Trianon And The Predestination Of Hungarian Politics: A Historiography Of Hungarian Revisionism, 1918-1944

2006

Dezso Bartha

University of Central Florida

Find similar works at: https://stars.library.ucf.edu/etd

University of Central Florida Libraries http://library.ucf.edu

Part of the History Commons

STARS Citation

https://stars.library.ucf.edu/etd/758

This Masters Thesis (Open Access) is brought to you for free and open access by STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of STARS. For more information, please contact lee.dotson@ucf.edu.
TRIANON AND THE PREDESTINATION OF HUNGARIAN POLITICS:
A HISTORIOGRAPHY OF HUNGARIAN REVISIONISM
1918-1944

by

DEZSŐ JÁNOS BARTHA
B.A., University of Central Florida, 1991

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of History
in the College of Arts and Sciences
at the University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida

Spring Term
2006
ABSTRACT

This thesis proposes to link certain consistent themes in the historiography of interwar and wartime Hungary. Hungary’s inability to successfully resolve its minority problems led to the nation’s dismemberment at Trianon in 1920 after World War I. This fostered a national Hungarian reaction against the Trianon settlement called the revisionist movement. This revisionist “Trianon syndrome” totally dominated Hungarian politics in the interwar period. As Hungary sought allies against the hated peace settlements of the Great War, Hungarian politics irrevocably tied the nation to the policies of Nazi Germany, and Hungary became nefariously assessed as “Hitler’s last ally,” which initially stained the nation’s reputation after World War II.

Although some historians have blamed the interwar Hungarian government for the calamity that followed Hungary’s associations with Nazi Germany, this thesis proposes that there was little variation between what could have happened and what actually became the nation’s fate in World War II. A new interpretation therefore becomes evident: the injustices of Trianon, Hungary’s geopolitical position in the heart of Europe, and the nation’s unfortunate orientation between the policies of Nazi Germany and Bolshevik Russia predestined the nation to its fate in World War II. There was no other choice for Hungarian policy in World War II but the Axis alliance.

The historian of East Central Europe faces a formidable challenge in that the national histories of this region are often contradictory. Hungarian historiography is directly countered by the historical theories and propositions of its Czech, Serb, and
Rumanian enemies. By historiographical analysis of the histories of Hungary, its enemies among the Successor States, and neutral sources, this thesis will demonstrate that many contemporary historians tend to support the primary theses of Hungarian historiography. Many of the arguments of the Hungarian interwar government are now generally supported by objective historians, while the historiographical suppositions of the Successor States at the Paris Peace Conference have become increasingly reduced to misinformation, falsification, exaggeration, and propaganda. The ignorance of the minority problems and ethnic history of East Central Europe led to an unjust settlement in 1919 and 1920, and by grossly favoring the victors over the vanquished, the Paris Peace Treaties greatly increased the probability of a second and even more terrible World War.
To my father
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are many to whom I am indebted for the completion of this thesis. I would like to thank my family for their support and patience throughout this endeavor. Dr. Bruce Pauley’s revisions and advice as my thesis advisor helped provide focus and direction in my writing. Dr. Shirley Leckie was instrumental in my return to the graduate program and her detailed editing was invaluable in my final revisions. Dr. Thomas Greenhaw was kind enough to serve on my reading committee and provide alternate points of view in my final draft. Dr. Elmar Fetscher’s wisdom and teachings helped me to focus on many levels both in my writings and course work. Imre and Mother Nancy Szabo’s warm support and encouragement sustained my morale through the writing process. Bill Richmond’s expertise proved invaluable to technical aspects of my draft. I must further thank Nancy Rauscher and Carole Gonzalez for their patience and assistance in the UCF History Department. Finally, I must thank Dr. Nancy J. Szabo above all others, without whose compassion, guidance, and direction, this thesis would not have been possible.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## INTRODUCTION

CHAPTER ONE: INTERPRETATIONS OF THE TREATY OF TRIANON

- Introduction to the Problem: Interpretations of the Paris Peace Treaties
- The Fall of the Habsburg Empire in the Great War
- The Flawed Peace Process: Paris 1919
- Breaking the Silence of the Cold War
- Voices of Freedom: Post-1989 Assessments
- Summation of the Trianon Problem

CHAPTER TWO: THE SUCCESSOR STATES AT THE PARIS PEACE CONFERENCE

- Hungary and the Czecho-Slovak Problem: 1918-1920
- Hungary and the Yugoslav Question
- The Transylvanian Problem in Hungarian and Rumanian Historiography
- Summation of the Problem of the Successor States

CHAPTER THREE: MINORITY PROBLEMS OF THE KINGDOM OF ST. STEPHEN

- Views as to the Integrity of the Kingdom of St. Stephen
- The Thesis of Turkish Partition in Hungarian Historiography
- South Slav Issues in the Hungarian Kingdom
- The Question of Czecho-Slovak Unity
- Introduction to the Transylvanian Dispute Between Hungary and Rumania
INTRODUCTION

In the history of mankind, few regions have suffered the ethnic and political discontent of East Central Europe and the Balkans. Underlying currents of national anxiety that had been aggravated and provoked by the imperial ambitions of Russia, Turkey, and Habsburg Austria in the nineteenth century escalated and finally exploded into bloody conflict in the twentieth. Austria’s annexation of Bosnia in 1908 provoked neighboring Serbs, and the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 further destabilized the region. Ethnic Serbian terrorists assassinated Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914 sparking the uncontrolled diplomatic spiral that manifested in the horrors of the Great War. With the collapse of the Central Powers in 1918, chaos reigned as the old European order fell apart and insurgent forces of Czechs, Serbs, and Rumanians fed upon the dying remnants of the old Austro-Hungarian Habsburg Empire. The West pondered “eternal peace” in 1919, but was unable to prevent a second World War against Adolf Hitler’s expansionist Third Reich. Even Hitler was forced to act promptly in 1940 to prevent regional conflict in his southern Balkan flank among Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria.

With the fall of the Third Reich in 1945, Soviet military hegemony suppressed the underlying national ambitions of Russia’s East Central European satellites for almost half a century. Russian troops swiftly crushed Hungarian resistance in 1956 and Czech discontent in 1968. With the disintegration of the Communist bloc in 1989 and the early 1990s, many old disputes resurfaced. Slovenia and Croatia seceded from the Yugoslav union in 1991; Slav Macedonia swiftly followed. Civil War embraced Bosnia until 1996.
The Czechoslovak union dissolved in 1993. Conflict in the ethnically Albanian Kosovo district of Serbia prompted NATO air strikes and military action against Yugoslavia in 1999.

Unhappily enduring this era of change and conflict, the Hungarian nation struggled to maintain national identity and ethnic union in the face of the disintegrating world order of the Great War, the political uncertainty of the interwar period, and the fatal alliance with the Fascist powers. The turmoil of East Central Europe has always affected Hungary directly. Although at the beginning of the twentieth century Hungary was temporarily secure in the Compromise of 1867 that established the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary, the Habsburg Empire was an aging political construct whose multinational nature faced serious problems in a rapidly changing world.

The 1920 Treaty of Trianon sanctioned the territorial acquisitions of Hungary’s enemies among the states that succeeded the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy. The nation was reduced to a rump state, bereft of much of its population, resources, and former glory as its thousand-year geographic boundaries along the Carpathian Mountains and Transylvanian Alps were torn apart and handed over to enemies and subjects of the Hungarian Crown. Czechs seized the pro-Magyar Slovaks of the northern Carpathians, and the “oriental vassals” that Budapest considered the Rumanians and Serbs took control of Transylvania and the frontier regions of the Bánát-Bácska.

Throughout the entire interwar period, Hungary’s greatest battle has been with the ignorance of the world community concerning the issues of East Central Europe. The ignorance of the history and ethnicity of Hungary’s frontiers allowed the propaganda of
its Czech, Serb, and Rumanian enemies to manifest during the Great War. British
diplomat David Lloyd George summarized the average Western position on East Central
European geography at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference in his statement “Where the hell
is the Bánát?!”\(^1\) Twenty years later, as Britain faced German demands in 1938, British
Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain declared his government’s position regarding the
potentiality of conflict over the German-Czech-Sudeten problem as a “quarrel in a far
away country between people of whom we know nothing.” Over a half-century later, the
problems that embrace East Central Europe are still relatively unknown to the
international community.

The rapid changes of the 1990s amazed the world as Germany united, the
Communist bloc and the Soviet Union dissolved, and rapid changes wracked the Balkans.
The average Westerner has little understanding of the roots of such problems as the
Yugoslav Civil War of the 1990s, the Greek perception of a danger to its ethnically
mixed northern regions by an independent Slav Macedonia, or the circumstances and
causes of the 1993 division of Czechoslovakia. The roots of these changes are in the
failed peace dictates of the Paris Peace Treaties that followed World War I. The
diplomats of the 1919 Paris Peace Conference sought to create an “eternal” peace that
would create a new world order.

By grossly favoring the states that had attached themselves to the Allied cause in
the Great War, the Paris Peace Treaties not only ruined the potential for a lasting peace,

\(^1\) David Sherman Spector, *Rumania at the Paris Peace Conference* (New York:
but quite possibly caused the Second World War. The Wilsonian ideals and principles of self-determination by which the Central Powers surrendered in the Great War were not applied to victors and vanquished alike. Instead, these ideals were violated in the attempt to create a mix of new ethnic national states, mostly from the remains of the old Austrian Habsburg and Russian empires. In the end, the Europe of the Paris Peace Treaties never survived the twentieth century.

No nation at Paris was so horribly mutilated as the thousand-year old Hungarian Kingdom of St. Stephen. The Hungarian Kingdom suffered the most radical changes of all the territorial dictates of the Paris Peace Treaties so that three “Allied” states could be created or expanded: Czechoslovakia, the Yugoslav union, and Greater Rumania. In 1920, 3.2 million Magyars found themselves living in states hostile both to their new ethnic Hungarian minorities and the government in Budapest. With 71 percent of its territory lost, the Treaty of Trianon reduced Hungary, already basically an agrarian power in 1914, to a nation bereft of most of its natural and mineral resources.

France took advantage of the minority problems that had manifested in the Kingdom of Hungary from 1867 to 1914 in order to create a band of states loyal to Paris that could presumably contain future German aggression. The new Successor States would create the scenario of a war on multiple fronts for Germany, which had always been the greatest fear of the German military command. While Poland and Czechoslovakia directly bordered almost all of Germany’s eastern territories, Yugoslavia and Rumania could theoretically present a supportive Balkan front that would provide men and materiel against a future German conflict. The Polish-Rumanian front would
also provide an excellent barrier against Bolshevik Russian expansion, another fear of the French high command. Hungarian territory comprised much of the land ceded to the new Successor States for these purposes.

The Hungarian state prior to 1918 suffered from a multitude of minority problems, but with the exception of the Rumanians and possibly the Serbs, these minorities had no national identity, and could be compared to the Britons and Alsatians of France, or the Welsh and Scots of Great Britain, which maintained their nationality yet posed no danger to the unity of the state. Due to the perceived gross injustices of Trianon, the movement for Hungarian frontier revision, henceforth known as “revisionism,” united Hungarians in a common cause, and the Trianon Treaty became known as the third great calamity of the Hungarian state, after the Mongol invasion of 1241 and the Turkish conquest of 1526. Since the League of Nations and the Western powers favored the status quo of what became generally known as the Europe of Versailles, Hungary was forced to turn to the nations that opposed that status quo: Germany, Austria, and Italy. This would lead to the fatal alliance between Hungary and Adolf Hitler’s Third Reich, which ruined Hungary’s reputation with the West. Willing or not, Hungary attained the ultimate distinction of being “Hitler’s last ally” in the Second World War.

I propose as a thesis for a Master of Arts degree in the field of History that Hungary’s revisionist movement and irredentist minority problems directly linked Hungary to the Third Reich, and further, that this was the only avenue open to Hungarian revisionism in the interwar and wartime period. This essay will be original as a
synthesis of the historical and historiographical arguments from the perspectives of both Hungary and its Czech, Serb, and Rumanian enemies. Since this will be balanced by neutral interpretations, I hope to provide a clarification of the often contradictory national histories of these nations in order to establish certain consistent themes in the history and historiography of this greatly troubled region.

Hungary’s minority problems aggravated the nation’s position at Trianon, and Czech, Serb, and Rumanian propaganda, with direct French support, not to mention the terror of the Kun regime, put Budapest at the worst position that can be possibly imagined. Although many Hungarians sympathized with Great Britain through the interwar period, few in Budapest would forget that the West had sacrificed Hungary at Trianon. Although the British may have realized that Trianon was an unjust settlement, the West in general did nothing to help Hungary’s position, forcing Hungary to turn to other disgruntled powers that opposed the status quo of the Europe of Versailles. My analysis will demonstrate through historiographical interpretation that Hungary’s foreign policy was thus predestined to alignment with fascist Italy and Germany.

Between Germany and Russia, the powers historically most interested in East Central Europe, there was little room for Hungarian foreign policy to maneuver. It is unlikely that Hungary could have deviated from its historical path of 1920 to 1944 given its revisionist aims. Fear of Soviet Bolshevism and the lack of a Western presence in East Central Europe greatly influenced Hungary’s adherence to the Axis cause. Adolf Hitler was further able to exploit the Balkan and East Central European problem better than his Western peers.
By skillful manipulation of the minority problems of this region, Hitler secured a general balance of power in the Balkans by countering nationality against nationality, such as Slovaks against Czechs, and Rumanians against Hungarians. This secured the economic needs of the German war machine for Hitler’s ultimate purpose: the military conquest of the Soviet Union. In the end, the Axis alliance proved fatal to almost all involved, and only Finland escaped relatively unscathed.\(^2\) The lack of any self-restraint as Hungary jubilantly reclaimed border revisions from 1938 to 1940 brought the nation deeper and deeper into the German sphere of influence until Hungary became the center of the German supply network in the Balkans. The blunder of Hungarian belligerence in the Yugoslav campaign of 1941 became a turning point in the issue of Hungarian “honor,” so often invoked by Hungarian authors and supporters. Soon Hungary became attached to the “crusade against Bolshevism,” and found itself at war with Britain and the United States. After this, there was no way out of Hungary’s affiliation with Nazi Germany, and soon Hungary would pay its highest price in its thousand-year history: loss of political continuity in the face of German occupation in March 1944 and “liberation” by the Red Army in 1945.

If history is a quest for “truth,” the historian of East Central Europe faces a formidable task, for the national histories of these nations are often opposed to each other. The historical and historiographical theories of Hungary differ greatly from those presented by its Czech and Rumanian enemies. In this historical quagmire of debated

\(^2\) Although Finland lost districts of Karelia and passage to the Barents Sea, there were no Russians in Helsinki, and the nation’s political continuity remained intact.
facts and events, it is by historiographical analysis that the clearest picture of “truths” may be established in the history of Hungary, its nationality problems, and its relationship to the Third Reich.

It will become clear through historiographical analysis that many of the more neutral authors tend to support arguments that have often been called “revisionist” by Hungary’s enemies. There is an increasing tendency among neutral authors to support Hungarian historical and historiographical propositions and national theories and while reducing the claims of Hungary’s enemies, so long accepted whole-heartedly by the West, to the level of propaganda. The Rumanian Daco-Roman theory of Roman origins is now dismissed by most serious historians and maintained only by politicians. The Czech claims at Trianon are often now recognized as deliberately deceptive in their cases at Trianon to secure railways and “navigable” rivers, many of which are now positively identified as mere streams and brooks. Serbian pan-Slavism in the Yugoslav union has failed, and Croatia and Slovenia have chosen independence instead of the “Greater Serbia” of rule from Belgrade. In light of this analysis, it will become clear that the historical and historiographical suppositions of the Hungarian state and the Magyar community may not have been so far from the truth as believed by many in the West in the interwar and wartime period.

This thesis will be divided into four main chapters that survey and balance the historiographical interpretations of as many perspectives as possible among the topical material. The first will detail interpretations of Trianon, the root of Hungary’s interwar political decisions, and will demonstrate the severity of this treaty and its implications for
Hungarian foreign policy. The second chapter will explore the historiographical arguments of the nations that succeeded the Habsburg monarchy at the Paris Peace Conference. The minority problems of Hungary and East Central Europe have proved disastrous for the region since the time of the Balkan wars of 1912 to the Bosnian war of the 1990s. A third chapter will therefore be dedicated to explaining the history and historiography of the ethnic dilemma of the region from various perspectives in an attempt to establish a neutral interpretation of the historical roots of the ethnic and other problems of Hungary and the Successor States to the Habsburg Empire. The fourth chapter will clarify the relationship between Hungary and Nazi Germany, from interpretations of being an “unwilling satellite” to Budapest’s nefarious assessment as “Hitler’s last ally.”

The issue of “honor” will be periodically invoked in this assessment, as Hungarians consider themselves an “honorable” people and nation. Hungarian authors repeatedly invoke Hungary’s “honor” in the nation’s policy of rarely straying beyond its natural borders. The Hungarian government refused to attack Slovakia in coordination with Hitler’s “Plan Green” for a military solution on the Czech state in 1938 based on Hungary’s “honorable” claim only for the ethnic regions and not Slovakia as a whole. Hungary’s Regent Admiral Nicholas Horthy repeatedly declared his refusal to turn upon Nazi Germany based on the fact that “Hungary had never, in its thousand year history, turned against an ally.” Where this “honor” was when Hungary attacked Yugoslavia in 1941 despite a treaty of “eternal friendship” will be assessed.
Present-day Hungary, an ethnically homogenous land based on the nation’s fate at Trianon, has invoked the nation’s “honor” in abandoning, at least officially, irredentist aims to reclaim the lost minorities among its neighbors in favor of a peaceful European union. It will become clear, however, that there still remains a “Trianon syndrome” among today’s Hungarians. That syndrome predestined Hungary to the Axis cause in the late interwar and wartime period, and will most probably always be a part of the Hungarian national consciousness.
CHAPTER ONE: INTERPRETATIONS OF THE TREATY OF TRIANON

Introduction to the Problem: Interpretations of the Paris Peace Treaties

Understanding the circumstances of the Treaty of Trianon are the focal points for any discussion of twentieth century Hungarian history and the revisionist movement that dominated interwar Hungarian politics. The decisions of the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 and 1920 shaped international diplomacy and the modern world order more than any event in modern history. From the events of World War II, to the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of East Central Europe that began in 1989, so many of the events in twentieth century world history trace their roots to the diplomacy of the Paris Peace Conference.

Any general assessment of the Paris Peace Conference is problematic. The crux of the problem is that views and conclusions regarding the peace are often contradictory and differ with nationality. Interpretations of the “victorious” powers often differ from the vanquished. Therefore, analyses of the peace process that ended World War I have been accorded a wide range of historiographical interpretations. This is especially true among the minor powers, such as Hungary and the states that succeeded the Habsburg Empire, which have written diametrically opposed national histories.

Another problem is the difficulty in separating the Paris Peace Conference from a causal relationship to the Second World War. Some historians argue that the events in Paris in 1919 must be viewed independently from the world crises that began in the
1930s. Others argue from the causal perspective, that World War II was an extension of the failed peace negotiations of the Great War. In any event, interwar Hungarians blamed Trianon as the singular cause of their nation’s sufferings. With the loss of 3.2 million Hungarians to the Successor States, at least one third of all Magyars, Hungarian interwar diplomacy sought nothing less than total revision of the Trianon Treaty. The Czechs and Rumanians by contrast insisted that the treaties of Versailles, Trianon, and St. Germain “solved” the problems of Europe in 1914.

Given such contradictory assessments, historiographical interpretation, in which the views of victors and vanquished are balanced by neutral third parties, may offer the clearest path to establish certain “truths” among the national histories of the states affected by the Paris Peace Conference. It will become clear in such an analysis that many arguments heretofore considered “revisionist” among the enemies of Hungary may be closer to the truth than had been previously believed. Although Hungary may be rightly condemned for certain actions in its relationship to the Third Reich, such as the 1941 participation of the invasion of Yugoslavia, the path of interwar Hungarian diplomacy may have been predestined by the nation’s fate at Trianon in 1920.

The Fall of the Habsburg Empire in the Great War

In the Spring of 1918, World War I had embraced Europe for its fourth bloody year. In a final bid to achieve a breakthrough and victory on the Western Front, German General Erich Ludendorff, commander of German forces in the west, reinforced his position with 45 divisions from the victorious campaign against Russia in order to break
the static front and achieve victory before American forces could arrive en masse and turn the war of attrition against Germany. Germany began the attack on 21 March 1918 and continued the attacks through June in an attempt to drive a wedge between French and British forces. Although the German troops achieved initial breakthroughs in several sectors, Germany failed to achieve a strategic victory in the west. Germany wasted its manpower in the assault, and by July initiative had passed to the Allies. The Allies began their counter-offensive on 8 August 1918, and by November, reinforced with fresh American forces, the Germans had been driven back over 50 miles into Belgium.

The Allies achieved additional victories in the Balkans and the Middle East. Bulgaria surrendered on September 29 and the Ottoman Empire on October 30. With the loss of Bulgaria and Turkey, Austria-Hungary could no longer maintain belligerence on the Balkan front. The Habsburg Empire’s doom was sealed. István Tisza of the Hungarian Parliament announced on October 17 “We have lost the war.” As Serbs swept through Bosnia and Croatia, Czech nationalists took over Prague, and Rumanians advanced deep into Transylvania, the Habsburg Empire began to internally disintegrate. On November 3, Austria-Hungary signed an armistice at Padua. Germany signed an armistice on November 11. After four terrible years of bloodshed, the Great War had ended.

In accord with the Padua agreement of 3 November 1918, the Austro-Hungarian Army was dismantled and a general armistice proclaimed. Austria became a federal

---

state, and Hungary was proclaimed a republic on November 13 with Count Mihály Károlyi as its provisional president. Since Austro-Hungarian military units and local militias had been generally disbanded, Hungary was virtually defenseless against Serb, Czech, and Rumanian incursions into Hungarian territory. Károlyi’s republic collapsed in the face of internal chaos and invasions on all fronts, leaving the country ripe for a Bolshevik takeover, which indeed manifested in the Soviet republic of Béla Kun on 21 March 1919.

Kun’s regime implemented a reign of terror in Hungary which totally antagonized the populace and further complicated Hungary’s cause at the Paris Peace Conference. As Rumanians swept across the countryside and finally entered Budapest on 6 August 1919, Kun and his associates fled. In a counterrevolution from the political right, Admiral Nicholas Horthy, having organized a national Hungarian army based at the southeastern town of Szeged, established control of the country by 16 November 1919. The Hungarian Parliament elected Horthy Regent and Commander in Chief of the Hungarian Army on 1 March 1920.

On 8 January 1918, President Woodrow Wilson of the United States had announced as the tenth of his Fourteen Points, that for the peaceful restructure of postwar Europe, the population of Austria-Hungary would be “accorded the freest opportunity of autonomous development.” In accord with that peace, the delegates at Paris dismembered the Hungarian Kingdom, a political entity that had existed in its approximate boundaries since 896. The Paris Peace Conference forced Hungary to sign the Treaty of Trianon on 4 June 1920. The severity of Trianon amazed the Hungarians,
who could hardly imagine that their participation in the conflict warranted such a hostile response from the Allies. Trianon was even more severe than the 1918 Brest-Litovsk Treaty between Germany and Russia, repeatedly denounced by the Allies, which, despite its extreme terms, affected few Great Russians.

Of a prewar population of 21 million, Trianon separated 13,356,000 or 63.6 percent of Hungary’s population to the states that succeeded the Habsburg Empire. Of the 125,600 square miles of the Hungarian kingdom, Hungary lost 89,700 square miles, or 71.4 percent of its territory, leaving the nation a population of 7.6 million with 35,900 square miles of territory. Of the 20,886,487 population listed in the census of 1910, Hungary was left with 7,615,117, while Rumania received 5,257,467, Czechoslovakia 3,517,568, Yugoslavia 4,131,249, and Austria 291,618. Of the Hungarian-speaking population of 10,050,575, as many as 3,219,579 went to the Successor States: 1,704,851 to Rumania, 1,063,020 to Czechoslovakia, 547,735 to Yugoslavia, and 26,183 to Austria. Hungary’s economic losses were severe: the nation lost 61.4 percent of its arable lands, 88 percent of its timber, 97 percent of its fir woods, 62.2 percent of its railroads, 64.5 percent of its paved roads, 83.1 percent of pig iron output and iron ore, 50 percent of its iron works, 55 percent of industrial plants, 67 percent of its credit and

---


5 Although some sources quotes that as many as 3.5 million Magyars were separated from Hungary at Trianon, only 3.2 million can be directly accounted for given census and other information regarding this figure. C. A. Macartney, *Hungary: A Short History* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1962), 207.
banking institutions, and all of its gold, silver, copper, and salt deposits. The nation was left with a standing army of only 25,000 compared to the 542,000 troops of the newly formed states that succeeded the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Hungarians united in a movement that penetrated all classes and stratifications of society with a new national slogan: “Nem, nem soha!” (“No, no never!”). Hungarians vowed never to accept the Trianon dictates, and the interwar period of Hungarian politics remained a constant search to secure allies that would support revision of that treaty.

A partial aspect to the problems at Trianon was the virtually untamed occupations of huge amounts of Hungarian territory by the Successor States between the cessation of formal hostilities on 3 November 1918 and the final peace dictates of 4 June 1920. Zsuzsa L. Nagy’s 1988 article “Peacemaking after World War I: The Western Democracies and the Hungarian Question” in Stephen Borsody’s The Hungarians: A Divided Nation argues that during the time between the armistice and Trianon, Hungary had no officially established borders. The Successor States continually pushed through Hungary, always extending new borders without authorization or consideration from the Western Powers. The author’s criticism is that whereas Britain and the United States urged containment of the military actions of the Successor States, France “supported

---


every claim against Hungary to the full.”

France thereby gave a *carte blanche* or at least looked the other way as Czechs, Serbs, and Rumanians pushed and plundered across Hungary at will. The Kun regime further complicated Hungary’s position as the Allies sought containment of the Bolshevik threat that had surfaced not only in Hungary, but also briefly in Bavaria and Slovakia.

In an article in Borsody’s volume entitled “Hungary at the Brink of the Cliff,” Sandor Szilassy explains that the chaotic conditions and drastic regime changes of immediate post-Great War Hungary limited the nation’s political options in the 1918-1920 period. The Padua agreement of 3 November 1918 ended hostilities for the Habsburg Monarchy and demobilized the Austro-Hungarian Army, therefore there was no defense in central Hungary against the Serbs, Czechs, and Rumanians who overran and pillaged the countryside. Szilassy proposes that the invasions of the Successor States, political weakness of the new regime of Mihály Károlyi, rampant unemployment, starvation in the cities, and the complete breakdown of the economy from the Allied blockade provided the opportunity for the Soviet Kun regime to come to power. The reign of terror that was Kun’s Bolshevik revolution lasted from March 21 until the

---

8 Ibid., 35.


Rumanian occupation of Budapest on August 6.\textsuperscript{11} Szilassy argues that whereas Britain was indecisive in its East Central European policies, France openly advocated the dismemberment of historic Hungary\textsuperscript{12} in accord with its desire to create a string of nation-states to curtail both Germany and Bolshevik Russia. The Successor States did their best to frighten the Allied delegations at Paris with the bogeyman of a return of the Habsburg Monarchy in Hungary, and Hungary’s fate was decided in the summer of 1919 without representation.\textsuperscript{13} Szilassy argues that Trianon thus turned a once proud and powerful country into a “militarily and economically weak pauper of the continent for the next two decades.”\textsuperscript{14}

Trianon left only one-third of the Hungarian Kingdom as it had existed in 1914. Hungary’s representative, Count Albert Apponyi was not even invited to Paris until January 5, 1920, by which time, the Successor States of Rumania, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia had already made their cases. The Allied Supreme Council rejected Apponyi’s bid for plebiscites, since the British and French had by this time already formulated the major tenets of the peace treaties.\textsuperscript{15} Hungarian representatives argued that their kingdom, alongside its Polish ally, had shielded Europe from the Mongols and Turks, and that the boundaries of the Kingdom of St. Stephen had scarcely changed in a

\footnotesize{
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 99.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 105.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 99.
}
thousand years. Such historical arguments were ignored and forgotten, and in the name of “self-determination” Hungary was completely dismembered. Even as late as 1998, Hungarian author Steven Várdy argues in his essay “The Impact of Trianon on the Hungarian Mind,” that “the terms of the treaty were so harsh and punitive that one looks in vain for parallels in modern European history.”\(^{(16)}\) Hungary now believed that the West it had historically shielded was faithless and treacherous. Vardy explains that “whole generations of youngsters grew up having only historic Hungary’s borders etched into their minds and fully convinced that Trianon Hungary was but a temporary phenomenon that was bound to disappear like an evil nightmare.”\(^{(17)}\) Despite political differences, virtually all Hungarian historians are one in condemnation of Trianon. The new “Trianon syndrome” would dominate Hungarian diplomacy in the late 1930s and drive the nation into the eager grip of Adolf Hitler’s Third Reich.

*The Flawed Peace Process: Paris 1919*

The Paris Peace Conference of 1919 faced difficulties that transcended any peace settlement in world history. Even the peace conferences of 1814 and 1815 could not compare to the problems which faced the representatives at Paris after the Great War. Alan Sharp’s *Versailles Settlement*, published in 1991, summarizes some of the basic problems which faced the diplomats at Paris in 1919. As Sharp explains, the Paris Peace


\(^{(17)}\) Ibid., 39.
Conference sought nothing less than to “reshape the world” and establish a new order of peace that would encompass the globe.\textsuperscript{18} Sharp presents the case of the German world empire: the liquidation of Germany’s colonies alone in Africa and Asia affected over 1 million square miles and 14 million people.\textsuperscript{19} The collapse of the Ottoman Empire further determined that the Middle East had to be completely restructured. Never before had a peace conference faced the burden of both a complete restructure of the European world order as well as issues in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia.

The French position at the Paris Peace Conference has become subject to many debates that will be explored in this chapter. Sharp clarifies certain aspects as to why French policy sometimes became quite radical at the peace conference. The German annexation of Alsace-Lorraine had ensured the enmity of France since 1871. Since Germany had attacked France again in accord with the implementation of the Schlieffen Plan in 1914, France wanted certain guarantees against future potential German aggression.\textsuperscript{20} Paris even sought an independent Rhineland as a buffer state. Above all else, the French quest for security, with the loss of their old Russian ally of 1894 to 1917, led them into eastern Europe, in which a strong Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Rumania were deemed vital to the French strategic command.\textsuperscript{21}


\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 159.

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 16.

\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 193.
The threat of the spread of Bolshevism was another factor in French planning after the Great War. The Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 had robbed France of its vital ally in the east, and most of Europe feared the spread of Bolshevism across Europe. Sharp explains that to the European governments, Bolshevism meant “chaos, despair, fanaticism, famine, anarchy, and a threat to all orderly government.”\(^\text{22}\) Thereby, the French took the lead in establishing the *cordon sanitaire*, to isolate Bolshevik Russia by the creation of states such as Poland, Greater Rumania, and Czechoslovakia that could theoretically contain Russia and provide allies against Germany.\(^\text{23}\) Sharp’s primary thesis regarding the link between establishment of the *cordon sanitaire* and the Paris Peace Treaties is that the Bolshevik threat led to a certain race in the peace proceedings to maintain order and prevent chaos.\(^\text{24}\) In some cases, there simply did not seem to be enough time to fully examine all issues to certain problems when the threat of revolutionary disorder seemed to loom across Europe. In the case of Hungary, the disorganization of the conference and the fact the no single commission addressed the Hungarian problem as a whole became that nation’s unjust undoing.

Sharp proposes that the peace settlements of 1919 and 1920 did not solve the problems of 1914. Many of the problems of 1914 remained, while new issues emerged such as the disputes concerning the Successor States.\(^\text{25}\) Germany had not surrendered

\(^{22}\) Ibid., 154.

\(^{23}\) Ibid., 155.

\(^{24}\) Ibid., 29.

\(^{25}\) Ibid., 189.
unconditionally, but had signed an armistice based on Wilson’s peace principles.\textsuperscript{26} Although Germany was no longer a colonial threat to Britain or France, Sharp believes that little else had changed, and Germany was still potentially powerful.\textsuperscript{27} France ensured future German hostility, for example, by what Sharp considers “malevolent and vindictive” reparations policies.\textsuperscript{28} Further, unlike the peace of 1815 or even 1945, the peacemakers at Paris did not always have full control over all contested areas, such as in East Central Europe. German Chancellor Otto von Bismarck once gloomily predicted in the nineteenth century that “some damned fool thing in the Balkans” would one day explode like a powder keg for Europe. That threat was not solved by the Paris Peace Treaties.

The roots of the Trianon problem are directly tied to the failure of the Allied powers to create a just and lasting peace at Paris in 1919. Although there is a movement to view the events of the Paris Peace Conference without retrospection to the calamity that began in the late 1930s, a recurring theme in the historiography of the period is that the conference caused the second and more terrible World War. In a recent assessment, Margaret MacMillan in her book \textit{Paris 1919}, published in 2002, asserts that the study of the Paris Peace Treaties “is a study of flawed decisions with terrible consequences, many of which haunt us to this day.”\textsuperscript{29} The Big Four “set out to do nothing less than fix the

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 17.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., 18.

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 83.

\textsuperscript{29} Margaret MacMillan, \textit{Paris 1919: Six Months that Changed the World} (New
world, from Europe to the Pacific . . . from small islands to whole continents.”

Harold Nicholson continued in his 1933 book *Peacemaking 1919*, “we were preparing not peace only, but Eternal Peace.”

Why this peace failed so badly becomes a complex interpretive historical study.

A recurring theme in so many of the histories of the Paris Peace Treaties that is quite indisputable is the almost total lack of understanding of the details and complexities of East Central Europe and the Balkans. If the contemporary West still lacks understanding of the events that unfolded in Eastern Europe in the 1990s, the ignorance at Paris in 1919 can well be imagined. Future Hungarian Prime Minister Count Pál Teleki proposed as the thesis for his *Evolution of Hungary and its Place in European History*, published in 1923, that Hungary, although in the heart of Europe, “has remained almost unknown to the outside world,” a factor which doomed the nation at Trianon.

Bruce Pauley’s 1972 article “The Patchwork Treaties: St. Germain and Trianon Reconsidered” likewise laments the ignorance and lack of objective analysis in the construction of the treaties that destroyed the Dual Monarchy, which must be therefore “condemned” for causing the European crises of the late 1930s.

---

30 Ibid., xxix.


Pauley continues as a major thesis in his book *The Habsburg Legacy*, that knowledge of the Habsburg Empire and its minority problems remained largely unknown to the international community well into the twentieth century.\(^{34}\) It is therefore unlikely that the delegates at Paris could have ever established a just peace for East Central Europe when part of the problem was a general ignorance of the affairs of the region. The task in Paris became an almost continuous arbitration of minor disputes among the Successor States and the enemies they sought to vanquish.

Regarding the nature of the Trianon settlement, Pauley asserts that of the more than 3 million Magyars handed over to the Successor States, 1.5 million of them lived just over the Hungarian border “in concrete blocks.”\(^{35}\) Any request for plebiscites were refused except in the Burgenland. Pauley assesses that “no patriotic Hungarian . . . could accept Trianon as final. Revision of the treaty (or simply ‘revisionism’) became almost an obsession with the Hungarian people and their governments throughout the interwar period.”\(^{36}\) Regarding self-determination, Pauley maintains that “the theory was only imperfectly applied at Paris:” Hungary was denied the very principles by which the Czech state was constructed. “Further, by dividing the Successor States into victors and vanquished the Allies aggravated rather than appeased national hatreds.”\(^{37}\)


\(^{35}\) Ibid., 87.

\(^{36}\) Ibid., 89.

\(^{37}\) Ibid., 98.
Pauley summarizes that “The world of 1919 . . . was far more revolutionary and insecure” than that of the treaties of 1814-1815.38

In a comparative historiography of the Paris Peace Conference, it will become clear that the failure of the peace treaties to establish a lasting peace may have directly been tied to the French directive to keep Germany indefinitely impotent and contain the Bolshevik threat from spreading across Europe. French policy directly supported the creation of a string of nation-states along the borders of Germany and its Austrian and Hungarian allies that could maintain an eastern bastion that would theoretically continually submit Germany to the scenario of a war on multiple fronts, the nightmare of German military planning since the time of Bismarck. The line from the Baltic to Rumania would also presumably contain the Bolshevik threat. Based on the so-called “Switzerland solutions” to the problems of East Central Europe, France gave its tacit approval to the formation and expansion of the Successor States from the remnants of the Habsburg Empire, particularly Hungarian territory. The Successor States thereby continually pushed into Hungarian territory until Trianon finally validated the lines of occupation, most of which violated the ethnic principles so often invoked at the Paris Peace Conference.

One of the more important early studies of the Paris Peace Treaties by one of its participants is David Lloyd George’s massive two volume *The Truth About the Peace Treaties*, published in 1938. To explain the position of France at the conference, Lloyd George reminded his readers of the revenge France sought since its humiliation in the

---

38 Ibid., 99.
Franco-Prussian War of 1871 and the loss of Alsace-Lorraine. Lloyd George claimed that the Allied policy had been to “persuade and pacify” the unstable regions of Europe and focus a “severe but just” policy towards the vanquished Central Powers.³⁹ Lloyd George asserted that the Paris Peace Treaties accomplished the greatest liberation of subject peoples in the history of the world.⁴⁰ From the Finns to the Baltic states to the minorities of the Habsburg Empire, many “nations” achieved independence for the first time. This included the Magyars, who were “liberated” from rule from Vienna.⁴¹ Lloyd George concluded that the Paris Peace Conference sought to make a just peace in 1919, to liberate oppressed peoples, and prevent future war, but ultimately the “temple of peace” failed despite the good intentions of its framers.⁴²

Margaret MacMillan’s Paris 1919 supports the theory of a French “conspiracy” of sorts in their application of the peace terms of 1919 and 1920. MacMillan contends that across the globe, from Africa to the Middle East, French and British interests often collided. Relations were even worse between the French and Americans. Whereas Wilson sought a just and lasting peace, many French diplomats sought nothing more than to punish Germany for the Great War and the humiliation of 1871.⁴³ France and England had been traditional enemies, and their friendship was very recent. Indeed, British


⁴⁰ Ibid., vol. 2, 751.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., 1414.

⁴³ Margaret MacMillan, Paris 1919, 144.
diplomat Lord George Curzon commented in 1919 regarding the course of French
diplomacy: “I am seriously afraid that the great Power from whom we may have most to
fear in the future is France.”

A most valuable analysis as a direct eyewitness account of the Paris Peace
Conference is Harold Nicholson’s *Peacemaking 1919*, first published in 1933. The
author’s purpose was to preserve for posterity, “before it evaporates, the unhealthy and
unhappy atmosphere of the Peace Conference.” The Nicholson thesis is that the four
terrible years of war and unprecedented bloodshed had created such hot feelings among
the powers that not even “supermen” could have drawn up a peace of “moderation and
righteousness” in 1919. Nicholson claimed that the conference treated Germany as if it
had been “beaten to her knees,” and that “it never entered our heads that we had
purchased the surrender of Germany [and the other Central Powers] by an offer of the
Fourteen Points.” Regarding the Western knowledge of the ethnic and geographic
problems of East Central Europe, Nicolson considered the Paris Peace Conference
“ignorant and ill-informed,” and lamented that day by day, injustice prevailed at the
conference, yet the committees “endured in silence.”

44 Ibid., 373.


46 Ibid., 7.

47 Ibid., 17.

48 Ibid., 18.

49 Ibid., 176.
Although Nicholson believed that the lack of attention to the rights of the vanquished powers was problematic, his prejudice was still dominant and perhaps characteristic of the victors. While Austria might have been a “pathetic relic,” his distaste for Hungary was clear: “Like the Turks, they had destroyed much and created nothing. . . . For centuries the Magyars had oppressed their subject nationalities. The hour of liberation and retribution was at hand.”

Nicholson’s account freely admitted that Wilson’s ideal collapsed at the conference. The lack of a “Hungarian Committee” placed more Hungarians under foreign rule than was “constant with the doctrines of self-determination.” Wilsonian peace theoretically safeguarded the minority and linguistic problems of the Habsburg Empire; instead the peace favored only the “Allied” states that succeeded the monarchy. Nicolson summarized: “We came to Paris confident that the new order was about to be established. . . . We arrived as fervent apprentices in the school of President Wilson: we left as renegades.”

Francis Deák’s analysis Hungary at the Paris Peace Conference, published in 1942, presents an important thesis regarding Hungary’s position at the peace conference and clarifies the unified Magyar position regarding Trianon. The primary Deák thesis is that if the Central Powers had indeed caused the war, “the measure of guilt should have

50 Ibid., 34.
51 Ibid., 128.
52 Ibid., 187.
been divided in proportion to responsibility” in the peace treaties.\textsuperscript{53} Hungary had little responsibility for the Great War, and all too often Vienna, not Budapest, dictated national and foreign policy in the Dual Monarchy. Hungarians could not understand the harshness of Trianon, which transcended the treaties accorded Germany, Austria, Bulgaria, and even Turkey. The Hungarian delegation that went to Trianon included Pál Teleki and Stephen Bethlen, experts in Magyar history and geography who arrived in Paris to the shock that matters had already been settled for Hungary. Having rested so much hope on the American delegation and the perceived justice of Wilsonian diplomacy, the Hungarian diplomats arrived to find that Wilson and much of his entourage had already returned to America before the Hungarian arrival.\textsuperscript{54}

Another important thesis in \textit{Hungary at the Paris Peace Conference} that holds true in retrospect is Deák’s assertion that never in the history of diplomacy had so many talented individuals gathered for a peace conference failed so badly as the diplomats at Paris in 1919 and 1920.\textsuperscript{55} In exact opposition to their purpose, the Paris Peace Treaties prevented a lasting peace for Europe and ensured future instabilities. Even in Britain, many diplomats and politicians feared the repercussions of splitting camps into victors and vanquished. Deák quotes one Sir Samuel Hoare of the House of Commons who stated in 1920 “It seems to me to be a cruel paradox that after a war that was meant to


\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 184.

\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 347.
end war we should see in Central Europe a state of militarism far worse than ever it was before 1914.”

David Lloyd George continued to harbor serious doubts about Trianon: “There will never be peace in South-Eastern Europe if every little state now coming into being is to have a large Magyar Irredenta within its borders.”

Although Deák admits that Hungary’s minority problems proved a stumbling block for the nation at Trianon, Deák totally rejects the “solutions” forced upon the nation. Deák directly counters the thesis of Czecho-Slovak cultural and national unity and accuses Beneš, the chief proprietor of that thesis, of attempting to secure the Slovakian regions of the Carpathians strictly for the region’s economic value. Deák argues that many purely Magyar regions were granted the Czechs simply for a transverse railway in the region. Deák accuses the Rumanians, however, of outright treachery in the incidence of 3 August 1919 in which the Rumanians disposed of any military resistance to their occupation of Hungary: in the wake of the Kun regime, the Rumanian military invited most of Hungary’s military officers to a base in southern Hungary to reform that body as a militia and police force. When the Hungarians arrived, they were taken to Transylvania as “prisoners of war.” Thus, Hungary lost much of its officer corps in 1919.

To Deák, Wilson’s Fourteen Points were meaningless at Trianon. The alliance of the Little Entente curtailed any Hungarian resistance to the treaty, and

56 Ibid., 244.
57 Ibid., 52, cross-referenced from Lloyd George’s Memoirs, vol.1, 266.
58 Ibid., 35.
59 Ibid., 112.
Hungary had no choice but to accept the peace terms. Ultimately, Deák concludes that had honest justice been applied by the Paris Peace Treaties, World War II could possibly have been avoided.

Among the most important testimonies from the Hungarian side of the Trianon issue are the publications of Count Pál Teleki and Stephen Bethlen, Hungarian diplomats present at Trianon and future Hungarian premiers. Count Pál Teleki was the noblest and perhaps most honest of interwar and wartime Hungarian politicians, respected by friends and enemies alike. Teleki’s *Evolution of Hungary and its Place in European History*, published in 1923, although calling for direct revision of Trianon, was probably the most accurate and scholarly of early Hungarian revisionist texts. The Teleki thesis of 1923 was the first among historians, revisionist or otherwise, to proclaim the ignorance of the West concerning the issues of East Central Europe as the direct reason for the destruction and partition of historic Hungary. Hungary became reduced to an exceptionally weak agrarian state bereft of its minerals, resources, 90 percent of its timber, and its best corn and wheat lands. Teleki likened Trianon’s effect upon Hungarians to the French the loss of Alsace-Lorraine in 1871, which united all Frenchman in solidarity for vengeance. Teleki argued that revision of Trianon, perhaps the greatest injustice ever imposed upon

---

60 Ibid., 283.
61 Ibid., 251.
63 Ibid., 100.
a European state since the eighteenth century partitions of Poland, would be the first step toward a general and lasting peace for all of Europe.\textsuperscript{64}

A continuation of the early Hungarian point of view was Count Stephen Bethlen’s \textit{The Treaty of Trianon and European Peace}, published in 1934. Bethlen was Premier of Hungary from 1921 to 1931. His book was a compilation of lectures the author delivered in London in 1933. The Bethlen thesis was that the “falsehood and villainy” of Trianon, whose revision was “the Creed of the Hungarian nation in the dark night of its present fate” was matched in calamity for the Hungarian people only by the Mongol incursion of 1241 and the Turkish conquest of 1526.\textsuperscript{65} To ensure a lasting European peace, Bethlen insisted that the self-determination promised but never applied at the Paris Peace Conference must be realized.\textsuperscript{66} In contrast to the historiography of the Successor States and France, Bethlen proposed that the Paris Peace Treaties aggravated rather than solved minority problems in East Central Europe. Without rectification, Bethlen predicted dire strife for the future of Europe. The author cited the case of the Croats, Ruthenes, and Slovaks, peoples separated not of their own accord from Hungary who suffered “oppression” rather than liberation in the Successor States.\textsuperscript{67} Bethlen considered a transfer of population to be a possible solution to the ethnic problems of East Central

\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., 196.


\textsuperscript{66} Ibid., vi.

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 159.
Europe, a topic that would be supported by future historians and politicians. In the end, Bethlen begged Great Britain, considered in the Hungary of his time to be fair and honorable, to champion the Magyar cause at Trianon and thereby prevent future instabilities in Europe.

The Magyar voices of dissent and the injustices of Trianon, although ignored by most politicians of the time, did not entirely fall upon deaf ears in the West. One of the most important of the neutral proponents of Hungarian history was C. A. Macartney, who dedicated his academic life to the history of Hungary and the problems of East Central Europe. Macartney’s works offer a non-partisan, highly detailed, and somewhat sympathetic account of Hungary’s national plight in the first half of the twentieth century. His book *Hungary and her Successors*, published in 1937, extends upon the Nicholson thesis that the Paris Peace Conference utterly failed to establish a peace of “moderation and righteousness” in 1919 and 1920.

Macartney proposes that the Western powers after World War I suffered from a “war psychology” based on the terrible human suffering endured in the Great War which caused them to treat “enemy” nations with undue severity. Although the Paris Peace Conference allowed the “Allied” Successor States to make their case in 1919, Hungary, as an “enemy” nation, was not invited to the peace table until its fate was already

---

68 Ibid., 134.

69 Ibid., 182.

decided. All the maps, geographical, and historical data the Hungarian delegation brought to Paris were in vain and ignored.

Macartney believes that had self-determination been applied as promised at the Peace Conference, Serbs and Rumanians would have opted for inclusion in the Successor States, but Slovaks and Ruthenes would most probably have chosen to stay in Hungary.\(^{71}\) Macartney argues on behalf of the inherent strength of the frontiers of the 1914 Kingdom of St. Stephen in that its was a coherent natural geographic unit with stable frontiers that had lasted a millennium, qualities absent in its successors.\(^{72}\)

Macartney continues his criticism of the world order established by the Paris Peace Treaties in his collaboration with historian A. W. Palmer in *Independent Eastern Europe*, published in 1962. In theory, all international parties at the Peace Conference were to be addressed according to principles that would eliminate “discord and antagonism” in Europe.\(^{73}\) Instead, the authors describe Paris in 1919 as a “conference of victors” which favored the enemies of the Central Powers and treated the vanquished with undue severity.\(^{74}\)

In direct contrast with David Lloyd George’s *The Truth About the Peace Treaties*, Macartney and Palmer consider it directly misleading to declare that the 115 million


\(^{72}\) Ibid., 496.


\(^{74}\) Ibid., 14.
people transferred to new states in Europe were “liberated.”

Although the “experts” remained in France, the most important parts of the American delegation at the peace conference departed on 29 June 1919 after the conclusion of the Treaty of Versailles. France therefore took the lead in the treaties of Trianon, St. Germain, and Neuilly. Wilson’s terms, the principles by which the Central Powers agreed to an armistice, now “fell silent.” “Hungary” was simply the “diminished remnant left after the claims of Czechoslovakia, Roumania, Yugoslavia and Austria [sic] had been met.”

C. A. Macartney’s most extensive treatise on Hungarian history is his massive two-volume *October Fifteenth: A History of Modern Hungary*, published in 1961, and unequaled in its detail of Hungary’s evolution from desperate isolation to its fatal alliance with the Third Reich. Macartney argues that interwar Hungary, after the Kun regime, was consumed by national paranoia, “gripped in the iron ring” of the Little Entente, terrified of Bolshevik Russia, and positively obsessed by a desire to recoup the lost territories. The combined arms of the Little Entente pitted 540,000 men against Hungary’s mere 35,000, as delimited by the Trianon dictates, whose express purpose was the prevention of Hungarian resistance to the boundaries of 1920.

---


76 Ibid., 103.

77 Ibid., 130. It must be noted that Austria did not indeed demand the Burgenland and insisted on a plebiscite in the region.


79 Troop strengths are from Charles Wojatsek, *From Trianon to the First Vienna*
became a nation-wide consciousness within Trianon Hungary, the 3.2 million Magyars in
the Successor States clung to their national heritage, desperately hoping for a way to
return to the mother country. The entire interwar Hungarian foreign policy thus became
a search for new allies to break the status quo of Trianon, the Little Entente, and its
supporters in Paris.80

Edward Cháșzár’s Decision in Vienna: the Czechoslovak-Hungarian Border
Dispute of 1938, published in 1978, summarizes some of the Magyar views on Trianon
from a rather patriotic perspective. Almost universally among Magyars of the interwar
period, Trianon was considered not a freely negotiated treaty, but a forced “Diktat” upon
the nation. The treaty was therefore “unjust” and the nation would use all means in its
power to change its terms.81 By theory, the League of Nations was to be the instrument
by which peaceful changes would be established throughout the world, but to Hungary,
the League was simply the “instrument of the victorious powers to preserve the status
quo.”82 Thus, Hungary would seek allies that opposed that status quo, such as Germany
and Italy.83

Arbitral Award: The Hungarian Minority in the First Czechoslovak Republic, 1918-1938
(Montreal: Institute of Comparative Civilizations, 1980), 50.

80 Macartney, October Fifteenth, vol. 1, 83.

81 Edward Cháșzár, Decision in Vienna: the Czechoslovak-Hungarian Border

82 Ibid., Italics are author’s.

83 Ibid., 2.
Chászár interprets the interwar era as a “period of false stability.” The West had sought an “eternal” peace to end the Great War. To implement this peace, “once and for all,” however, France, the chief supporter of that peace, sought to build a system of alliances, such as the Little Entente. Budapest hated and feared this union, which it perceived, quite accurately, as a force to contain any Hungarian resistance to its Trianon borders. The underlying nervous anxiety among France and its allies manifested in such treaties as Locarno in 1925 to guarantee the German, French, and Belgian borders, and the Kellog-Briand Pact of 1928 and its attempt to “outlaw war.” Clearly an underlying tension had begun to manifest among the supporters of the Europe of the Paris Peace Treaties.

Another source from a patriotic revisionist Hungarian perspective is Stephen Sisa’s *The Spirit of Hungary*, published in 1983. Sisa’s primary thesis concerns the “mystique” of the Carpathians among Hungarians. To Sisa, the Carpathians represented the “eternal frontiers” in the Hungarian “collective mind,” and its boundaries served not only as a defensive shield against the east, but as a bastion of solidarity dividing the two cultural worlds of Western Christianity and Eastern Byzantine Orthodoxy.84 Sisa argues on behalf of the geographic unity of the Carpathian Basin and the Kingdom of St. Stephen and the lack of any geographic cohesion among the Successor States. In Rumania, the Carpathians and Transylvanian Alps bisect the country like “a gigantic natural ‘Great Wall of China.’”85 The northern Carpathians which link Slovakia to the


85 Ibid., 194.
Hungarian plains have absolutely no geographic correlation to the Bohemian and
Moravian Crownlands, and all the valleys and rivers of Slovakia flow into the heart of
Hungary. Pál Teleki put forward this argument in 1923, and Admiral Nicholas Horthy
summarized this theory as a principle thesis in his memoirs: “the central Danube basin is
a geographical unit in that it has a clearly demarcated boundary and a marked center,
while the component parts within its confines complement each other in their harmonious
economic functions.”87 Sisa further argues on behalf of the strategic importance of
Ruthenia as the “gateway to the Carpathian Basin,” and that Russia strategically annexed
this region from the Czechs in 1945 in order to launch an instantaneous invasion of
Central Europe if necessary.88

The 1988 collection of essays entitled The Hungarians: A Divided Nation, edited
by Stephen Borsody, argues not on behalf of revision but as “an effort to expose a
problem for all to see and to seek constructive solutions to it.”89 As many historians have
done, the editor proposes a causal link between the problems of the Paris Peace
Conference and the calamity of World War II. He reminds his audience that it was the
democratic powers that had fashioned the problematic nature of interwar Europe at the

86 Ibid., 210.

87 Admiral Nicholas Horthy, Memoirs (New York: Robert Speller and Sons,
1957), 114.

88 Sisa, The Spirit of Hungary, 252. Such strategic importance of Ruthenia is
based on the world military situation at the time of World War II and was made obsolete
both by the Soviet military satellites of Eastern Europe and the conventions of modern
warfare.

89 Stephen Borsody, ed., The Hungarians: A Divided Nation (New Haven: Yale
Paris Peace Conference, thereby defusing blame for the Second World War from the Fascists. Borsody urges the need for a general historiography of Trianon in order to counter the Western views that have been so often dominated by Czechoslovak, Rumanian, Yugoslav, and even Soviet perspectives. In the article “State-and Nation-Building in Central Europe,” Borsody continues the criticism of the West for having dismembered Hungary without respect for Hungary’s “merits in Europe’s history,” that is, the thesis of the Magyar-Polish shield against the Mongols, Turks, and other nomadic peoples of the east. Borsody asserts that since Hungarians viewed their “betrayal” as a “work of vengeance,” revisionism became the “cornerstone of Hungary’s interwar foreign policy.”

Historian Thomas Sakmyster considers the 1918-1921 period a “time of troubles” for Hungary. The trauma of Trianon, red terror under the Kun regime, and counter-revolution from the political right created an atmosphere that was not conducive to democracy. Fueled by a right-wing ideological political movement called the “Szeged Ideal” to regain Hungarian honor and losses, revisionism embraced the Hungarian government, and Parliament became dominated by revisionist politicians. Hungarians would not forget their betrayal by the West and would desperately seek allies conducive

90 Ibid., xxvi.


92 Thomas L. Sakmyster, *Hungary, the Great Powers, and the Danubian Crisis:*
to their policy of revising the nation’s borders. The democratic powers had destroyed the Kingdom of St. Stephen. The ruling classes of Hungary had never been partial to democracy, and Regent Nicholas Horthy himself could not understand the logic of democracy, in which he considered “the votes of two idiots count for more than that of one wise man.” Trianon destroyed any chance for democracy in interwar Hungary. The road to German domination of Budapest was thus born at Trianon.

*Breaking the Silence of the Cold War*

With the end of World War II and the Russian occupation, discussion of Trianon became silenced in Hungary. Those Hungarians who reached the free world, however, especially after the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, formed patriotic Hungarian societies and began the process of writing Hungarian propaganda for the English-speaking world. Western Hungarian patriots published many pamphlets and books, most of lesser scholarly value such as the radical publications of Astor Florida’s Danubian Press in the 1970s and early 1980s, which included Edward Chászár’s *Decision in Vienna: the Czechoslovak-Hungarian Border Dispute of 1938*, Endre Haraszti’s *Ethnic History of Transylvania*, Zathureczky’s *Transylvania: Citadel of the West*, Anne Sanborn’s

---


93 This comment is a direct quote of Horthy recorded in the diary of one Walther Hewel, a German diplomat. Cited in Thomas L. Sakmyster, *Hungary’s Admiral on Horseback: Miklós Horthy, 1918-1944* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 264.
Transylvania and the Hungarian-Rumanian Problem, and even such radical assessments as the “documentary” Genocide in Transylvania: Nation on the Death Row.  

Within Hungary, however, such patriotic and revisionist voices were silent. Trianon became a taboo subject. Between 1945 and 1990, the Trianon question was rarely officially discussed, and people were considered “chauvinists” if they spoke of the minorities in neighboring states. Tibor Hadjú’s 1984 article “From Sarajevo to Trianon” explains that authors within Hungary approached the topic of Trianon with great caution. Only in the early 1980s did such silence begin to break, and some Hungarians began to consider the thesis that France had treacherously dominated the Paris Peace Conference for its exclusive agenda to create a new European order dominated by Paris.

Another Cold War examination, “The Impact of Trianon upon Hungary and the Hungarian Mind: the Nature of Interwar Hungarian Irredentism” by Steven Vardy claims

---


that Trianon’s lasting imprint upon the Hungarian psyche pervaded Hungary even long after World War II and through the Cold War, and that the “national malady” of the “Trianon disease” still engulfs the nation.97 The interwar regime’s orientation was determined almost exclusively by the psychological shock of Trianon, whose terms were unacceptable to all Hungarians.98 The shock of Trianon was so severe and all-encompassing that the author proposes that it must be regarded as a “syndrome” and a “malignant national disease.”99

In the interwar period, virtually every Hungarian historian wrote his own “Trianon book” or “Trianon pamphlet.” Hungarian interwar historians were outraged that the West did not recognize Hungary’s role and sacrifices in the defense of medieval Europe from “Oriental barbarism.”100 Children’s history books taught that Trianon was an “unnatural” violation of the old kingdom’s integrity and a “temporary phenomenon that was bound to disappear like an evil nightmare.”101 Vardy quotes one historian Péter Hanák’s Élet és Irodalom (Life and Literature) that Trianon shattered everything that used to be “absolute, concrete and unambiguous” in Hungary. “[Hungarian] national consciousness found itself bound not to a living, but to a non-existing [entity], to a

---


98 Ibid., 22.

99 Ibid.

100 Ibid., 37.

vanished absolute.”102 The shock of Trianon turned many against the “faithless” and “treacherous” West, and in its despair, Hungary was willing to turn to whomever would remedy its dilemma, which resulted in the fatal alliances with the Fascist powers.103 Vardy asserts that only in the late 1930s did Hungary turn from its policy of full restoration of the Trianon borders to negotiated settlements of the Magyar areas, but this was done “at the wrong time and with the wrong nations,” which transformed Hungary into “both the ‘unwilling’ and ‘last’ satellite of Nazi Germany, for which the country and the nation soon had to once again pay a heavy price.”104

Voices of Freedom: Post-1989 Assessments

In the post-Cold War article “New Sources on Trianon,” author Magda Ádám explains the modern trend in Hungarian historiography regarding the guilt of France in Hungary’s Trianon dilemma. Using newly available declassified documents since the end of the Cold War, Ádám suggests that not only was self-determination not applied to Hungary at the Paris Peace Conference, it was not even considered in French strategic planning.105 The secret pacts arranged by the West with such nations as Italy and

102 Ibid., 25.
103 Ibid., 39.
104 Ibid., 30.
Rumania during and after the Great War totally violated the principles of self-determination by which the Central Powers surrendered.106

The theory of French diplomatic treachery is currently dominating Hungarian historiography. Although the Allies initially favored plebiscites, by 1919 France dominated the peace process and abandoned the cases for self-determination by allowing the Successor States to victoriously claim much of the territory they demanded.107 This theory would pin the war guilt for World War II upon the French even more than upon the Germans. Had actual self-determination and justice been applied to the ethnic and political problems of Europe at the Paris Peace Conference, many Hungarian historians believe that World War II could have been avoided.

László Borhi’s “Towards Trianon,” published in 2000, continues this argument. Borhi argues that rather than for self-determination, border changes in East Central Europe in 1919 were established on the basis of strategic objectives, economic needs, and communications networks for the victorious states. In addition to containing Germany, the Successor States bordering or near Russia would further help to contain Communism from spreading across Europe as an “Eastern pillar of Western security.”108 The author concludes that “the priority of economic and communications principles, used frequently

106 Ibid.
107 Ibid., 94.
only as a pretext for underlying strategic interests, was a decisive factor [in the border
created by Trianon].”109

László Szarka’s 2000 essay “A Protecting Power without Teeth: the Minorities
Created by the Trianon Peace Treaty” offers some modern considerations regarding
Hungary’s minorities. Szarka asserts that the lack of self-determination and plebiscites at
Trianon are still an issue among contemporary Hungarians. The great confidence of
Hungarians in the integrity of their kingdom is represented by one Count Apponyi, who
declared at Paris in 1919 that all regions of Hungary, not just the regions with a Magyar
majority, should be subject to plebiscites, to which he stated “I declare that even in
anticipation we will accept the results of such plebiscites, whatever they may be.”110

After Trianon, Hungary was the theoretical protector of the minorities in the Successor
States, however the new frontiers, economic collapse, and domestic chaos left the nation
with little power internally or externally to help the detached minorities.111 Szarka
proposes that with the end of Communism, however, there may be new opportunities for
the minorities: “The Trianon certificate of origin of the Hungarian minorities will no
doubt lose its defining importance when the frontiers of the small states in the region

109 Ibid., 130.


111 Ibid., 12.
become as symbolic as they already have been in the daily life of the happier parts of Europe.”\textsuperscript{112}

Stephen Várdy’s 1997 post-Cold War assessment, “The Trianon Syndrome in Today’s Hungary,” declares that in the new-found freedom with the fall of Communism in Europe, many works regarding Trianon have begun to emerge in Hungary. Although most of these are of little scholarly value, they do show that many Hungarians feel the need to vent the frustration “that had accumulated during the decades of enforced silence.”\textsuperscript{113} The argument of frontier revision has quieted, however. Although many may speak out in favor of human rights for the Hungarian minorities, in order to integrate with NATO and the European Union, Hungary has been expected to accept the status quo of the current European frontiers.\textsuperscript{114}

A radical re-assertion of the principles of self-determination for the Hungarian minorities by one Ernö Raffay in a 1994 book called \textit{Magyar Tragédia} [Hungarian Tragedy], caused sufficient international reaction among the world’s Hungarians for the organization of a Hungarian World Federation on 15 January 1996. At this conference, all agreed that Trianon was unfair and that the effects of the treaty could still be felt as a “permanent scar upon the Hungarian mind,” but the group was unsure on the issue of revisionism.\textsuperscript{115} Another recent result of the “reemerging Trianon syndrome” was the

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 17.

\textsuperscript{113} Várdy, “The Trianon Syndrome in Today’s Hungary,” 74.

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 76.

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 77.
establishment of a Trianon Association in 1997 to preserve the Magyar language and culture in the neighboring states and to further the cause of autonomy in those states. Vardy’s article shows that the repercussions of Trianon are still felt by the world’s Hungarians and it is doubtful that Trianon will ever be forgotten in the Hungarian mass consciousness.

*Summation of the Trianon Problem*

Understanding the Hungarian position at Trianon is fundamental to any study of Hungary in the interwar period. The states that would succeed the Habsburg Monarchy aggravated the already hot minority tensions that had plagued Austria-Hungary since the nineteenth century. The ethnicity of East Central Europe was barely understood by the West, and as the Central Powers collapsed in 1918, Serbs, Czechs, and Rumanians used their diplomatic status as “Allied” nations to destroy the Dual Monarchy outright. With the support of France, the Successor States achieved tremendous territorial victories at the Paris Peace Conference. No Hungarian could accept as final the mutilation of the thousand-year Kingdom of St. Stephen. Revisionism therefore became the cornerstone of interwar Hungarian politics.

Many historians in the interwar period have tried to clarify the contradictory nature of the Paris Peace Conference, which promised self-determination and ethnic justice, yet greatly favored the “victors” over the vanquished. The Hungarian revisionists, such as Teleki and Bethlen, are supported by the “concerned neutrals,” such

---

116 Ibid.
as Macartney, McEvedy, and Perman, that the Successor States won their cases through propaganda and one-sided considerations of the ethnic principles that plagued East Central Europe.

After World War II, historians began to doubt German war guilt for the Great War, and there is an increasing historiographical trend to blame French diplomacy at the Paris Peace Conference for the interwar and wartime woes of Europe. France was the only nation of the Big Four to have a concrete plan for Europe after World War I. In order to form the new nations that would create the potentiality of a future war on multiple fronts for Germany, Hungary was forced to pay most of the territorial price. Since Hungary had been an enemy nation during the Great War, its concerns and issues were of little interest to France.

As this summary of some of the more important histories of Trianon clarifies, many of the arguments that had at one time been considered “revisionist” and contrary to the established histories of the democratic Western world are being challenged. France conspired at Trianon to sacrifice Hungary for the greater good of French military planning. The Czechoslovak state, long considered a benevolent democracy sacrificed for peace at Munich in 1938, purposefully misinformed the Paris Peace Conference for its own strategic gain, destroying a cultural and economic system in Slovakia and Ruthenia that had been sustained for a thousand years. Yugoslavia was little more than a “Greater Serbia” before and after the Second World War. Rumania has repeatedly violated its allies in both World Wars and conspired to enlarge its territories regardless of the conventions of international diplomacy.
Many Magyars at the end of the war had rested so many hopes on the Fourteen Points and the principles outlined by President Wilson. Hoping for self-determination and plebiscites, the Hungarian delegation that arrived at Paris found that the case for Hungary had already been decided without Magyar representation. With the withdrawal of President Wilson after Versailles, France was free to dominate the restructure of Europe to its own strategic aims at Trianon, St. Germain, and Neuilly. The Tenth Point was absolutely perverted by the drafters of Trianon, who knew that more than three million Magyars would be separated into hostile neighbors by the peace. By the time Hungary signed the treaty, it was exhausted from war, revolution, and counterrevolution, and the nation protested in vain for plebiscites.\footnote{Newman, \textit{The New Europe}, 436.} Since the democracies had destroyed Hungary, Hungary would turn to the only powers that would support its revisionist aims.

The way was paved for the Axis domination of Hungary. Trianon thus united the interwar Hungarian nation in a way that transcended class, political, and cultural backgrounds, uniting peasants, workers, students, the intelligentsia, and all political affiliations (Conservative, Liberal-Socialist, and Communist).\footnote{Macartney, \textit{October Fifteenth}, vol. 1, 5.} For the entire interwar period, every classroom in every school in every city in Hungary would begin its day with the new “\textit{Hiszekegy}” or “\textit{National Creed:}”

\begin{center}

\begin{tabular}{ll}
  Hiszek egy Istenben & I believe in one God \\
  Hiszek egy hazában & I believe in one country \\
  Hiszek egy isteni örök igazságban & I believe in a holy and eternal truth \\
\end{tabular}
\end{center}
I believe in the resurrection of Hungary!

Amen.\textsuperscript{119}

\textsuperscript{119} Sisa, \textit{The Spirit of Hungary}, 234.
CHAPTER TWO:

THE SUCCESSOR STATES AT THE PARIS PEACE CONFERENCE

The story of the Successor States at the Paris Peace Conference is one of deception, outright misinformation, and propaganda that achieved incredible results. The Successor States of Yugoslavia, Rumania, and Czechoslovakia achieved massive territorial victories at Paris in 1919 and 1920, yet remained unsatiated in their demands. Rumania sought the Tisza, a purely Magyar region, as the “natural” boundary between Hungary and Rumania. Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia sought a “Slavic corridor,” perhaps formed from the Burgenland, to link these two nations while cutting off Hungary from its Austrian and German allies. Yugoslavia remained unsatisfied with its victories, claiming among other regions, the Istrian Peninsula and Austrian Klagenfurt.¹ Since the histories of these nations have generally been better-accepted among the Western powers, even long after the end of World War II, the story of the Successor States at Paris in 1919 necessitates a chapter devoted to the exploration of the differing historiographical interpretations between them and the Hungarian enemy from whom they acquired much of their territory at the Paris Peace Conference. Ultimately, only a somewhat truncated Rumania would survive the twentieth century.

¹ Although most of the inhabitants of Klagenfurt spoke Slovene, over 59 percent of them voted for inclusion in Austria in the plebiscite held in the region in 1920. Magocsi, *Historical Atlas of East Central Europe*, 138.
Of all the states that succeeded the Habsburg Monarchy, Czechoslovakia was the most problematic. Whereas Serbs and Rumanians sought merely to enlarge their territorial possessions, the Czechs sought to create a new state altogether. As precedent for existence, the Czechs claimed that the medieval realm of Great Moravia from 836 to 894 temporarily united both the Czechs and Slovaks, before the Germans and Hungarians divided this realm.² The “Bohemian Crownlands,” although geographically consistent with Czech demands in 1918, had been at best semi-autonomous provinces culturally and politically part of the Holy Roman Empire.³ The primary historiographical debate concerns the Czech thesis of a common Czecho-Slovak “people” or “nation” and the Hungarian counter-argument of the lack of any cultural or historical affinity between these peoples.

One of the first publications dedicated to the Czecho-Slovak cause was Edvard Beneš’s wartime *Bohemia’s Case for Independence*, written and distributed to the Allies in 1917 to help establish legitimacy for a united Czecho-Slovak nation. The Beneš thesis was that the Czechs and Slovaks were essentially the same people, sharing the same

---


history, culture, language, and heritage.⁴ This thesis proposed that the Slovaks had been part of the ninth-century Kingdom of Moravia and that the Magyars were to blame for the destruction of that kingdom.⁵ Beneš demanded that the Magyars be deprived “of the power to oppress non-Magyars,” and that “German hegemony in Europe” be forever broken.⁶ Beneš maintained that there “were never worse oppressors than the Magyars,”⁷ yet such beliefs were probably not shared by most of Hungary’s Slovaks. Beneš proposed that Czechoslovakia, with French support, would help form an “anti-German barrier” which, along with the dismemberment of the Habsburg Empire, would create a “stable equilibrium in Central Europe.”⁸

Beneš continued his propagandistic testimony in his War Memoirs, published in 1928. The primary thesis of this book is that the peace treaties of World War I “solved the problem” of minorities in East Central Europe.⁹ As a revolutionary movement to deal “a death-blow to the Habsburg Empire,” Beneš described that the goal of Czech patriots was to coordinate with the other “oppressed” peoples of the Habsburg Empire: the Poles,
South Slavs, and Rumanians. To Beneš, the war was a struggle of democracy against absolutism, a black and white contest between “good and evil,” which realized the “democratic ideals” of the Successor States.

Charles Wojatsek’s *From Trianon to the First Vienna Arbitral Award: The Hungarian Minority in the First Czechoslovak Republic*, published in 1980, presents the Hungarian perspective to the Czecho-Slovak issue. Wojatsek proposes that rather than solving the minority problems of the Habsburg Empire, the Paris Peace Conference simply handed the same problems over to new masters. In the case of Czechoslovakia, the Czechs barely held an ethnic majority over their minorities. Czechs accounted for 51 percent of the nation’s population, faced with 22 percent Germans, 15 percent Slovaks, 5 percent Magyars, 4 percent Ruthenians, 0.5 percent Poles, and 0.15 percent Rumanians. Wojatsek proposes that the very nature of Czech hegemony “condemned [the state] to extinction,” from its very formation, and as the “the most improvised, artificially built state in Europe,” it would be the first to feel the winds of change as the Europe of Versailles decayed in the late 1930s.

---

10 Ibid., 286.

11 Ibid., 499.


14 Ibid., 183.
Wojatsek accuses the Czechs of outright deception in the case of certain “navigable” rivers the Czechs demanded as necessary for their economy. Many of these were mere streams, as in the case of the Ronyva, which a contemporary photograph by Hungarian sources in retrospect shows that the center of the stream barely reached the knees of children playing in the water.\textsuperscript{15} Further, the author argues against the cession of Pressburg (Pozsony or Bratislava) to the Czechs as a capital for Slovakia. Pressburg had been the capital of Habsburg Royal Hungary during the era of Turkish partition, and the 1910 census of Pressburg listed 146,753 Hungarians, 39,488 Germans, and 18,282 Slovaks.\textsuperscript{16}

A more neutral interpretation is D. Perman’s \textit{Shaping of the Czechoslovak State}, published in 1962. Perman proposes that the cooperative solidarity between the Successor States at the end of the Great War and the support of France allowed the Czechs to form a state of diverse minorities and territories as a theoretical “second Switzerland.”\textsuperscript{17} Perman explains that from the perspective of Paris, the geopolitical position of Czechoslovakia on the map of Europe made good strategic sense in French military planning. Geopolitically, Czechoslovakia protruded into the heart of Germany, 

\textsuperscript{15} Sisa, \textit{The Spirit of Hungary}, 226.

\textsuperscript{16} Wojatsek, \textit{From Trianon to the First Vienna Arbitral Award}, 25.

offering an excellent strategic military scenario for the French, while comfortably
standing alongside Poland and Rumania in the cordon sanitaire against Bolshevik
Russia.

The policy for French military security clashed, however, with the principles of
self-determination that the Americans proposed.18 Paris authorized such violations of
self-determination as the military boundary of the Sudeten Mountains for the Czechs, the
annexation of Ruthenia to grant a railway between Czechoslovakia and Rumania, and the
cession of a large strip of the Hungarian Plain to accommodate Czech communications
throughout Slovakia.19 A primary thesis in Perman’s book is that throughout the Paris
Peace Conference, the French followed a strict policy as an “open advocate of kindness
to friends and severity toward enemies” which would ultimately be the undoing of the
whole purpose of the conference—to establish a lasting, even “eternal” peace.20 The price
for the Czecho-Slovak nation-state was great, however, for the new nation faced enemies
on all sides, and Paris was uncomfortably distant.

The Slovak perspective, so often ignored, is addressed in Gilbert Oddo’s Slovakia
and its People, published in 1960. The ultimate purpose of this book is to eradicate the
“myth” that the Czechs and Slovaks are one people.21 Although Oddo concurs that the
Slovaks were indeed part of the Great Moravian Empire, the author denies any real

18 Ibid., 145.
19 Ibid., 182.
20 Ibid., 145.
21 Gilbert L. Oddo, Slovakia and Its People (New York: Robert Speller and Sons,
relation between Czechs and Slovaks. When Masaryk proclaimed such unity in a 1916 British referendum entitled “The Slovaks are Czechs,” the Slovakian nationalist poet Hurban-Vajanský countered in 1917 that “there is not a single Slovak in Slovakia who would call himself a Czech. Slovaks regard themselves as an ethnically distinct nation.” Religious differences also divided the Roman Catholic Slovaks from the Protestant Czechs. From linguistic standpoints, Oddo explains that while resembling the Czech language, Slovakian contains many different idioms and is definitely a different language and not just a dialect. It is interesting that soon after the hegemony that was Soviet Communism was lifted from Europe and Slovakia had any say in its affairs, it declared independence from the Czechoslovak union in 1993.

Margaret MacMillan’s Paris 1919 supports the Hungarian historiographical interpretation of the destruction of the Slovak economy by Czechs. The Czechoslovak union cut off the river system by which Slovakian timber and coal flowed into the Hungarian plain, and the difficulty of transverse communications between Slovakia and the Bohemian and Moravian Czechs devastated the Slovak economy. MacMillan records

---


23 Ibid., 163.

24 Ibid., 4.


57
an American witness to the Slovak response to their new government in Prague: “We thank you for nothing. You say you have rescued us from the political oppression of the Hungarians which was in fact pretty bad but now we are under martial law, we have no work, little food, we suffer from cold and our future is black.”26 The report of a Slovak priest to an American observer in 1919 summarized the Slovak position: “We have lived alongside the Magyars for a thousand years. All the Slovak rivers flow towards the Hungarian plain, and all our roads lead to Budapest, their great city, while from Prague we are separated by the barrier of the Carpathians.”27

Macartney and Palmer’s *Independent Eastern Europe*, published in 1962, proposes that the union of Slovakia with the Czech state was an unjust violation of the principles of self-determination. The authors insist that the Slovaks were generally loyal to the Hungarian Crown and there was considerable sympathy for old Hungary among both Slovaks and Ruthenes.28 The Czech thesis of a Czecho-Slovak “people” or “nation” was rooted only in nineteenth-century romantic idealism, and embraced only by Czech patriots such as Masaryk and Beneš. Macartney challenges that whereas the Czechs successfully acquired the Sudeten Mountains as their national boundary based on its historic unity in the medieval Czech “Historic Lands” as a “national and economic unit, bound together by history,” the same argument was denied the Magyars in the case of

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid., 242.

Slovakia as part of historic Hungary. Macartney and Palmer argue that the Czech annexation of Ruthenia was nothing less than an “undisguised occupation.”

A. H. Hermann’s 1975 *History of the Czechs* challenges the common assumption in the West of the interwar Czechoslovak “model democracy.” Minorities were unequal in Czechoslovakia, and the economy outside of Bohemia and Moravia became disrupted. The author claims that any anxiety among the Slovaks toward Budapest in 1914 was only redirected against Prague after 1920. Ruthenia was even more devastated by the Czech annexation. During the winter seasons, Ruthenian timber traditionally flowed down the Carpathian river system into the Hungarian plain, and many Ruthenians found summer employment on northeastern Hungarian farms. After the Czechs annexed the region, these traditional enterprises ceased, causing rampant unemployment and destitution at a catastrophic level.

William Wallace’s 1976 *Czechoslovakia* asserts that Slovaks truly favored only autonomy in the Hungarian Kingdom rather than full independence, while the Czechs had always been more radical against the Habsburgs. Wallace does not support the Czech state as the model democracy that Prague had advocated. Indeed, Wallace argues that to assimilate its minorities, Prague abolished the historic “lands” of the region in place of 21 separate districts in an approach to minimize ethnic discontent.

---

29 Ibid., 144.

30 Ibid., 193.


The Czechoslovak experiment failed, both before World War II and after the Cold War. The nation was surrounded by enemies and the minority situation of the state doomed the nation. Germany dissolved the state in 1939, and although the Czechoslovak union was resurrected after World War II (minus the Soviet annexation of Ruthenia), only Soviet Communist hegemony could hold the state together. The union dissolved in 1993.

**Hungary and the Yugoslav Question**

The issues between Yugoslavia and Hungary are considerably less complex than those of the Czechs and Rumanians. Relations between the Croats and Hungarians had been more or less benevolent, based on the special “federated” status between the Croats and the rest of the Kingdom of St. Stephen. The problem areas for the Hungarian Crownlands concerned those territories called the Bánát and the Bácska, regions that had formed the traditional military frontier districts of Habsburg Austria. Frontier regions in East Central Europe have traditionally been ethnically complex, and the Bánát-Bácska featured a mix of Magyars, Germans, Serbs, Croats, and Rumanians. The 1910 census accounts for 547,735 Magyars in the region, with perhaps a comparable number of Serbs, Germans, and Rumanians.³³ The ethnic complexity of this region cannot be understated, and sometimes single towns possessed multiple languages and religions.

---
The Yugoslav Kingdom officially came into being on 1 December 1918, and since this time has been the subject of a variety of interpretations. Some sources proclaim Croatian and Slovenian support for this new nation. Others, such as Bruce Pauley’s *Habsburg Legacy* point out that many Slovenes and Croats looked upon the Orthodox Serbs as a culturally inferior people and viewed the Serbs “not as liberators, but as conquerors and oppressors.”\(^{34}\) It is very probable that the Yugoslav nation was indeed the “Greater Serbia” its enemies proclaimed.

Ivo Lederer’s *Yugoslavia at the Paris Peace Conference* is one of the few neutral accounts that document the formative period of the Yugoslav Kingdom from 1918 to 1920. Lederer continues the thesis that dominates much current historiography that the creation of Yugoslavia, like Czechoslovakia and Greater Rumania, did not solve the minority problems of the Habsburg Empire but simply handed the same problem to new masters. Yugoslavia’s position at the Paris Peace Conference was simplest of all the Successor States in that its goals were clear from the outset: Slovenia from Austria; Croatia, the Bánát and Bácska from Hungary. Only in the case of the Bánát was there any difficulty, for Rumania also claimed this region. Lederer asserts, however, that there could be no real concrete solution as to which nation had rights in the Bánát, since that region lacked any geographic, economic, ethnic, or historic unity.\(^{35}\)

\(^{34}\) Pauley, *The Habsburg Legacy*, 89.

Lederer argues that the creation of Yugoslavia set some dangerous precedents at the Paris Peace Conference. Many regions ceded to the Yugoslav Kingdom, such as the Bánát, Bácska, Macedonia, and Kosovo, were not inhabited by or lacked a South Slav majority. Lederer therefore proposes that the very formation of Yugoslavia “violated the principle of nationality” that had been the major force with which that nation had been constructed.\footnote{Ibid., 127.}

Macartney and Palmer in \textit{Independent Eastern Europe} assert that the ethnic complexity of Yugoslavia was great in regions such as the Bácska and Bánát and the nationalism of the population in such areas was often unclear. Macartney and Palmer also deny any true “South Slav unity” in Yugoslavia. Slovenes and Croats were culturally “Austro-Hungarian” and the interwar Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes became in essence a “Greater Serbia.”\footnote{Macartney and Palmer, \textit{Independent Eastern Europe}, 193.} Throughout the interwar period, the Serbs increasingly dominated the state. The Croats alone held any administrative independence or autonomy.\footnote{Magocsi, \textit{Historical Atlas of East Central Europe}, vol. 1, 139.} Although Yugoslavia did fairly well at the Paris Peace Conference, Lederer asserts that the nation faced hostile neighbors in the entire interwar period among Austria, Hungary, and Bulgaria, as well as Italian and Albanian irredentism at the time of the Paris Peace Treaties. To counter that threat, Yugoslavia secured relations with the Little Entente and France. The greatest initial threat to Yugoslav’s international position was Italian demands for Istria, Fiume, and the Dalmatian coastline, territory promised to

\footnote{Ibid., 127.}\footnote{Macartney and Palmer, \textit{Independent Eastern Europe}, 193.}\footnote{Magocsi, \textit{Historical Atlas of East Central Europe}, vol. 1, 139.}
Italy for its involvement in the Great War. Italy settled its claims with Yugoslavia, at least officially, in the Treaty of Rapallo of 12 November 1920 in which Rome acquired the Istrian Peninsula with the port of Fiume, as well as certain coastal regions such as the city of Zadar.39 Although Italy remained unsatisfied, conflict between Rome and Belgrade was avoided, at least for the time being. Lederer agrees with the increasing historiographical trend that Yugoslavia’s good fortune at the Paris Peace Conference was part of a French plot to establish a balance of power and security network in the Balkans against future potential German aggression.40

The fate of Yugoslavia is a case study of the failure of the “eternal peace” that was proposed at the Paris Peace Conference. Friction between the nationalities, especially the Croats, became increasingly difficult for the Serbian government to manage in the interwar period. The Serbian government therefore abolished the traditional historic “lands” of the country in favor of nine districts or banovinas.41 Germany, Italy, Bulgaria, and Hungary partitioned the country in 1941 and set up an independent Croatia. With the end of World War II, the traditional lands were restored as six federated republics and two autonomous districts (Kosovo and the Voivodina), based on the pre-Great War divisions. As revolutionary changes began to embrace Europe in 1989, the Yugoslav state could no longer maintain cohesion. Slovenia and Croatia declared independence in 1991; Macedonia followed in 1992; Civil war began in Bosnia

39 Ibid., 139.
40 Lederer, Yugoslavia at the Paris Peace Conference, 218.
in 1993; the future status of Kosovo is undetermined. Like Czechoslovakia, the Yugoslav union would not survive the twentieth century.

The Transylvanian Problem in Hungarian and Rumanian Historiography

Of the territorial controversies of East Central Europe, none has been so hotly contested as the Hungarian-Rumanian dispute over Transylvania. Hungarians and Rumanians have considered themselves enemies for the better part of the twentieth century and their national histories are generally contradictory. The debate concerns Transylvania, which both nationalities proclaim to be their cultural heartland. Admiral Nicholas Horthy’s assessment of the Hungarian-Rumanian relationship in Transylvania has been generally common among most Magyars: “A purely Magyar people lived there of old, but became overrun by Rumania shepherds and agricultural workers.”

C. A. Macartney’s 1937 book Hungary and her Successors comments that the German Saxons and Slovaks had no real problems with Hungarian leadership. The status of the Croats was also not severely problematic based on the special “federated” status between Hungary and Croatia guaranteed by the Hungarian Crown and the medieval Hungarian Constitution. Transylvania, however, was an extremely complex problem, primarily based on the settlement patterns of the so-called Székely or Szekler population.

42 The Rumanian side of the argument primarily concerns the theory of Daco-Roman continuity and issues of primacy in the region. Their theses will thereby be presented in more detail in chapter three.

The Szeklers of Transylvania consider themselves the descendants of one of Attila’s two sons, Csaba, who, according to folklore, remained behind when the rest of the Huns fled eastward after Attila’s death.\textsuperscript{44} Although a Magyar people, their dialect is distinguished from the rest of Hungary and their settlements were in the heart of Transylvania, surrounded by extensive Rumanian rural populations.\textsuperscript{45} Although the Rumanians formed the ethnic majority, Macartney insists that the culture, intellectual, and civic life of the region remained Magyar and Saxon. In 1914, Transylvania was ruled by and for the Magyars against the Rumanians. After 1920, the tables turned, and Rumanians dominated their old Magyar masters.\textsuperscript{46} In some cases, purely Hungarian territory was ceded to Rumania simply to facilitate north-south communications in Transylvania. Macartney claims the Magyars would have happily built a railway for the Rumanians instead of ceding territory.\textsuperscript{47}

In his 1943 book, \textit{The New Europe}, author Bernard Newman offers a comparison between the Hungarian and Polish minority problem in the case of Lwow, an “unquestionably” Polish city which is surrounded by Ukrainian peasantry in the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{45} During the Cold War, Rumania had scattered the Szekler population across Transylvania in order to avoid a repeat of the 1940 settlement of the Second Vienna Award. This prevents the territorial blocs of Szekler population that existed in the interwar period.]
\item[\textsuperscript{46} Macartney, \textit{Hungary and her Successors}, 348.]
\item[\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 354.]
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Transylvanian Kolozsvár (Cluj in Rumanian), a Magyar city surrounded by Rumanian peasants, faced the same problem. Newman states that Magyars looked down upon Rumanians as an inferior race, 78 percent of whom were illiterate, and considered their process of Magyarization a means to bring minority populations to a higher cultural level. Almost all higher education in the region was Hungarian. Newman claims the Austrian re-conquest of Hungary in the seventeenth century aggravated the problem, after which many villages in the countryside comprised four races and four religions.

Probably the most neutral account of Rumania’s lot at Paris in 1919 is Sherman David Spector’s 1962 *Rumania at the Paris Peace Conference*. Spector’s thesis is that the tremendous political ability of its premier Ioan Bratianu is largely the reason for Rumania’s success at the Paris Peace Conference. Hungarian authors often accuse the Rumanians of political treachery, and the story of Rumania in the Great War shows them indeed to be opportunistic. Rumania has the curious distinction of having been on both sides during the Great War. Although technically by treaty part of the Central Powers at the start of World War I, Rumania sold itself to the Entente in the secret Treaty of

---


49 Ibid., 262.

50 Ibid., 461.

51 The Rumanians were also on both sides in World War II. Although among the staunchest of Hitler’s allies early in the war, as soon as the Red Army approached their border in 1944, they quickly declared war on Germany and fought alongside the Red Army for the rest of the war. Hungarians have repeatedly denounced the Rumanians for
Bucharest on 17 August 1916 that promised Rumania all of Transylvania, the Bukovina, and the Bánát. Rumania attacked Austria-Hungary as a coordinated effort with the Russian General Brusilov’s 1916 Galician offensive, but both attacks were swiftly turned and the Central Powers occupied and divided Rumania. Spector proposes the Rumanian solution to this turn of events, however: “Having lost the war, Bratianu did not intend to lose the peace.”

During the 1916-1918 occupation of Rumania, much of that nation’s intelligentsia fled to the West to further the cause of Rumanian propaganda, especially in France, where most of Rumania’s intellectuals had been educated. When defeat indeed came for the Central Powers, the Western ignorance at the Paris Peace Conference played right into the hands of the Rumanian delegation. Bratianu personally led the Rumanian delegates at the conference, and his abilities as a speaker and diplomat achieved victories for Rumania in a way impossible for Hungary. Just as the Czechs demanded Magyar territory in Slovakia for transverse communication, Rumania demanded and received many Magyar regions such as the cities Szatmár-Németi and Nagyvárad because the existing railway there was considered a boon to Rumania’s economy. Bratianu and Rumanians ever since 1918 have frequently argued that the ethnic majority of such behavior in their history.

---


53 Ibid., 58.

54 Ibid., 71.

55 Ibid., 103.
Transylvania had in most cases asked to be joined to Greater Rumania, as in the case of the Saxons of Transylvania and the Bukovina who asked for such union on 8 January 1919. Spector urges that this be carefully considered, as he asks “were the acts of union spontaneous or were they arranged under the menacing or protecting guns of the Rumanian army?”

Regarding Rumanian opportunism, Spector demonstrates the Rumanian response to the Kun regime. Rumania used the pretext of Béla Kun’s Soviet regime to validate a military campaign in Hungary which allowed them to push the Rumanian Transylvanian border ever further westward. Eventually, however, even the Allies began to see that some of the Rumanian demands were absolutely ridiculous, such as the Tisza as the “natural” border between Hungary and Rumania. Spector declares that a conspiracy between Bratianu and Masaryk, his Czech counterpart, was successful in the case of Ruthenia, which granted a common border for the Czechs and Rumanians while denying the Magyars a common border with their thousand-year Polish allies. With the end of the Paris Peace Conference, Bucharest established its long-awaited dream of a “Greater Rumania” in a manner that few in Bucharest could ever have believed possible. With the geopolitical position of Rumania on the map of Europe, a French-dominated Rumania

---

56 Ibid., 71.
57 Ibid., 147.
58 Ibid., 222.
would help secure the containment of Bolshevik Russia, and theoretically aid in the international isolation of Germany.\textsuperscript{59}

\textit{Summation of the Problem of the Successor States}

The formation of the Little Entente in 1920 united Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Rumania in common cause. These three nations and their French supporter were dedicated to the \textit{status quo} of the Europe of Versailles and the containment of any Hungarian revisionism against the Treaty of Trianon by which these three states acquired much of their territory. The Little Entente isolated Hungary except its small border with its Austrian ally.

Although the Europe of Versailles had such high hopes in the formation of these states, it is ironic how completely they failed in the long run. Czechoslovakia became the nation “sacrificed for peace” in the 1938 Sudeten appeasement, and soon became completely dissolved as the Nazis moved into Prague in March 1939 and set up a puppet government in the newly independent Slovakia. Hungary recovered Ruthenia, and the Fascist powers partitioned Transylvania between Hungary and Rumania in the Second Vienna Award of 28 July 1940. The Germans, Italians, Bulgars, and Hungarians crushed Yugoslavia in 1941. With the fall of France, the Balkans became Hitler’s supply network for his “crusade” against Bolshevik Russia.

With the arrival of the Red Army in 1944 and 1945, the settlement of Versailles was reimposed, with some changes, among the East Central European powers, but the

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid.
evidence of the instability of these nation-states soon became apparent as Soviet military hegemony left Eastern Europe beginning in 1989. Czechoslovakia voluntarily divided, and civil war and dissolution wracked Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Although Rumania has not suffered the same fate, this may be partly based on the non-irredentist nature of the contemporary Hungarian government. Budapest has asked for autonomy and protection for the Magyar minorities in the surrounding countries while (at least officially) renouncing any aim to reunite these peoples once again into a greater Hungary. The fate of the states that succeeded the Habsburg Austro-Hungarian Empire illustrate that the solutions dictated by the Paris Peace Conference were often superficial and unable to survive the test of time.
CHAPTER THREE:
MINORITY PROBLEMS OF THE KINGDOM OF ST. STEPHEN

The minority problems that faced the Hungarian Kingdom in the 1867-1914 era were primarily responsible for the dismemberment of historic Hungary at Trianon in 1920. Understanding the roots of Hungary’s minority problems are the basis to understanding the core ideals that would manifest in the interwar revisionist movement. Through a historiographical exploration of the theses of Hungary and its enemies among the Successor States, it will become clear that many arguments made by the Hungarians since 1918 are better supported by today’s neutral historians than those of Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, and Rumania, nations that have generally received better press than Hungary in the first few decades after World War II. At the Paris Peace Conference, the Hungarian delegation rested their cases on historical, geographic, and economic principles in defense of the integrity of the Magyar Kingdom as it existed in 1914. These arguments failed in the face of the ethnic principles by which the Rumanians, Czechs, and Serbs based their cases in Paris.

Of these, the Serbian demands were least problematic, based on the special “federated” status that existed between Hungary and Croatia, and the comparatively small dispute for domination of the region called the Bácska in Hungary which (along with a strip of the Bánát) became the Serb Voivodina. To the Czechs, the Slovaks were their eastern “brethren,” not only linguistically related, but culturally and historically according to Czech historiography. Revisionist Hungarian literature argues that whereas
the Slovak language is indeed related to Czech, the Slovaks had never had any true affinity with their linguistic relatives in Bohemia and Moravia. Hungarian historiography proclaims that the Slovaks were culturally, historically, geographically, and economically part of the Hungarian Kingdom, whose separation greatly impaired the Slovak economy.

The greatest historiographical controversy concerns the Hungarian and Rumanian contest for Transylvania, which transcends any other territorial dispute in Europe. Rumanian national history proclaims as fact the theory of Daco-Roman continuity, in which the Rumanian people are descended from Romans who settled the Transylvanian region between AD 106-271. Hungarian historiography counters this theory by proposing a Balkan migration of the people who would become the Rumanians to account for the thousand years of silence before the first mention of these people in Hungarian territory. Another major theme from the Hungarian historiographical perspective is the medieval confederation between the Magyars, Szeklers, and German Saxons called the “Union of Three Nations,” of which the Vlachs, as early Rumanians were known, are curiously absent.

If Czechoslovakia was indeed British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain’s “faraway country between people of whom we know nothing,” regions such as Transylvania, the Bánát and the Slavic and other areas of the Balkans remained even more foreign. In *Hungary and her Successors*, historian C. A. Macartney laments that little more than 15 years after the Paris Peace Conference, little had changed in Western understanding of the problems of East Central Europe.¹ Most of the West looked with

¹ C. A. Macartney, *Hungary and her Successors: the Treaty of Trianon and its
amazement upon the dissolution and civil war that embraced parts of Europe in the 1990s. Historian Margaret MacMillan’s *Paris 1919* warns that Rumania and Hungary may as well face off one day for Transylvania.² Clearly there has yet to be an effective solution for the problems of East Central Europe. Count Paul Teleki’s 1923 *Evolution of Hungary and its Place in European History* proposed that “truth alone can be the foundation for a better world,” and that since “full knowledge was lacking” in formation of the Paris Peace Treaties, mutual understanding must guide future negotiations in East Central Europe for the betterment of humanity.³ That mutual understanding begins with clarification of the minority problems that has embraced this part of Europe for well over a millennia and a fair assessment of the often conflicting national histories of the nations involved.

*Views as to the Integrity of the Kingdom of St. Stephen*

Geography in Hungarian historiography plays a key factor in the Magyar worldview of the integrity of their nation and the importance of the boundaries of the Kingdom of St. Stephen. Hungarian historian Stephen Sisa in his 1983 patriotic account *The Spirit of Hungary* explains that within the Hungarian “collective mind” the ring of the Carpathians represented Hungary’s “eternal frontiers” as a bastion of solidarity dividing

---

the two cultural worlds of Western Christianity and Eastern Orthodoxy. Hungarians do not hesitate to express the geographic, economic, and cultural unity of this region. All of the Slovakian rivers and valleys flow into the central Hungarian plain, solidifying an economic union of the northern Carpathians and its minerals and timber with the heart of Hungary. Even the American specialist in East Central Europe during the Paris Peace Conference, Archibald Coolidge, reported in 1919 that “no country in Europe has been more genuinely and historically united for the last thousand years than has Hungary.”

Coolidge further argued in 1919 that the Carpathians were among the best boundaries of Europe, “marked out by nature,” which embraced cultural minorities in a way similar to the Alsatians, Bretons, and Basques, who maintain their cultural identity yet do not affect the unity of France. British historian C. A Macartney agrees that the boundaries of the old 1914 Kingdom of Hungary held an inherent geographical strength as a natural unit “which lacks in some of its successors.”

Hungarians have often seemed rather naive regarding the unity of both the lands and people of the Kingdom of St. Stephen. C. A. Macartney presents the example of Regent Admiral Nicholas Horthy, who could not imagine that such peoples as the Croats

---


5 Ibid., 21.


7 Ibid.

8 Macartney, *Hungary and her Successors*, 496.
and Slovaks would actually wish separation from the Hungarian Kingdom. Throughout Hungarian historiography, there is a self-righteous trend among the Magyars regarding themselves and their kingdom. Hungarians believe, with some accuracy, that they single-handedly defended Europe from the “infidel” Turks circa 1380-1526, and that their sacrifices, both against Turk and Mongol, warrant special treatment or at least consideration from the greater European community. Neither do the Hungarians (or Poles, for that matter) regard themselves as an “eastern” European nation, which they personally regard the Orthodox Serbs and Russians, but rather part of the “heart” of European culture.

The modern Kingdom of Hungary, however, had profound minority problems. A cross-section of Hungary’s nationalities based on the census of 1900 listed 8,152,000 Magyars in the Kingdom, facing minorities of 1,902,000 Germans (and an additional 233,000 Transylvanian Saxons), 438,000 Serbs, 2,799,000 Rumanians, 425,000 Ruthenians, 191,000 Croats (in Hungary proper with an additional 1,491,000 in the federated territory of Croatia-Slavonia), 846,000 Jews, and somewhat under 2,000,000 Slovaks. Of these, only the Serbs and Rumanians were hostile to the Hungarian state. A policy of “Magyarization” of these minorities, however, apparently grew after the Compromise of 1867 created the Dual Monarchy. Bruce Pauley explains in The

---


Habsburg Legacy that after 1867 “the Magyars almost without exception upheld the absolute indivisibility of the state and the need to absorb minorities.”  

Count Pál Teleki, later Prime Minister of Hungary, described the Hungarian position on its minority problem in his 1923 Evolution of Hungary and its Place in European History. Teleki argued that neither “nationality” nor “linguistic group” were equal to the term “race.” He cited one British Lord Bryce who called nationality “an aggregate of men drawn together and linked by certain sentiments.” For Teleki, that aggregate was the Holy Crown of St. Stephen. The crown symbolized legitimacy for Hungary’s leaders, and after the original Árpád dynasty died out, the crown symbolized all of the lands and people of Hungary. Teleki proposed that the crown united all diverse nationalities in Hungary and that all were equal in the kingdom. It is improbable that these diverse ethnic groups held equality or even, in many cases, autonomy, but only the Serbs and Rumanians really complained about their status in the Hungarian Kingdom.

Count Steven Bethlen, Premier of Hungary from 1921-1931, represented the extreme view of Hungarian historiography in his collection of 1933 lectures The Treaty of Trianon and European Peace. To Bethlen, it was “historical fact” that the Magyars did not oppress their minorities, citing as example the German Saxons who had lived for centuries with the Magyars with little complaint. Bethlen reminded his audience that

---


12 Teleki, The Evolution of Hungary and its Place in European History, 211.

13 Ibid., 73.

14 Count Steven Bethlen, The Treaty of Trianon and European Peace (New York:
having “single-handedly” defended Europe from Mongols and the Turks, Hungary should have been granted special lenient treatment at Trianon.\(^{15}\) He reminded his audience that the Magyar Kingdom was an entity with a thousand-year history, and that throughout Hungarian history, the nation rarely strayed beyond its natural boundaries. As for indigenous populations, Bethlen claimed that only the Bulgars and Slovenes could show any proof of having survived the “dark ages” of East Central Europe. The Avars, Goths, Huns, and surely the Daks or ancient Dacians had all died off in the waves of barbarian invasions before the Magyar arrival. He proposed as evidence the Magyar language, which although had some influence of ancient Slovene, had absolutely no Serb, Croat, Slovak, Ruthenian, and “beyond a doubt,” no Rumanian influences upon the Hungarian language.\(^{16}\) Any other races in Hungary, according to Bethlen, entered only after the Magyar conquest. No aboriginal inhabitants survived. Bethlen’s thesis was that the Magyars actually “invited” people of other races into the kingdom at various times in history. For example, according to his theory, Transylvanian Magyars and Szeklers invited Vlach tribes, fleeing from the barbarous Mongols, into southern Transylvania in the thirteenth century.\(^{17}\) Further, Bethlen reminded the reader that all urban areas in the medieval Kingdom of Hungary were Magyar or German.\(^{18}\)


\(^{15}\) Ibid., 100.

\(^{16}\) Ibid., 10.

\(^{17}\) Ibid., 101.

\(^{18}\) Ibid., 105.
It must be understood, however, that although all Magyars are Hungarians, not all Hungarians are Magyars. C. A. Macartney in *Hungary and her Successors* clarifies the policy of Magyarization in Hungary. Although Magyars discriminated against non-Magyars, if a member of a minority accepted the “Magyar ideal,” and became Hungarian in language and culture, “every door was open to him.” Although the Magyars were “quick to punish, [Hungary] is equally generous to reward.”

The author compares the Hungarian scenario to those Scots, Welsh, or northern Irish who do not excessively dwell on their Celtic heritage and are fully accepted as British citizens. Pauley’s *Habsburg Legacy* concurs that once a minority member renounced his ethnic heritage and accepted the Magyar ideal and culture as his own, however, he became Hungarian in all senses of the word and part of Hungarian society. Macartney argues that those minorities who sought to maintain their identity, however, (excepting the autonomous Croats and German Saxons) such as Slovaks, Ruthenians, and Rumanians, possessed few rights in 1914.

One of the finer neutral historians of Hungary in the latter-part of the twentieth century is Thomas Sakmyster’s accounts of the complexities of Hungary in the interwar period. Despite his neutral stance in his books, Sakmyster argues that Hungary fulfilled what he considers a “cultural mission” in its history on the fringes of East Central European civilization. He considers their guidance of the nationalities to be

---


20 Ibid.


22 C. A. Macartney and A. W. Palmer, *Independent Eastern Europe: A History*
“benevolent,” which helped the Slovaks, Rumanians, and South Slavs to develop from “semi-oriental” conditions to a more European system of life.23

The Thesis of Turkish Partition in Hungarian Historiography

Count Paul Teleki concurred with most historians that Hungary’s ethnic dilemma doomed that nation at the Paris Peace Conference. Teleki was the first Magyar historian, however, to propose a single historical event as the key to Hungary’s minority problem. This is the 1923 thesis that the 150 years of Turkish occupation which began after the battle of Mohács in 1526 transformed Hungary into a multi-ethnic state. Teleki argued that the Turkish occupation absolutely devastated Hungary. In the densely-populated Alföld or Great Hungarian Plain, Turks executed hundreds of thousands of Magyars or depopulated the region to fill the slave markets of Anatolia. It would take hundreds of years for the Great Plain to be repopulated. Nomadic tribes thus began to enter the vacuous fringes of the former Hungarian Kingdom.24 In 1505, before the Turkish conquest, a Vatican document estimated the population of the Hungarian Kingdom to be roughly 4 million, 76 percent of which spoke Hungarian.25 The remaining 24 percent

---


24 Teleki, *The Evolution of Hungary and its Place in European History*, 64.

must have included not only Vlachs, but also Germans, Slovaks, Ruthenes, and possibly Serbs. It therefore becomes a primary issue in Hungarian historiography that Hungary was largely an ethnically homogenous state before the Turkish era.

C. A. Macartney’s 1962 *Hungary: A Short History* concurs that the Turkish conquest was the greatest calamity for Hungary before Trianon and the root of Hungary’s minority problem. Macartney explains that the Magyars of the Hungarian Great Plain faced a worse scenario than other populations throughout the Balkans. Whereas South Slavs, Bulgars, and Greeks could hide in mountainous regions, the fertile Hungarian plains offered no such geographic protection. Magyars of the central plain were put to the sword, enslaved, or perished in the terrible pestilence brought about by the horrible conditions in the wake of the Turks. Macartney agrees that with the Magyar depopulation of the central plain, Serbs, Vlachs, and Bosnian Muslims pushed into southern Hungary, or sought refuge in the relatively unoccupied and fairly autonomous Transylvania.

With the completion of the Austrian conquest of 1699, the Habsburg emperors initiated an operation known as the *Impopulatio* to resettle the now virtually empty Great Hungarian Plain with populations from other parts of the empire. This resettlement was predominant in the Bánát, although many Rumanians settled in Transylvania at this time. Macartney argues that whereas many of Hungary’s minorities became assimilated as

---


27 Ibid., 116.
honorary Magyars, race relations between the Magyars and Rumanians were always tense, and Rumanians were considered an inferior race on the same social level as gypsies.28

*South Slav Issues in the Hungarian Kingdom*

Any historiographical interpretation of Hungary’s minority problems must primarily address the issues of the three irredentist nationalities which claimed Hungarian territory after World War I: the Serbs, the Czechs, and the Rumanians. The issues between Hungary and the South Slavs are far less complicated than the Czech and Rumanian historiographical claims and theories. Much Hungarian historiography maintains that relations between the Croats and Magyars were generally fairly good. The Croats shared a special federated status with Hungary since AD 1102 and enjoyed more autonomy than any other nationality in Hungary. After the Austrian conquest of Turkish Hungary in 1699, it is most probable that Croatia remained on Hungarian maps since that land assured Hungary the port of Fiume on the Adriatic. Charles Jelavich’s *South Slav Nationalisms* deals fairly extensively with the sometimes opposing views between the Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs before the 1914 period and the Yugoslav union that followed the Great War. Jelavich insists that the Turkish conquest of Hungary greatly disturbed the status of Croatia, which became part of the Habsburg military frontier against the Turks. Throughout the nineteenth century, Jelavich claims that Croats had to “fight to preserve their autonomous rights against Hungarian pressure” throughout the nineteenth

---

28 Ibid., 118.
century. With the Compromise of 1867, Croatia was officially returned to the Hungarian Kingdom, but the *Nagodba* or Compromise of 1868 between Hungary and Croatia established greater autonomy for Croatia and an independent judiciary which improved relations between Budapest and Zagreb.29

Jelavich argues that the Croats and Slovenes may have sided with the Serbs and the South Slav cause to distance themselves from Austrian or Hungarian domination, but they did not necessarily share common interest with the Serbs.30 Pauley’s *Habsburg Legacy* further comments that many Slovenes felt that they had more common interest with the Western Austrians than simple Macedonian Serbs who had lived under the tutelage of the Turks for centuries.31 Further, the Roman Catholic Slovenes and Croats with their Latin alphabet were definitely a more “Western” folk than the Orthodox Serbs with their Cyrillic script.

That Croatia should go to South Slavs may not have affected Hungarian policy as much as other areas in question. Indeed, Croatia was not part of the Republic of Hungary that seceded from Austria in 1848 under the nationalist hero Lajos Kossuth. Further, Croatia and Slavonia are absent from the well-known ethno-linguistic map of Hungary drawn by Pál Teleki in 1930 based on the 1910 census. The main disputed areas between Hungary and Yugoslavia concern the Bácska and that part of the Bánát that was

29 Charles Jelavich, *South Slav Nationalisms: Textbooks and Yugoslav Union before 1914* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1990), 8.

30 Ibid., 25.

partitioned between Yugoslavia and Rumania at Trianon in 1920. This region of Hungary is not generally considered by the Magyars to be as important as the Slovakian Carpathian range or Transylvania, although Hungary did temporarily recover the area in 1941 for its participation in the German invasion of Yugoslavia. Overall, the territorial dispute between Hungary and the South Slavs is of minor importance when compared to the Czech and Rumanian claims on the Kingdom of St. Stephen.

The Question of Czecho-Slovak Unity

Of all the states of Europe that either survived or succeeded the Great War, Czechoslovakia was the most problematic. Czechoslovakia had the greatest minority problems of Europe, even worse than Yugoslavia. Concrete census data exists for the 1930 census which listed 7,406,000 Czechs, (51.1 percent of total population), 2,282,000 Slovaks (15.8 percent), 3,232,000 Germans (22.3 percent), 692,000 Magyars (4.8 percent), 549,000 Ruthenians or Carpatho-Russians (3.8 percent), 187,000 Jews (1.3 percent), 82,000 Poles (0.6 percent), 32,000 Gypsies (0.2 percent), 13,000 Rumanians (0.1 percent), and 5,000 others. Unlike the Serbs and Rumanians who sought at the Paris Peace Conference basically to enlarge their territory, the Czechs sought to form a new state entirely at the expense of its German, Polish, and Hungarian neighbors. Barely

---

32 Paul Robert Magocsi, *Historical Atlas of East Central Europe*, vol. 1 (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998), 133. It must be noted that the Czech population was even smaller in 1920, although concrete figures from that time are not as defined as the 1930 census from which Magocsi bases his figures.
a majority in their own state, the means by which the Czechs formed their state assured hostility on virtually all of its borders.

Like Rumania at the Paris Peace Conference, a primary mission of the Czech delegation at Paris in 1919 was to establish some precedence for not just a Czech state, but also a Czecho-Slovak entity. For the western boundaries of this state, the Czechs claimed the Historic Provinces by which Bohemia and Moravia had been known under the domination of the Holy Roman Empire within the geographic ring of the Sudeten Mountains and with a population of over three million Germans. The eastern parts of the country were more troublesome to establish. There had been little historical precedence for a Czecho-Slovak union on any basis other than linguistic. In historiographical retrospect after the creation of Czechoslovakia, many pro-Czech authors invoke the existence of the ninth century Kingdom of Great Moravia which temporarily united the Czech lands with eastern Slovakia and Pannonia from 836 to 894. Pauley’s *Habsburg Legacy* maintains that this inference remained “halfhearted” at the peace table and that the Czechs therefore based their claims mainly on the ethnic principle. Nevertheless, its mention in pro-Czech historiography necessitates clarification. Although the core of the Great Moravian Empire was in Moravia and western Slovakia, historical cartographer Paul Robert Magocsi in his *Historical Atlas of East Central Europe* argues that before its destruction by the Magyars in 894, at its greatest extent Great Moravia also briefly embraced Bohemia, Pannonia (Hungary west of the Danube) and even Silesia and Poland

---

along the Vistula as far as Cracow and Wislica.\textsuperscript{34} The historiographical debate, therefore is the Czech claim for Slovakia based on ethnicity and historical precedence as a common “people” or “nation” and the Magyar claims to the contrary, that Slovakia (and Ruthenia) were historically and economically integral parts of the Hungarian Kingdom.

One of the first published documents for the case of Czecho-Slovak unity was the Czech nationalist leader Edvard Beneš’s \textit{Bohemia’s Case for Independence} published in 1917 during the Great War to persuade the Western or Entente powers to the Czech argument of Czecho-Slovak unity. The Beneš thesis was that the Czechs and Slovaks had the same history, culture, language, and civilization, separated only on account of Hungarian aggression and imperialism \textsuperscript{35} Beneš claimed that for twelve centuries, the Czechs had defended themselves, never attacking, from Germans, Hungarians, and others not just as Czechs, but as “Czecho-Slovaks.”\textsuperscript{36} In this theory only German and Hungarian oppression prevented the political unification of a people who were already not only linguistically, but culturally united.\textsuperscript{37} Beneš asserted that only by the destruction of German and Magyar hegemony in central Europe could justice ever be accorded the Czechs and other Slav peoples of East Central Europe whose fate had been “a martyrdom unparalleled in history.”\textsuperscript{38} Beneš remarked in his 1928 \textit{War Memoirs} that a “Western

\begin{footnotes}
\item[34] Magocsi, \textit{Historical Atlas of East Central Europe}, 4.
\item[36] Ibid., 4.
\item[37] Ibid., 2.
\item[38] Ibid., 76.
\end{footnotes}
Czecho-Slovak nation” had indeed attained a high degree of “historical development” in Western civilization that was curtailed by Germans and Magyars.39

Beneš’s War Memoirs continued some of the more important Czech historical perspectives of national identity. In this 1928 text, Beneš argued that the Germans, Habsburgs, and Magyars sought repeatedly throughout history to rob the national identity not merely of the Czechs, but of a “Czecho-Slovak” “Western Nation” which had achieved a high degree of “historical development” in their long developmental course as an “historical entity.”40 Although Beneš repeatedly attached the Slovaks to the Czech cause, he did not clarify any actual unifying factors between these two disparate peoples other than the linguistic basis. The Ruthenian issue was completely ignored.

In the 1971 book, Czechoslovakia: A Short History, author J. N. F. Bradley offers a brief, albeit comprehensive review of the entire Czech history. The author proposes that a history of Czechoslovakia is basically the quest of the Czechs throughout the ages for autonomy as “one long struggle for the preservation of some kind of independence.”41 Bradley asserts that the Czechs faced formidable problems with their nationalities, and their relations with the Slovaks were much more problematic than they anticipated at Paris in 1919.42 Although the Czechs sought “fusion” between these two peoples, the


40 Ibid.


42 Ibid., 154.
Slovaks insisted on a separate national identity from that of Prague, and it was clear that there was no true federal equality between Czechs and Slovaks.

S. Harrison Thompson’s *Czechoslovakia in European History*, written in 1965, is a readable exploration of the Czech and Slovak political and cultural movements throughout European history up to the German occupation of 1939 in an attempt “to trace the development of several of the more acute problems of Czechoslovak life and history.” The author declares that for more than a thousand years, the Czech and Slovak presence in Europe could be felt, even if it did not politically manifest that presence. Although the Great Moravian Empire may not have had any true lasting impact on the Czechs and Slovaks, Thompson argues that the empire did set some precedence for the West and South Slavs that would only manifest in the twentieth century—that these people could indeed unify and achieve independence. Thus, Bohemia could fulfill its dream and emerge victorious and transcendent from its status as “the classic land of national battles between German and Slav.” Regarding the Slovaks, Thompson claims that their history “is not a record of wars and expansion, rather it is the story of an uninterrupted struggle for existence.” Their lot had always been one of foreign domination, whose only instance of independence before 1918 had been in the brief union with Great Moravia, which the author concurs had no lasting political effect.


44 Ibid., 132.

45 Ibid., 238.
A. H. Hermann’s *A History of the Czechs*, published in 1975, is one of the finer analyses of Czech and Czechoslovak history in its thoroughness and objectivity. Besides the general coverage of Czech history, the author is one of the few to dedicate sufficient treatment to the Slovak problem. Hermann claims that the Slovaks had been politically and culturally part of the Hungarian Kingdom since the arrival of the Magyars in the ninth century. The Slovaks occupied the upper highlands of the Carpathians and became so intertwined with Hungarian domestic affairs, that Hermann declares “the history of Slovakia cannot therefore be treated separately from that of Hungary.” Their lot was bad, however, “for they were few, poor, and harshly ruled by the Hungarians,” and tied tightly to the feudal structure of the Hungarian monarchy which retarded Slovak economic and social development. Hermann argues that with the transfer of power from Budapest to Prague in 1920, however, the Slovaks simply found a new dominating power among the Czechs to replace the Hungarians. The author argues that the “defensive character of Slovak nationalism, the feeling of being threatened, has always been very prominent, and when Prague instead of Budapest became the seat of the central government departments after 1918, the force of these emotions was redirected.” The situation for Ruthenia was even worse, and Hermann agrees with Hungarian historiography that the restructure of the Ruthene economy away from the Hungarian

---


47 Ibid., 195.

48 Ibid., 197.
plains destroyed the Ruthene economic infrastructure causing rampant unemployment and destitution at a catastrophic level. Hermann’s examination demonstrates that Czechoslovakia may not have been the “ideal democracy” so often accorded in the West.

William Wallace’s *Czechoslovakia* focuses on the modern era and eras of reform from 1849 through the “Prague Spring” of 1968 and offers some considerations concerning the lot of the Slovaks. Although the author maintains that “Magyar policies and Slovak aspirations were inevitably on a collision course,” the author contends that few Slovaks sought actual independence from Budapest and merely favored local autonomy. Wallace presents the Slovaks as an impoverished and uneducated people. They had no self-government, but Wallace argues that the government imposed by Budapest was not actually malevolent, and the Slovaks had never truly governed themselves in their history. They sought better representation, but not true independence, unlike the more radical Czechs.

Kurt Glaser’s 1961 *Czechoslovakia: A Critical History* is an interestingly hostile reaction to Czechoslovak history. Although the author’s main theses concern Czechoslovakia’s relations with Russia as a willing “police state” for Communism “more orthodox than the Kremlin,” Glaser dedicates several scorching chapters to early Czechoslovak history in an attempt to clear up the Western “myths” about that nation.

---

49 Ibid., 207.


51 Ibid., 68.

52 Kurt Glaser, *Czechoslovakia: A Critical History* (Caldwell, Ohio: Caxton
which have so often dominated Czechoslovakia’s reception to the West. Glaser absolutely denies Czecho-Slovak unity and any precedence for such a union.\(^{53}\) Indeed, the author continually presents the Czechs as “Russophile” opportunists in their desire to form a state along the lines of Switzerland, only with the Czechs firmly in command of their minorities.\(^{54}\) Glaser argues that as soon as it was politically able, Slovakia seceded from this state both in 1939 and 1993.

A strong counter against Czech historiographical theories from the Hungarian perspective is Charles Wojatsek’s 1980 *From Trianon to the First Vienna Arbitral Award*. Concerning Czecho-Slovak unity, Wojatsek asserts that whereas the Czechs indeed had a realm of sorts under the Holy Roman Empire, the Slovaks never had any political identity.\(^{55}\) Both cultures would remain divided for a thousand years. Wojatsek argues that the only tie between Slovaks and Czechs was linguistic, and their cultural and religious differences were profound.\(^{56}\) Wojatsek also stresses the importance of the river system of the Carpathians for the Slovaks and Ruthenes. Since all the rivers flow from the mountain system of the Carpathians to the Hungarian Great Plain or Alföld, this river system maintained the Slovakian and Ruthenian economy, in which timber and other

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Ibid., 2.}
\footnote{Ibid., 28.}
\footnote{Wojatsek, Charles, *From Trianon to the First Vienna Arbitral Award: The Hungarian Minority in the First Czechoslovak Republic, 1918-1938* (Montreal: Institute of Comparative Civilizations, 1980), 2.}
\footnote{Ibid., 7.}
\end{footnotes}
resources flowed into central Hungary. The establishment of Czechoslovakia therefore destroyed an economic system that had existed for a thousand years. A thesis by Wojatsek that is supported in much Hungarian historiography is that the Magyars, in a kind of benign overlordship, brought civilization to the Slovaks, who occupied the mountains as a loose confederation of tribes in medieval times.

Regarding the Ruthenian problem, Wojatsek argues that this region formed a natural boundary between Hungary and Poland, and all the roads and railways flowed into Hungary. Wojatsek argues that relations between the Ruthenians and the Hungarians were “excellent” throughout their history and that they even had political autonomy in Hungary. The 1910 population of the region listed 44.8 percent Ruthenes, 33.4 percent Magyars, 21 percent others; Magyars and Germans accounted for 90 percent of the urban population, however.

Macartney and Palmer’s 1962 Independent Eastern Europe summarizes the basic issues between the Czechs, Slovaks, Magyars, and the West. The authors maintain that Czech propaganda achieved fantastic results in the Great War, but propose that the union of Slovakia with the Czech state was an unjust violation of the principles of self-determination. Macartney insists that the Slovaks overall were basically loyal to the Hungarian Crown and there was considerable sympathy for old Hungary among both

57 Ibid., 25.
58 Ibid., 140.
59 Ibid., 26.
60 Ibid.
Slovaks and Ruthenes.⁶¹ The Czech thesis of a Czecho-Slovak “people” or “nation” was rooted in nineteenth-century romantic idealism and maintained only by Czech patriots such as Masaryk and Beneš. Macartney challenges that whereas the Czechs successfully acquired the Sudeten Mountains as their national boundary based on its historic unity in the medieval Czech “Historic Lands” as a “national and economic unit, bound together by history,” the same argument was denied the Magyars in the case of Slovakia as part of historic Hungary.⁶² Regarding Ruthenia, the authors accuse the Czechs of outright deception regarding an integral part of the Hungarian Kingdom in the Czech argument that Ruthenia was not “politically ripe” to determine its own destiny as a basis for what Macartney terms an “undisguised occupation.”⁶³

Czechoslovakia never became the “second Switzerland” that its founders sought to create. Indeed, the creation of this state served more as a part of French European policy to counter future German aggression than as an honest attempt to bring justice to the peoples dominated for so long by the Germans, Austrians, and Hungarians. As this essay demonstrates, not only Hungarian historiography, but many neutral authors support the thesis that Slovakia and Ruthenia were probably better suited as part of the Magyar Kingdom than with their western linguistic relatives in Bohemia and Moravia. Czechoslovakia dissolved as a state in 1938 and 1939 not simply because of Nazi

---


⁶² Ibid., 144.

⁶³ Ibid., 193.
imperialism, but also because its creation violated the very tenets of the self-determination and other Wilsonian dogma by which the Central Powers surrendered in World War I. That the state broke apart once again in 1993 proves that Czecho-Slovak union was at best superficial and at worst unrestrained Czech imperialism. The Czechoslovak experiment was a failure that did not survive the twentieth century.

*Introduction to the Transylvanian Dispute Between Hungary and Rumania*

The complexities of the Rumanian-Hungarian historiographical disputes are so great that a brief detailed historical analysis of Transylvania is necessary in order to clarify the opposing Hungarian and Rumanian historical, historiographical, and ethnic theories. The word “Transylvania” in Latin means “land beyond the woods,” in reference to the vast forests of the Carpathians and Transylvanian Alps. The Magyar name for the region is “Erdély,” derived from the Hungarian root “erdő,” meaning forest. The Rumanian name for Transylvania is “Ardeal,” an adapted mispronunciation of the Hungarian “Erdély.” If the Rumanians indeed held primacy in the region, it is doubtful that the name for their homeland would come from a Hungarian place-name. Prior to the 1860 unification of Wallachia and Moldavia, there had never been a term-usage of the phrase “Rumanian” or “Romanian.” The people who would become known as

---


“Rumanians” in the nineteenth century had been known as “Vlachs” in all considerations, hence the name “Wallachia,” or “Land of the Vlachs.” The word “Vlach,” according to one Rumanian linguist Margineanu literally means “shepherd,” a far cry from the noble Roman descent claimed by Bucharest. Wallachia and Moldavia remained the battleground of Russia and Ottoman Turkey for hundreds of years and had little self-government or independence until their 1860 unification. Vlach origins may remain a historical mystery, but in any case, the histories of Hungary and Rumania are in direct conflict with each other.

Transylvania During the Era of Partition

The Transylvanian problem is that both Hungary and Rumania claim the region as the heartland of their culture. In Rumanian historiography, Transylvania is their autochthonous territory as the heirs of Roman colonists. For Hungary, Transylvania was the sole region to carry the flame of Magyar independence during the catastrophic Turkish occupation. Prior to the Turkish era, most Hungarian historians considered the nation’s heartland to have been relatively ethnically homogenous. With the collapse of the Hungarian military forces at Mohács in 1526, Hungary was partitioned into three main bodies: the Turkish occupied Great Plain or Alföld, Habsburg dominated “Royal Hungary” in the northwest, and the relatively autonomous Transylvania under nominal

66 Ibid., 255.

Turkish suzerainty. The Habsburgs claimed their right to the Holy Crown of St. Stephen, but refused to uphold the Hungarian Constitution for which the Crown was a symbol. Only Transylvania in the east carried on the tradition of an independent Hungary.\textsuperscript{68} Magyar sources claims that of the 5 million souls who lived in central Hungary before the Turkish conquest, only 1.5 million survived the occupation.\textsuperscript{69} If a Magyar district of Turkish Hungary resisted, the whole area was put to the sword, and every man, woman, and child was slaughtered.\textsuperscript{70}

The situation in Transylvania was quite different. Admiral Nicholas Horthy presents an argument in his memoirs that is quite common among most Hungarian authors: “During the Turkish domination [Transylvania] had been the hearth where the sacred flame of the national spirit had been kept alight.”\textsuperscript{71} The Magyar nobility in Transylvania survived, unlike in the Turkish-occupied Great Plain, or in Habsburg Royal Hungary where the nobility became absorbed into the German orbit. Indeed, with the Habsburg conquest of Turkish Hungary, completed in 1699, many of the Transylvanian nobles established their leadership across the rest of the newly-freed Hungary. Historian Anne Fay Sanborn in Transylvania and the Hungarian-Rumanian Problem proposes that the urban composition of virtually all cities in Transylvania at this time were either

\begin{footnotes}
\item[68] Sanborn, Transylvania and the Hungarian-Rumanian Problem, 29.
\item[70] Newman, The New Europe, 426.
\item[71] Horthy, Memoirs, 178.
\end{footnotes}
Hungarian or German Saxon. Historian Endre Haraszti further supports that 80 percent of the urban population of Transylvania at this time was Magyar or Saxon. In regard to any Vlach presence in Transylvania by the time of the re-conquest of 1699, Haraszti argues that they occupied only villages and mountainous areas, and although they had a culture of their own, they were a migratory people who could just barely be considered civilized at this time. Recent scholarly collaborations from Budapest such as general editor András Felvidéki’s superb Történelmi Világatlasz (Historical Atlas of the World) still maintains that Magyars and Saxons held hegemony over virtually all urban centers in Transylvania at this time.

The trend in Hungarian or pro-Hungarian historiography concerning this era is that the vast depopulation of the Great Plain wrought by the Turks became responsible for the dispersal of non-Magyar minorities across vast parts of Hungary. As the Turks exterminated or sold off so many of the original Magyar inhabitants into slavery, other nationalities, previously migratory and nomadic, began to settle in the southern reaches of Turkish Hungary such as the Bánát. Hungarian historian Gyula Zathureczky proposes as the basis of his thesis in Transylvania: Citadel of the West that the Turkish era was indirectly responsible for the large Rumanian population that flocked to the outlaying areas of the Transylvanian mountains. Zathureczky argues that the Vlachs sought refuge

72 Sanborn, Transylvania and the Hungarian-Rumanian Problem, 214.
73 Haraszi, The Ethnic History of Transylvania, 126.
74 Ibid., 56.
75 Andráš, Felvidéki, ed., Történelmi Világatlasz (Budapest: Kartográfiai
within the confines of the Transylvanian nobility as they fled from Turkish horror in the Balkans.

Even as Vlach numbers increased in the region, however, they were so disband as to have no national structure, the Orthodox Church alone being a unifying factor among the Vlachs. Their national consciousness only grew after 1700.76 Within the confines of Transylvania, however, Hungarians brought many cultural benefits to these people. Historian Anne Fay Sanborn cites the example of the first Vlach Bible, translated by Hungarians into Rumanian in 1561 at the expense of the Magyar landowner Miklós Forró of the city Brasso which started the birth of Vlach literature.77 The Transylvanian Rumanians had no distinct culture of their own. A major thesis by author Albert Wass de Czege in Documented Facts and Figures on Transylvania, contends that any true culture that may be considered “Rumanian,” that is, a culture more refined than that of simple Vlach shepherds and nomads, was imported into Transylvania from the neighboring provinces of Wallachia and Moldavia.78

**Rumanian Origins and the Theory of Daco-Roman Continuity**

The theory of Daco-Roman continuity has become the cornerstone of virtually all Rumanian historiography from the time of the Vlachs’ national awakening to the present-
day. In the late eighteenth century, two Uniate (Greek Catholic) clerics who studied in Rome, Gheorge Sinkai and Samuel Micu Klein, found the similarities between Latin and the Vlach tongue thought-provoking. Noting a large percentage of Latin root words in the Rumanian language, they formed a theory of continuity linking the Vlachs to the ancient Roman colonists of Dacia.79 Their theory is that the Vlachs were the ethnic remnants of the Roman colonists who had settled in Dacia between AD 106-271 during the Roman occupation. Gheorge Sinkai and another Rumanian scholar, Peter Maior, prepared and printed the *Supplex Libellus Valachorum* in 1791, which outlined a new history of the Vlach people.80 In this theory, the Roman population that remained after the general withdrawal in AD 271 intermarried with the original inhabitants and survived the waves of barbarian invasions by hiding in the hills of the Transylvanian Alps. They allied with each invader and maintained their local identity until they became “second class citizens” to the Magyars, who were intruders to the region in the ninth century.81 Even though history has no records of the Vlachs in this area until the thirteenth century, the *Supplex Libellus Valachorum* became a “declaration of rights” for a people now calling themselves “Romanians” or “Rumanians.” By 1895, as Rumanian nationalism began to soar, this document greatly fueled Rumania’s claim to Transylvania, now the proclaimed heartland of its culture.


81 Ibid.
The general and neutral historiographical counter against this theory is that there is no trace of any early Vlach civilization in Transylvania: no roads, remnants of cities, or any archeological evidence exist which could support this theory.\textsuperscript{82} There are further no legends, tales, ballads, or folks songs of Roman influence among the Magyars and Saxons, not even folk art to demonstrate any evidence of Roman survival among the later conquerors of the region.\textsuperscript{83} Rumanian culture is decisively Balkan in its orientation, showing Slavic, Albanian, Bulgarian and Greek influences.\textsuperscript{84} Colin McEvedy, one of the most prominent neutral historians who has dedicated his life’s work to ethno-linguistic history in his \textit{Penguin Atlases of World History} directly refutes the Rumanian theory. The McEvedy thesis is that ten centuries exist between the overthrow of the Roman province in AD 271 and the first mention of the Vlachs around 1220-30. In support of Hungarian historiography, McEvedy asserts that a more plausible idea is that the Vlachs could have descended from the Latin-speaking populations south of the Danube, as in Moesia (northern Macedonia), where Roman roots were deeper and survived much longer within the Latin cultural orbit.\textsuperscript{85}

Many Hungarian historians propose that analysis of the Rumanian language supports the thesis that the Vlachs are of Balkan rather than Dacian-Roman descent. One

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{83} Sanborn, \textit{Transylvania and the Hungarian-Rumanian Problem}, 13.


analysis proposes that the Rumanian language, although definitely a Romance language, is comprised of 45.7 percent Slavic, 31.5 percent Latin, 8.4 percent Turkish, 7 percent Greek, 6 percent Hungarian, and 0.6 percent Albanian root words, which lends support to the Magyar theory of the Vlachs’ Balkan migration. Stephen Sisa’s *Spirit of Hungary* proposes through his sources that in addition to similarities in phonology and morphology to Albanian, there are hundreds of Albanian loan-words in the Rumanian vocabulary, tracing the Vlachs to the Illyrian coast, a region within the Roman orbit for over a millennia. Had the Vlachs existed in Transylvania before the Goths or Avars, there should be some East Germanic influence in modern Rumanian. There is, however, no such influence in the Rumanian language. Although the basic grammar and syntax of the Rumanian language is of Latin origin, much of the vocabulary was enriched with Latin loan-words in the nineteenth century.

In a general survey of the Romance languages, linguist Rebecca Posner in *The Romance Languages* indicates that there remain to this day scattered Rumanian dialects in the regions of Greek Thrace and southeastern Albania, which would support the Hungarian thesis of Balkan migration. Posner further argues that in the last two

---

86 Data based by a Rumanian linguist named Cihac quoted in Sanborn, *Transylvania and the Hungarian-Rumanian Problem*, 18.


90 Rebecca Posner, *The Romance Languages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University
hundred years or so, there has been a movement among Rumanian linguists to replace the older Slavonic forms in Rumanian with new Latin and French loanwords in an effort to “Romanize” the language as much as possible.\textsuperscript{91} Indeed, Slavonic forms are abundant in the Rumanian language, and these Slavonic and other Balkan influences are what differentiate Rumanian from the other Romance languages in the West. Finally, Posner agrees that there is indeed some distant relationship between Albanian and Rumanian, a fact which is curiously absent in Rumanian linguistic analyses.\textsuperscript{92} In another scholarly treatment, linguist Graham Mallinson in \textit{The Romance Languages} also argues that Albanian and Rumanian share a distant ancestry.\textsuperscript{93} Further, Mallinson agrees that the preponderance of southern Slavic in the most basic forms of Rumanian vocabulary indicate a Balkan origin for the early Vlachs.\textsuperscript{94} Although the core of the Rumanian language is Latin based, such linguistic evidence counters a purely Dacian origin for the ancient Vlachs.

\textsuperscript{91} Ibid., 213.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., 245.
\textsuperscript{93} Martin Harris and Nigel Vincent, eds., \textit{The Romance Languages}, “Rumanian,” by Graham Mallinson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 413.
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid.
Since the historiography of the Transylvanian issue appears so often subjective in Hungarian and Rumanian historical theory and either ignored or at best misunderstood by most in the West, a brief neutral objective account of the region’s history is of paramount importance to clarify many historiographical perspectives. Such a history begins with the settlement of the region by a people known as the Daks, or Dacians, linguistically from a branch of the Indo-European family of languages called Thraco-Phrygian, a linguistic sub-group related to both ancient Greek and Hittite.95 These nomadic people merged with other migratory tribes throughout much of their early period, from about 1600 B.C. until they established a formal Dacian or Dak Kingdom around 44 B.C.

During the height of Imperial Rome, the warlike and aggressive Daks under their king Decebalus occupied a position deemed dangerous to the Roman flank north of the Danube and the Roman province of Moesia. After increased border conflicts, Rome decided to destroy the Daks outright in what became known as the Dacian Wars of AD 85-89.96 Emperor Trajan finally subjugated the Daks and formally created the Imperial Province of Dacia in AD 105.97 Hungarian historian Anne Fay Sanborn proposes as a major thesis in her Transylvania and the Hungarian-Rumanian Problem that, based on

---


97 Ibid., 99.
analysis of Roman records, Rome totally annihilated the Daks, since after the conquest there remained virtually no Dak archaeological or cultural relics.98

The Dacian conquest freed Roman legions for the ever-present wars in the east against Persia and Parthia. However, the geographical position of the colony, north of the Danube and with few natural defenses, meant that its defense was only tenable so long as no new threat emerged in the region. The Romans evacuated the colony for two reasons: increasing barbarian activity in the region and restructure of the Roman army. As the East Germanic Goths and Gepids pressed along the colony, Rome retreated to its traditional static defensive line along the Danube in AD 271.99 With the retreat in 271, Emperor Aurelian ordered a scorched-earth policy in the face of the advancing Goths: buildings, food supplies, and everything that remained of the Roman colony were destroyed as the Romans evacuated.100

In the vacuum left by the Romans, Dacia became settled by several East Germanic tribes: the Vandals, the Gepids, and the Visigoths. A new threat to all emerged, however, in the onslaught of the Huns in the fifth century: Attila, the “scourge of God,” emerged from the east in a fierce path of destruction. The Germanic tribes, now in a panic, burst into the Roman boundaries, where some had been allowed to settle in sanctuary from the Huns. The Visigoths sacked Rome in AD 410, and other Germanic

---


100 Sanborn, *Transylvania and the Hungarian-Rumanian Problem*, 23.
tribes transformed the western Roman Empire from Imperial territory to a scattering of Germanic kingdoms. Roman power declined in the west and the German chieftain Odoacer deposed Romulus Augustulus, the last Roman Emperor in the west, in 476.\footnote{Kinder, \textit{Anchor Atlas of World History}, vol.1, 103.}

Attila created a great Hun empire which began with his rule in 434 and ended with his death in 453, after which the Hun tribes scattered without central leadership. As the Huns faded into memory, the Germanic Gepids occupied the former Dacian lands until a new tribe from the east, the Avars, advanced from the steppes of Central Asia. By 561 they subdued the remnant Huns and Germans from the Volga to the Danube. The Avars settled as a loose collection of unified nomadic tribesmen in the center of the Carpathian Basin, a region from which they pressured the Byzantine Empire with forays into the Balkans, sometimes reaching close to Constantinople, as in their campaign of 626.\footnote{Colin McEvedy, \textit{The New Penguin Atlas of Medieval History} (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 31.} For two hundred years, the Avars would remain in the region that would later form the crownlands of the Hungarian kingdom. They remained a barbarian people during the time of the formation of such realms as that of the Merovingian Franks, and a constant threat to the eastern heirs of Rome in Byzantium. With the aid of the Bulgars, another Turkic people migrating from the steppes, Charlemagne destroyed the Avars in 796.\footnote{Ibid., 45.} The destruction of the Avars was the last step in the settlement of the Carpathian Basin before the arrival of the Magyars, who, during the time of Charlemagne, had
already reached the Ukraine from their ancient homeland, traced along the Urals, which Hungarian historiography claims as the Magyars’ aboriginal homeland.\footnote{András Felvidéki ed \textit{Történemelmi Világatlasz} (Budapest: Kartográfiai Vállalat, 1991), 107.}

A thousand miles from their Uralic homeland, where even today languages related to Hungarian survive, the Magyars descended on horseback in a fury upon Europe in 896 and terrorized Germany, Italy, and France for a half-century until finally defeated in battle at Lechfeld in 955. The early Magyars consisted of seven tribes led by a tribal chieftain named Árpád, a figure whose dynasty would last from 896 to 1301. With the Magyar defeat by Christian knights at Lechfeld, the Magyar forays and raids stopped and Árpád’s grandson, Géza (972-97) encouraged the pagan Magyars to settle and adopt Christianity. Géza’s son, Stephen (István in Hungarian) brought about the true birth of Hungary as a Western Christian state by officially converting the tribes to Christianity and organizing the Magyar nobility as a monarchy based on Western models. Stephen was formally crowned by Pope Sylvester II in 1001, and with his reign (997-1038), Hungary embarked on its thousand-year national history. Stephen established a Roman Catholic Archbishopric in the city of Gran and was sainted for his conversion of the pagan Magyars.\footnote{Excellent information can be found detailing the early Hungarian monarchy in Hermann Kinder, \textit{The Anchor Atlas of World History: Vol. I: From the Stone Age to the Eve of the French Revolution}. Trans. by Ernest A. Menze. (New York: Anchor Books, 1978), 169.} Hungarians take great pride in that, with its ally Poland, Hungary formed a shield for the West against eastern barbarian and nomadic incursions, allowing
the flowering of high medieval times in western Christendom.\textsuperscript{106} In any event, Transylvania remained an integral and “organic” component of the medieval Hungarian kingdom.\textsuperscript{107}

\textit{Historiographical Interpretations of the History of the Rumanians}

The first records of the Vlach people originate neither in Hungary nor Wallachia, but in a Byzantine Greek Chronicle that in 976 mentions a people called the Vlachs who lived in the vicinity of modern-day Albania,\textsuperscript{108} a region occupied and controlled by the Romans since 145 B.C.\textsuperscript{109} These Vlach shepherds were relocated apparently to a region in Moesia called Chalkidké by order of the Byzantine Emperor Alexios Komnenos in 1097, which began the Balkan migration of the Vlachs, later becoming a cornerstone in Hungarian historiography.\textsuperscript{110}

An important development prior to any evidence of any sizeable Vlach settlements in Transylvania is the establishment of the medieval “unio trium nationum,” or “Union of Three Nations,” of the twelfth or thirteenth century which politically united


\textsuperscript{110} Sanborn, \textit{Transylvania and the Hungarian-Rumanian Problem}, 26.
the Magyars, Szeklers, and the German settlers or Saxons in Transylvania for common defense under the King of Hungary. The importance of this union is the inclusion of the Saxons, who represented a small minority in Transylvania before the fifteenth century. Their inclusion demonstrates that the Hungarian monarchy sought to unite all ethnic groups of any importance within the kingdom. Although Hungarian sources from this time mention Slavic peoples at the realm’s frontiers, only in the twelfth century had the Vlachs even been mentioned in the early Hungarian chronicles, and then only as a scattering of shepherds.\footnote{Felvidéki, \textit{Történemelmi Világatlasz}, 109.} Had the Vlachs been a true population component at this time, and had their presence in Transylvania held any significance, they would have been included in the Union of Three Nations. British historian C. A. Macartney’s prolific accounts of Hungarian history argue that a Saxon presence in the Union of Three Nations shows that Magyars counted groups with smaller populations among their “nation.”

There were far fewer Germans in Hungary than Magyars and Szeklers. Count Steven Bethlen argued in \textit{The Treaty of Trianon and European Peace} that those Roman colonists who did not evacuate from the colony were exterminated first by the Huns, then by the Germans, who destroyed all traces of civilization in Dacia. Magyars as well destroyed indigenous populations they encountered in their nomadic period, and the Mongols committed the final killings.\footnote{Count Steven Bethlen, \textit{The Treaty of Trianon and European Peace} (New York: Arno Press and the New York Times, 1934), 16.} The only people that seemed to have survived the central Balkans from the time of the barbarian German invasions to the
Magyar arrival were the Bulgars and the Slovenes. The Avars, Goths, and Huns all seemed to die off. By this thesis, there were no aborigines left in Hungary after the initial Magyar conquest.

Hungarian histories claim that the first Vlach migration into Hungary and Transylvania was due to the Mongol invasion of Europe. Pope Gregory IX in 1234 is reported to have requested that King Bela IV of Hungary grant “for the sake of God [to provide] refuge [for] those poor Vlachs,” who were fleeing the Mongols, resulting in the first political document for the Vlachs in Hungary: the “Silva Vlachorum,” of the mid thirteenth century. The Mongol campaigns of 1241 devastated Hungary, exterminating much of the population they encountered. In Hungarian historiography, this led to the first stage of migrations by people such as the Vlachs and Serbs. From the eleventh to sixteenth centuries, Vatican studies during these times declared that 76 percent of the population of Transylvania was Magyar. In a royal archive of 1358, Transylvania was claimed to be “the richest part of the Hungarian kingdom” with its Magyar-German population, although there is some mention of Vlach herdsmen who lived in the mountains tending their sheep. Magyar historians even credit Hungary with creation of the first Vlach state: King Charles Robert of the Anjou line in 1314 established

113 Ibid., 9.
114 Ibid., 34.
117 Ibid., 28.
Wallachia, literally “Land of the Vlachs,” after the Mongol extermination of the Cumans in that area.\textsuperscript{118}

Whatever their origin, the Vlachs remained an impoverished nationality throughout their history.\textsuperscript{119} As late as 1910, 72 percent of the population was illiterate, and most of the Vlach people were peasants or herdsmen.\textsuperscript{120} Regardless of circumstances, the Vlachs never integrated with the Magyars. They were considered thieves and vagabonds by the Magyars, and regarded as an “alien element.”\textsuperscript{121} The Rumanians further did not seek assimilation with the Magyars, and remained the population least linked with the Hungarian monarchy. Hungarians considered the Vlachs “savages” and on the same social/racial level of the gypsies; a backward people in comparison to the other races in the kingdom.\textsuperscript{122}

A major thesis among Magyar and most neutral historians is that from the period of Austrian liberation from the Turks in 1699 to the 1918 dismemberment of the Hungarian Kingdom, the ethnic settlements of the Transylvanian countryside were constant: all cultural centers and cities were either purely Magyar, Saxon, or Szekler, while Vlachs remained simple shepherds outside the cities in the countryside and mountainous foothills. The small Rumanian villages almost always lay far outside the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[118] Ibid.
\item[119] Macartney, \textit{Hungary and her Successors}, 262.
\item[120] Ibid., 266.
\item[121] Ibid., 261.
\item[122] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
Nevertheless, the Rumanians were prolific, and the 1910 census listed 2.8 million Rumanians in Transylvania compared to 1.7 million Magyars, or 55 percent Rumanian, 35 percent Hungarian, and 9 percent German.

Aspects of Rumanian Historiography

It is rare in the history of a people that so much energy and effort has been made to back a theory of historical existence and manipulate history to fit facts as the Rumanians have treated their theory of Daco-Roman continuity. The primary aim of virtually all Rumanian historiography concerned with Rumanian origins is to establish the legitimacy of their theoretical Roman origins. A scholarly and well-documented account that nonetheless fails to successfully defend the Roman prehistory of the early Vlachs is Nicolae Stoicescu’s *Continuity of the Romanian People*, published in Bucharest in 1983. From the outset, the author declares that his purpose is to absolutely maintain the legitimacy of the Daco-Rumanian theory. The author’s main thesis is that the Romanization of Dacia did not stop with the withdrawal of the Roman legions. Stoicescu suggests that only the “officialdom” of Roman influence was removed from the

124 Czege, *Documented Facts and Figures on Transylvania*, 43.
127 Ibid., 124.
colony, while the bulk of the population—bankers, landowners, tradesmen, etc., remained. How this civilization survived waves of invading Goths, Avars, and others, remains unclear in this account. The author is unable to successfully account for the lack of archaeological evidence of a remnant Dacian civilization, and weakly argues that archaeology alone cannot discount the Vlach presence of the region during the late ancient and early medieval period. To explain how such a theoretically noble and civilized people degenerated into a population of simple herdsmen, Stoicescu proposes that it was exactly because of the invasions of nomadic and other migratory peoples throughout the centuries of early medieval times that the Vlachs abandoned their settlements and farms and turned to the mountains and their sheep. To explain the lack of a Vlach presence in the early Transylvanian chronicles Stoicescu claims the chroniclers only dealt with migratory and nomadic populations and ignored the Vlachs and their settlements.

Seton-Watson’s 1934 History of the Roumanians is an interesting account in that it was the first by a British author to accord a national history of the Rumanian people and nation, although one highly sympathetic to Bucharest with a continuous anti-German and anti-Hungarian tone. From the outset, the author supported Daco-Roman continuity, claiming the “well-marked social and economic structure,” that was Dak society blended

\[\text{\[128\]}\text{Ibid., 149.}\]
\[\text{\[129\]}\text{Ibid., 201.}\]
\[\text{\[130\]}\text{Ibid., 259.}\]
\[\text{\[131\]}\text{Ibid., 228.}\]
with the Romans and thereby formed modern Rumanian society.\textsuperscript{132} The author firmly attested to the survival of that culture in the face of the waves of invaders, however he simultaneously admitted that “it is not until the beginning of the thirteenth century that history breaks its long silence and reveals the existence of a ‘Vlach’ or Roumanian nation.”\textsuperscript{133} The author further could not successfully explain the “mysterious silence” of the Rumanian people for that thousand years, although he proposed as a possible theory that the Mongol incursion of 1241 may have destroyed any previous records of the Vlachs.\textsuperscript{134} Seton-Watson’s summary of the problem between Hungarian and Rumanian historiography was accurate, however, in that Bucharest’s ultimate goal was to link its past with Rome while Budapest sought to deny that union.

Ioan Aurel Pop’s \textit{Romanians and Romania} is a brief yet interesting account for the average reader of the Rumanian view of its history. At the outset Pop declares that the popular belief of every schoolchild in Bucharest that they are descended from the Romans is not far from the truth.\textsuperscript{135} Although he does not account for the thousand year silence between the third and thirteenth centuries, Pop argues that the Roman administration of the Dacian colony, as well as justice, education, and economic models

\begin{flushleft}

\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., 9.

\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., 11.

\textsuperscript{135} Ioan Aurel Pop, \textit{Romanians and Romania: A Brief History} (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1999), 5.
\end{flushleft}

112
survived in Dacia after the Romans withdrew.\(^{136}\) An interesting exception to Pop’s account, so often missing in Rumanian historiography, is an attempt to explain the absence of the Vlachs in the Union of Three Nations and the Vlach settlements along the mountainous fringes of Transylvania far from the Urban centers. Pop claims that the early Vlachs went to the hills, deep forests, and mountains to flee from extermination by the Huns, Avars, and early Magyars.\(^{137}\) Indeed, he calls upon an old Rumanian proverb to this end: “the forest and the Romanian are brothers.”\(^{138}\) Pop’s testimony is a fascinating exploration of the Rumanian point of view, but as so many other texts, it blurs the medieval period and archaeological issues that must be addressed in objective historical analysis.

Stefan Pascu’s *A History of Transylvania* was published in 1944 in Rumanian as the first complete history of Transylvania. In an excellent forward, Paul E. Michleson from Huntington College, contends that the “national historiography of each people . . . reflects its national experience.”\(^{139}\) Hence, the Rumanian interpretation of the Transylvanian problem is so concerned to enforce the perspective of a Rumanian-Latin-Dacian origin in its national historiography. The author contends that “it is on the historical front that the most ammunition is expended” in such national historiography and that “the Romanians, a synthesis of the Dacian and Roman peoples, have always

\(^{136}\) Ibid., 24.

\(^{137}\) Ibid, 30.

\(^{138}\) Ibid.

\(^{139}\) Stephen Pascu, *A History of Transylvania*, trans. D. Robert Ladd (Detroit:
constituted an absolute majority of the Transylvanian population,”¹⁴⁰ a statement which is in violation of established and solid historical tenets regarding population patterns in medieval and ancient Transylvania.

Pascu insists that “Romanization” of the Dacian region affected the autochthonous Dak population, resulting in the birth of the Rumanian people and that during the brief reign of the Romans in Dacia, the population was transformed in the manner typical of the Roman citizens in the rest of the empire.¹⁴¹ As the Roman troops withdrew, the Romanized Daks did not abandon their homes and maintained a national and cultural identity in the face of the centuries of marauding invaders.¹⁴² The author declares that linguistic unity with very little dialectical variation demonstrates a continuity in the Rumanian people,¹⁴³ however he does not account for the presence of Albanian in the language if the population was exclusively indigenous to Dacia-Transylvania.

Rumanian author Dumitru Berciu proposes to shed light on the Rumanian problem by focusing strictly on the Rumanian theory of origins in his 1978 book Daco-Romania. The author’s purpose is to demonstrate through cultural, archaeological, and historical analysis to “prove” the theory that the Rumanians are the autochthonous

Wayne State University Press, 1982), x.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., xx.
¹⁴¹ Ibid., 20.
¹⁴² Ibid., 28.
¹⁴³ Ibid., 182.
population of Transylvania and directly linked to Rome. The author suggests as historical fact that the “Romanians are the people of the Carpathians and the lower Danube, never leaving this homeland during the period of the great migrations.”\textsuperscript{144} Berciu proposes to demonstrate by archaeological finds that the Dacian inhabitants survived the Roman withdrawal, but virtually all his examples are before the third century with a few that date from around the ninth century, of which most are primitive motifs, some of which are strongly German in design or likewise are dubiously authentic.\textsuperscript{145} Hungarian and much neutral historiography contend that the Romans vacated the colony in a scorched-earth operation. Berciu’s evidence suggests that there may have been some remnants of the “Romanized Daks” after the withdrawal, but few if any of his archaeological finds date beyond the period of the Avars who migrated from Asia in the sixth century and whose khanate remained in power until destroyed by Charlemagne in 796. Ultimately, Berciu’s argument is the standard Bucharest interpretation, that “within the framework of Daco-Romania the Romanian people came into being on the same territory which they occupy today; and from time immemorial this region, protected and consolidated by the spinal column of the Carpathians, has developed with unbroken continuity and in perfect unity.”\textsuperscript{146}


\textsuperscript{145} See Berciu p.43 for some designs that seem of German origin. The Gepids, Visigoths, and Vandals all had presence in Transylvania between the fourth and sixth centuries.

\textsuperscript{146} Ibid., 170.
A massive three volume *History of Transylvania* was written by a board of Hungarian scholars in the late 1980s and translated into English in 2001. Political constraints at the time of its writing prevented much historical analysis beyond 1919, but the set serves as an important facet of Hungarian historiography regarding Transylvania. Despite the time of its publication in its original 1987 Hungarian language version, the book is not a Marxist history, and treatments of the topical material are clear and biased only in the scope that the work is clearly from a Hungarian perspective. Rumanian arguments such as Daco-Roman continuity are presented and only refuted when they directly contrast with Hungarian historiography.

Author Endre Tóth in this history predictably resists any lasting Romanization of Dacia after the Roman withdrawal based on the archaeological perspective and the conclusion that during the turbulent years following the Roman withdrawal of AD 271, “Dacia would remain excluded from the Romanized world.” The authors maintain that the early Rumanians in the medieval period confined themselves to the southern mountainous regions of southern Transylvania in the thirteenth century, and that they only began to “proliferate” in that region in the fourteenth century, always in the hills and mountains unoccupied by the prior populations of Transylvania.

---


148 Ibid., vol. 1, “From the Mongol Invasion to the Battle of Mohács,” by László Makkai, 487.
A chapter in this volume by one Péter Katalin discusses the Rumanian way of life in the early modern period. Even by the end of the sixteenth century, most Rumanians still had not achieved a truly settled way of life in Transylvania and remained an ignorant and superstitious people. Indeed, in the early nineteenth century, the authors contend with supportive evidence from editors of Rumanian newspapers and publications in that period, that of the 3 million Rumanians in Transylvania, only 10,000 of them were literate. The Daco-Roman theories of the 1791 *Supplex Libellus Valachorum* fed the growing Rumanian intelligentsia of the nineteenth century, whose patriotic nationalism from Wallachia and Moldavia spread across the Hungarian border. The military authorities in Austria and Hungary looked with disdain on any reference to the Daco-Roman theory as a destabilizing element in Transylvania, and indeed by 1848 the Rumanians in Transylvania began to become vocal in their desire to be led by Wallachia and Moldavia instead of the Hungarians. University students and intelligentsia in Bucharest, many of whom had been educated in France, began the rampant spread of the mythical noble Roman origins of the Rumanian people.

If there is any general theme of the “Rumanian question” or ‘Rumanian problem” in this massive three-volume history, it is that the Rumanians truly had so little historical influence or impact upon the history, culture, and politics of ancient, medieval, and

---


modern Europe, yet had achieved such great political victories in the early twentieth century. It is rather by omission of any true Rumanian influence in the history of Transylvania that this book makes it greatest statements against the Rumanian people. Since the ninth century, Transylvania had remained a Hungarian, and to a lesser extent, a German issue in the politics of Europe. The Rumanians achieved the great victories of their state by deception and subterfuge in the twentieth century, especially at the Paris Peace Conference under their expert propagandistic speaker Ion Bratianu, whose claims fed into the ignorance of the international delegation at Paris concerning issues of East Central Europe. Rarely has a people who have contributed so little to European cultural, political, or social development attained such great achievements in their foreign and domestic policies as the Rumanians at Trianon in 1920.

The theory of any autochthonous remnants of the old Roman Dacian colony has been disregarded by most historians based on the thousand-year series of invasions in the region after the Roman withdrawal in 271 by Germans, Avars, Huns, Magyars, and Mongols. Lack of any archeological evidence further supports this theory. All urban centers, even in medieval Hungarian Transylvania, have been composed of Magyars, Szeklers, and Saxons. This has been abetted by the lack of any Rumanian influence on the Hungarian language, the absence of Rumanian place-names in Transylvania, and the lack of a Vlach presence in the thirteenth century “Union of Three Nations,” which included the small settlements of German Saxons with the Magyar and Szekler majority in Transylvania.
Hungarian and pro-Hungarian historiography point out several suppositions that have generally become more accepted among the historical community than the arguments made by the Successor States. The Carpathian Basin served not only as a political boundary, but as a cultural, religious, and economic system for a millennium that united Slovaks and Ruthenes successfully within the Hungarian Monarchy. The Czecho-Slovak union had no true historical precedents. Regarding the case of Yugoslavia, Croats and Slovenes definitely were culturally a more Western folk than the Orthodox Serbs. Rumanian historiography seems to hold acceptance only among the political community.

With the end of World War II and throughout much of the Cold War, Hungary attained an unflattering position for being on the wrong side in both World Wars. Upon closer examination, however, those arguments so often considered “revisionist” in the West by Hungary’s diplomats, scholars, and historians have been found to be quite possibly closer to the truth than the propositions of the “Allied” Successor States, especially in the history of national minorities. Ultimately, the current map of Europe demonstrates that the settlements of the Paris Peace Conference has failed to stand the test of time.
CHAPTER FOUR:
THE COST OF REVISION: GERMAN-HUNGARIAN RELATIONS, 1938-1944

Resistance to the Trianon Diktat and the common view of the Magyars regarding the authenticity of their ethnic and other claims against the Successor States led the way to the achievement of the revisionist movement that began in the late 1930s. Virtually all Hungarians believed that their cause against the Successor States had been validated by the Magyar interpretation of the history of East Central Europe and its ethnic problems, which Magyar historians claimed to be a far more honest assessment of Hungarian regional history than the arguments presented by the Successor States at Paris in 1919 and throughout the interwar period. The historiographical summations of Hungarian historians seemed to prove, at least in Magyar historiography, that the crucial ancient, medieval, and early modern historical analyses backed Hungarian claims to the ethnic population and the borders of the Kingdom of St. Stephen, so horribly mutilated at Trianon. From 1938 to 1941, Hungary began to achieve revisionist victories that fulfilled at least the ethnic demands of the Hungarian government, but such victories irrevocably tied Hungary to the policies of Nazi Germany.

The Problem of Hungary’s Affiliation with the Axis

Approaching the topic of Hungary’s relations with Adolf Hitler’s Third Reich is rather problematic in concluding the story of Hungary’s revisionist movement. The era
of the late interwar and wartime period is certainly the most controversial period in Hungarian history. The legacy of the Trianon Treaty dominated Hungary’s domestic and foreign policy, and all aspects of interwar and even wartime Hungarian diplomacy singularly focused on revising the borders imposed by Trianon. For almost two decades, Hungary sought a way to regain the Trianon losses, and the nation achieved common cause with the powers opposed to the Europe of Versailles. Alliance with Italy and Nazi Germany helped Hungary attain many of its irredentist demands on its neighbors, but such victories carried a price. Based on its geopolitical position within Germany’s Balkan network of supplies, Hungary became the unhappy rail-center for the economic livelihood of the Third Reich. Hitler further brilliantly established a competitive balance of power between Hungary and its Rumanian enemy, forcing Budapest to ever-increasingly align its domestic and foreign policies to German demands lest Rumania gain Hitler’s favor. The “national malady” that was the “Trianon syndrome” among interwar and wartime Hungarians began to spiral out of control as Hungary attained its border revisions from 1938 to 1941. All too soon, it became clear that these victories could only be maintained by allegiance to the Axis cause, and as World War II progressed, Hungary found itself once again on the losing side in a World War.

Several questions emerge, however, in a historiographical analysis of the literature concerning Hungary’s alliance with the Third Reich. Hungary’s lot surely became tainted in early analysis after World War II. After all, the nation was “Hitler’s last ally” and the source of one-third of the Third Reich’s oil supply after the defection of Rumania. Whether Hungary had a choice in this distinction will be assessed. From this
follows the thesis and counter-thesis of the “willing” or “unwilling” status of Hungary as a satellite to Nazi Germany. While one historical school insists that Hungary was sympathetic not only to Germany, but to National Socialism, another counters that Hungary used its position alongside the Third Reich only to achieve the territorial revision of the Trianon *Diktat*. The latter school proposes that Hungarians opposed the excesses of National Socialism and suggests as evidence Hungary’s lenient anti-Jewish policies while Hungary remained a truly independent nation, that is, before the unofficial German occupation of March 1944.

By examining and contrasting the varying historiography of the subject, a new interpretation may become evident: that the injustices of Trianon, Hungary’s geopolitical position in the heart of Europe, and the nation’s unfortunate orientation between the policies of Nazi Germany and Soviet Bolshevism predestined the nation to its fate in World War II. There was no other choice for Hungarian policy in World War II.

Hungary’s Regent, Admiral Nicholas Horthy, comments in his memoirs that Hungary followed a policy alongside Nazi Germany to “gain time” and hopefully somehow maintain Hungarian independence in the face of the collapsing world order that was Axis Europe toward the end of the war. In the end, Hungary badly managed its way out of the war, unlike Finland and Rumania, countries that shared the luxury of the Red Army approaching their borders. In contrast, Hungary became occupied by Germany six months before the Russian Front even approached its borders. The German Wehrmacht defended every inch of Hungarian territory until the very end. Indeed, the last German offensive of the war, the so-called Battle of Lake Balaton or *Operation*
Frühlings erwachen from March 6 to March 16, 1945 was fought on Hungarian territory. Although some historians may blame the Regent and the Hungarian government for Hungary’s fate alongside Nazi Germany, this examination will testify that there was little variation between what could have happened and what truly became the fate of Hungary in the Second World War. In any event, the history of Hungary’s alignment with the Third Reich by which it attained its revisionist victories concludes the story of the Hungarian revisionist movement.

The Failure of the Paris Peace Treaties and the Fall of the Europe of Versailles

It has already been argued that Paris Peace Conference failed to establish a lasting general European peace. Although the Paris Peace Treaties favored the “victorious” Successor States of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Rumania, and Poland in a plan for French security against Germany and maintenance of the cordon sanitaire against Bolshevik Russia, one by one these dissolved or turned to new masters. Germany disbanded Czechoslovakia without a shot fired; Poland fell to the Wehrmacht; Rumania became a German lackey; Yugoslavia nervously sought a precarious neutrality until it too fell before the German war machine.

Although the military solution sought by Nazi Germany upon its neighbors cannot ever be excused, many historians have argued that had a balanced solution been imposed upon the ethnic and other problems of East Central Europe, perhaps World War II could have been avoided. American author John Flournoy Montgomery in his book Hungary: the Unwilling Satellite, published in 1947, blames the problems of late interwar Europe
on the Versailles “blunder” which created a multitude of nation-states instead of a “Danubian Federation” along the lines of Switzerland, an idea at one time supported even by American President Woodrow Wilson.\footnote{John Flournoy Montgomery, \textit{Hungary: the Unwilling Satellite} (New York: the Devin-Adair Company, 1947), 215.} The so-called “Switzerland-solution” is indeed supported in much pro-Hungarian historiography for the Transylvanian problem. Bernard Newman’s book \textit{The New Europe}, written during the height of the war in 1943 supports the theory that the status quo of the Paris Peace Treaties and French support for its adherents aggravated the tensions of Europe and were to blame for the calamity that began for Europe in 1938.\footnote{Bernard Newman, \textit{The New Europe} (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1943), 239.}

For Hungary, however, the dissolution of the Little Entente of Czechoslovakia, Rumania, and Yugoslavia brought the first breathing space for the nation. Hungary had perceived a constant threat from the Little Entente and despised the French support of Budapest’s enemies. The Little Entente began to dissolve as a power bloc in the face of the Sudeten and Vienna agreements of 1938 against Czechoslovakia. Despite French and British political guarantees to Rumania, Bucharest, fearful of Germany’s rising strength, soon sought closer relations with Berlin instead of Paris.\footnote{Ibid., 240.} With the final dissolution of the Czechoslovak state in 1939, Little Entente unity disintegrated and France’s solution for a permanent European peace was destroyed.
Nicholas Kállay was Prime Minister of Hungary from 1942 to 1944, and his memoirs *Hungarian Premier* are a powerful representation of much interwar and wartime sentiment among the Magyars. Kállay admits that since 1920, revisionism had been the singular goal of the Hungarian nation. This differed slightly between the generations, for only the older veterans and contemporaries of the Great War desired restitution of the entire 1914 frontier, but even the younger students and intelligentsia demanded that at least the Magyar-inhabited lands should be reunited with the kingdom.4

With the assistance of Germany in the 1938-1941 period, Hungary recovered most of the lands inhabited by Magyar minorities, but at a price. Since Germany was the primary architect of these territorial awards, Kállay asserts that the territorial victories cost Hungary its political freedom of action and irrevocably aligned Hungary with the Axis powers.5 After the Vienna Award of 1938 which returned southern Slovakia to Hungary, Hungary felt obliged to sign the Anti-Comintern Pact on 24 February 1939. With the Second Vienna Award of 1940 and the return of the northern two-fifths of Transylvania to Hungary, Budapest signed the Tripartite Pact on 20 November 1940.6 Hungary’s revisionist victories drastically increased the nation’s dependence on Germany.

---


5 Ibid., 61.

6 Ibid.
Hungary’s Revisionist Dilemma

Historian Thomas Sakmyster has written several important histories of the Hungarian revisionist period from a neutral perspective. Sakmyster argues in his book *Hungary, the Great Powers, and the Danubian Crisis*, published in 1980, that the date of the First Vienna Award of 2 November 1938 is a clear dividing line in the history of the Hungarian revisionist movement. Hungary received in that award 4,900 square miles of Slovak territory with a population of 1,030,000 consisting of 830,000 Magyars, 140,000 Slovaks, 20,000 Germans, and 40,000 Ruthenes. With the Vienna Award Hungary attained its first revisionist victory. This date also serves as Hungary’s first formal step to the Axis cause. Although Sakmyster criticizes that Hungary had chosen a course of diplomatic action that would one day be regarded as “unflattering” for Budapest, Sakmyster admits that Hungary could hardly have won its case with the Western powers, and even less with the League of Nations, all which seemed to support the status quo of Versailles and the political bloc of the Little Entente. Sakmyster reminds the reader that Hungary’s geopolitical position in the heart of Europe compromised the nation’s options, for Hungary’s only friendly border in 1938 was with the Third Reich after Germany’s annexation of Austria. Sakmyster opposes the hypothesis of Hungarian neutrality in the

---


manner of Switzerland based on this proposition, and reminds the reader that willing or not, Hungary was the center of the Third Reich’s rail system to its region of supplies.9

Sakmyster is the first historian to propose the thesis of Hungary’s “revisionist dilemma” that stemmed from Trianon and prevented the nation from acting sensibly in the late interwar period.10 Sakmyster asserts that Hungarians felt that without the “natural” Carpathian boundaries of the Hungarian Kingdom, the nation could not fulfill its “cultural mission” as the “defender of the West” and maintain the “benevolent” nationalization of “backwards” minorities such as the Rumanians, Slovaks, and South Slavs from “semi-oriental” conditions.11 Sakmyster argues that this arrogant national philosophy transcended class boundaries and united the nation in almost unanimous solidarity.12

Charles Wojatsek’s *From Trianon to the First Vienna Arbitral Award*, published in 1980, continues the argument of how geopolitics affected Hungary’s revisionist scenario. The Wojatsek thesis is that Hungary’s very internal and foreign policies were dictated by the nation’s geopolitical position in Europe. Hungary felt very isolated by the Little Entente, with its 540,000 soldiers compared to the Hungarian army of only 35,000. France directly supported the policies of the Little Entente, and Hungary felt that France

---

9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid., 230.
12 Ibid., 11.
was the conscience of the West, the very architect of Versailles and the status quo that Hungary so dearly hated.

Wojatsek attempts in this book to illustrate the benevolence of Hungarian foreign policy in contrast to the militaristic expansionist nature of Hitler’s Third Reich. Hitler had hoped to implement “Operation Green” against Czechoslovakia sometime in 1938, in which a Hungarian invasion of Slovakia would draw away Czech reserves as the German Wehrmacht shattered the Czech defenses in the West and completed the military conquest of the Czech state. Wojatsek urges that historians must realize Hungary’s “benevolence” in refusing this militaristic option, even when Hitler offered Hungary all of Slovakia. The author argues that the solution of the First Vienna Award and the Hungarian reclamation of only the Magyar districts of Slovakia proved Hungary’s commitment to peaceful negotiation instead of warlike aggression.\(^\text{13}\) The author does hint, however, that Hungary may have feared a Yugoslav-Rumanian strike in southern Hungary if Budapest moved against one member of the Little Entente.\(^\text{14}\)

Edward Chászar’s *Decision in Vienna* is a good supplement to Wojatsek’s treatment of the Hungarian-Czechoslovak problem. The author’s thesis is that the Europe of Versailles was a “period of false stability” in Europe, in which the League of Nations and its Western supporters sought to enforce a permanent peace upon Europe.\(^\text{15}\)

\(^{13}\) Wojatsek, *From Trianon to the First Vienna Arbitral Award*, 114.

\(^{14}\) Ibid.

He proposes that France was the leader of that peace, which supported the Little Entente not only to curtail Germany but also to stifle Hungarian irredentism, since the nations of the Little Entente had been formed with huge portions of territory historically part of the Hungarian Kingdom. 16 Chászar supports the thesis that the First Vienna Award is a good dividing point in Hungarian historiography, for with the resolution of the Czechoslovak crisis of 1938, Germany began to eclipse France as the dominant power of the continent.17

It is interesting to note that both Hungary and Czechoslovakia asked Germany and Italy to arbitrate their dispute and not the Western powers. This remains an area of interest not really addressed in the historiography of the region. Chászar proposes that Germany and Italy were only too happy to negotiate the award, which would show the world that Franco-British leadership in the affairs of Central Europe had dissolved.18 Chászar explains that unlike Trianon, the First Vienna Award was based on ethnicity, whereas Trianon’s economic and strategic considerations often worked against Hungary, as in the case of the cession of Ruthenia to the Czechs to facilitate a railway between Czechoslovakia and Rumania.19 With the victory of the First Vienna Award of 1938, Hungarians felt that the era of Trianon had ended and a new order for Europe was about to begin. It was, in fact, the beginning of the end for the Hungarian Kingdom.

16 Ibid., 8.
17 Ibid., 9.
18 Ibid., 53.
19 Ibid., 64.
Assessment of the Horthy Regime

Interpretations of the regime of Regent Admiral Nicholas Horthy are central to any analysis of the Hungarian revisionist movement, for his regime had become the very symbol of revisionist Hungary for many Hungarians, especially those with patriotic (and generally somewhat right-wing) tendencies. The Horthy era in Hungary is often synonymously associated with the Nazi era in Germany, but such a consideration is a gross exaggeration of the realities of late interwar and wartime Hungary. Horthy’s regime was characterized by a general patriotic reaction by many Hungarians, especially as the lost territories began to be reclaimed, but his regime lacked the malevolence associated with German National Socialism.

Author Miklós Molnár in *A Concise History of Hungary*, published in 1996, links the revisionist victories that patriotic Hungarians invoked in Horthy’s name to the actual fall of Hungary in World War II. Molnár groups interwar Hungary into three periods: one of national consolidation after the Trianon calamity under Prime Minister István Bethlen (1921-1931), the gradual slide to alliance with Germany in the later 1930s, and the “fatal spiral” after 1938, in which revisionist policy tied Hungary irrevocably to the Third Reich. Molnár assesses Horthy’s regime as controversial, and directly blames the Regent for Hungary’s fall in World War II: “[Horthy] carries the responsibility for what can only be described as a massive failure.”

---


21 Ibid., 292.
Stephen Sisa’s rather patriotic *Spirit of Hungary* represents the sympathetic assessment of the Horthy regime. Sisa portrays the Regency as a “semi-feudal autocracy,” and in no way “fascist,” “semi-fascist,” or an “anti-Semitic dictatorship.” Sisa explains that the philosophical basis for Horthy’s rule was based upon the right-wing dogma of “Hungarism,” which itself was based upon an early counter-revolutionary movement called the “Szeged Idea” (*a szegedi gondolat*) which favored Magyar domination of Danubian and Carpathian Europe. Although a movement of the political right, it differed from National Socialism in that it had no pathological anti-Semitism in its dogma, even in its more extreme form in Ferenc Szálasi’s Arrow Cross party. In Sisa’s interpretation, Horthy was no hero, but neither was he a villain. He quotes American Ambassador Nicholas Roosevelt: “[men] might question his judgement, but none questioned his integrity and uprightness.”

Historian John Montgomery occupies the position in Hungarian historiography of the “interested and somewhat sympathetic neutral” in *Hungary: The Unwilling Satellite*, published in 1947. United States Minister to Hungary from 1933 to 1941, Montgomery witnessed first-hand the problematic years of late interwar Hungary. Montgomery declares that the main purpose of his book is to explain to the West what had been in his day considered the “Nazification” of Hungary that began in the late interwar period, a process that he urges was not understood by his contemporaries. Montgomery seeks to

---


23 Ibid.

24 John Flournoy Montgomery, *Hungary: the Unwilling Satellite* (New York: the
clear the Regency of wartime guilt and to defend the position that Hungary was not responsible for the calamity that descended upon the nation with allegiance to Nazi Germany and belligerence in World War II. The Montgomery thesis is that in no way was the Regency a “fascist” power during the war. Montgomery proposes that Regent Horthy was a man of good integrity whose “rash decisions” resulted from the national obsession to reclaim the lost territories.\textsuperscript{25} To support this argument, Montgomery reports that in 1938 Ferenc Szálasi and his ultra-right Arrow Cross Party formally protested and led demonstrations against Horthy’s lack of support for the extreme Hungarian right wing.\textsuperscript{26}

The 1954 memoirs of Nicholas Kállay in \textit{Hungarian Premier} continues the positive assessment of the Horthy regime. Kállay maintains the integrity of the Regency: “Horthy was no dictator, only a restorer of order and authority. It was he who gave liberty back to our people after the Communist terror of 1918 and the ensuing Rumanian occupation.”\textsuperscript{27} Further, Kállay adds “there has hardly been a period in the thousand years of our history in which our country developed so vigorously, and labored and created with such rich results, as in the course of the twenty-five years under Horthy . . . it was under his rule that the nation found the means, the possibilities, the tranquility, and the

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 77.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 8.

\textsuperscript{27} Kállay, \textit{Hungarian Premier}, 466.
faith necessary for such a regeneration.”\textsuperscript{28} He concludes that “during the war, Hungary was an island of individual liberty and humanity in the Nazi sea.”\textsuperscript{29}

Perhaps that most valuable and objective summation of the Horthy regime in recent years is Thomas Sakmyster’s extensive \textit{Hungary’s Admiral on Horseback}, published in 1994. Sakmyster has a rather mixed appraisal of Horthy. Sakmyster concurs with nationalist Hungarians that the Regency was one of honor and loyalty, even if with the wrong powers. As the Russians advanced deep into Hungary in 1944, Horthy refused to declare war on Germany, even when it served Hungary’s interest, based on the Regent’s principals that Hungary had never attacked an ally in its history.\textsuperscript{30} Sakmyster asserts that Horthy badly managed Hungary’s attempt to get out of the war, however. He blames Horthy’s personal ineptitude in diplomacy for Hungary’s predicament, unlike Rumania, which managed to change sides, and Finland, which managed to escape occupation by the Red Army.\textsuperscript{31}

Sakmyster’s assesses the Regent as naive and gullible, and poses the question in his interpretation “how could such a person achieve lasting political success?”\textsuperscript{32}

Sakmyster claims that many paradoxes characterized Horthy’s reign. Horthy had no belief in democracy, and scorned such nations as Greece where “the votes of two idiots

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 467.

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 503.


\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 384.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 387.
count for more than one wise man.”33 Horthy’s rule offered certain assurances, however, for many Hungarians. Patriots flocked to him and he seemed to be the person who could restore the nation's honor and frontiers.34 Despite his flaws, Sakmyster claims that there was a certain benevolence in Horthy’s rule of Hungary, and his Hungary was an island “where a semblance of the rule of law and a pluralistic society had been preserved in a sea of barbarism.”35 Though he did not share their views, the adherents of democracy, liberalism, and parliamentary government and social reform could live and exist in his Hungary, or at least maintain a precarious foothold there.36 Ultimately, as Sakmyster points out, only a man of extraordinary ability could have saved Hungary in World War II, and such a man was not Horthy.

General editor of the 1998 essay compilation *Hungary in the Age of Total War*, historian Nándor Dreisziger, offers some interesting perspectives on the Regent in Hungary’s role in World War II in an essay entitled “Miklós Horthy and the Second World War.” The author concurs that Horthy was “one of the most controversial statesmen in modern Hungarian history.”37 Dreisziger’s major criticism is that he personally blames Horthy and the Regency for Hungary’s role and fate in World War II.

33 Ibid., 266.
34 Ibid., 389.
35 Ibid., 400.
36 Ibid.
This counters the Montgomery thesis in *Hungary the Unwilling Satellite*, which sympathizes with Horthy and blames Hungary’s predicament on the Paris Peace Treaties. Dreisziger does support, however, that even though Horthy possessed substantial power as head of the Hungarian state, he never used it to “enhance his personal influence.” Dreisziger cites historian István Deák that “[Horthy] was no democrat but never tried to be a dictator.” Further, it is to the Regent’s credit that he did not participate in the invasion of Czechoslovakia, despite the opportunity to win Slovakia in its entirety. Dreisziger urges that Horthy further opposed any kind of radicalism, although he hated and feared Communism above all else.

A more recent and important interpretation of the Horthy regime is István Deák’s article “Admiral and Regent Miklós Horthy: Some Thoughts on a Controversial Statesman.” The author’s purpose is to clarify the interpretation of the Regency without sentiment. Although Deák does not condemn Horthy, neither does he sympathize with the Regent. Deák stresses that Horthy sought above all else to emulate the regime of his beloved Emperor Franz Joseph in a “noble, chivalrous, and humane” manner. Deák

38 Ibid., 240.
39 Ibid., 241.
41 Dreisziger, “Miklós Horthy and the Second World War,” 244.
42 Ibid., 241.
claims that in the Horthy regime, terror sometimes prevailed and more than half of Hungary’s Jews were deported to Auschwitz.\textsuperscript{43} After the fall of Béla Kun’s Soviet regime in 1919, Deák claims that Horthy’s officers brought a murderous reign of “White Terror” against Jews and anybody that opposed the counterrevolution, circumstances denied in Horthy’s memoirs.\textsuperscript{44}

With the end of the Regency, Hungary was destroyed. Deák proposes that Horthy’s personal responsibility for this fiasco is still in debate. The Regent was well-liked in Hungary, with resistance only from the extreme political left and right.\textsuperscript{45} As a ruler, Deák portrays Horthy as more extreme than the standard Western constitutional monarch, but still less the dictator that enemies of his reign portray.\textsuperscript{46} The press was relatively free in his reign, and the courts were independent, at least until German interference with Hungarian politics became more direct.\textsuperscript{47}

Regarding the personal relationship between Horthy and Hitler, Deák claims that Horthy greatly admired the capabilities of the Wehrmacht, but had a cautious relationship with Hitler, mostly due to the Regent’s distaste for the “fascist mob” that was the right-wing Arrow Cross Party in Hungary.\textsuperscript{48} Deák proposes that Horthy’s strong objection to


\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 81.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 79.

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 81.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 83.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 85.
Bolshevik Communism favored a swift German conquest of the Soviet Union in 1941. With Slovakian, Rumanian, and Croatian participation on the Eastern Front, however, Deák argues that it would have been difficult for Hungary to maintain any true neutrality in the war with Russia. In the end, it is generally agreed by most historians that Horthy badly managed Hungary’s attempt to leave the war. Deák offers a new proposition to Hungarian historiography regarding that scenario: unlike Rumania, whose officer corps was loyal to the King, Deák claims that the Hungarian officer corps was strongly pro-German to the point of disloyalty to the Regent. Horthy could not effectively negotiate a surrender when his army refused to comply.

Deák’s final analysis summarizes the principal aspects of Horthy’s Regency. Deák claims that in retrospect, Horthy’s regime basically “failed” on all levels in World War II. It did not preserve the regained territories, the country was destroyed, political continuity was lost to the Russians, and half a million of its Jews were exterminated (some of which were the nation’s most productive workers). Still, Deák proposes that no other regime or government could probably have achieved different results. The fate of the smaller nations of Europe in World War II “depended on luck, geography, and great power politics.” Horthy seems to be a rather bland, middle of the road politician in any

49 Ibid.
50 Ibid., 88.
51 Ibid., 89
52 Ibid.
53 Ibid.
retrospect: “He was neither a fascist nor a liberal; he was not a monster, but he was not a humanitarian either. He was no democrat but never tried to be a dictator. . . Miklós Horthy deserved both to be rewarded and to be punished severely after the war. He might even merit a little sympathy, but he does not deserve admiration.”54

The Path to the Axis: Interpretations of Hungary’s Alliance with Germany

The roots and evolution of Hungary’s relationship with Nazi Germany have generated a considerable debate in the historiography of the Hungarian revisionist movement. Since Hungary recovered most of the major Magyar-inhabited territories of the Successor States with the aid of Germany and, to a lesser extent, Italy, the development of that relationship has generated considerable contrasting arguments among historians of wartime Hungary. A good introduction to the more patriotic Hungarian perspective is Stephen Sisa’s analysis of the German-Hungarian relationship in *The Spirit of Hungary*. Although Sisa’s presentation is not exactly propagandistic, he does approach the topic rather apologetically. The Sisa thesis is that fear of Bolshevik Russia was the major catalyst in Hungarian foreign policy by which Hungary found common cause with Germany and Italy. Hungarians were terrified of Soviet Communism and were eager to join a political cause dedicated to its containment. Sisa argues that the turning point in Hungarian policy, however, occurred with the fall of the Western Allies in 1940. The weakness of the West and the strength of the German war machine greatly influenced the Hungarian government to adopt a pro-German policy. It

54 Ibid.
seemed that Germany had indeed won the war, and most Hungarians were only too eager to attach themselves to the victorious cause of their ally from the Great War.\(^{55}\)

The issue of Hungarian “honor” is invoked by many Hungarian historians, and many neutral historians such as C. A. Macartney, John Flourney Montgomery, and Thomas Sakmyster have tended to support many aspects of Hungarian policy. Sisa’s main argument to this point concerns Hungary’s decisions during the 1938 Czechoslovak crisis. Sisa contends that Hungary’s refusal to participate in a military solution to the Czech state demonstrated Hungary’s commitment to peace. Even when all of Slovakia, which had historically been part of the Kingdom of St. Stephen, had been offered the Hungarians, Budapest opted for the much less radical Vienna Award of 1938 and claimed only the Magyar districts of southern Slovakia.\(^{56}\)

Sisa further cites Hungarian “honor” in the nation’s response to the Russian peace proposals of 1944, as the Red Army swept across Transylvania and entered the Hungarian Great Plain. Horthy and the Hungarian government refused the Russian negotiations which stipulated that Hungary declare war upon Germany as conditional to Soviet peace terms. Horthy refused based on Hungary’s “honor” in never in its thousand-year history having declared war upon or otherwise turned against an ally.\(^{57}\) This argument is difficult to maintain in the face of Hungary’s participation in the 1941


\(^{56}\) Ibid.

\(^{57}\) In actuality, Hungary was most probably in no position in 1944 to declare war on Germany, given the unofficial German occupation and the large German military presence in the region.
Axis invasion of Yugoslavia despite a treaty of “eternal friendship” with that nation. Sisa’s explanation of the Yugoslav fiasco is the standard “official” argument among patriotic Hungarians: that Croatia’s declaration of independence from the Yugoslav union nullified Hungary’s treaty since Yugoslavia was no longer truly a sovereign state, and Hungary only entered territory possessed by the Hungarian Kingdom of 1914.58

A further examination of the Hungarian perspective is historian Gabor Baross’s *Hungary and Hitler*, a 1970 tract from Astor Florida’s Cold War right-wing Danubian Press which published many propagandistic texts in the late Cold War period circa 1970-1985. Although the scholarship of such texts may be doubted, they are important to illustrate the primary nationalistic arguments from the school of patriotic Hungarian authors who left Hungary in 1945 or 1956. Baross’s purpose in *Hungary and Hitler* is to establish a “scientific study” for historians to explain Hungary’s position alongside Germany in World War II.59 The thesis of the book is that circumstances beyond Hungary’s control pushed the nation into the German orbit in World War II. Since Hungary lay between the encroaching forces of Germany and Russia in the interwar period, Hungarian foreign policy had to adjust accordingly. Fear of Bolshevik Russia and the solidarity of the Little Entente oriented Hungary from the start toward Germany, a step which was further accentuated by German domination of the Hungarian economy. Baross stresses that Hungary was not prepared, however, for the alarming progression of events that began in 1938. Baross proposes that the German annexation of Austria, the

58 Ibid., 239.

Sudeten agreement, Hungary’s attainment of southern Slovakia through the First Vienna Award, and the decline of the Little Entente happened so quickly as to amaze most people in Budapest.\textsuperscript{60} Even the more reasonable and pro-Western Premier Count Pál Teleki perceived the West as weak, and the German military victories of 1940 seemed to prove that Germany was unstoppable.\textsuperscript{61}

Regent Horthy’s memoirs further clarify the Hungarian position of the relationship between the revisionist movement and the alliance with Germany. Horthy asserts that “we desired revision, yes, but revision by peaceful means,” such as the refusal of Plan Green and the option for the Vienna Award of 1938.\textsuperscript{62} Horthy supports the thesis of the Vienna Award of 1938 as the dividing line in the Hungarian revisionist movement. With the 1938 Vienna Award, Horthy asserts that many Hungarians became increasingly pro-German, for it appeared that Germany was returning lands which had been taken from Hungary by the West in the Great War.\textsuperscript{63} Horthy maintains, however, that although he and most Hungarians were friends of “Germany,” they were not necessarily friends of the “Third Reich,” whose Nazi “pseudo-philosophy” the Regent considered “repugnant.”\textsuperscript{64}

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 94.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 95.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., 170.
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., 172.
The Second Vienna Award of 1940 which returned the northern two-fifths of Hungary becomes more problematic in interpretation, however. Hungarians were delighted with the return of the predominantly Magyar districts of Transylvania and the return of the Szekler region to Hungary. Regent Horthy personally rode his famous white stallion in triumph into Kolozsvár (Rumanian Cluj), the ancient capital of Hungarian Transylvania. The award never truly satisfied Hungarian demands, however, and the Rumanians were downright incensed, having already ceded territory to Russia and Bulgaria. Horthy proposes a thesis in his 1957 memoirs that has become an interesting consideration in the historiography of the period— that the very purpose of the award was to satisfy neither Hungary nor Rumania, thereby establishing a competitive balance of power in the region. Horthy claims that only Ciano and Ribbentrop, the architects of the settlement, were satisfied at Vienna in August 1940. Thus emerges the thesis that Germany established a rivalry between Budapest and Bucharest in which both nations would vie for the Führer’s graces, in the hopes that the rest of Transylvania would be returned to the power that followed Germany to the “final victory.” Although the important historian of Hungary C. A. Macartney in his extensive October Fifteenth counters that such inner purposes were absent from the award’s construction, it is clear that the effect did indeed stabilize Hitler’s volatile southern flank for the imminent invasion of Russia. Soon Hungary became forced to follow Rumania’s example in

---

65 Ibid., 180.

participation in the Russian campaign, in stricter economic alignment with Germany, and in the declaration of war against the United States.

Just as the Regent expressed the distaste for National Socialism among many Hungarians, former Hungarian Premier Miklós Kállay argues in his memoirs that Hungary was not the “willing last ally” of Nazi Germany in World War II that had found ground in the West in immediate retrospection of the war. Kállay urges that Hungary did not throw itself into Germany’s arms, but followed a policy of “hesitation and intricate maneuverings” with Germany in order to resist too close an association with Berlin. Kállay insists that Hungary’s close relations with Germany were not only logical but necessary, for Western support for the Little Entente and the status quo dictated that Hungary seek allies elsewhere. Since Hungary’s enemies enjoyed close friendship with the West, it was difficult for Budapest to establish a working rapport with the Western nations.

Thomas Sakmyster’s *Hungary’s Admiral on Horseback* is probably the clearest critical analysis of the German-Hungarian wartime relationship. Sakmyster supports the thesis that Hungary had little time to adjust its internal and external policies to the rapid European developments in 1938 and 1939 regarding Czechoslovakia. Most people in Budapest perceived that Soviet Russia, not Nazi Germany, was the greatest threat to world peace. Sakmyster’s thesis is that Hungary’s quest for revision eventually spiraled

---


68 Ibid., 28.

69 Sakmyster, *Hungary’s Admiral on Horseback*, 207.
out of control and resulted in the fatal repercussions of Budapest’s alliance with Germany. Had Hungary maintained its senses before it invaded Yugoslavia, the nation may have found some Western support for revision. Even Britain initially supported some of Hungary’s claims. Sakmyster quotes Winston Churchill on 6 September 1940 in the House of Commons: “Personally, I have never been happy about the way Hungary was treated after the last war.” All too soon, Hungary’s ties to the Axis became irrevocable, and it became clear to many in Hungary, including the Regent, that Hungary would be unable to maintain its extended borders if Germany lost the European war.

Sakmyster proposes that the core problem of the Hungarian “revisionist dilemma” specifically followed the Second Vienna Award. With return of the Magyar regions of Transylvania, the Hungarian population became ecstatic to get the rest of the lost territories, and even Regent Horthy could show little self-restraint. Sakmyster asserts that for any of the revisionist victories to be lasting, Hungary would have needed the benevolent neutrality of the West, a thesis that exactly corresponded with Hungary’s clear-thinking Premier Pál Teleki.

Sakmyster proposes an alternate thesis regarding the Second Vienna Award, however, that differs from the general historiography of the period. Sakmyster argues that the Second Vienna Award was neither a benevolent act to Hungary nor the competitive power balancing act many historians propose. He interprets the award as a military maneuver by Hitler and the German high command against a potential Russian

---

70 Ibid., 252.

71 Ibid., 235.
invasion of the Balkans. As the Russians demanded Bessarabia and northern Bukovina from Rumania and Bulgaria pressed for southern Dobrudja, Hungary planned an invasion of Rumania in the summer of 1940. As Hitler nervously pondered the diplomatic situation on his southern flank, he feared the worst: that a conflict in Rumania would have precipitated in a Russian advance in the Balkans, possibly all the way to the Turkish straits. Thus, the Sakmyster thesis regarding the Second Vienna Award is that it was a German act to safeguard Rumanian oil and other vital supplies in the region for the Third Reich and to prevent a potential Russian military move in the Balkans. Bernard Newman’s *New Europe*, written during the war, summarizes the situation after the award. Although Hungary received 17,500 square miles, and a population of 2,370,000, (48 percent Magyar, 43 percent Rumanian, 2.5 percent German, and 6.5 percent other) over 400,000 Magyars remained in Rumania, and both sides committed atrocities against their remaining minorities. Although the Second Vienna Award may have staved off a military conflict in the region, it truly created only more problems.

Miklós Molnár’s *Concise History of Hungary*, published in 1996, considers the Hungarian alliance with the Third Reich to have been suicidal, although in reality, there probably was no other choice. Molnár concurs that after the *Anschluss* or annexation of Austria in which Germany became a direct neighbor to Hungary, there was no real room for Hungarian politics to maneuver. Now that Hungary shared a common border with

---

72 Ibid., 241.

73 Ibid., 248.

Germany, many of its internal and foreign policies supported the dictates of Berlin.

Molnár argues that Hungary’s reputation was stained in retrospect by Hungary’s grant of military transit rights to Germany in 1940, and Hungary was the first nation among the Axis minor satellites to join the Tripartite Pact. Molnár argues that even Prime Minister Pál Teleki, so often historiographically regarded as an honorable gentleman, sought to strengthen Hungary’s ties with Germany, for Teleki knew that by this point the revisionist movement could not be successfully continued and maintained without ties to Germany.75

In the collection of essays Hungary in the Age of Total War, general editor Nándor Dreisziger declares that there is a discernable path that drew Hungary to the Axis orbit before 1941.76 Resentment of Trianon, hatred of Communism, the legacy of the military comradeship of arms in the Great War, “force of past association,” and the geopolitical threat of the Little Entente all pushed Hungary firmly into the German orbit.77 This German orientation had a price, however, as the author declares that “For every act of German help Budapest had to make political and economic concessions to the Reich.”78 The author maintains that the Second Vienna Award in particular was a “concession by the Axis leaders to Hungary that signaled the reduction of Hungary to the


77 Ibid., 62.
status of an Axis puppet state.”79 Germany and Italy supported Hungary’s case against Rumania for revision, but as author István Mócsy declares in his article “Hungary’s Failed Strategic Surrender,” Axis support directly “endangered Hungary’s independence.”80 Mócsy also claims that Britain seemed so distant and France so easily defeated that with the Second Vienna Award, Hungary was pulled away from any potential for neutrality. The price was high, however, for the award pushed Hungary into signing the Tripartite Pact and allowed Germany complete military transit rights in its preparation for the invasion of the Soviet Union.81

As Hungary entered the war in 1941, Dreisziger declares that Hungary’s international situation based on its foreign policy greatly deteriorated with the nation’s military moves against Yugoslavia and Russia.82 Several different schools of historiography based on the 1941 blunders become apparent. There will always be an interpretation that Hungary’s interwar policy did not predestine its alignment with Nazi Germany, however, an important school of historiography insists that Hungary’s revisionist and “fascist” goals made the events of 1941 unavoidable.83 Another thesis is

78 Ibid., 63.
79 Ibid., 63.
81 Ibid., 90.
82 Dreisziger, “Hungary Enters the War, March-December 1941,” 61.
83 Ibid.
that the Vienna Awards were the cause of Hungary’s entanglement with the Axis. The price of the First Vienna Award was closer alignment to Germany, and Germany’s military successes distanced Hungarian public opinion from Britain. All historians seem to agree, however, that 1941 became the low point of Hungary’s foreign policy in the wartime period. Dreisziger declares that some historians argue that Hungary created its greatest errors—war with Yugoslavia and Russia—and learned the mistakes of that policy in the same year.

Sakmyster’s *Hungary, the Great Powers and the Danubian Crisis* firmly states that despite constant denials to the contrary in pro-Hungarian historiography, Hungary was indeed a nation friendly to National Socialism. Sakmyster’s thesis is that all too often, the “Hungarian question” was tied to the “German question”—that all too often Hungary supported the internal and foreign policies of the Third Reich, at least in the 1938-1942 period. Sakmyster presents the example that Hungary was the first nation to congratulate Hitler’s annexation of Austria as an event which happened “without the loss of blood.” Sakmyster does soften his interpretation, however, that Hungary was forced to choose between the two evils of Fascism and Bolshevism, and that even Britain before

---

84 Ibid.
85 Ibid.
87 Ibid., 135.
the war would have considered Communism a greater menace to the world than the German Nazi regime.\textsuperscript{88}

The alternate perspective becomes the principal thesis of John Montgomery’s \textit{Hungary: The Unwilling Satellite}, published in 1947. As the title suggests, Montgomery believes that Hungary, although indeed an ally of Nazi Germany, was not the willing participant as Slovakia or Rumania, nations which whole-heartedly embraced Germany’s fascist internal and foreign policies.\textsuperscript{89} Montgomery urges that Hungary was not your average Axis state in the war: it possessed a relatively free press, lenient Jewish policy, and a Parliament of many political parties.\textsuperscript{90} In his analysis, Hungary was an island of relative freedom in Axis Europe. If there is one national fault and singular prejudice among the Magyars, Montgomery argues it was their immense superiority complex over the Rumanians, whom they considered an inferior race.\textsuperscript{91}

Montgomery stresses in his analysis that the Hungarian people were not responsible for what happened to them in World War II. He proposes that Hungary’s Foreign Minister Kánya well-summarized Hungary’s wartime predicament: “whosoever

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 82.

\textsuperscript{89} Finland cannot be placed within this consideration. Although Finland supported many of the Third Reich’s military policies, Helsinki wisely refused to advance beyond the 1939 boundary in the region of the Leningrad siege, although it allowed German command in the north of the country and advanced in Karelia in the region of Russian Petrozavodsk.


\textsuperscript{91} Ibid.
won, Hungary would lose.”92 Hungary supported the German cause because Germany supported the revisionist movement. France and the Little Entente did not. Britain, although sympathetic to some of Hungary’s claims, did not actively seek to implement any territorial changes, and by 1940 could no longer commit any influence to the continent. Although most Hungarians generally liked the Germans (especially the Austrians) as a people, Montgomery asserts that most were horrified by the excesses of National Socialism.93

An interesting and somewhat accusatory testament to historical relations between the Germans and Hungarians throughout their long historical association is Ivan Volgyes’s article “The German Question in Hungary.” In Volgyes’s analysis, the “German question has been one of the continuing problems of Hungarian national existence.”94 The author argues that the Germans in one form or another, especially in commerce and economics, have been “inextricably a part of the history of the Hungarian people.”95 The author points out that in much Hungarian historiography, it was not forgotten in Hungary that the Habsburgs liberated the Magyars from Turkish rule. Nineteenth and early twentieth century “German imperialism” further fostered a positive and approving response from Budapest.96 Thus, Hungary favored Germany and Italy

92 Ibid.
93 Ibid., 188.
95 Ibid., 146.
96 Ibid., 147.
over the West, although the author asserts that any actual Western orientation would have
been impossible based on Horthy’s “dictatorship,” and the “undemocratic” outlook of the
interwar Hungarian government. Even if Hungary had become a democracy after World
War I, however, the Entente would still have dismembered Hungary at Trianon, thus
Volgyes urges that any pro-Western Hungarian stance was “doomed by history,
nationalism, and Realpolitik.”

Regarding the pro-German stance of Horthy’s regime, the author suggests that
alliance between Hitler and Horthy was inevitable because “Horthy’s Hungary had
nowhere else to turn! [italics author’s].” Volgyes does not support the Horthy regime,
however, suggesting that “there was a great similarity of values between the Fascist
Hitler and the ‘salon-Fascist’ Horthy, between the racist policies of the Nazi Hitler and
the anti-Semitic, conservative Horthy,” and that this realization must be understood in the
historiographical interpretation of this period.

Hungary’s Path to the Second World War

Despite attempts by some in the Hungarian government to keep Hungary out of
the war, as Hungary’s association with the Third Reich grew, it became more and more
difficult to keep the nation out of the conflict. Count Pál Teleki, at heart a geographer,
scholar, and quiet gentleman, became Prime Minister of Hungary on 15 February 1939.

---

97 Ibid., 148.

98 Ibid.

99 Ibid., 149.
Although a staunch revisionist, Teleki believed that for revision to become lasting, Western approval would be needed for permanency in Hungary’s revisionist victories. As war descended upon Europe with the German invasion of Poland, Teleki’s singular goal was to keep Hungary out of the conflict. With the recovery of southern Slovakia, Ruthenia, and northern Transylvania, Hungary’s debt to Germany became ever greater, until Hungary finally militarily joined Germany in the invasions of Yugoslavia and Russia.

While many sources patriotic to Hungary try to distance the actual cooperation between Hungary and Germany in the Second World War, it is more probable that most Hungarians favored close relations with Germany, especially as France fell and Hungary recovered northern Transylvania in 1940. Both Regent Horthy and Prime Minister Kállay’s memoirs continually stress that Hungary was basically forced into alliance with Germany based on geopolitics and competition with Hungary’s Rumanian enemy. Historian Thomas Sakmyster challenges this notion in his book *Hungary’s Admiral on Horseback*. Sakmyster cites a letter from Horthy to Hitler on 28 March 1941, only days before the German attack on Yugoslavia, that Hungary was “fully and wholly united with Germany,” and that Hungary would “stand by the German Reich in unalterable loyalty and to the extent of its strength.”

---

“comradeship in arms” that had existed between the Hungarian and German officer corps in the Great War.\textsuperscript{101}

Regarding Hitler’s war with the Soviet Union, Sakmyster proposes that Horthy sought to sit back and let Hitler have his swift victory in the East with minimal Hungarian involvement. Sakmyster does support the thesis of the more patriotic Hungarian assessments of the campaign, however, in that it soon became evident that Hungary had to participate in the Russian campaign since Slovakia, Italy, and Rumania had supported Operation Barbarossa from the outset. By January 1942, it became clear to all members of the Axis that the Russian campaign was not going to be the swift “blitzkrieg” style conquest of Germany’s campaigns in the first two years of the war. As the United States joined the conflict, Britain remained undefeated, and the conflict escalated to global war, Sakmyster claims that Horthy sought some way of finding peace with the Western powers while maintaining belligerency on the Eastern Front. To Horthy’s dismay, all attempts at diplomacy received the same answer from the West: so long as Hungary supported the war against Russia, Hungary would receive “neither sympathy nor consideration from the Allies.”\textsuperscript{102} All too soon, Hungary found itself once again on the losing side of a global conflict.

Since Hungary became considered an enemy nation to the West as an ally of Nazi Germany in the Second World War, it becomes important in the historiography sympathetic to Hungary to try somehow to exonerate Hungary’s position as an Axis

\textsuperscript{101} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., 300.
nation in that conflict. Although Regent Horthy’s supposition is fairly predictable, his thesis regarding Hungary’s impossible diplomatic position alongside Nazi Germany is quite probably accurate. In his memoirs, Horthy continually tries to draw Hungary away from responsibility from its belligerency in the conflict. Horthy presents the argument of Hungary’s diplomatic position regarding the Tripartite Pact: Germany “invited” Hungary to join the Tripartite Pact, ominously suggesting that if Hungary did not, Rumania would be granted this “place of honor.”

Hungary signed the Tripartite Pact on 27 September 1940, according to Horthy in order “to gain time” or at least postpone direct German interference with Hungarian politics.

Regarding Hungary’s position in World War II, Horthy explains that “we were not . . . Germany’s ally by treaty [as in the Great War] - we had been forced against our will into a war that was waged to further Hitler’s expansionist aims.” As Hitler began to doubt Hungary’s loyalty, in March 1944 he offered Horthy the choice of either direct cooperation with consolidated German “supervision” or outright occupation as an enemy nation. Horthy laments “What was I to do?” Horthy’s final analysis is that Hungarian neutrality would have been impossible, for any attempts at neutral solidarity would have speeded the German occupation that indeed manifested in March 1944.

---


104 Ibid., 181.

105 Ibid., 222.

106 Ibid., 214.

107 Ibid., 259.
In his 1970 book, *Hungary and Hitler*, author Gabor Baross greatly supports the argument of the competitive balance of power that Hitler established between Hungary and its Rumanian enemy. The Baross thesis is that although Hungary and Rumania were bitter enemies, both nations were bound to the Axis and the Anti-Comintern Pact, and Hungary feared to lose German favor to the Rumanians if it did not orient its policy according to the other members of the Axis.\(^\text{108}\) Although Baross asserts that most Hungarians indeed favored the “crusade against Bolshevism,” it was with great hesitation that Hungary entered war with the West in late 1941. Baross maintains that Hungary went to war with the United States because of its fear that Rumania would gain German favor.\(^\text{109}\) Bernard Newman’s wartime *New Europe* further clarifies Germany’s psychological domination of its minor Axis satellites through the threat of the “Red menace” that was Soviet Russia. Hungary was terrified of Bolshevik Russia, which Newman explains is the reason for Hungary’s continued belligerency on the Eastern Front even in the face of the tremendous reversals of Stalingrad in 1942 and Kursk in 1943.\(^\text{110}\)

Historian Mario Fenyo is one of the few authors to detail Hungary’s wartime position exclusively in *Hitler, Horthy, and Hungary*, published in 1972. Fenyo concurs with the general historiography that Hungary was indeed a more reluctant satellite than Germany’s other minor partners, but in his view, Hungary was still a National Socialist


\(^{109}\) Ibid.

“puppet” state, although an ungrateful and unreliable one. As Fenyo explains, Hungary attained all its revisionist victories with the aid of National Socialism.\textsuperscript{111} Fenyo agrees with the thesis that Hitler successfully manipulated his minor allies to further his aims in the war effort. Hungary feared Slovakian and Rumanian enthusiasm for the “crusade against Bolshevism,” and continued its (unenthusiastic) support of materiel and manpower for the war in the east to maintain German favor.\textsuperscript{112} The campaign in Russia, however, manifested in the realization of Hungary’s greatest prewar fears: war with Britain and the United States. Britain declared war upon Hungary, Finland, and Rumania on 7 December 1941, and despite Hungary’s cordial official relations with the United States, Hungary felt compelled at this time to announce the existence of “a state of war with” the United States.\textsuperscript{113} Fenyo concurs with the general historiography that the Hungarian state of war with America was influenced by the fact that Rumania and Bulgaria had already declared war, but in reality, he claims that by this time the minor Axis allies were “puppets of Hitler and had merely jumped when the strings were pulled.”\textsuperscript{114}

An important facet of much of the historiography favorable to Hungary asserts that since the Trianon Treaty had left Hungary bereft of minerals and raw materials, Hungary was forced into economic cooperation with its fascist neighbors. Fenyo

\textsuperscript{111} Mario D. Fenyo, \textit{Hitler, Horthy, and Hungary: German-Hungarian Relations, 1941-1944} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 12.

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 20.

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 52.
dedicates significant analysis to Hungary’s economic relationship to the Third Reich. Although Hungary “contributed less than half of what she might have contributed to the German armaments program,” Hungary was nonetheless tightly tied economically to the Third Reich.\textsuperscript{115} Revisionist historiography claims that Hungary was helpless in the economic predicament of German domination of its markets which thereby caused such tight alignment with the Third Reich. Fenyo counters this thesis, and argues that “Hungarian trade with Germany is insufficient by itself, to explain the pro-German orientation of Hungarian foreign policy.”\textsuperscript{116}

In retrospect of World War II, Prime Minister Kállay proclaims that Hungary’s declaration of war upon the United States was “the gravest error committed by the government.”\textsuperscript{117} Although it was probably impossible for Hungary to have avoided severing ties with the United States, Kállay declares that the state of war could have been avoided, which directly counters the Regent’s and other patriotic interpretations. While Kállay asserts that the war with the West was avoidable, war with Russia was not: “The Hungarian people feared the Soviet Union both as Russians, and even more, as Bolsheviks.”\textsuperscript{118} Kállay maintains that Hungary did not commit itself whole-heartedly to the campaign in the east, however, and Hitler soon began to pressure the nation with the

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 53.
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 79.
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 83.
\textsuperscript{117} Kállay, \textit{Hungarian Premier}, 64.
\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 56.
threat that if Hungary did not participate with greater earnest, adjustments to the Transylvanian frontier favorable to Rumania could result. It is clear, then, the territorial awards checkmated Hungary’s internal and external politics as a lackey of Germany: if Hungary did not send troops to the front, Kállay asserts that Germany would have occupied the country, and if Germany won the war in the east and Hungary had maintained neutral solidarity, the country would have been occupied as an enemy nation or likewise have lost its independence. Once again, Hungary was checkmated in its available options.

Editor Nándor Dreisziger’s collection of essays in Hungary in the Age of Total War is strictly dedicated to Hungary’s wartime predicament. If there is a general thesis to the work, it is that had Hungary been non-belligerent in World War II, it is possible that it could have been spared some of the calamities that descended upon the nation due to the war, but Hungary’s unfortunate position of being Hitler’s “last ally” forfeited the nation’s rights. The author indeed concurs that Hitler started a “race” between Hungary and Rumania for “the Führer’s graces” in the Second Vienna Award by which Germany exploited these nations for the next four years. Ultimately, however,

119 Ibid., 64.

120 Ibid., 141.


Hungary’s collaboration with Germany ruined Hungary’s reputation among the Western Allies in World War II.\textsuperscript{123}

The author presents a perspective regarding Hungary’s belligerency in the war in Russia that must be considered, however. Hungary had to make a quick decision in the Summer of 1941 as Germany invaded the Soviet Union, for most Hungarians in 1941 believed that Russia would imminently collapse.\textsuperscript{124} If Hungary did not closely adhere to Axis policy, its independence could have been endangered. Many historians have discussed the issue of Hungary’s position in October 1944 regarding armistice with Russia. Among all analyses, historian István Mócsy’s thesis in “Hungary’s Failed Strategic Surrender” is probably the most accurate. Mócsy declares that the members of the Axis alliance were only able to surrender when the front line reached them, as in the case of Rumania and Finland.\textsuperscript{125} Since Germany in 1944 had already committed excessive reserves to the defense of Hungarian territory, Hungary did not have the luxury of Finland (which had a minimum of German troops in the country) to successfully negotiate an armistice.

It is indeed for the sake of “honor” that patriotic Hungarian authors argue that Hungary stayed with the Axis alliance even as the Red Army began its invasion of eastern Europe and the Balkans. Baross expresses the typical Hungarian view in that

\textsuperscript{123} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., 100.
Hungary “honorably” stood by Germany as the Russians approached, unlike Rumania, which changed sides as soon as the Red Army approached its frontiers.\textsuperscript{126} Sisa continues with the ever-present Magyar thesis that never in its thousand-year history had Hungary ever betrayed an ally, therefore it was impossible for Hungary to turn against Germany in the war. In actuality, Hungarian support for the war had always been rather lukewarm, unlike the enthusiastic Rumanian support for Germany and the war that began with the regime of General Ion Antonescu in Bucharest following the abdication of King Carol II in September 1940. Sisa cites German General Erich von Manstein’s memoirs: “the Rumanians were our best allies, whereas we more or less forced the Hungarians into the war.”\textsuperscript{127}

Although the question of Hungarian guilt in the Second World War rages back and forth between historians in retrospect, it is quite clear that Hungary faced a lack of available options in its diplomacy during the Second World War. Germany’s overwhelming victories in Poland and the West amazed most Hungarians, and in actuality, many Hungarians favored Germany as a neighbor and an ally. Although the official Hungarian argument strives for the contrary, it was with enthusiasm that many Hungarians initially greeted Hitler’s campaign in Russia. The stain of German affiliation, however, was too great for the realists in Budapest such as Prime Minister Pál Teleki. Although Teleki greatly supported the border revisions of 1938 and 1940, he knew that the West was not truly defeated so long as Britain endured with the tacit

\textsuperscript{126} Baross, \textit{Hungary and Hitler}, 60.

\textsuperscript{127} Sisa, \textit{The Spirit of Hungary}, 241.
support of the United States. With the Hungarian support for the invasion of Yugoslavia, Britain officially declared the attack “an eternal shame to Hungary” who would be “brought to judgment” at the end of the war.\textsuperscript{128} Believing that his country had become “dishonored beyond redemption,” Teleki took his own life in protest on 3 April 1941. In his final letter to Horthy, he declared “We have become breakers of our word . . . I have allowed the nation’s honor to be lost. The Yugoslav nation are our friends . . . but now, out of cowardice, we have allied ourselves with scoundrels.”\textsuperscript{129} There was now no way out of the Axis alliance for Hungary. All too soon, Hungary’s support for the war in Russia would cost the nation its independence.

The Jewish Question in Hungary

With some pride, many Hungarian authors boast of the nation’s treatment of Hungary’s Jews prior to the German occupation of March 1944 as evidence of inherent Hungarian “honor.” In actuality, there are some contrasts in the historiographical interpretation of Hungary’s Jewish policies. It is true that until March 1944, 95 percent of Hungary’s Jews were alive and relatively safe in Hungary, compared to the threats facing Jews in the rest of Axis Europe. Indeed, István Deák’s article, “Admiral and Regent Miklós Horthy: Some Thoughts on a Controversial Statesman,” claims that when Hitler demanded the deportation of Budapest’s Jews, Horthy declared that such was


\textsuperscript{129} Ibid.
impossible lest the economic infrastructure of the Hungarian war economy collapse.\textsuperscript{130}

Although Horthy cared little for the Jews of the countryside, Deák argues that he defended the Jews of Budapest, some of whom were personal acquaintances of the Regent.\textsuperscript{131} As the SS followed the German soldiers into Hungary, many Hungarians in Budapest personally risked their lives to protect the Jews of Budapest. In the end, despite deportations after March 1944, 40 percent of Hungary’s Jews survived the Holocaust.

John Flournoy Montgomery praises Hungary’s lenient wartime policies toward the Jews in \textit{Hungary: the Unwilling Satellite}. He asserts that not until the Gestapo descended upon Hungary in the March 1944 occupation were Hungary’s Jews in any real danger. German National Socialist dogma turned many Christians into Jews, as in the case of having a single Jewish grandparent. Hungary by contrast turned many Jews into Christians. A Jew who converted to Christianity or was baptized Christian while having one Jewish parent, for example, was a Christian in Hungary in every sense of the word.\textsuperscript{132}

Prime Minister Kállay’s assessment of the Jewish question in Hungary is that demands against the Jews would have been followed by demands against “Socialists, left-wingers, pro-Jewish Gentiles, ‘Anglophiles,’ and against the whole Hungarian elite.”\textsuperscript{133} Kállay argues, with some honesty, that it is to Hungary’s credit that Hungary kept its borders


\textsuperscript{131} Ibid., 87.


\textsuperscript{133} Kállay, \textit{Hungarian Premier}, 122.
open, at least in the beginning of the war, through which many Jews, Poles, and others fled across its borders to safety in the West.\textsuperscript{134}

Contrary to pro-Hungarian historiographical assessment, Mario Fenyo in \textit{Hitler, Horthy and Hungary} counters that anti-Jewish regulations had been enforced in Hungary even prior to the March 1944 occupation. The Hungarian “Law 12” of 1942 confiscated Jewish property in Hungary, Jews were eliminated from service in Hungarian civil and military administration, and often faced “severe economic hardship.”\textsuperscript{135} Fenyo urges that Hungarian historiography of the Jewish question must be rather carefully examined, for the Jews of Hungary, although much better off than in other nations controlled by the Axis, still faced discrimination and hardships.\textsuperscript{136} Nonetheless, the Jews of Hungary faced far fewer restrictions before the German occupation than any other region in Axis Europe. Although their lot may not have been “ideal,” neither were they in any real danger so long as Hungarians truly held independent control over their government. Hungarian “honor” in this case, at least, may have been earned by Budapest in historical retrospect.

\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., 113.

\textsuperscript{135} Mario D. Fenyo, \textit{Hitler, Horthy, and Hungary}: \textit{German-Hungarian Relations, 1941-1944} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 69.

\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., 78.
**Critical Arguments Against Wartime Hungarian Foreign and Domestic Policies**

Although there is a substantial trend in modern historiography to vindicate Hungary of some of its wartime guilt, there remain considerable criticisms of Hungary’s wartime policy as an ally of Nazi Germany. Miklós Molnár’s *Concise History of Hungary*, published in 1996, presents one of the more critical interpretations of Hungary’s interwar and wartime policies. Molnár argues that Horthy’s government was often oppressive, especially against the political left.137 Whereas Macartney and Montgomery protest that Horthy’s reign was not authoritarian, Molnár argues that some applicable labels for Horthy’s regime include “Fascist, semi-Fascist, authoritarian, nationalistic, anti-Semitic, semi-feudal, [and] archaic.”138 Molnár urges that Horthy’s rise to power was marked by violence, anti-Semitism, and even “white terror.”139 Regarding the strata of Magyar society in Hungary, Molnár believes there is some credence to the nineteenth century conception of “a thousand lords and 3 million beggars” in Hungary.140 Whereas many historians insist that the revisionist movement penetrated all classes, Molnár insists that it was most prevalent among the higher and upper middle classes.141

---


138 Ibid., 264.

139 Ibid.

140 Ibid., 271.

141 Ibid., 266.
Molnár argues that Hungarians have always had “a tendency to see all their misfortunes originating elsewhere—with some justification.”\textsuperscript{142} Whether from the Mongols, Turks, or Trianon, Hungarians have always sought to pin the blame for their national calamity upon sources beyond their control. Molnár does admit, however, that perversion of the Fourteen Points by which Hungary surrendered, the nation’s lot at Trianon, the aggravated invasions of the Successor States, and economic ruin with the loss of all its natural resources at Trianon fostered an environment that was conducive to a regime that could promise national renewal and reclamation of the lost territories.\textsuperscript{143}

Mario Fenyo’s \textit{Hitler, Horthy, and Hungary} contrasts any interpretive empathy for the Regency as “benevolent” and refutes the thesis that forces beyond Hungary’s national control pushed the nation into its wartime blunders against Yugoslavia, Russia, and the United States. Fenyo argues that although Hungarian foreign policy in the war “was determined by geographic, geopolitical, economic, psychological, and a number of other factors,” Hungary was hardly guiltless in World War II.\textsuperscript{144} Fenyo proposes that Hungary had more closely aligned its political, military, and economic resources to Nazi Germany than Hungarian nationalistic historiography contends. Hungary’s participation in the Russian campaign was less than the other minor Axis powers (except Bulgaria, which did not fight in Russia at all), but Fenyo contends that Hungary must still be must be seen as a power that did indeed serve the Third Reich of its own accord. Although

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{142} Ib\textit{id.}, 355.
\footnote{143} Ib\textit{id.}, 269.
\footnote{144} Fenyo, \textit{Hitler, Horthy, and Hungary}, ix.
\end{footnotes}
Hungary was most probably the “unwilling satellite” that has dominated much sympathetic historiography, Fenyo raises questions that Hungary could have possibly done more to maintain its so-called “honor” as a nation.

Fenyo criticizes that many so-called Hungarian “patriots” were quite pro-German in their outlook. Whether such affiliation was based on the belief of unavoidable German victory in the war, or in gratitude for Germany’s help in reclamation of some of the lost territories, many such “patriots” were virtually National Socialists, or at least favored Nazi dogma.145 Regarding Hungarian “honor” in refusing to declare war upon Germany in 1944 like Rumania, Fenyo asks, where was Hungarian honor when it attacked Yugoslavia despite its treaty of “eternal” friendship?146 Pro-Hungarian historiography often maintains the tolerance of the Regency toward political parties and philosophy banned elsewhere in Axis Europe. While this may be true, Fenyo asserts that this argument is somewhat misleading. Fenyo declares that of the 296 delegates in the Hungarian Parliament in 1941, 178 of them were of the far right wing, pro-German, and even National Socialist in their outlook.147

A counter-analysis against the Hungarian revisionist movement from the point of view of Hungary’s enemies is well-represented in Viorica Moisuc’s 1987 article “Revisionism: A Serious Threat.” According to this author, revisionism and “Horthyism” were a direct threat to the security of Europe during the interwar period. In

145 Ibid., 8.
146 Ibid., 9.
147 Ibid., 69.
this interpretation, the Trianon Treaty was a solution for European peace “written in [Rumanian] blood, not ink,” to establish justice and “enabling people to live in peace and progress for many years to come.”\textsuperscript{148} Moisuc argues that “from the beginning, revisionism [italics author’s] . . . proved to be a factor of instability and regress in international life, an obstacle to interstate cooperation, a source of hatred among peoples.”\textsuperscript{149} Thereby Hungarian revisionism had “the purpose of conquering foreign territories and bringing other peoples into economic subordination. Revisionism has been synonymous with insecurity, instability, with the disturbance of the climate of peace.”\textsuperscript{150} This proposes that Horthy’s regime was hostile and “chauvinist,” dangerous to European peace, with a goal only to occupy and dominate minorities in other lands.\textsuperscript{151} In this interpretation, the Little Entente, so often reproached in Hungarian historiography, was a body formed in order to enforce “the peace and stability in Central and Southeast Europe.”\textsuperscript{152}

Moisuc’s strongest accusations concern Hungary’s relations to the Third Reich: “Horthyist Hungary was a permanent hotbed of aggressiveness by both its own plans of occupying other territories, and its role as an outpost of German imperialism and revisionism and eventually by its serving as an instrument of Hitlerism for isolating the


\textsuperscript{149} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{150} Ibid., 298.

\textsuperscript{151} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., 299.
anti-revisionist states in the region, conquering and dominating them.” Moisuc portrays the Hungarian people as bloodthirsty conquerors, citing as example Horthy’s letter to Hitler on 10 July 1940: “It is our burning wish to take our revenge on the Romanians . . . We cannot tolerate ‘Greater Romania.’” Regarding the Second Vienna Arbitration, the “saviours’ brought terror, fear, [and] monstrous crimes” to its “peaceful” neighbors. The summation of Moisuc’s argument is that the Hungarian revisionist movement was strictly a malevolent desire by hostile and warmongering Magyars to impose upon their peaceful neighbors, whose peace had been established by the “just dictates” of the Paris Peace Treaties.

In a critical analysis of C. A. Macartney’s massive two-volume history of interwar and wartime Hungary in *October Fifteenth: A History of Modern Hungary*, Author M. Incze’s 1958 review of that book offers some interesting contrary commentary on the revisionist movement itself. Incze criticizes Macartney’s assessment that somewhat vindicates Hungary’s alliance with the Third Reich. Against the Macartney interpretation of the Horthy regime’s relative benevolence, Incze argues that the Bethlen period (1920-1929) was “in effect a parliamentary dictatorship.” Incze’s criticism of Macartney can further be extended to many other historiographical tendencies of

---

153 Ibid.

154 Ibid., 300.

155 Ibid. 297.

supportive Hungarian histories in the defense of Hungarian policy in World War II. Incze accuses that Macartney tries to “excuse every step” of the Hungarian government in its domestic and foreign policy alongside Nazi Germany, a policy followed by many other sympathetic historians ever since.\textsuperscript{157} This historical school basically fails when confronted by the Yugoslavia problem of 1941. Whereas Macartney and some supportive historians argue that Hungary’s diplomacy in the Treaty of Eternal Friendship lacked policies in the event of a change of government in Yugoslavia, Incze considers the Hungarian violation of that treaty “the most shameful act of wartime Hungary.”\textsuperscript{158} In any event, Hungary was unable to escape from the war, and the nation became stigmatized as Hitler’s last puppet state under the Szálasi regime.

\textit{Summation of the Problem: the Predestination of Hungarian Wartime Politics}

There will always remain considerable controversy regarding Hungary’s role in the Second World War. Many historians of Hungary have followed a sympathetic approach to Hungary’s lack of responsibility for its role in World War II, while others have blamed Budapest for its alliance with the Third Reich and the nation’s dishonor in the Yugoslav and Russian campaigns of 1941. Historiographical retrospect must place the truth somewhere in the middle. Certain themes remain constant in the historiography of Hungary that may establish an interpretation that Hungary was indeed predestined to its role in the interwar and wartime period.

\textsuperscript{157} Ibid., 424.

\textsuperscript{158} Ibid., 426.
Trianon and Western support for the Little Entente directly turned Hungary against the West in the early interwar period. Between Germany and Russia, the powers most dominant in the affairs of East Central Europe, most Hungarians greatly favored Berlin over Moscow. The force of past association of Hungary with its German allies remained strong in Hungary throughout the interwar period. The progression of events in 1938 seemed to indicate that Germany and Italy were replacing France and Britain as the dominant powers on the continent. The rapid fall of the West in the 1940 German military campaigns convinced many Hungarians that the war had been won by the Axis and that the Europe of Versailles and Trianon was finally at an end. Hitler’s effective manipulation of the Hungarian-Rumanian Transylvanian dispute placed Hungary deeper into the Axis camp. Hungary’s geopolitical position in Europe further compromised the nation’s options throughout the war as the center of Hitler’s Balkan supply network. Although some authors have declared Hungary’s position alongside Hitler’s Third Reich as “suicidal,” in reality, there were probably no other political options open for Hungary, at least in the 1938 to 1944 period.

Hungary’s “revisionist dilemma,” the nation’s desperate desire to regain the lost territories, spiraled Hungary into rapid alliance with the Fascist powers. All too soon, the tide of the war turned against Germany, the Hungarian Army was destroyed in the field during the Stalingrad fiasco of 1942 and 1943, and the Red Army pushed further and further toward East Central Europe. The Regency and the rest of the Hungarian government soon found that their ties to Germany were irrevocable. As soon as Hitler doubted the loyalty of his Hungarian subjects, the German Army occupied Hungary in
March 1944. The Wehrmacht defended Hungarian territory to the last, and the country and its cities were badly damaged until the Russians “liberated” the country in 1945.

Although the German alliance indeed proved fatal to Hungary, there was in actuality no other route open for Hungarian foreign policy. Hungary’s fate would most likely have been similar to Germany’s “solution” to the Yugoslav problem had Budapest resisted German demands, based on the nation’s proximity to Germany’s oil supply in Rumania. Hungary’s Foreign Minister Kálmán Kányà’s summation of Hungary’s international predicament in World War II may have been the most accurate in historical retrospect: “whosoever won, Hungary would lose.”¹⁵⁹ Hungary was not entirely guiltless for its fall in World War II, for most Hungarians were quite pro-German, and some of these even favored National Socialist philosophy. But although Kállay, Horthy, Teleki, and many others have insisted that they found the “pseudo-philosophy” of Nazism repugnant, nothing will ever truly remove the stain that Hungary, willing or not, was the last ally of Nazi Germany.

CONCLUSION

As this historiography demonstrates, any approach to the history of East Central Europe is both problematic and formidable. The histories of Hungary and its interwar Czech, Serb, and Rumanian enemies are generally contradictory. Since the Successor States had been generally considered “Allied” nations in one form or another during the Great War, they had been initially subject to a far better press in the West than in Hungary, technically an enemy nation to the Entente in the Great War and the Allies in World War II. Czechoslovakia’s assessment by the West as the “democracy sacrificed for peace” at Munich in 1938, Yugoslavia’s 1941 conquest by the Axis, and Rumania’s successful turncoat operation as the Red Army approached its borders all seemed to confirm, at least initially in the West, that these nations were, in one way or another, “Allied” powers which deserved sympathy, while Hungary nefariously remained “Hitler’s last ally” among the Western governments as World War II drew to a close. The benevolence of the Successor States was an illusion, however, that historiographical analysis demonstrates.

The minority problems of the Austro-Hungarian Habsburg Empire doomed that nation at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. The antiquated nature of that realm could not survive the national aspirations of its component minorities. As Czechs, Poles, South Slavs, and Rumanians revolted against their Austrian and Hungarian overlords, Western recognition added to the cause of these secessionist powers. As this thesis demonstrates, many of the arguments that the Successor States presented at Paris in 1919 based on their
national and ethnic histories have been found by many contemporary historians to have been misinformation, falsification, exaggeration, and propaganda. True Czecho-Slovak unity has been denied by the lack of any official affiliation between those realms other than linguistic, and Slovaks have opted for independence from that union both in 1939 and 1993. Many Croats favored the “Western” orientation of the Habsburg Empire and soon began to doubt their attachment to the South Slav cause that was Yugoslavia. When the Axis destroyed Yugoslavia in 1941, the Croats became an independent Axis state that even committed several Waffen SS units to the Russian front.\footnote{See George S. Stein, \textit{The Waffen SS: Hitler’s Elite Guard at War, 1939-1945} (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966), 297-298.} In 1991, they were among the first nations to secede from the Yugoslav Union. Rumania has based its whole national history upon the theory of Daco-Roman continuity and its theoretical historical link to the Roman Empire. Although accepted by some international governments and politicians, most neutral historians are eager to point out the thousand-year gap between the Roman withdrawal in AD 271 and the first mention of the Vlachs in the thirteenth century. Linguistic evidence also points the Vlachs to the former Roman Province of Epirus within Roman Macedonia as it existed circa AD 240.\footnote{For a breakdown of the Roman provinces, see Colin McEvedy, \textit{The New Penguin Atlas of Ancient History} (New York: Penguin Books, 2002), 116.}

The ignorance of the minority problems and ethnic history of East Central Europe, combined with French strategic and political aims to contain Germany and enforce the \textit{cordon sanitaire} against Bolshevik Russia, resulted in an unjust settlement in 1919 and 1920 for East Central Europe. Hungarians sincerely believed in the historical
unity of both the nation and its component minorities, comparing their lot with the minority situations of both Britain and France, which in no way disrupted central governing unity. The treaties of St. Germain and Trianon did not solve the minority problems of East Central Europe, but merely handed them over to new masters.

Hungarian and pro-Hungarian historiography point out several suppositions that have generally become more accepted among the historical community than the arguments made in the Successor States. The Carpathian Basin served not only as a political boundary, but as a cultural, religious, and economic system for a millennium that often united its component minorities successfully within the Hungarian Monarchy. Most historians now criticize the severity and injustice of Trianon and its ramifications upon the Hungarian people and their government, both in domestic and foreign politics. Trianon destroyed thousand-year old economic institutions in Slovakia and Ruthenia.

The course of Hungarian diplomacy during virtually the entire interwar period was dominated by the legacy of Trianon. Current historiographical trends supported not only by pro-Hungarian sources but also by many neutral perspectives have tended to blame France for the harsh diplomacy of Trianon as an extension of French military planning. By the creation or expansion of the Successor States at Hungary’s expense, France sought military containment of both Germany and Bolshevik Russia, without consideration of the ramifications of such policy in the long term. An increasingly common thesis in the historiography of the Paris Peace Conference is that by grossly favoring “victors” over “vanquished,” Paris Peace Treaties ensured a second and even more terrible World War. Hungary was denied the promised self-determination by which the nation sought peace at the end of World War I and was refused plebiscites even when
Magyar leaders promised to abide by their results. Hungary thus realigned its policies against the Western powers, the League of Nations, and all who supported the status quo of the Europe of Versailles. Hungarians became desperate to the point of a national obsession to find allies to revise the despised diktat of Trianon. Since the democratic powers had destroyed historic Hungary, Hungary became forced to find allies that opposed the status quo of the Europe of Versailles.

Hungary’s minority problem led to Trianon, the severity of Trianon led to the revisionist movement, and the circumstances of the revisionist movement predestined Hungary to alliance with the Axis powers. Revisionism totally dominated Hungary’s foreign and domestic politics in the late interwar and wartime periods. The revisionist movement transcended class and political affiliations among virtually all Magyars for this entire period. As many authors have indicated, the “Trianon syndrome” became a “national malady” which perhaps ultimately clouded the better judgment of the Hungarian government and people as the nation’s involvement in World War II progressed. This “Trianon syndrome” absolutely predestined Hungarian domestic and foreign politics both to the Axis alliance and the nation’s belligerence in World War II.

For its participation in the Axis cause in World War II, Hungary attained an unflattering reputation for having been on the wrong side in both World Wars. In actuality, Hungary’s affiliation with the Axis was not only predestined, but unavoidable and the only course open for Hungarian diplomacy. Germany and Italy provided the means by which Hungary was able to recoup at least the Magyar regions of the Successor States. In return, Hungary became the rail center for the German region of supplies, and
a military transit ground for the staging of the military conquest of Yugoslavia, Greece, and the Soviet Union.

There becomes a clear dividing line, however, in establishing Hungary’s “honor” and the eventual loss of that honor as an Axis participant in World War II. A constant theme in pro-Hungarian historiography is the general “honor” of the Hungarian nation that it has maintained throughout its history. It is to Hungary’s credit that it refused Hitler’s “Plan Green” for the military conquest of Czechoslovakia, opting instead for the Vienna Award of 1938. Hungary further peacefully acquired Ruthenia, to which Budapest had at least as legitimate a claim as Prague. Hungary further sought a diplomatic solution to the Transylvanian problem, even when the nation was fully ready to wage war against Rumania. These revisionist victories cost Hungary its freedom of action, however, as the nation became forced to align ever closer with Germany lest Rumania gain Hitler’s favor. Hungary was forced to sign the Anti-Comintern Pact, the Tripartite Pact, and grant Germany both military and economic transit rights on its territory.

Hungary’s fall from grace was its participation in the Yugoslav campaign of April 1941. Despite the treaty of “eternal” friendship with Yugoslavia, Magyar historiography argues that with the Croatian declaration of independence from the Yugoslav union, that treaty was no longer valid. The official Hungarian interpretation of the conflict that has been the thesis of many pro-Hungarian historians, including the memoirs of Regent Horthy and Prime Minister Kállay, is that Hungary’s involvement in that campaign was a “defensive” operation to “protect” the 468,000 Magyars of the Bácska (Serb Voivodina).
This is a direct falsification that can be proved by a military analysis of the Yugoslav campaign.

If the Hungarian move was indeed a defensive or protective maneuver, Hungarian forces, upon crossing the Yugoslav border, would have moved in a broad formation to simply secure the towns of the Bácska. Instead, study of the tactical move made by the Hungarian Third Army reveals that Hungary launched its attack in a double-pincers move, a classic military maneuver meant to encircle and destroy an enemy force. The Hungarian invasion, in contrast to the claims of Horthy and other Hungarian authors, was definitely a military move with a military objective: the isolation and destruction of the Yugoslav First Army, which was massed in the Voivodina in a support role of the Yugoslav Fourth Army, which was engaged at this time by the Germans in the northwest of the country. Hungary’s encirclement and destruction of this army group ensured no strategic relief for the forces engaged with the Germans in the northwest.¹⁶² Further, Hungary’s pincer attack on the Yugoslav First Army could not have achieved such textbook success were it not for German intelligence on the region. Germany possessed absolute air superiority in the Yugoslav campaign, and must have thoroughly investigated the Yugoslav military positions even in the Bácska (Voivodina) and identified the positions of the Yugoslav First Army, allowing Hungary to move with great accuracy to isolate and destroy that enemy force. The tactical and strategic precision of the

Hungarian military in the region therefore quite possibly linked the Hungarian military command with elements of the German High Command, regardless of Hungary’s claims of innocence.

With the Yugoslav fiasco, Hungary’s position as an ally of the Third Reich became irrevocable. In compliance with the other Axis powers, Hungary declared war on the Soviet Union as Operation Barbarossa progressed. War with Britain and the United States shortly followed. It seems that only Hungarian Prime Minister Pál Teleki properly understood that for Hungary’s revisionist aims to be lasting, Hungary would have needed the support of the Western powers. With Teleki’s suicide after the Yugoslav invasion, Hungary lost the last of its diplomats that held any favor with the West. The war now embraced Hungary, and all too soon, Hungary found itself once again irrevocably on the losing side of a global war. The result was worse than Trianon: loss of political continuity and Russian occupation from 1945 to 1989.

Ultimately, this summation of the general historiography reveals certain trends in the histories of revisionist Hungary. The Hungarians had always considered the Kingdom of St. Stephen to be an indivisible political, cultural, geographic, and economic entity. Trianon represented the worst nightmare possible for virtually all Hungarians. As many neutral historians have pointed out, the Trianon Treaty was unprecedented in its severity. The humiliation of Trianon and the loss of 3.2 million Magyars to the Successor States united all Hungarians under the slogan “nem, nem soha!” (No, no never!). Hungarians vowed to never accept the Trianon diktat and their entire interwar policy was dominated by a desperate search to reunite those lost lands. Since France was the leader of the status quo of interwar Europe and the hated Little Entente, Hungary was
forced to find common cause with the only powers that would support revision of Trianon. The path to the Axis was therefore predestined by the Trianon Treaty, and even more, the only sensible path for Hungarian foreign policy. If the Hungarians chose the “wrong” side in World War II, it must be understood that the West had dismembered historic Hungary, and few Hungarians would have chosen support from Bolshevik Russia. The only avenue for Hungarian policy, then was the Axis alliance. If Hungary went too far by participating in the Yugoslav and Russian campaigns, it must be understood that the joy of recovering the lost lands from 1938 to 1940 possibly clouded the better judgment of the Hungarian people and government.

Having lost two revolutions (1848 and 1956) and two world wars, Hungary has little fight left. It is clear, however, that there still remains a “Trianon syndrome” among Hungarians, often from those abroad, who fled the nation in 1945 and 1956. Although Hungary is currently seeking modern peaceful endeavors for its own security such as the NATO alliance and the European Union, it is unlikely that this “Trianon syndrome” and the romantic remembrance of the Kingdom of St. Stephen will ever escape the Magyar mass consciousness, and the greatness of Hungary’s glorious historical past and its heroic figures, from St. Stephen, Louis the Great, Matthias Hunyadi, to Lajos Kossuth, will never be forgotten among the Magyars of the world.
APPENDIX:

HISTORICAL MAPS
Hungary during the era of Turkish of partition showing Habsburg Royal Hungary and the semi-independent Transylvania.
The Hungarian thesis of the ancient migration of the Vlachs.
REFERENCES

Primary Sources

Government Documents:


Memoirs:


Propaganda Tracts:


**Historical Atlases:**


Secondary Sources

Books:


191


**Articles:**


Computer Software: