign that would never come into practice"¹³⁸. As Spannenberger put it:

With Trianon the conviction took place in the Hungarian public that the too liberal minority policies were responsible for the dissolution of the old empire of the Holy Stephen and the ceding of the Burgenland. All ethnic minorities were marked as traitors and even the *Neue Post* propagated: "If Hungary dies, you have killed it!" The belief that a revision of the Treaty of Trianon is only achievable within a homogenous state, led to the conviction that 'national unity' had to be achieved more effectively than had happened up to this time. This meant a forced Magyarization.¹³⁹

Hence, Trianon was the dead end for any rational politics in Hungary. Pre-war ideas emerged with new power and carried out by the old-new political elite. Bethlen was among them. He was the 11th post-war minister forming the 15th cabinet. It does thus not surprise that he favoured stability and the preservation of *status quo* over social innovation or revolutionary change. He wished to return to the pre-war political and social system which united aristocratic agrarian and capitalist banking and industrial interests under the leadership of the historic classes. The political spectrum, however, had expanded. The creation of an extreme left and a powerful new right weakened both liberals and conservatives, the two groups that formed the political spectrum. Bethlen was thus, one can say, obliged to turn into a master of political moves. Indeed, Bethlen's promises mentioned above seemed not more than that. At the time when Bleyer resigned as Minister for Nationalities in December 1920, the future fate of the ministry was doubtful. At a meeting of TESZ (Társadalmi Egyesületek Szövetsége/Association of social institutions) under the

¹³⁶ Ibid., 72.

¹³⁷ Antal Szentfilöpi. "Zur Nationalitätenpolitik in Ungarn zwischen den beiden Weltkriegen und zur Geschichte des Ungarländischen Deutschen Volksbildungsvereins," in *300 Jahre Zusammenleben – Aus der Geschichte der Ungarndeutschen*, ed. Wendelin Hambuch Vol. II (Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1988), 84.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Spannenberger, *Volksbund*, 32.

leadership of István Bethlen, the members asked the then prime minister Teleki to abolish the ministry because it would in no way support the creation of a unified Magyar-national feeling.¹⁴⁰ Bleyer was overthrown on December 20th, 1920. György Steuer became responsible for completing the abolition of the ministry although it still existed nominally, though highly ineffectively. As Spira indicates, the ministry spent most of its time, funds and energy on pro-Hungarian propaganda aimed at the minorities at home and abroad rather than on protecting their ethnic interests.¹⁴¹ When Bethlen assumed power, the dispersal of the ministry was finally put into practice. Later, after the Second World War, Bleyer's secretary, Antal Pótz, admitted that "with the peace treaties the existence of the Ministry for Nationalities did not make sense any more"¹⁴². The government nevertheless did not forget the fact that the minority issue could still be used as an instrument for foreign policy. Till the spring of 1921 negotiations took place with Austria about drawing the borders in Burgenland. With the successful Sopron Plebiscite, a generous behaviour towards the minorities was not required anymore. Spannenberger worked out that according to the opinion of the government "the Ministry for Nationalities as an organisation for nationality tasks endangers the unity of the government".¹⁴³ Soon, in 1922, it was indeed abolished, replaced by so called governmental commissioners for the German, Romanian and Slovak minority. By appointing György Steuer as responsible for the Germans the essence of Bethlen's ideas on minority policy came clear, as will be demonstrated in the following section.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 34.

¹⁴¹ Spira, *Swabian problem*, 92.

¹⁴² Spannenberger, *Volksbund*, 34.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 36.

5.1.1 Victory of opportunism – The case of György Steuer

*Nennt mich ruhig 'nen Magyaronen,
Hauptsache sind mir doch die Kronen,
Die der Graf Bethlen, mein Bezahler,
Ist ja ein Christnationaler.
Ich bin auch sonst ein Patriot,
Und schlug gern alle Deutschen tot.
Trotzdem ich, wie Ihr alle wisst,
Mich täglich nenn' den besten Christ.¹⁴⁴*

What were now Steuer's guidelines in minority policy? According to his memorandum from February 21st, 1921, the cultural and economic organization of the German speaking population stood in the centre of state tasks. Steuer also did not forget to remind the prime minister that he would carry out his task – in contrast to the radical minority politicians – on a 'Magyar-national basis'.¹⁴⁵ He was well aware that the work of governmental commissioner was quite unthankful. Not only did the politicians poison the German question, the local administration refused to carry out the governmental decrees. According to a memorandum from István Bethlen, Steuer's task was to listen to complaints, to inform the prime ministry on cultural, social and economic questions of the German population, to lead them in a social way according to the order of the prime ministry and to strengthen the devotion to the Hungarian fatherland.¹⁴⁶ Thus, the priority lay on patriotic education and the support of the (Magyar) national feeling.

What did Steuer understand now under carrying out his tasks on 'Magyar-national basis'? In his estimation the decrees of former governments went too far, so that they just could not be carried out, which seems not more than a late justification for the chauvinist sabotages. "They created bitterness among the Hungarian and hopes among the

¹⁴⁴ Bellér, *Counterrevolution*, 208.

¹⁴⁵ Spannenger, *Volksbund*, 38.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibd.*, 39.

nationalities.”¹⁴⁷ His ideology did not differ from contemporary public opinion. While claiming that the German came to Hungary to find a new home, they are also pieces of the Hungarian nation and thus shall never be unfaithful or ungrateful to it.¹⁴⁸ Hence, he favoured every stereotype and history cliché of the contemporary public opinion. It does not surprise that the promotion of ‘national unity’ served as the basis for his work. Following Steuer’s understanding of the issue, one can imagine the burdens for any minority movement of the time. Public opinion demanded an absolute conformity to the political course, including the renouncement of peculiar minority interests. Forced assimilation was the peak point. In the moment where minorities aimed to follow their own aims which differs from the official line, they were criminalized and stigmatized as dangerous for the state, unpatriotic or disloyal. One can argue that Hungary has been consistent. If she has pressed her minorities like no other Central European state to abandon their nationality, she has also offered them every legitimate inducement to do so. Quick to punish, she was also equally generous to reward.

The establishment of the governmental commission for the German minority is characteristic for Bethlen’s minority policies. Its concept and structure makes clear how he imagined the ideal way to deal with the minority question. The abolishment of the Ministry for Nationalities and the creation of an alternative showed how all decisions came together in his hands. Due to the fact that no elected representatives of the Germans existed, the government was able to carry out a minority policy in its own estimation. From the point of a successful minority protection the effectiveness of this system was doubtful from its beginnings. First, the social and administrative resistance became already obvious by 1922 and the government had no interest to come into conflict with them, and, second, even the members of the government were no promoters of the minority question, i.e. not even those

¹⁴⁷ Spiegel-Schmidt, *Bleyer in neuerer Geschichtsschreibung*, 73.

¹⁴⁸ OL K28 130/210, 2423, 47/1925, Steuer to Bethlen.

people supported a positive minority policy whose task was to carry it out. As will be shown in the next section, even the creation of a cultural association faced severe difficulties.

5.2 The *Ungarländische Deutsche Volksbildungsverein*

As Bleyer emphasized in 1926, it would be “our only desire to lead our Swabian people to the road of pure Christian customs and faithful love of the traditional Hungarian fatherland”¹⁴⁹. The contemporary scholar, C.A. Macartney, also saw no reason to doubt the sincerity of frequent and even passionate loyalty to the Hungarian state made by the Swabian leaders.¹⁵⁰ As can be shown in a poem Bleyer published under the nom de plume B. Schwabe:

*Gott segne tausendmal dich, Ungarland,
Du Heldenwall der Christenheit!
Mit deutschem Herzen, schwieliger Schwabenhand
Steh'n fest zu dir wir alle Zeit.*

*Fernher vom Rheine kam der fromme Ahn,
Bracht deutschen Fleiß und Schwabenbrauch.
Durch Sumpf und Wildnis brach sein Mut sich Bahn
Gesegnet reich von Gottes Hauch.*

*Wo einst gestampft der Türkenpferde Huf,
Im Kampfe floss das Ungarnblut:
Da deutscher Schweiß und Schwabenarbeit schuf
Der Ähre Gold, der Trauben Glut.*

*Dem Erb' der Ahnen bleibt der Enkel treu,
Der Schwabenart, dem deutschen Wort;
Treu auch in jeder Not, von Arglist frei
Dem Bruder Ungar immerfort!*

*Gott segne tausendmal dich, Ungarland,
Du Heldenwall der Christenheit!
Mit deutschem Herzen, schwieliger Schwabenhand
Steh'n fest zu dir wir alle Zeit.*¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Schödl, *Land an der Donau*, 463-4.

¹⁵⁰ Macartney, *Hungary*, 285.

¹⁵¹ Bellér, *Counterrevolution*, 192.

As the poem shows, Bleyer surely loved his country by all means, the greatest burden, however, remained the rejection of the government towards any organisational joining together of national minorities. Bleyer was well aware that successes in the field of minority policy, if ever, were only achievable at the side of the government. Thus, he tried to create a German cultural association in agreement with Bethlen. Here one can find a fundamental change in Bleyer's thinking. While in 1918 he renounced the creation of such an organization due to the will of the then prime minister, Wekerle, he now insisted on it as the unquestioned representative of the German minority. He still refused any kind of radical opposition but he had enough experience in minority politics at this point and did not trust the government anymore. On the other side, Bethlen made no secret of his aversion against Bleyer, but while accepting him as representative of the minority he limited the danger of a maybe more radical group. However, Bethlen was not ready to give up the initiative in minority policies. He wanted to anchor all directions in a German cultural association in order to prevent separate tendencies.

The *Ungarländische Deutsche Volksbildungsverein* (UDV) was founded on July 15th, 1923, with Bleyer elected as president. According to Bellér it was the aim of the UDV – apart from non-political surveillance of the state of education – was to support cultural interests, taking care and strengthen folkish peculiarities, traditions, language, customs and the Christian morals of the Germans in Hungary.¹⁵² The government immediately refused the association as well as the acceptance of its leader. Bethlen rather saw in the UDV an instrument for his own aims. If such an association exist, it should at least be “useful and, from the point of view of the Magyar nation's goals, carry out a successful work”¹⁵³. The leadership should be taken over by already assimilated personalities. Therefore, Bethlen

¹⁵² Bellér, *Bleyer als Minderheitenpolitiker*, 37.

¹⁵³ OL K28 130. csomó 210 tétel, 2239/925.

insisted on Gustav Gratz as the formal head of the *Volksbildungsverein*. Gratz led the UDV, with some breaks, from summer 1924 till the end of the 1930s. However, he never had any intention to doubt Bleyer as the leading and widely accepted personality of the Hungarian Germans. Gratz's task was rather to act as a mediator between the UDV and the cabinet of Bethlen. The prime minister proved himself to be a master of political moves. While accepting of the UDV he did not only demonstrate his 'generosity' towards the minority but also calmed down a possible inner political factor of disturbance. Just after this, the 'profit' for him was clear, and he finally accepted the association on August 3rd, 1924. During the following years the UDV moved into two directions. One focused on cooperation and peaceful coexistence with the Hungarians, the other tried to strengthen connections with Berlin. According to Ágnes Tóth, the experience that the Hungarian government did not cooperate reliably even with the moderate wing of the German minority also intensified the polarization within the German minority and strengthened the side waiting for help from Germany.¹⁵⁴ During its existence the headquarters were under constant surveillance and emissaries closely watched when they went to the province. There were not allowed to penetrate at all into certain districts where it was believed that the population had already been magyarized. According to Szentfülöpi, the UDV contained never more than 35.000 members.¹⁵⁵ Although Márta Fata mentions the "defensive character"¹⁵⁶ of all Hungarian German organizations, the *Ungarländische Deutsche Volksbildungsverein* was, so to say, a new beginning in the history of the Hungarian Germans after the First World War. Since the abolition of the *Volksräte*, neither political nor cultural representation existed. However, the more popular the UDV became, the more problems emerged between the village *Honorationen* and the people. Especially the church in the village, which always defended

¹⁵⁴ Ágnes Tóth, *National and ethnic minorities in Hungary, 1920-2001* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 2005), 176.

¹⁵⁵ Szentfülöpi, *Nationalitätenpolitik Ungarn*, 8.

assimilation, opposed the club and saw it as an institutionalization of an anti-assimilation policy.¹⁵⁷ Soon, a united front of teachers, administrators and clerical representatives against the UDV emerged, most obvious in the school question.

5.3 The school problem

As in pre-war times it served as a probate tactic to refuse any demand for German speaking schools and thus weld together the nation. Nationalism and assimilation served as tools for this policy. On the other hand, Bethlen's foreign policies – mainly in regard to the revision of Trianon – demanded good relations with Germany. Nevertheless, it has to be emphasized that it was as early as the 1930s when the German government recognized the Hungarian Germans as a political source. At this time the number of Germans in Hungary had already decreased from 550.000 in 1920 to 479.000 in 1930.¹⁵⁸

A distinction has to be made between the treatment of the minorities as prescribed by the law and the actual treatment they received. The law applicable to minorities fell under two heads. Internationally, Hungary was bound by the articles 54-60 of the Treaty of Trianon. According to it, Hungary undertakes to assure full and complete protection of life and liberty to all her inhabitants without distinction of birth, nationality, language, race, or religion, and the free exercise of any religion not inconsistent with public order or morals; to grant to all her nationals, with distinction of race, language or religion, equality before the law and identical civil and political rights, including equal admission to public employments, functions, and honours or the exercise of professions and industries; free use of their language in private life, religion, the press etc., and adequate facilities for the use of

¹⁵⁶ Márta Fata, "Minderheitenkonzeption und -politik Jakob Bleyers," in *Jakob Bleyer. Ein Leben für das Ungarndeutschtum*, ed. Wendelin Hambuch (Budapest: JBG, 1994): 24.

¹⁵⁷ Spannenberger, *Katholische Kirche*, 146.

minority languages before the courts; to grant to minorities the same treatment and security in law and fact as is enjoyed by others Hungarian nationals, including the right to manage at their own expense schools etc., and to give adequate instruction in a minority language in the public primary schools in districts where a ‘considerable proportion’ of members of a linguistic minority resides.¹⁵⁹ However, the Paris Peace Conference confused the concept of a people’s right to self-determination with the principle of defining nationality on the basis of language. The two are by no means identical; an ethnic group may well prefer to belong to a national sovereignty whose majority is linguistically different from its own, as can be seen in the case of the Swabians. Nevertheless, the Peace Conference, when drawing and sanctioning the new frontiers, could only lay the foundations of minority protection. Through its various legal constructs the Peace Conference created the framework for the minorities’ internal protection, but the task of setting this protection in motion and developing concrete procedures was to fall to the League of Nations itself.

The Peace Treaties incorporated minority rights to be guaranteed by the League of Nations. In addition to the anomaly outlined above, the Council had to face another problem: the treaties listed definite rights, but contained little information about how these were to be guaranteed in practice. It was nevertheless explicitly stated that the granting of minority rights was the “international obligation” of the given state, and the compliance with these rights was “placed under the international guarantee of the League of nations” (Art. 60). Countries which were not members were obviously not bound by this regulation, although they, too, could have their treaties registered with the League of Nations if they desired so. The minority protection sections of the Hungarian peace treaty (Art. 54-60) were placed under the League of Nations’ guarantee on August 30th, 1921. Hungary herself joined the League in 1922. The ‘solution’ of the ‘suitable handling’ of the minority problem in East

¹⁵⁸ Macartney, *Hungary*, 271.

¹⁵⁹ Available from <<http://net.lib.byu.edu/~rdh7/wwi/versa/tri1.htm>> (accessed 3 April 2008).

Central Europe at that time could only be found in a relationship between the majority state and the minorities. The institution of international minority protection could help movement towards this, but the creation of such relationship was really the task of the parties concerned.

On the national level, the decree 4/800 from June 22nd, 1923, was, in many places, a literal quotation from the Nationality Law of 1868, i.e. refreshing a 55-year old law. It obliged the government agencies to use the mother tongue of the citizens in their dealings with the latter in areas mainly populated (i.e. 1/5 of the population) by the minority. Parents or guardians representing at least forty children of school age, belonging to a linguistic minority, in any commune, may ask for minority instructions in the state and communal elementary schools. They may then choose between so-called A-, D- and C-schools. According to Macartney, these provisions rank among the most liberal in Europe.¹⁶⁰ The establishment of so-called A-(German speaking), B-(bilingual) and C-(Hungarian as teaching language) schools nevertheless remained unsatisfactory. In 1933, 40 A-schools and 191 B-schools together with 76 kindergartens faced 265 schools of type C, a relation in no way proportionate to the numbers of the minority. It was characteristic for school policy and the tendency toward assimilation that the number of the C-schools, which could hardly be described as a minority school at all, continuously increased while the German speaking A-schools were merely established at the Western border. However, by just exercising their guaranteed rights, the Germans were blamed as 'pan-Germans'.

Bethlen was well aware that the minority treatment, which Hungary expected from the Little Entente for the Hungarian minorities, stood in contradiction to their own treatment of the Hungarian Germans. On the other side, one can ask to what extent the newly created states could or wanted to follow the international rules and obligations. As László Szarka

¹⁶⁰ Macartney, *Hungary*, 282.

put it: “The inter-war development of Hungarian minorities created by Trianon exposed all the controversial points of the Peace Treaty. There is no denying that Trianon did not restrict itself to endorsing the self-determination of the former non-Hungarian national communities of historical Hungary.”¹⁶¹ The situation after Trianon demanded also a change of the political ideas represented by the old feudal generation. Gratz stated that Hungary changed from a state where the minorities claimed something, to a state where the nation raises claims to the minorities, i.e. to their own minorities.¹⁶² At this point one can argue that the Hungarian minority policy of the 1920s was characterized by a successful double strategy. On the one hand it made the foundation of the *Kulturverein* possible, on the other side it hindered its activity on the local level. This might be seen as a way to keep the minority as a political resource for achieving the revisionist goals of the government, because Bethlen as well as his successors were well aware of the fact that a revision of borders in the long run would only be possible with Germany. Paradoxically, there existed, according to Macartney, a certain fear in Hungarian minds, borne of past experience, of all Germans and German influence.¹⁶³ But what is even more important, the government could trust in the intolerance of the Hungarian society towards the minorities and thus could be calmed that the presence of a German cultural organization would be imagined as a dangerous factor in Hungary’s inner politics.

¹⁶¹ László Szarka, “Trianon and the emergence of Hungarian minorities,” in *Trianon and East Central Europe. Antecedents and repercussions*, eds. Béla Király/ László Veszprémy (New York: Social Science Monographs, 1995), 36.

¹⁶² Gratz, *Deutschungarische Probleme*, 116.

¹⁶³ Macartney, *Hungary*, 285.

Conclusion

One of the remains of King Stephen was the expression that states, inhabited by citizens of different origin and different mother tongue, would only become stronger and more capable of surviving.¹⁶⁴ Turning away from this wisdom seemed dangerous. Hungary from the second part of the 19th century did so. However, one has to ignore common stereotypes and accept that all parties involved, due to their convictions, could not act in another way. Hungary, traumatized by Trianon, did what it believed it had to do, i.e. nationalizing what remained of the Land of the Holy Crown of St. Stephen. On the other side, the Swabians as the largest minority suddenly awakened to national consciousness during and after World War One and although they demanded very little, it seemed even too much in Hungarian contemporary thinking. Would there have been an alternative? Disregarding theoretical possibilities, there was certainly none. Even without Trianon, Hungary would have been a backward country, inhabited by nationalities whose aim would have been independence with all means. The rather peaceful and, what is of greater importance, politically untrained Germans, as the largest remaining minority, could not present any serious threat. The Hungarian elite had been well aware of this and thus regarded it as a minor effort forcing their Magyarization. The influence of such sophisticated people like Gustav Gratz was limited and the Hungarian elite closed their ears to what they did not want to hear. Instead of communication, radicalization took place and no side showed enough patience to work on the issue on a common ground. Maybe this is a speciality in Hungarian politics in general. Indeed, sometimes it is easier to hate instead of being ashamed or take the first step towards the other side.

¹⁶⁴ Gratz, *Deutschungarische Probleme*, 106.

This paper has shown and examined the efforts undertaken by the Hungarian Germans under the leadership of Jakob Bleyer. Although he started with honest means, the fight against the rejection of any Hungarian post-Trianon government turned him into a bitter accuser of Hungarian nationality policy. The Hungarian elite on the other side was always quick to mark those as traitors who ostensibly agitated against the state and thus the ‘undividable’ Magyar nation. The victory of the democratic revolution of 1918 only for a short time ended the old method of oppressing the minorities. It opened the way for a democratic solution of the nationality question. Oszkár Jászi himself saw the guarantee of Hungary’s independence in the arrangement with her nationalities rather than bounding herself to more powerful partners like Germany. His thoughts were of honest means but he could not devote all his attention to it. After the failure of the democratic illusions, Hungary took a step back in time again. Thus, one might assume that a consequent German minority policy in Hungary was not possible. Out of the private existence one had to fit in the *Staatsnation*. On the other hand, there existed a possibility to decide for opposition against this state, disregarding the framework provided by the Hungarian leadership. This finally happened.

The difference of the systems of 1919 and 1923/24 can be found in their principles. Though both relied on the Nationality Law of 1868 and the illusion of the ‘one Hungarian political nation’, a thought the Hungarian public believed could never be abolished, the practical realization was different. The system of late 1919 was partially a continuation of the 1918/19 nationality policies, partially dominated by the interest to re-allure the nationalities. The Communist’s conception widened the framework provided by the Nationality Law of 1868 by granting extensive rights for the nationalities on the political, economic and cultural level. The policies of 1923/24 in turn continued to limit the rights of minorities. While offering something with one hand, they took it back with the other. The

situation thus seemed very similar to 1868, where a rather liberal law existed on paper but was never put into practice.

The decision regarding assimilation was always individual and not dictated in Hungary, but the respect for the rights of national minorities is to the same extent a matter of political will, and Hungary always showed a certain aversion towards the realization of these rights. Thus, the emancipation of minorities was not dependent from modernization, but followed a political logic. In the long run, the enemy was not modernization but feudalism and while Hungary stepped back in time, the minorities moved forward. None of them could foresee the consequences. After sliding into the Second World War, parts of the German minority under the head of the *Volksbund* indeed acted as a fifth column of Nazi Germany. However, Germans in Hungary also founded the so-called *Treuebewegung* during the war to show their faith towards their Hungarian home country. It could not prevent most of them from expulsion.

More than 60 years later, the situation of the German minority in Hungary seems very similar to the 1920s. Otto Heinek, head of the Hungarian German self-administration, speaks of 50-60.000 people as the active core of the minority.¹⁶⁵ The Hungarian German, Jenő Kaltenbach, from 1995 to 2007 ombudsman for minorities in the Hungarian parliament, complained that the Hungarian political elite would be unable to realise a law concerning the minorities in the country, which promises them parliamentary representation. The basic question now is, if Hungary is willing to support a 'mixed' society or rather regard them as being on the fringes of a national state. 18 years after the political change, the Hungarian German minority is still at the beginning. They do not have decision rights and the situation of the Hungarian German school system is as weak as usual. On the other hand, they do not use all their legal possibilities and it thus seems they are not interested in

¹⁶⁵ Pester Lloyd, 25 October 2006.

their own survival. Instead of being part in all decisions made in the country, they lock themselves in a voluntarily ghetto. It is thus not a question of right, but also what they make out of it and how they use it. Kaltenbach blamed the political elite, the media and also the Roma as the largest minority of the country for doing nothing. He further emphasized that the Hungarian Germans find themselves in “a difficult state” with their future “highly uncertain”¹⁶⁶.

The Swabians themselves can thus be blamed as well. It is maybe due to historical reasons that they do not show themselves and rather feel the hopelessness of any efforts. What disturbs even more is the display of empty phrases mainly from the ultra-conservative, Bleyer worshipping part of the Hungarian Germans. This is to the same extent manifested in their historiography. Jakob Bleyer serves as the keystone, as a kind of godfather, while the Hungarian Germans emphasize their role as victims. Sometimes a perverted contest seems to take place about who suffered most. This paper tried to widen the context of the Hungarian-Swabian problem in order get away from the short-sighted victim-traitor rhetoric. Last, but not least, because of the critical view of the Hungarian society towards minorities, a balanced historical picture could improve the dialogue between minority and majority. It is up to the Hungarian Germans to do so by posing honest questions and giving honest answers. If they can do so is indeed uncertain.

¹⁶⁶ *Pester Lloyd*, 18 April 2007.

Bibliography

Unpublished documents

Magyar Országos Levéltár (Hungarian National Archive)

K 26: Miniszterelnökség központilag iktatott iratai (Central registered writings of the office of the prime minister)

K 28: Miniszterelnökség. Nemzetiségi és Kisebbségi Osztály (Ministry of the prime minister. Department for Nationalities and Minorities)

Essays online

Bibó, István. „Deformierter ungarischer Charakter. Ungarische Geschichte auf Abwegen“; available from

<<http://www.kakanien.ac.at/beitr/fallstudie/IBibo1.pdf>> [accessed 17 March 2008].

Bleyer, Jakob. „Rede im Parlament gegen die Minderheitenpolitik der Regierung 1933“; available from

<<http://www.jbg.n1.hu/keret.cgi/?sub.cgi-redeung.htm>> [accessed 8 February 2008].

Hanák, Péter. „A national compensation for backwardness“; available from

<<http://repositories.cdlib.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1020&context=cstch>> [accessed 12 January 2008].

Essays in anthologies

Apponyi, Albert, ed., „The historic mission of Hungary and of the states aggrandised to her detriment,” in *Justice for Hungary. Review and criticism of the effect of the Treaty of Trianon*, 1-20. London: Longmans, 1928.

Beller, Béla. „Jakob Bleyer als Minderheitenpolitiker,” in *Jakob Bleyer. Ein Leben für das Ungarndeutschtum*, ed. Wendelin Hambuch, 29-42. Budapest: JBG, 1994.

Chaszar, Edward. „Trianon and the problem of national minorities,” in *Essays on World War I. A case study on Trianon* (=War and society in East Central Europe, Vol. VI), ed. Béla Király, 479-489. New York: Social Science Monographs, 1982.

Fata, Márta. „Minderheitenkonzeption und –politik Jakob Bleyers,” in *Jakob Bleyer. Ein Leben für das Ungarndeutschtum*, ed. Wendelin Hambuch, 13-28. Budapest: JBG, 1994.

Ginder, Paul. „Jakob Bleyers Weg vom ungarischen Patrioten zur deutschen Volksgemeinschaft,” in *Jakob Bleyer. Ein Leben für das Ungarndeutschtum*, ed. Wendelin Hambuch, 57-74. Budapest: JBG, 1994.

Katus, László. „József Eötvös and Ferenc Deák: Laws on Nationalities,” in *Geopolitics in the Danube region. Hungarian reconciliation efforts 1848-1998*, eds. Romsics, Ignac/ Király, Béla, 133-160. Budapest: CEU Press, 1998.

Litván, György. “Oszkár Jászi’s Danube Federation Theories,” in *Geopolitics in the Danube region. Hungarian reconciliation efforts 1848-1998*, eds. Romsics, Ignac/ Király, Béla, 227-242. Budapest: CEU Press, 1998.

Pálok, Judit. “The protection of national and ethnic minorities’ rights in Hungary (1989-1997),” in *Geopolitics in the Danube region. Hungarian reconciliation efforts 1848-1998*, eds. Romsics, Ignac/ Király, Béla, 317-345. Budapest: CEU Press, 1998.

Seewann, Gerhard, ed., „Das Ungarndeutschtum 1918-1988“ in *Ungarndeutsche und Ethnopolitik*, 107-128. Budapest: Osiris, 2000.

Szarka, László. “Trianon and the emergence of Hungarian minorities,” Trianon and East Central Europe. Antecedents and repercussions, eds. Király, Béla / Veszprémy, László, 29-42. New York: Social Science Monographs, 1995.

Szentfülöpi, Antal. „Zur Nationalitätenpolitik in Ungarn zwischen den zwei Weltkriegen und zur Geschichte des Ungarländischen Deutschen Volksbildungsvereins,” in *300 Jahre Zusammenleben – Aus der Geschichte der Ungarndeutschen*, ed. Wendelin Hambuch, II. Vol., 84-100. Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1988.

Tilkovszky, Loránt. „Die Nationalitätenpolitik Ungarns und das heimische Deutschtum zwischen 1919-1945,” in *300 Jahre Zusammenleben – Aus der Geschichte der Ungarndeutschen*, ed. Wendelin Hambuch, I. Vol., 114-137. Budapest: Tankönyvkiadó, 1988, pp. 114-137.

Vince, Pál. „Kontrahenten oder Weggefährten? Jakob Bleyer und Gustav Gratz an der Spitze des Ungarländischen Deutschen Volksbildungsvereins,” in *Jakob Bleyer als Volkstumspolitik*, ed. Wendelin Hambuch, 39-58. Budapest: JBG, 2004.

Essays in periodicals

Bleyer, Jakob. „Nation, Volk, Staat,” *Suevia Pannonica* (11/1983): 20-30.

Schödl, Günter. “Trianon-Ungarn und die deutsche Minderheitenpolitik. Zu den ‚Lebenserinnerungen‘ von Gustav Gratz,” *Südostdeutsches Archiv* 26/27 (1983/84): 139-151.

Spannenberger, Norbert. „György Steuer. Regierungskommissar für die deutsche Minderheit in der Bethlen-Ära,” *Suevia Pannonica* (26/1998): 65-81.

Spiegel-Schmidt, Friedrich. „Die Arbeiterbewegung 1918/19 in Ungarn mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Deutschen in Ungarn,” *Südostdeutsches Archiv* 26/27 (1983/84): 100-109.

Idem. „Das Deutschtum Ungarns zwischen dem Putsch gegen Peidl und der Ödenburger Volksabstimmung (1919-1921),“ *Südostdeutsches Archiv* 30/31 (1987/88): 78-111.

Idem. „Die kulturpolitische Konzeption Jakob Bleyers,“ *Suevia Pannonica* (11/1983): 4-18.

Idem. „Jakob Bleyer in der neueren ungarischen Geschichtsschreibung,“ *Suevia Pannonica* (11/1983): 69-94.

Sugar, Peter. „The more it changes, the more Hungarian nationalism remains the same,“ *Austrian Yearbook* (31/2000): 127-174.

Newspapers and periodicals

Deutscher Kalender. Jahrbuch der Ungarndeutschen
Pester Lloyd
Südostdeutsches Archiv
Suevia Pannonica. Archiv der Deutschen aus Ungarn
Ungarn-Jahrbuch
Zeitschrift für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde

Monographies

Ablonczy, Balázs. *Pal Teleki (1879-1941): the life of a controversial Hungarian politician*. Boulder: East European Monographs, 2006.

Bán, András. *Magyarok kisebbségben és szorványban: a Magyar Kisebbségi Osztályának válogatott iratai, 1919-1944* (Hungarians in minorities and loose. Selected documents from the Department for Minorities and Nationalities). Budapest: Teleki László Alapítvány, 1995.

Bellér, Béla. *Az ellenforradalom nemzeti politikájának kialakulása* (The development of nationality politics in the counterrevolutionary regime). Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1975.

Bibó, István. *Die Misere der osteuropäischen Kleinstaaten*. Frankfurt a.M.: Verlag Neue Kritik, 1992.

Borsanyi, György. *The life of a communist revolutionary. Béla Kun*, Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 1993.

Brubaker, Rogers. *Nationalism reframed: national minorities, nationalizing states, and external homelands in the new Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Deák, István. *Hungary from 1918 to 1945*. New York: Institute on East Central Europe, 1988.

Epstein, Irene. *Gyula Szekfű. A study in the political basis of Hungarian historiography*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1987.

Galantai, József. *Trianon and the protection of minorities*. Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 1992.

Glatz, Ferenc. *Minorities in East-Central Europe: historical analysis and a policy proposal*. Budapest: Europe Institut, 1993.

Gratz, Gusztáv. *Deutschungarische Probleme*. Budapest: Neues Sonntagsblatt, 1938.

Gyurgyák, János. *Ezzé lett Magyar hazátok. A Magyar nemzeteszmé és nacionalizmus története* (This became out of your Hungarian home. History of Hungarian national ideas and nationalism). Budapest: Osiris, 2007.

Hajdú, Tibor. *Károlyi Mihály*. Budapest: Akadémiai kiadó, 1978.

Idem. *The Hungarian Soviet Republic*. Budapest: Akadémiai kiadó, 1979.

Haslinger, Peter. *Der ungarische Revisionismus und das Burgenland*. Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, 1994.

Janos, Andrew. *The politics of backwardness in Hungary, 1825-1945*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982.

Jászi, Oszkár. *The Dissolution of the Habsburg monarchy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964.

Idem. *Homage to Danubia*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1995.

Károlyi, Mihály. *Faith without illusion*. London: Jonathan Cape, 1956.

Komjathy, Anthony/ Stockwell, Rebecca. *German minorities and the Third Reich: ethnic Germans of East Central Europe between the wars*. New York: Holmes and Meier, 1980.

Kovács-Bertrand, Aniko. *Der ungarische Revisionismus nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg: der publizistische Kampf gegen den Friedensvertrag von Trianon (1918-1931)*. München: R. Oldenbourg, 1997.

Lendvai, Paul. *The Hungarians: A thousand years of victory in defeat*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003.

Litván, György. *A twentieth-century prophet. Oscar Jászi, 1875-1957*. Budapest: CEU Press, 2006.

Macartney, C.A. *Hungary*. London: Ernest Benn, 1934.

Mócsy, István. *The effects of World War I. The Uprooted: Hungarian refugees and their impact on Hungary's domestic politics, 1918-1921*. New York: Social Science Monographs, 1983.

Paclisanu, Zenobius. *Hungary's struggle to annihilate its nation minorities*. Miami Beach: Romanian Historical Studies, 1985.

Pastor, Peter. *Hungary between Wilson and Lenin: the Hungarian Revolution of 1918-1919 and the Big Three*. Boulder: East European Quarterly, 1976.

Peteri, György. *Effects of World War I: war communism in Hungary*. New York: Social Science Monographs, 1983.

Pölöskei, Ferenc. *Hungary after two revolutions (1919-1922)*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1980.

Romsics, Ignac. *Istvan Bethlen: a great conservative statesman of Hungary, 1874-1946*. Boulder: Social Science Monographs, 1995.

Rothschild, Joseph. *East Central Europe between the two World Wars*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992.

Schödl, Günther, ed. *Land an der Donau* (=Deutsche Geschichte im Osten Europas, Vol. 5). Berlin: Siedler, 1995.

Schwind, Hedwig. *Jakob Bleyer*. München: Süd-Ost Institut, 1960.

Spannenberger, Norbert. *Der Volksbund der Deutschen in Ungarn 1938-1944 unter Horthy und Hitler*. München: Oldenbourg, 2002.

Idem. *Die katholische Kirche in Ungarn 1918-1939. Positionierung im politischen System und „Katholische Renaissance“*. Stuttgart: Steiner, 2006.

Spira, Thomas. *German-Hungarian Relations and the Swabian Problem. From Károlyi to Gömbös*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1977.

Sugar, Peter. *East European nationalism, politics, and religion*. Brookfield: Ashgate, 1999.

Stern, Fritz, ed., *The varieties of history from Voltaire to the present*. New York: Vintage Books, 1973.

Szekfü, Gyula. *Három nemzedék és ami utána következik* (Three generations and what comes after). Budapest: ÁKV-Maecenas, 1989.

Tilkovszky, Loránt. *Zeitgeschichte der Ungarndeutschen seit 1919*. Budapest: Corvina, 1991.

Tőkés, Rudolf. *Béla Kun and the Hungarian Soviet Republic: the origins and role of the Communist Party of Hungary in the revolutions of 1918-1919*. New York: Praeger, 1967.

Tokody, Gyula. *Deutschland und die ungarische Räterepublik*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1983.

Toth, Ágnes. *National and ethnic minorities in Hungary, 1920-2001*. Boulder: East European Monographs, 2005.

Turda, Marius. *The idea of national superiority in Central Europe, 1880-1918*. Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 2004.

Vardy, Steven Bela. *Modern Hungarian Historiography*. New York: East European Quarterly, 1976.