

CENTRAL EUROPE: OSZKÁR JÁSZI'S AMERICAN DREAM

RICHARD ACZEL

University of London

Addressing the Polish Sejm and Senate in January of this year, the Czech President, Václav Havel, claimed: "there is before us a real historic opportunity to fill with something meaningful the great political vacuum that arose in Central Europe after the breakup of the Habsburg Empire".¹ If only as a utopian projection, a cultural and moral hypothesis, or, to use a phrase that Masaryk was fond of quoting from Goethe, "eine exakte Phantasie" — Oszkár Jászi's dream of a United States of Danubia, as a first step towards integration into a fully United States of Europe, appears to have returned to the ideological agenda of Central Europe. It is not the aim of this paper to assess the prospects of this dream in the 1990s, nor to examine the political and historical reasons for the failure of Jászi's federalist fantasy in the first half of our century. These reasons are well known; and indeed were recognised by Jászi himself in his retrospective article of 1955, "Why the Danubian Confederation Failed to Materialize".² My interest lies, rather, in the consideration of a more narrowly intellectual phenomenon. In an attempt to move towards a fuller understanding of the historical limitations of Jászi's Central European vision, I should like to reconstruct the intellectual genealogy of an illusion. To read the fascinating and perplexing fusion of blindness and insight in the "American", "scholar-statesman" Jászi of *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Empire* and *The Future of Danubia*, through the *sociological* Jászi of *Huszadik Század* (Twentieth Century), the pioneering journal in and through which his distinctive view of the relationship between social science and international relations matured during the first two decades of the century. How, for example, could the American Jászi — for all his immense knowledge of national animosities in Central Europe — go on proposing the same federal solution to the "problems of Danubia" throughout his thirty-two years in the United States, when the antagonisms which had relegated the federalist idea to the level of a mere utopia in 1918 had only been exacerbated by the tensions which had both led to, and been exploited by, the Second World War and its aftermath. How could the American Jászi — for all his familiarity with Central European history and with the belligerent psychology of Bolshevism — claim at the end of 1944 that: "It seems not an overstrained optimism to assume that for the next twenty years or so Russia will loyally accept the new equilibrium, would not interfere with the cultural and national independence of Central European countries, and would abstain from any action which would disturb her cooperation with the democracies."³

Let me begin by taking issue with what remains to date the most coherent attempt to explain the strain of illusionism which runs throughout Jászi's work, Péter Hanák's short but instructive monograph, *Oszkár Jászi's Danubian Patriotism* (Budapest, 1985). Hanák traces the limitations of Jászi's political utopianism back to what he sees as the "enlightened" or "common-sense" rationalism of European social thought in the 19th century. The social scientists of the 19th century, Hanák claims, "were not acquainted with the theory of relativity, the relation of matter to energy ... the new findings of depth psychology and social psychology". They failed to realise, he goes on, "that there existed certain phenomena and relationships which were incomprehensible to 'common sense', ... that the irrational too had rational causes, and that in order to understand social phenomena one needed to recognise determining principles of a higher order".⁴

While Hanák is undoubtedly right to relate Jászi's theoretical limitations to the sociological systems of the 19th century, his characterisation of these limitations is more problematic. For Jászi — especially during the interwar period — was profoundly aware of the enormous importance of apparently irrational forces in history, and sought to explain them in overtly, consciously mass-psychological terms. In his book *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Hungary*, for example, he argues that "mass movements are not primarily rational and deliberate; they are the products of religious instincts".⁵ This statement is from a chapter entitled "The Mass Psychology of the Bolshevik Movement", where Jászi criticises Marx for precisely the kind of excessive rationalism for which Hanák criticises Jászi. In this same chapter, Jászi also claims that one of the most powerful and dangerous lessons of the War was that it "seemed to have taught the relativity of moral law".⁶

As for the need to recognise a "higher order" of determining principles in history, it was precisely such an order that Jászi — and his key 19th century models, Spencer and Marx — set out to discover. And it was ultimately this very endeavour which so often led Jászi to sacrifice the implications of his rationalistic, positivistic approach to the facts of historical reality to the demands of an essentially transcendental, rather than strictly rational or even common-sense, approach to the laws of historical development.

At the heart of this transcendentalism lies the concept of social evolution formulated by the first *guru* of *Huszadik Század*, Herbert Spencer, who, it should be pointed out, contrary to Hanák's characterisation of 19th century social thought, was deeply preoccupied by the attempt to integrate the concepts of matter and energy. It is in the theoretical antinomies of this particular model of social evolution, and its far from common-sensical application to the sphere of social and inter-state affairs in Central Europe, that the real key to Jászi's peculiar fusion of blindness and insight can be found.

Jászi's tacit presumption of the relationship between sociological theory and international, political project is revealed most crucially in a famous statement of 1912 which was to determine his thinking on the nationality question throughout his career: "*Mankind*", Jászi claims, "*has been created in such a fashion that his path to inter-*

nationalism leads through the national, and his path to nationality through the mother-tongue of the masses".⁷

For Jászi, the status of this claim is not, above all, a matter of political strategy or historical ethics — that the national represents the most expedient or the most morally desirable road to the international — but one of *scientific necessity*. The developmental process which leads from the differentiation of national specificity to the integration of international unity is seen as an inevitable process. This inevitability or necessity is explained in metahistorical terms earlier in the same work: "from the Middle-Ages to the French Revolution and beyond, a single, uniform world-historical process has been progressing irresistibly forward: the integration of the peoples of Europe into ever wider and more organic unities".⁸

Once the scientific character of this "irresistible" process is understood, Jászi can confidently conclude, "it will be obvious to every thinking person that the movement towards nationality is, in the last analysis, a movement towards unity, towards greater economic and cultural association".⁹

To understand Jászi's representation of historical development in terms of an irresistible process of scientific necessity, we must return to the beginning of the 20th century and to the intellectual premises of the journal which bore that century's name, *Huszadik Század*. What is Jászi's concept of scientificity in 1900, the pioneering moment at which both century and journal are born? An immediate, if only somewhat provisional, answer to this question is supplied by Jászi's opening article in *Huszadik Század*, which follows Herbert Spencer's famous letter of approval and support. In this article, entitled "Scientific Journalism", Jászi argues that, in order to be scientific, any intellectual inquiry must satisfy two fundamental conditions: it must combine the "strict observation of phenomena"¹⁰ with the causal induction of increasingly general laws. The theoretical relationship between phenomenon and law is never fully stated. All we are told is that the processes of induction and deduction must somehow be made to agree. While Jászi's positivistic commitment to the first of these conditions — the strict observation of phenomena — is responsible for some of his greatest insights (from the unprecedented factual detail afforded to the history and conditions of the nationalities in Central Europe in *The Evolution of Nation States and the Nationality Question*, 1912, to the wealth of instructive economic data collated in *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy*, 1929), the increasingly mechanical graduation from phenomenon to law constitutes the source of most of Jászi's blindnesses.

Jászi's conception of law, the scientific law of human development, is — and in spite of Jászi's growing disillusionment with Spencer's politics — would remain, profoundly indebted to Herbert Spencer's theory of evolution. In a contribution to *Huszadik Század*, entitled "Herbert Spencer and Our Future Tasks", Jászi claims that Spencer had been "the first to express and explain the development of the inorganic, organic and spiritual world according to the same mechanical laws of matter and motion".¹¹ Jászi does not go on to rehearse these "mechanical laws" in his article, but we can safely assume that he is thinking of Spencer's classic statement of the "Law of Evolution and Dissolution" as formulated in his *First Principles* of 1862: "Evolution

is an integration of matter and concomitant dissipation of motion; during which the matter passes from an indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a definite, coherent heterogeneity; and during which the retained motion undergoes a parallel transformation."¹² Or, as Spencer puts it a little more simply elsewhere in the same work: "Evolution is definable as a change from an incoherent homogeneity to a coherent heterogeneity, accompanying the dissipation of motion and the integration of matter."¹³

This law applies to all organisms, including what Spencer will go on to call the "social organism". The organic metaphor is an important one. For Spencer, societies are not the products of "manufacture or artificial arrangement",¹⁴ but of "natural development". The structure of this development involves a dialectic of dissipation, or differentiation and integration. Like any other organism, the social organism increases in mass, becoming more complex and differentiated as it grows. At the same time, this complexity is accompanied by a greater degree of integration, towards the final goal of what Spencer calls complete "equilibration". Primitive societies are characterised by the repetition of essentially homogeneous elements; advanced societies by the integration of essentially heterogeneous elements. Thus the greater the differentiation, the greater the integration.

It is, of course, precisely this notion of integration through differentiation which informs Jászi's central commitment to the idea of national specificity as the path to international unity, and thus also his faith in the historical necessity of first Danubian, and then full European, confederation.

Looking back over the first ten years of *Huszadik Század* in 1910, Jászi claimed that: "if the first three years were dominated by Spencerism, the next three years brought us closer to Marxism".¹⁵ This shift in intellectual allegiances, while it marked a clarification of Jászi's position on the relation of the theory of social development to the tasks of contemporary political organisation and strategy, did not, in essence, signify a change of direction in Jászi's fundamentally deterministic theory of social development or evolution. The road from Spencer to Marx may cross a sea of differences in political vision and methodological procedure, but their shared emphasis on teleology and determination, coupled with their shared deference towards Darwin, might suggest they have more in common than the simple fact that their tombs stand face to face in Highgate cemetery. If Spencer could derive his concept of the "survival of the fittest" from Darwin — and the phrase *is* Spencer's — Marx too could claim, looking into *The Origin of the Species* in 1860, that: "Darwin's book is very important and serves me as a basis in natural science for the class struggle in history."¹⁶ It is revealing that in an article on "Darwin and Sociology", published in *Huszadik Század* in 1909, Jászi himself could conclude with an appeal to the necessity of combining the lessons drawn from Darwin by both Spencer and Marx. "Social Darwinism", he claims — or more accurately, "Sociological Darwinism" (*társadalomtudományi darwinizmus*) — and "historical materialism" represent "the two tendencies best equipped to keep the law of causality alive in the social sciences".¹⁷

The attempt to reconcile historical materialism with Spencerian evolution inevitably involved a very selective and qualified reading of Marx. In his book of 1908, *The His-*

torical Materialist Philosophy of the State, for example, Jászi claimed: "The eternal value of Marx's theory lies in the methodological principle which can be formulated as follows: In explaining social phenomena it is only legitimate to seek the assistance of intellectual motives (religion, morality, philosophy) when economic forces on their own are insufficient to explain the phenomenon in question."¹⁸

Jászi recognised that such a formulation was considerably more modest than the original historical materialist position. Its cautionary tone is largely the product of the strict and reductive economic determinism championed by Marxists internationally at the turn of the century, to which Engels himself had objected in the 1890s. Jászi, however, takes his qualifications still further by quoting approvingly from Ferdinand Tönnies: "Historical materialism is valid insofar as it expresses the scientific and positive tendency which traces the high back to the low, the noble to the vulgar, the complex to the simple. But it is invalid if its principle is extended and used in such a manner as to set it in opposition to the *psychological* explanation of social development. On the contrary, it is precisely this explanation it should be working towards."

This not only serves as further evidence against Hanák's representation of Jászi as an "enlightened rationalist" who had no time for psychology, but also points us towards the limitations of Jászi's theoretical appropriation of the systems of both Marx and Spencer. Just as, in adopting Spencer's notion of evolution as a purely theoretical construct, Jászi had ignored both Spencer's politics and the political and historical phenomena his theory was formulated to address, so, in accommodating historical materialism to this evolutionary theory as no more than a "methodological principle", he ignored the strikingly similar realities to which Marx was responding and the strikingly different political conclusions he reached. For what is missing from Jászi's appropriation of both evolutionism and historical materialism — as well as from the qualitatively different "phenomena" to which he applies these theories in considering social and national developments in Central Europe — is the *shared* historical context from which both Spencer and Marx had set out. That context is, above all, market society in 19th century England, with social Darwinism as the patron of its theoretical justification, and historical materialism as the committed herald of its practical negation. Had Jászi grasped the historical preconditions of these two movements, rather than merely their emphasis on scientificity, teleology and determination, he could surely have recognised that the second was proposed as a critique of, rather than a complement to, the first.

It is here that the problematic relationship between phenomenon and law in Jászi's social science becomes fully manifest. Ignoring the phenomena on which both Spencer and Marx had initially based their developmental laws, Jászi uncritically applies these laws — emptied of their historical content — to the very different social and national phenomena of what was still — in Jászi's own estimation — a residually feudal Central Europe. The problem is not that Jászi pays insufficient attention to these new phenomena — the "facts" of his own social and national context. Indeed, throughout his life he remains true to the dictum he attributes to Durkheim in an essay on *The Methods of Sociology*, published in *Huszadik Század* in 1905: "We need facts!! Then more facts!! Then still more facts!!"¹⁹ It is, rather, that the laws he imposes on these facts

are taken ready-made from a different context, not as the products of, or responses to, *history*, but as science — mechanical, inevitable and necessary.

An animus to history is already implicit in the Spencerian model of evolution, and its roots can be traced directly back to Spencer's own intellectual development. For Spencer — like Jászi and the *Huszadik Század* circle in general — had a very low opinion of the contemporary state of historiography, and sought to set the study on a scientific footing. "I take but little interest in what are called histories", wrote Spencer in his *Autobiography*, "but am interested only in Sociology, which stands related to these so-called histories much as a vast building stands related to the heaps of stones and bricks around it".²⁰ Taking issue with the historians of his own age some seventy pages later, he argues: "the ordinary historian ... thinking of little else but the doings of kings, court intrigues, international quarrels, victories and defeats, concerning all of which no definite forecasts are possible, asserts there is no social science..."²¹

The same disposition is reproduced by Jászi in the opening article of *Huszadik Század* in 1900: "Scientific publicism differs as much from the unscientific as the chronicles which sing of kings and battles, or the so-called pragmatic history which investigates the intrigues of diplomacy, differ from the historical labours of [the] ... sociologists of the modern age."²² That such a position was characteristic of the project of *Huszadik Század* as a whole is illustrated by Zoltán Szász's comments from a review of Max Nordau's *Der Sinn der Geschichte* in the same year: "It became clear that the intellectual activity subsumed under the category of historiography could not be called scientific research, that works of history do not constitute science, and with such works having been thus discredited, a new science was born, the science of sociology..."²³ Especially in its early years, *Huszadik Század* rarely concerned itself with historiography as such. It strove, rather, towards the empirical, sociological analysis of given realities, and towards the metahistorical foundation of the laws of social development.

The theoretical logic behind such a focus is again provided by Spencer. Already in 1852, in a letter to Edward Lott, he could explain: "My position, stated briefly, is that until you have got a true theory of humanity, you cannot interpret history; and when you have got a true theory of humanity *you do not want history*. You can draw no inference from the facts and alleged facts of history without your conceptions of human nature entering into that inference; and unless your conceptions of human nature are true your inference will be vicious. But if your conceptions of human nature be true, you need none of the inferences drawn from history for your guidance."²⁴

Insofar as such a "theory of humanity" was proposed as scientific — answering to the fundamental requirements of causality and necessity — historical reality, with its awkward tendency to break the rules, was often viewed as simply recalcitrant. For Spencer, this recalcitrance took the form of, above all, the problem of what he called "re-barbarization". While Spencer believed he could see in the first half of the 19th century the practical realisation, and thus phenomenal justification, for his theory of evolution in the development of "industrial" society, he increasingly came to view the second half of the century as an age of regression, resulting in the re-emergence of

those forms of social organisation his evolutionary schema had designated as "militant", and had identified with a more primitive stage in the development of the social organism. Much of Spencer's later work focuses on this problem of re-barbarization and "militancy", leading him to precisely the kind of political conservatism — in particular the rejection of the principle of universal suffrage and a profound hostility towards socialism — which led Jászi to claim, characteristically, that "the future will undoubtedly justify the basic principles of Spencer's thought, while refuting his political conclusions".²⁵

The point is not so much whether Jászi was right or wrong in this assessment — although one might argue that Spencer's anxieties concerning excessive state power have proved more prophetic than his faith in social evolution — rather, that Jászi, like Spencer himself, was ultimately unable to reconcile the phenomena of history with the laws of evolution. Historical developments which went against the great scientific plan of heterogeneous integration could never be fully accounted for, only rejected out of hand. As Jászi argued in *The Future of Hungary and the United States of Danubia* in 1918: "all initiatives which, in contradiction to the enormous impetus of integration, strive towards economic and political isolation are directed against the most powerful evolutionary forces of the 20th century".²⁶

With this final contradiction between historical initiative and evolutionary law, eventuality and necessity, history and metahistory, our search for the intellectual genealogy of an illusion has reached, in a Jászian phrase, its "Archimedean point". Given the limitation of time, all I should like to do now is offer two illustrations of the effects of this contradiction in Jászi's work.

My first illustration concerns the concept of democracy, which, as Jászi's own "Archimedean point" of the nationality question, occupies a privileged place in his thought in general and in his conception of Danubian confederation in particular.

Jászi's fullest theoretical statement on this question is a major article entitled *The Future of Democracy*, published in two installments in *Huszadik Század* in 1907. Starting out from a polemic with Henry Maine's static, formalistic description of the democratic state (in *Popular Government*, 1890), Jászi proposes an alternative, organicist and developmental description, involving a characteristic attempt to draw upon both historical materialism and Spencerian evolution. "In the final analysis", Jászi argues, more or less with Marx, "the form of political rule is determined by the economic structure of society ... the final cause, character and nature of the external form of the constitution can only be understood through the material structure of society ... any profound change in the form of government or constitution can only be the product of a profound transformation of the social structure".²⁷ On this basis, Jászi offers the following, rather naive and schematic, definition of democracy: "Where, in place of a few rich people, wider circles have access to material well-being, and thus also to social independence: we shall find such constitutional forms as may be designated democratic."²⁸ In support of this thesis, Jászi cites approvingly from Gusztav Beksics's study of 1881, *Democracy in Hungary*: "If I want to know how the cause of democracy is faring in any given state, I must examine the division of public property."²⁹

On the more Spencerian side, Jászi offers a still less historical definition of democracy as an eternal value. "For every time and age", he writes, "we can call democratic those tendencies which seek to place the organs of the state under the supervision of an ever widening stratum of society in order that they should be able to serve the interests of the community increasingly effectively against the interests of certain smaller circles".³⁰ In this way, Jászi can see democracy as an insurance of integration in a complex, expanding, and widely differentiated "social organism". The conclusion Jászi reaches towards the end of his essay is even more evolutionistic: "We have good reason to consider democratic development as a natural necessity, independent of human reason and will."³¹

It hardly needs saying that Jászi's far from consistent attempt to fuse historical materialism and Spencerian evolution in this crucial question does not stand up well to history. For the equation he proposes between a greater equality of wealth and property and a higher degree of democracy hardly constitutes a relation of scientific or historical necessity. If this *were* the case, we would be bound to consider Hungary in the 1950s a more democratic state than the USA today. Where Jászi himself turns to the evaluation of historical realities — in particular the state of democracy in England and America at the turn of the century — tensions between democracy as a historical reality and as a theoretical ideal become still more apparent. Democracy came into being, Jászi argues, "through the battle for equality before the law which the bourgeoisie waged against feudalism".³² In contrast to this, he goes on, the new task of democracy is to "struggle for economic equality" by bringing into being "a social order and structure which, through the state ownership of the means of production, will eliminate all unproductive labour and all incomes which are not the product of labour".³³ That the democratic ideal which fought against the feudal state for equality before the law is inadequate for the creation of a genuinely democratic order today, is, Jászi claims, demonstrated quite "alarmingly" by the example of the current democratic states — an example which fills Jászi with feelings of "horror and disgust". "It is quite beyond doubt", he argues, "that the experience of the two classical democratic nations [England and America] do not show the present state of democracy in a very favourable light".³⁴ This experience, Jászi concludes, "only confirms our point of departure: that the democratic spirit and endeavour cannot prevail in a pure form where, in terms of property and influence, there are great differences between the constitutive elements of society".³⁵ As the most disturbing illustration of this, Jászi points to the American example, where, he writes, "even the inveterate forces and restraints of a long historical past are unable to impede the free development of a form of democracy which rests on oligarchic, capitalist foundations".³⁶

Jászi is equally critical of parliamentary democracy in turn of the century England, where, he insists, "there is no genuine spirit of democracy in the parliamentary parties, which, in the hands of professional businessmen who make their living from politics, have become no more than machines for the election of representatives".³⁷ This criticism is remarkably reminiscent of a point made by Spencer, writing in *The Study of Sociology* in 1880: "While the outside form of free government remains, there has

grown up within it a reality which makes government not free. The body of professional politicians, entering public life to get incomes ... have ... in fact become a ruling class quite different from that which the constitution intended to secure..."³⁸ The ultimate historical irony of the similarity of their positions on this matter has already been referred to. Spencer's critique of parliamentarism would lead him over the next ten years to attack not only the principle of universal suffrage, but also the very socialism which Jászi saw as the driving force behind the emergence of a new and fully authentic democratic ideal.

My second illustration of the conflict between history and metahistory in Jászi's thought concerns the key work of his American period, *The Dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy*, published in 1929. In discussing this book, it is worth remembering that it was not written as a straightforward *history* of the last years of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, but as a contribution to a series on Civic Education, the purpose of which was to answer the question: how do state systems achieve and sustain political cohesion? Thus the impetus behind the book is already partly theoretical, rather than purely historiographical, from the outset.

More important, however, are two further theoretical premises which inform Jászi's project in *The Dissolution*; one of which points back to Spencer, the other to Marx — or, rather, through Marx to Hegel. Just as Spencer had insisted in *The Social Organism* (1860) that "society is a growth, not a manufacture", a "natural development", not an "artificial arrangement", so Jászi could base the whole of his study of the ultimate failure of the Monarchy on the premise that "the dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy was not a mechanical, but an organic process".³⁹

The laws which govern this process, however, are derived not so much from Spencerian evolution in this instance, as from the dialectical teleology of Marx and Hegel. Jászi proposes to articulate the dissolution of the Monarchy in terms of two sets of opposing dynamics, identified as centripetal and centrifugal forces. He is quick to recognise that such a division, "like all scientific classification, is to some extent an artificial and arbitrary one, as it severs processes which in reality are united". But he is equally quick to attempt to resolve — or rather to dissolve — the dilemma of arbitrariness by simply taking scientific classification to a further remove of inevitability and abstraction. "Each social force in history", he argues, "has a certain particular dialectic movement, by which itself and the institutions created by it receive, in the course of its historical development, such new tendencies as at the beginning were alien to it".⁴⁰ Far from overcoming the arbitrariness of the initial division — centripetal versus centrifugal forces — Jászi merely insists on their (no less arbitrary) dialectical relation: that is to say, the dialectical process whereby centripetal forces become centrifugal forces.

The way in which Jászi goes on to fill this empty theoretical framework with "historical" content represents the tension in his thought between phenomena and laws at its very sharpest. Jászi identifies eight essentially centripetal forces which constitute what he calls the "real pillars of Austrian internationalism": the dynasty, the army, the aristocracy, the Roman Catholic church, the bureaucracy, capitalism, free trade unity

and socialism. The first four of these centripetal forces come into conflict with the second four, producing their dialectical opposite, eight new *centrifugal* forces.

While the positivistic description of each of these forces and the internal contradictions they embody contains — especially in the case of Jászi's discussion of free trade and the Customs Union — much information and original analysis that continues to be invaluable to the student of the Monarchy, the dialectical schema into which these forces are so neatly slotted remains essentially arbitrary and unhistorical.

One is returned, once again, to the problem faced not only by Jászi, but also by Spencer and, in a rather different way, by Marx: the problem of the causal relationship between phenomenon and law, history and metahistory. By what criteria can the agreement of the former with the latter be reached in necessary, rather than contingent terms? Here the case of Marx is qualitatively different from that of either Spencer or Jászi. For Marx, the criterion remains — whether rightly or wrongly — an essentially rationalistic one: the principle of economic overdetermination, or determination “in the last instance”. For Spencer and Jászi, on the other hand, the criterion is not one of “enlightened rationalism” — to use the misplaced term of Hanák with which I began — but one of an essentially religious nature: the criterion of *faith*. Spencer was ultimately forced to conclude that his commitment to the concept of evolution was “a profession of faith”.⁴¹ For Jászi, a similar conclusion is equally inescapable. This is best illustrated by an extensive article entitled “Is There Such a Thing as Social Progress?” published in *Huszadik Század* in 1912. Arguing, as one would expect, in the affirmative, Jászi concludes with the following exalted claim: “Faith in progress [a haladási hit] finds in the miserable and discouraging wilderness of the world-historical relativists a certain divine path, a certain ambitious order, which, if we choose to follow it and adapt ourselves to it, arouses within us the sensation of contact with a reality which goes beyond the confines of our own wordly lives ... faith in progress ... connects our finite, frail and aimless lives to something infinite, eternal and absolute.”⁴²

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What, if anything — one is bound to ask in conclusion — can be retrieved from Jászi's religiously progressive, stubbornly evolutionary and artificially metahistorical project in the 1990s in the light of the methodological antinomies we have been highlighting? Our first answer to this question must surely be Jászi's undeniable moral example, which has fallen beyond the scope of this paper. His exemplary commitment to tolerance and mutual understanding in the nationality question cannot but be important in the transformations we are currently witnessing in Central Europe. Beyond this, however, the idea of federal union in the region seems to be as unrealistic as ever. All the same, it is possible to point to two developments which might have fired Jászi's optimism had he been living today.

The first is the emergence, since 1945, of an economically powerful, yet essentially democratic and European West Germany, now incorporating or — to shift back into a more Spencerian vocabulary — “integrating” a formerly “regressive” and “militant”

East Germany into its evolutionary process. In spite of his repeated return to a Naumannesque concept of a German-led Mitteleuropa, Jászi, to be sure, always maintained, with Bismarck's great critic Constantin Frantz, that the "world mission" of German evolution was not unification, but the formation of "the base of a European federation".⁴³ He may, however, have found some encouragement in the strength of federal feeling in transitional East Germany today, particularly in such *Länder* as Saxony.

The second development is the current social and economic transformation of Central Europe, which may well yet provide the missing historical reality at the heart of Jászi's metahistorical dream: market society, which constitutes the crucial context of both its social darwinist justification and its historical materialist critique. Could it be that the emergence of the free market in the political context of liberal democracy, frustrated by both pre-war residual feudalism and post-war state socialism in Central Europe, might finally possess the resources to solve the nationality question, where both irredentist chauvinism and Marxist internationalism had failed. I have no intention of hazarding an answer to this question here — the form of which is probably anyway ill-conceived. My only purpose in reconstituting the terms of the argument in such a way at a time when Central Europe is at last breaking free from the Orwellian dystopia with which it has lived for the past forty years, is to give the utopian Oszkár Jászi the last word: "My policy", he wrote when forced to stare his own illusions in the face in 1924, four years after the treaty of Trianon, "was directed to the future, rather than to the present".⁴⁴ Looking at the disturbing revival of national hostilities in Central Europe today, it is hard to believe that the future of an illusion has finally arrived.

Notes

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4. Péter Hanák, *Jászi Oszkár dunai patriotizmusa*, Budapest, 1985, p. 151.
5. *Revolution and Counter Revolution in Hungary*, London, 1924, p. 65.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
7. *A nemzeti államok kialakulása és a nemzetiségi kérdés* (1912), ed. György Litván, Budapest, 1986, p. 276.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 275.
10. "Tudományos publicisztika" in *Huszadik Század* I. January 1900, p. 23.
11. "Herbert Spencer és jövő feladataink" in *Huszadik Század*, V. p. 4.
12. Herbert Spencer, *First Principles* 1862, p. 367.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 291.
14. "The Social Organism" 1860, in *Essays: Scientific, Political and Speculative* Vol. I, London, 1883. pp. 384–5. Also "society is a growth and not a manufacture".
15. "Tíz év", reprinted in *Jászi Oszkár publicisztikája* ed Gy. Litván and J. Varga, Budapest 1982, p. 80.
16. Cited by Raymond Williams in 'Social Darwinism', *Problems in Materialism and Culture*, London, 1980, p. 93.

17. "Darwin és a szociológia" in *Huszadik Század* Vol. XIX, p. 281.
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