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## **THE IMAGE OF HUNGARY'S INTERNATIONAL POSITION IN AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICYMAKING, 1937-1947.**

University of Minnesota, Ph.D., 1967  
Political Science, international law and relations

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**THE IMAGE OF HUNGARY'S  
INTERNATIONAL POSITION  
IN AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY-  
MAKING, 1937-1947**

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE  
SCHOOL  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

BY

Paul Rupprecht

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

October 1967

## FOREWORD

The idea of this dissertation grew out of direct experiences that had witnessed the exchange of one alien,-totalitarian rule in East-Central Europe for another, and that had generated an interest in the causes of the present situation in that part of the world. This interest raised the following questions: to what extent did Hungary's position play a role in American decisions; were opportunities offered by it, . which might have enhanced American objectives; were those potential advantages recognized, fostered, or utilized by the United States; were there attempts made to coordinate such available resources in the interest of peace; and what were the reasons for their failure or success.

The feasibility of this study depended entirely on the availability of primary sources which provided background materials, revealed the motivations of the international actors, and unfolded the environmental influences. Recently and slowly -- very slowly -- access to official as well as private documents made a better insight into this subject possible. For the use of that material, the writer wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness to the following:

The Archduke Otto von Habsburg, Tibor Eckhardt; General G. Hennyey, András Hory, the late Miklós.Kállay, Professor C.A. Macartney of Oxford, the late John F. Montgomery, Ferenc Nagy, Bernhard C. Noble and his staff of the Historic Office of the United States Department of State, the late Hubert C. Pell, Aladár Szegedy-Maszák, the late András Tamás, and Ferenc Wagner of the Library of Congress.

The writer is particularly indebted to his academic advisors, Professors Charles H. McLaughlin and Harold C. Deutsch, who have guided and inspired him along his prolonged academic career. Special thanks are due to Professor McLaughlin for his enduring patience with the writer's deficiencies.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

- A. C. C. - Allied (Soviet) Control Commission.
- D. I. M. K. - Diplomáciai Iratok Magyarország  
Külpolitikájához.  
(Diplomatic Papers Pertaining to Hungary's Foreign Policy)
- D. G. F. P. - Documents on German Foreign Policy
- F. R. U. S. - Foreign Relations of the United States
- M. M. V. - Magyarország és a Második Világháború  
(Hungary and the Second World War)

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

On November 4, 1937, at a top-level policy meeting in Berlin, Hitler outlined his ambitions in the international field, vividly retained in the famous Hossbach minutes.<sup>1</sup> Ten years later, on June 1, 1947, the presentation of a forced resignation by the Prime Minister of Hungary, Ferenc Nagy, marked the day of that country's becoming a satellite of the Soviet Union.<sup>2</sup> The decade between these two events witnessed a huge transformation in the world of international politics from an era of uneasy, post-World War calm through Hitler's attempted assertion of European dominance to the establishment of Soviet power in East Central Europe, essentially still in effect today, twenty years later.

The events, developments, clashes -- both military and political -- of that fateful decade constitute the subject of this study's investigation and analysis, focussed on East-Central Europe, particularly on Hungary. Since the final outcome of the struggles of

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of State, Documents on German Foreign Policy (hereafter DGFP), Series D, Vol.. I: From Neurath to Ribbentrop, 1937-1938 (Washington, 1949), pp. -37

<sup>2</sup>U.S Department of State, Moscow's European Satellites (Washington, 1955)s p. 3.

those ten years was determined to a very large extent by the power and involvement of the United States, it appears most appropriate to study how America perceived the international situation there, to what extent the American evaluations of it were accurate, how the final decisions were influenced by them, how the opportunities inherent in that situation for America were exploited and used to obtain desired results, who and what segments of the American decision-makers actually determined the policies shaping America's actions and inactions.

Situated where the major powers' spheres of influence met, in both the German-Russian and in the American-Russian contexts, Hungary provided an excellent subject on which their intertwining relationships exerted overwhelming effects. As the last country in that area coming under German occupation and one that had a relatively long period of some self-government under her own political leadership after World War II, Hungary was able to display multifarious attempts to save her own political life and thus show many of the political possibilities that a small country has in store, even facing severe forms of foreign interference by great powers adjacent to or present on her soil.

The purpose of this paper then is to examine the East-Central European scene, and occasionally even cause, of great power ambitions and rivalries as they



reflected themselves in a microcosmic form in the fate of Hungary and as these reflections were viewed by the United States during the era of World War II. Such a study is useful in that it reveals the possibilities of great power interests in Central-Eastern Europe in solving their own conflicts, in preserving the small countries, and in maintaining the peace of the world. Such a study is also necessary and overdue to fill a gap in this area.' Most studies either concentrate on the direct relationships of the great powers and completely neglect the potentials involved in the small ones, or they focus on individual small countries neglecting the effects of their presence, actions, inactions, offerings, and desires on world powers and other neighbors. But such a study has become possible today by the availability of related and very relevant documentation. Many of the early documents which came to light in relation to the events of interest here did not serve exclusively the purpose of objectivity. Some were selected and published with a view to provide incriminating evidence in the war crimes trials; others were memoirs written with the primary intention to justify the author's role or actions, with heavy emotional overtones and factual errors; again others aimed

<sup>3</sup>Thomas Schreiber, "La Hongrie de 1918 à 1958, État de travaux," Revue Française de Science Politique, 8 (Sept. 1958), 655-675

at the support of new regimes replacing old ones. All lacked a balanced, complete approach, being one-sided by necessity, created in a world composed of antagonistic super-powers anxious to justify their opposing stands, views and behavior. The more recent publications, however, are more complete on both sides. Not only does a twenty-year distance give us a better perspective in trying to evaluate the period, but the availability of relevant documentation also becomes very helpful.

This examination of the decade, starting with 1937, and focussing on U. S. policies toward Hungary, follows the path of chronological sequences, starting with background information on the international situation after World War I with its essentially unchanged power relationships until the establishment of the European Axis of Germany and Italy; then tracing the development of efforts challenging the status quo as of 1936, with the rise of Hitler's power and ambitions met by western inabilities to realize, recognize or oppose its dangerous implications; further by describing the stages of Germany's assertion of dominance over South-East Europe, East Europe and the ensuing appearance of a coalition of powers opposing, halting, and defeating it; finally, by scrutinizing the transfer of power in that part of the world from Hitler's to Stalin's hands and the western powers' role

in the course of this change, which, after an unsuccessful challenge from the inside in 1956, is still in effect.

our particular inquiry will be in relation to America's view of the events in Hungary's diplomatic activity. Did Hungary's international position differ from that of other neighboring small nations? Did their interrelationships contain elements of possible cooperation powerful enough to be of importance in the great powers' game there? Were such possibilities exploited by the parties involved or by interested great powers? During the war, were the underlying factors, which went far beyond Hitler's mere exploiting of them, recognized in the U. S. preparatory peace work? To what extent were the U. S. - Soviet post-war encounters related to Eastern Europe of importance in determining the shape of things to take place there bearing so heavily on the world situation ever since? What was the nature of American foreign-policy making in these connections? What were its personal and factual elements? To what extent could they be and were they actually influenced by reality, by expectations, by misjudgment, by motives, by the character of personalities, by the sequence of events, or by the skill of the opponents?

Answers to these questions could be of value in two respects: for one, they could reveal the elements, given realities and relationships of the super-powers'

meeting each other's interest spheres in Eastern Europe, constituting the prime basis of today's East-West tension and of the Cold War; and for the other, they could shed some light on the internal workings, mentality, limitations and possibilities of foreign-policy formation in the United States, one of the two primary determinants of the world political situation.

The two main challengers of the existing international order in Europe, Hitler's Germany first and Stalin's Russia later, followed and announced ambitious programs threatening neighbors and distant lands both in their independent existence and their internal structures. Neither of them seemed to be able to become satisfied and thus their restraint could be brought about only by outside forces. The main power able to provide such a limitation to Germany's and Russia's insatiable expansion has been the United States. This is why America's actions are of decisive significance in world affairs. This is why their study may be rewarding for those attempting to look into the future of international relations.

Combining the features of the Cold War's main scene with the behavior patterns of one of its participants should give us an answer to the question whether those patterns are flexible and accommodating to the realities of the situation or whether they are unrealistically determined by fixed assumptions and

rigid interpretations of tradition and self-interest. Were world events viewed by pre-determined standards judging peoples and nations by their associations -free or forced, by their governments -- chosen or endured, by their aspirations -- honest or dishonest, or were situations and their participants judged on the merits of the case? Were potentials in a situation favorable to the cause of freedom and democracy always recognized, encouraged, and assisted or where they overlooked, prejudged to be incapable of fruition and thus neglected to the detriment of those causes?

These are the problems and questions related to the topic of this study. Their pursuit with questioning research and honest objectivity is the only approach which is acceptable, feasible, and promising of good results. It appears worthy of being attempted.

## CHAPTER II

### HUNGARY'S INTERNATIONAL POSITION – A BRIEF BACKGROUND

Looking at the relief map of Europe, one can readily distinguish, spreading between Germanic Central Europe proper and the Russian Lowlands, a wide belt marked more by the absence than the presence of its own uniformity or cohesion. Put between east and west, this huge area called East-Central Europe is a historic battleground or "shatter zone" of the old continent.<sup>1</sup> It comprises three large and distinct regions: the Polish Plain in the north, the Middle Danube Basin in the center, and the Balkans in the South. Situated in the Middle Danube Basin, Hungary, the subject of our concern, occupies a strategic position with an area of 35,900 square miles.

Destined by its position to serve as a bridge between east and west, when the area of East-Central Europe was broken up into smaller, independent states at the end of World War I, its new states were also intended to serve as buffers against Germany's eastern and Russia's western aspirations. Soon it became evident,

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<sup>1</sup>Richard Hartshorne, "The Most Difficult Part of the World," in Foundations of National Power, eds. Harold and Margaret Sprout (Princeton: Princeton U. Press, 1945). p. 378.

however, that the ethnic differences, minority problems, and national animosities created an atmosphere totally uncondusive to effective cooperation in the direction of the above, desired ends. The western policy to create a tier of these new, small states designed to be a cordón sanitaire for the Soviet Union failed for two reasons: first, they were left on their own economically, when they were still dependent on outside assistance and when only economic development could satisfy their social grievances and not the politico-territorial rearrangements; secondly, neither the western Allies, nor the new states in East-Central Europe could foresee the emergence of the USSR as a principal power.<sup>2</sup>

The American geographer, Richard Hartshorne, called this region "the most difficult part of the world,"<sup>3</sup> and came to the conclusion that the new states, cursed with the ills of youth, lacking strength, unable to attain in their small national areas the necessary economic base for operating their economies independently, were not capable of resisting external pressure. The status quo could have been assured only if the bordering great powers had an interest in its maintenance, which they did not. Neither Germany, nor

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<sup>2</sup>A. E. Moodie, "The Eastern Marchlands of Europe," in The Changing World, eds. W. Gordon East and A. E. Moodie (New York: World -Book Co., 1957), pp. 116-7.

<sup>3</sup>Hartshorne, op. cit., p.378.

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Russia, nor Italy had a hand in the system's creation. They had only reasons of their own to change it. Those interested in saving it were far away and without sufficient power.<sup>4</sup> Nor was the system of the inter-war years equipped to prevent its own destruction since its external support depended almost exclusively on the Western Powers. Internally the Little Entente, the only alliance within the system, was directed against a small neighbor, Hungary, and not against Germany or Russia.<sup>5</sup>

To counter this historical development of instability and immaturity, an effective organization of East-Central Europe calls for meeting two opposing needs: while economic progress and political security require some organization of the area as a whole, the dignity of the individual requires a recognition of the integrity of the individual folk-group, or nation, to which each belongs.<sup>6</sup>

The particular significance of the area to the Western Powers was pointed out again by Hartshorne, who referred to the fact that any increase in the area of Germany in the east would inevitably increase its potential danger to national states of the west.

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 380-1.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., P. 383.

<sup>6</sup> Richard Hartshorne, "The Politico-Geographic Pattern of the World," *Annals*, No. 218-. (Nov. 1941), 47.

Stability of Western Europe is dependent on the national security of Eastern Europe. This interrelationship emphasized the absence of any political organization of Europe as a whole when Germany started to assert itself.<sup>7</sup>

It can be said, then, that the independence of small nations in the "shatter zone" is a precarious affair, possible only if the neighboring great powers are impotent, not interested, or as rivals in agreement on a compromise. To assess further the value of these small countries in international affairs, it has to be added that not even all together could muster sufficient military power to oppose either the German or Russian colossus successfully. A military federation of all still would lack geographical and military cohesion, strategic materials and defensible frontiers .

Yet to underline the true significance of East-Central Europe as a whole, it should suffice to point out that both world wars originated there, if not by that area then because of it.

The interrelationships of the three main regions of East-Central Europe are amply demonstrated by considering the fact that only through the Middle Danube

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid.,\_P. 53.

<sup>8</sup>Stefan Possony, "Political and Military Geography of Central Balkan and Eastern Europe," Annals,\_No. 232 (March, 1944), 6.



Basin could the Balkans be reached from Central Europe, or vice versa, and that movements from East Europe either to Central Europe through the Polish Plain's southern half or to the Balkans could be successfully interdicted through flanking operations by a strong power in possession of the Middle Danube Basin.<sup>9</sup>

The Middle Danube Basin, the center one of the three main regions composing Central Eastern Europe, is also referred to as the Carpathian Basin owing to the fact that it is surrounded from the northwest to the southeast by the semilunar Carpathian mountain crest with valleys converging on the central plain -- rising to about four to five thousand feet. The unique, natural whole so formed unites the entire area around its Danubian hydrographic center, protected by the outside mountain girdle. In its geographic composition the Carpathian Basin also reflects its central position by displaying features of the East having in its plains the westernmost spurs of the eastern steppes and in its varied regions with mountain systems the easternmost formations of a distinctly western pattern.

This basin then was a highway of migrations and a line of conflicts. Running through it, the Danube connected it to the west with the Upper Danubian Basin

<sup>9</sup>Ferenc Adonyi, A Magyar Katona a Második Világháborúban (Klagenfurt: Ferd. Klienmayr, 1954), pp. 146-8

or Central Europe's southern half and to the east with the Lower Danube Basin or the northern half of the Balkans. The Danube also provided the natural gateways for this transit; one leading to the west at the gates of Vienna, the other opening the way through the Serbian Morava Valley to the southeast. Through them came the ottoman Turks challenging the west, and through them went in the opposite direction the Crusaders, and later the Germans penetrating into the east. The cultural influences, too, followed the same routes,<sup>10</sup>

When the area is not occupied by a single great power, it serves as an invitation, rather than a deterrent, to other powers attempting to move across it. This became quite evident when on the dissolution Of Austria-Hungary the power structure of East-Central Europe was weakened to the extent that it opened up the way to Germany's moving east and to Russia's marching west. <sup>11</sup>

Historical, or pre-World-War-I Hungary owed her beginnings in the late Ninth Century to the Magyars' descendents of Finno-Ugrian tribesmen, who made their way to Central Europe and occupied the entire Carpathian

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<sup>10</sup> Eric Fischer, "The Passing of Mitteleuropa." The Changing World, eds. W. Gordon East and A. ~~ New York: World Book Co., 1957), p. 77.

<sup>11</sup>Gyula Princ, et al., Magyar Föld, Magyar Táj (Budapest: Királyi Magyar Egyetemi Nyomda, n.d.) III: Magyar Földrajz, az államföldrajzi kép, pp. 393-4

Basin, enjoying a natural boundary that proved to be one of the most enduring in Europe.<sup>12</sup> Their appearance in the Danube Valley had many significant implications which were to stay with that area for centuries. Being neither Slav, nor Teutonic, nor Latin, the Magyars constituted an alien body between northern and southern Slavs and eventually became a buffer state between Slavs, Germans, and even Romanians. In the course of history European culture reached this area with western Christianity, which, taken up by the Hungarians, had its easternmost bulwark in Hungary's frontiers to the east. Beyond was the eastern world under the influence of Byzantium.<sup>13</sup>

The Hungarian geographer and twice prime minister, Count Paul Teleki, who took his own life in protest of Germany's attack on Yugoslavia through his country in 1941, considered Hungary as a geographic, a historical, and a political concept. Geographically Hungary meant the Danube Basin, a unified and complementary region which no political structure can hold unless it is in possession of all of it out to the Carpathian rim, which presents the most effective separating and dividing land frontier. Historically she reflects the fact that

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<sup>12</sup>Stephen D. Kertész, Diplomacy in a Whirlpool (Notre Dame, Ind.; University of Notre-Dame Press 1953) P. 3.

<sup>13</sup> ibid.

the Hungarians migrating through the area decided to stay and settle there, thereby changing their form of life, fusing themselves into the life of Europe at a spot where they were able to survive; had they stayed in the open eastern steppes, they would have been lost and absorbed like other smaller tribes; had they moved on to the west, they, as plainsmen, would not have been able to adjust successfully to the requirements of the Alps. Politically Hungary meant a changing into western culture which remained national in character.<sup>14</sup>

The geographical and economic unity of that basin was not matched by a unity in ethnic respects. As a matter of fact, it shared the ethnic diversities of East-Central Europe, and presented a most confusing and confused patchwork of nationalities.<sup>15</sup> Consequently, historic Hungary, occupying the entire Carpathian Basin of 125,000 square miles, had a population of twenty-one million people, of whom only 54% were Magyars at the turn of this century; the remainder was composed of a

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<sup>14</sup>Pau1 Graf Teleki, "Die Weltpolitische and Wirtschaftliche Lage Ungarns in Vergangenheit and Gegenwart," Zeitschrift für Geopolitik, III (1926), 381-409.

<sup>15</sup>Harold and Margaret Sprout, eds., Foundations of National Power (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1945), p. 376

large number of different nationalities reflecting the complicated ethnic pattern of the area.<sup>16</sup>

When after World War I the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was dissolved, Hungary became one of the successor states and was reduced by the Treaty of Trianon of June 4, 1920, to less than one-third of her former territory and to a population of eight million, leaving 3-1/4 million Magyars outside the new boundaries and creating one of the chief problems of the inter-war period in that part of Europe.

Trianon Hungary, then situated at the bottom of the Carpathian Basin, still maintained her central position in relation to Central and Eastern Europe and to the other main regions making up East-Central Europe. Since according to Nicholas Spykman the geography of a country is rather the material for than the cause of its policy,<sup>17</sup> an examination of the vital components of Hungary's national power is called for to determine her abilities to exercise decision-making in her own affairs and to influence it in others. This way the realities of Hungary's international position can be detailed, which will serve as the determinants to a large extent

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<sup>16</sup>Andre Blank, "Hungary," in Larousse Encyclopedia of Geography, Europe, ed. Pierre Defontaines (New or ; Prometheus Press, 1961), p. 263.

<sup>17</sup>Nicholas J. Spykman, "Geography and Foreign Policy." American political Science Review, XXXII (1938), 30.

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of her limitations and capabilities. These geographical facts serve as the bases of the history, which is geography set in motion<sup>18</sup> and which is the subject of this study.

Trianon Hungary's size of less than 36,000 square miles, or lib of Europe, put her among the smallest states of her area, compared with Czechoslovakia's 54,200, Romania's 113,900, Yugoslavia's 96,200 and Austria's 3p,000 square miles.<sup>19</sup> Her frontiers run a total of 1,400 miles, of which 228 border on Austria in the west, 512 on Czechoslovakia in the north, 268 or Romania in the east, and 397 on Yugoslavia in the south.<sup>20</sup> None of these borders represents clearly definable, natural dividing lines in the sense of being effective barriers to communication, having low population density, lack of transportation facilities, and no value to neighbors, The Danube serves as the frontier between Czechoslovakia and Hungary on its western portion, but, being a central artery of transportation, even though a natural from tier, it is not a good one. They are all exposed

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18 New Compass of the World, Hans W. Weigert et al., eds. (New York: McMillan Co., 1949), p. xi.

19 Larousse Encyclopedia of Geography, Europe, ed. Pierre Defontaines (New York: Prometheus Press, 1961) Pp. 440-2.

20 Imre Kovács, ed.; Facts about Hungary - The Fight for Freedom (New York: Hungarian Committee, 1966), p.347.

frontiers running along densely populated areas which are closely interdependent economically.

The shape of the country lacks compactness, which would enhance defensibility. A line cutting through the capital city, Budapest, in the east-west direction extends over the longest distance possible from border to border, 315 air miles, with the capital roughly at its center, 142 miles from the west and 173 miles from the east. Another line through the capital perpendicular to the first extends 125 miles, of which only 25 fall north of the capital.

Trianon Hungary has two geographical axes. One is the Danube toward which the country's entire transportation system is gravitating. The other one is a belt of hills angling from northeast to southwest intersecting the Danube where the capital city is located and thus roughly dividing the country into four regions. On the northwest we find the fertile Little Plain bordered by the Danube flowing from west to east, by the Austrian frontier, and by the hilly ranges which contain the important source of bauxite. South of them is rich, rolling Transdanubia, the Pannonia of Roman times, with oil-wells in its southwest corner, further delimited by the Danube and Drava rivers. East of the Danube, cut in two by the meandering Tisza river, the Great Plain spreads out up to the Romanian border, the rather flat granary of the Danube Basin with a fertile soil

occasionally depressed by drought. The fourth area is made up of the northern hilly ranges, just under the Czechoslovakian border, with some mining of coal and iron ore.

Historically, Budapest developed at the intersection of the two geographical axes mentioned where 'two main commercial routes had also crossed the Danube and each other. one was the trade route which carried amber from the Baltic to Italy, crossing from the northeast to the southwest. The second was the "beef-route" on which cattle herds were driven from Transylvania and the Great Plain to Central Europe. <sup>21</sup> At Budapest the Danube was the narrowest, in contrast to other sections with marshy flood plains; it was also defensible by a fort situated on the Buda hills west of the river overlooking the area. This point also coincided with the area where the country's different production regions met each other creating a market belt for the exchange of their respective products.<sup>22</sup>

In natural resources the country is poor, except for bauxite and petroleum in rather limited amounts. In 1938, the bauxite production was half a million metric tons; the coal production was two million metric

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<sup>21</sup>Géza Teleki, "Budapest politikai-földrajzi helyzete," Új Magyar Út, VI (1955), 63-64.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.



tons and the petroleum production was 86,000 metric tons.<sup>23</sup> At the end of the First World War, Hungary lost most of her mineral resources and timber, leaving the industrial areas in the center of the country cut off from their raw materials and also from their markets.

Since the whole plains region constituting Trianon Hungary is mostly agricultural, to which it is best suited by virtue of its climate with spring rains and hot summers, only the milling industry was left intact by the frontier changes. The steel industry's production was 0.6 million metric tons in 1938.<sup>24</sup>

Lack of industrial raw materials and a primarily agricultural economy made the country very much dependent on outside markets and assistance.

The population was 8,685,000 in 1930, and 9,316,000 in 1941,<sup>25</sup> which over an area of 36,000 square miles yielded a relatively high population density of about 250 people per square mile. This factor was an advantage from the standpoint of available labor and military manpower supply, but it created a problem in the interwar economic situation as to support and employment.

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<sup>23</sup>Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, Magyar Statisztikai Zsebkönyv, 1690 (Budapest: Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, 1960), p.47.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

Location with respect to surrounding countries determines security by defining the position in regard to potential enemies or allies. In Hungary's case all four of her neighbors received territories from her by the Trianon Treaty. Actually more than three million Magyars had been transferred with those territories, half of whom were located in areas immediately adjacent to the new frontiers. <sup>26</sup> generated an overwhelming desire in Hungary for a revision of the status quo, setting the tone of Hungary's foreign policy for the entire inter-war period. Since three of her neighbors, namely Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia, were on the other hand vitally interested in the maintenance of the status quo for which they had joined in the Little Entente with the primary purpose of preventing Hungarian revision, a situation developed on the Danubian international scene which made potential enemies of these three neighbors. This relationship was particularly disadvantageous from the standpoint of military strength because Hungary's armed forces were limited to 35,000 officers and men by the Trianon Treaty whereas the Little Entente members were fully armed, without any limitation on the size of their armies. <sup>27</sup>

This situation

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<sup>26</sup> John F. Montgomery, Hungary, The Unwilling Satellite (New York: Devin Adair Co., 1947), p. 48.

<sup>27</sup> C. A. Macartney, Hungary: A Short History (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1962), p. 207.

A further feature of Hungary's geographical make-up is that of her being landlocked, a condition shared with Czechoslovakia. Spykman tells us that, because of disadvantages, such a position is not a normal one unless nature has endowed a country with insurmountable frontiers. Otherwise, if weak, a landlocked country will be partitioned or absorbed by its neighbors, or if strong, it will eventually force its way to the sea.<sup>28</sup>

The most advantageous regional location of a state is to be strong between two weak neighbors, thus providing a balance of power system. Relative equality in strength among adjacent states forces the state facing a joint attack by its neighbors to look for alliance with the neighbor's neighbor. In the case of a weak state put between two larger ones we have a buffer state; if it serves as a neutralized border area to separate the two greater powers, the true buffer is established. If, however, the in-between state instead of separating its powerful neighbors actually provides an avenue for approaching each other in a conflict, then we have a pseudo-buffer state. Such was Hungary's case. Its security depended on the neighbor's security derived from its existence; thus, it was forced to neutrality. If a greater power should be tempted to replace the

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<sup>28</sup>Spykman, *op. cit.*, pp. 214-5.

security obtained from the existence of an independent buffer state with a security obtained from its actual occupation, then its safety would be gone. If location and topography make the state a buffer state, then it is safe. If location makes it a passage but with a barrier, problems become more difficult. If both location and topography make it a passage state, it must make its independence indispensable to the security of its neighbors.<sup>29</sup>

Unfortunately, the strategic importance of the Middle Danube Basin does not tolerate neutrality, whether its neighboring great powers are involved in a conflict with each other through it or whether they are pursuing designs on the Balkans by it: Hungary's diplomatic history is made up of the answers sought, attempted or given to the forced question: how to survive when the great power neighbors are friends, which one to choose when they are enemies?

Before we set out to trace that history and the image that it created among American policy makers, we can summarize that the course taken was limited and many times determined by the realities of Hungary's geographical position, which were very disadvantageous. Geographically small, militarily powerless, economically weak, a landlocked country put among

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 225-7.

hostile neighbors whose primary interest was to keep her that way, Hungary was sitting at a crossroads of history, which it was unable to avoid, weak to prevent, and powerless to influence. In conditions like these diplomacy becomes of paramount importance in the struggle for existence. The quality of diplomacy is another element of national power which we shall set out to investigate: what were its possibilities and limitations; to what extent and how were they applied by Hungary and other powers involved; what chances were missed in creating or maintaining a just peace, or in building a better world.

## CHAPTER III

### THE INTERNATIONAL SETTING IN 1937

#### 1. The Grouping of the Great Powers.

The Europe in which Hungary found herself at the beginning of 1937 was not much different on the surface from that which had been established by the peace settlements of the First World War. The new borders were still unchanged, and the internal regimes of the countries in East-Central Europe were similar to their predecessors of seventeen years back. On the larger scene, Europe's international politics were dominated then, as for a decade or more before, by the following major features:

- a. The continuous struggle between the forces fighting for the maintenance and those fighting for the revision of the Paris Peace Treaties, aligning the countries in the groups of "have" and "have-not" nations;
- b. The withdrawal from the European political arena of two non-European great powers, namely, the United States and Japan;
- c. The emergence after the successful communist revolution in Russia of the Soviet Union as a power in the east;
- d. The appearance of two totalitarian regimes to the west in the form of Italy's Fascism and Germany's

National Socialism with expansive foreign policies corresponding to their internal systems; and

e. The presence in East-Central Europe of explosive border situations brought about by the peace settlements whenever they disregarded the principle of national self-determination.

Hitler's rise to power marked the beginning of a very definite and determined pursuit of a policy in direct challenge of the existing post-war order. He made it quite clear that his basic foreign political goal was to make Germany supreme in Europe by uniting in his Reich all German populations in or outside the 1919 frontiers, by conquering enough Lebensraum for his new Germany at the expense of her eastern neighbors, and by recovering her colonies lost in World War I.<sup>1</sup> Naturally all this also involved the repudiation of those clauses of the Versailles Treaty which related to the limitations on Germany's armaments.

As a first step, in March 1935, Hitler announced the resumption of compulsory military service and the increase of the German army to half-a-million men. The reaction of the Western Powers was condemnatory without actions that would have checked this development. Still, at least in principle, the front opposing Germany's

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<sup>1</sup>Julius W. Pratt, A History of United States Foreign Policy (New York: Prentice Hall, Inc. , 1955) p. 591.

assertion composed of Great Britain, France and Italy was unified enough, particularly in its determination to avert the Anschluss of Austria to Germany. Already on January 7, 1935, France and Italy had agreed on guaranteeing Austria's frontiers and on co-ordinated colonial policies, virtually amounting to Italy's adherence to the anti-revision front and to France's tacit consent in advance to Mussolini's designs on Ethiopia.<sup>2</sup> This front denounced at its Stresa conference in April the German rearmament announcement, and attempts were made by them to organize East-Central Europe against Germany under joint Franco-Italian leadership,<sup>3</sup> to be discussed later in connection with developments closer to Hungarian foreign relations.

By May 2, 1935, France signed a Mutual Assistance Pact with the Soviet Union in Moscow, thus involving Eastern Europe also in the anti-German alliance scheme. Only two weeks later this pact was also extended to Czechoslovakia in the form of a Soviet-Czechoslovak Treaty made operative on the condition of prior French military intervention.

The Stresa front's unity of purpose, restricted to condemnatory declarations against Hitler's Austrian

<sup>2</sup>C. A. Macartney and A. W. Palmer, Independent Eastern Europe (London: McMillan Co., 1962), p.327. .

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 340.



designs, failed to deter in the arena of actual political behavior. Great Britain, displeased with the Franco-Russian rapprochement, signed a Naval Treaty with Germany in June allowing German naval rearmament up to 35% of the British fleet, which was far in excess of the Versailles restrictions. By the early summer of 1935, it was clear that the inter-war diplomatic revolution had begun,<sup>4</sup> brought about by the French interest in winning over Italy first and by Great Britain's favoring Germany as the first to be won. The break in the original alignment of the great powers came when Mussolini attacked Ethiopia in October, bringing into conflict his designated partners on the European scene.<sup>5</sup> While the League sanctions against Italy were imposed by Great Britain, France's Prime Minister, Laval, tried his best to retain Italy on the side of the Western Powers by devising the Hoare-Laval plan, which would have sacrificed Ethiopia's territorial integrity to keep Italy's friendship. The plan, when it became known through a deliberate French leak to prevent the British from backing out, caused the fall of both Hoare and Laval. The rearranged British and French ministries continued with the sanctions against Italy and agreed to

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<sup>4</sup> John A. Lukács, The Great Powers and Eastern Europe (New York: American Book Company, 1953) p. 53.

<sup>5</sup>Macartney - Palmer, op. cit., p. 340.

submit the Franco-Russian Pact for ratification to the League. These actions made the split between Italy and the West complete and benefited Hitler greatly, providing him with an ally and future excuses for his planned actions. Europe did not have to wait for them long.

On March 7, 1936, Germany reoccupied the Rhineland, a rapid move which remained unchallenged by military countermeasures on the part of the West. Hitler's pretext for it was that the ratification of the Franco-Russian Pact was incompatible with the spirit of the Locarno Treaty that had demilitarized the Rhineland in 1925.

As a further complication in the relations of the great powers in Europe, the Spanish Civil War broke out in July, providing an opportunity for them to take up positions in the conflict on opposing sides.

The end of 1935 saw the break-up of the Stresa front, which was conforming to the original arrangement growing out of the division between the victors and the vanquished of World War I. This marked the end of the first phase of the diplomatic revolution. The establishment of new alignments constituted its second phase. Hitler's sympathetic attitude toward Italy during the Ethiopian war, and his seeing eye-to-eye in the matter of supporting Franco in Spain, neutralized Mussolini's concern for Austria's territorial integrity and led to the conclusion of a treaty which founded the Rome-Berlin

Axis on October 25, 1936, with agreement on the recognition of annexation of Ethiopia by Italy, and on the coordination of their respective spheres of economic interest in Southeastern Europe.

A further consolidation of the new front of the revisionist powers was accomplished exactly one month later when Germany and Japan signed the Anticomintern Pact, joined by Italy a year later, which committed the parties to inform each other on matters related to the activities of the Communist International. Thus, at least a loose connection was established among the powers bent on changing the map of the world by aggressive measures. From then on French hegemony on the Continent was replaced by German initiatives, and the worth of the League of Nations as a peace-keeping organization was severely reduced.

The grouping of the powers by 1937, showed that the English-French-Russian axis cut the German-Italian axis in Austria and Czechoslovakia, indicating the location of conflicts to come.<sup>6</sup> The rearrangement of the major powers was made more complete by Japan's new attack on China in July of 1937, and by Italy's joining the Anti-comintern Pact on November 6, 1937. By then all three of them had performed their first aggressive

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<sup>6</sup>G. P. Gooch, "The Grouping of the Powers," The Hungarian Quarterly, III (1937), 20.

step, Italy in Ethiopia, Germany by occupying the Rhineland, and Japan against China, and all three of them had concluded agreements formally co-ordinating their respective actions.

## 2. Small Power Combinations.

Against the background of the international setting of the major powers, Hungary found herself among neighbors, three of whom, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia, had already allied themselves in the Little Entente at the beginning of the 'twenties against her and her alone. The primary purpose of that alliance was to prevent a restoration of the Habsburg family to the Hungarian throne and a revision of the peace settlement regarding Hungary.

From its inception up to 1936, Hungary was the sole object of the Little Entente's military planning.<sup>7</sup> Even though revision of the Trianon Treaty was the fundamental aim and objective of Hungary's foreign policy, the misdirection of the Little Entente's military concentration upon her becomes quite evident if one considers her measureless military inferiority, both actual and potential, compared with her neighbors, and

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<sup>7</sup>Rudolf Kiszling, Die Militärischen Vereinbarungen der Kleinen Entente, 1929-1937 (München: Oldenburg, 1959), pp. 68-69.

if one appreciates the existence of a major threat in Nazi Germany.

Hungary's foreign relations, determined by her isolated position among pro-status-quo countries, made her look for friends who would be able to assist her in her aspirations to recover the three-and-a-half million Hungarians who were placed under foreign rule outside the new borders drawn at Trianon. The first successful move in this direction was to secure admission to the League of Nations on September 18, 1922, which was achieved by Prime Minister Bethlen against considerable resistance by the Little Entente.<sup>8</sup> This was followed by a League loan to Hungary and by the signing of two Protocols on March 14, 1924, by Britain, France, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia, promising to respect the territorial integrity of Hungary in return for Hungary's promise to respect and fulfill the obligations contained in the Trianon Treaty.

The main purpose in obtaining League membership was to exploit the possibilities for revision through peaceful change and procedures open within the framework of the League. Unfortunately, those who wrote the peace treaties were looking not forward, but backward. They were thinking not in terms of permanent peace,

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<sup>8</sup>C. A. Macartney, A History of Hungary (New York: Praeger, 1956), I, 63.

economic cooperation and social progress, but rather in terms of war and its prevention.<sup>9</sup> The only basis on which the League of Nations could have been of service to its members was a freedom within the community of nations for each member, the same freedom that each member claims for itself. For the small nations the only way to secure this was to be guardians and supporters not only of their own but of each other's rights.<sup>10</sup> Nothing was to be hoped from the new political machinery of the League unless the regime which it hoped to establish was actually founded on principles securing general assent. Disorder was due to absence of common ideals and of common morality. There was no protection of small nations or redress of grievances in the League. Instead of collective security, it brought collective insecurity.<sup>11</sup>

By 1927, another opportunity opened itself for Hungary to get out of her isolation. Italy, under Mussolini, anxious to establish herself in the Balkans as the most influential power, was frightened into offering a friendly hand to Hungary, having heard of a

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<sup>9</sup>Nicholas M. Butler, "The United States of Europe," The Hungarian Quarterly, I (1936), 15.

<sup>10</sup>Stephen Gwynn, "The League and the Small Nations," The Hungarian Quarterly, I (1936), 47.

<sup>11</sup>Sir Arnold Wilson, "The Future of the Society of Nations," The Hungarian Quarterly, I (1936), 21-31.

possible Yugoslav-Hungarian rapprochement, which, however, was duly stifled by Little Entente Interventions.<sup>12</sup> Hungary now had an official friend who came out openly for revision. A Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation was signed in April. This Italy-Hungarian relationship was expanded in 1934 by means of the Rome Protocols to an Italian-Austrian-Hungarian concert in response to their mutual interest in Austria's independence and in economic cooperation. The exact nature of the military understandings is still not quite clear, but it is without doubt that Italy promised Hungary to take part in a conflict in which Hungary would be attacked by Yugoslavia.<sup>13</sup> There was some concern in Hungary about the possible results of this agreement in making more remote the likelihood of a rapprochement with France and the Little Entente that could lead to a common Danubian front against Germany. To this, in his defense of the agreements, the Hungarian Foreign Minister Kánya replied that it was not proved yet that a rapprochement with the French bloc was possible on terms other than the unconditional surrender of Hungary's claims for revision, whereas the association with Italy and Austria implied no political renunciation.<sup>14</sup> This explanation was

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<sup>12</sup> C.A. Macartney, A History of Hungary, I, 85.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., I, 144.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., I, 145.

maintained all the way through the existence of the Little Entente in its relations with Hungary.

There was a further power combination in East-Central Europe which had some indirect bearing on Hungary's international position. In 1934, just two months before the Rome Protocols were signed, the Balkan Pact between Turkey, Greece, Romania and Yugoslavia was concluded, aiming at the coordination of the signatories' foreign policies. Since Greece considered this to be a defensive alliance only, Yugoslavia turned elsewhere for more substantial assurances, rendering the pact quite weak.

There were many attempts to effect a rapprochement between the Little Entente and the Rome Protocol States to forestall a German expansion in the Danube Valley. In 1934, with the French-Italian community of interest in opposing the Anschluss, there was willingness on the part of both to bring about a similar understanding between their respective groups of proteges. Italy took upon herself to mediate in the matter and in May of 1935, called the Austrian and Hungarian statesmen to Venice. Acceptance of a mutual assistance treaty between the two blocs was, by Hungary, made conditional on the recognition of her rights to military equality and on the assurance of her right to watch over the interests of the Hungarian minorities in



the succession States.<sup>15</sup> In addition the attitude both of Austria and Hungary had already been made clear a year before that neither of them would accept an anti German combination as long as Austrian independence was assured<sup>16</sup>. As a matter of fact, even Yugoslavia had let Germany know in the fall of 1934, that she would not be drawn into an anti-German grouping. These facts and attitudes, combined with the Little Entente's insistence that revision meant war, made any closer reconciliation between the two groups unlikely.

Yet the approaches in that direction were not given up even after the French and Italian sponsorship of them was fading in view of the Ethiopian war. By 1935-1936, the Little Entente started to discover that reliance for their safety against Germany on the Western Powers was not a very solid foundation. Thus in 1936 the Czechoslovak Prime Minister Hodsa presented a plan for a Danubian Pact with non-aggression, noninterference, and possibly mutual assistance clauses to be guaranteed by the great powers and extended by a preferential trade agreement.<sup>17</sup> The plan, however, foundered on the well-known differences on the matter

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<sup>15</sup>Magda Ádám, "Magyarország és a Kisantant" (Hungary and the Little Entente), Századok, Vol. 96 1962), 504.

<sup>16</sup>Macartney, op. cit., I,147.

<sup>17</sup>Ádám, op. cit., 506-7.

of revision. Later attempts of Benes, the President of Czechoslovakia, to strengthen the Little Entente itself were also made hopeless first by Yugoslav, then by Romanian, refusal to go along with them. <sup>18</sup>

There was some hope for an improvement of relations at least on a bilateral basis between Yugoslavia and Hungary. The proposal came from the Yugoslavs that if Hungary were willing to accept the Yugoslav-Hungarian frontier as final, Yugoslavia would reconcile her relations with Hungary without the other two members of the Little Entente. Such a reconciliation would be easy in view of the two countries' common anti-Communist, anti-Habsburg and pro-German policies.<sup>19</sup> Hungary wanted to pursue this offer and responded favorably. Nothing came of it, however, since by March of 1937, Italy concluded an agreement with Yugoslavia in which each recognized the other's frontiers, an agreement that was already too much of a burden on Yugoslav public opinion to be further aggravated by a Hungarian rapprochement. In spite of the constant set-backs, direct negotiations did go on between Hungary and the Little Entente states, but the points of view of the parties were still too far apart by 1937 for a reconciliation. <sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., PP. 522-3.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 529.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., P. 548.

### 3. Hungary's Position in 1937.

Hungary's evaluation of her own position was very much influenced by historical considerations as she was faced by the diplomatic revolution in Europe. Throughout their history, the Hungarians have had to fight against the danger of eastern invasion, against pressure of Slav peoples from north and south, and against the Germanic pressure from the west.

<sup>21</sup> By 1937, the eastern danger appeared to be eliminated for the time being, but the Slavs, having won their victory at the end of World War I, pointed their pressure in the direction of Germany for a counterbalance. Yet German hegemony was feared as much as any other, and the first preference still remained for a friendship with the neighbors, if available on satisfactory terms. The absence of such terms was demonstrated by Ripka, close collaborator of Benes, when he summarized the Czechoslovak Danubian policy in 1937 as consisting of opposition to Pan-German Mitteleuropa, Italian hegemony, Habsburg restoration, Austrian Anschluss, Hungarian revision, a closer Austro-Hungarian union, and the federalist conception.<sup>22</sup> In the more positive direction

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<sup>21</sup> C. A. Macartney, Hungary (London: Ernest Bann, 1934), p. 335.

<sup>22</sup>Wenzel Jaksch, Europe's Road to Potsdam trans. and ed. Kurt Glaser (New York: Praeger, 1958), p. 256

Ripka was fully satisfied with the protection offered by the Little Entente and Franco-Russian association.<sup>23</sup>

The Czechoslovak-Russian Pact was particularly disconcerting to the Hungarians. Articles written at the time by two Hungarian politicians, both anti-German, brought this concern out clearly. Andrew Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, member of an opposition party, who later was executed by the Nazis in 1944, said in 1936 that the problems of the Danube Valley ought to be settled before Germany and Russia were able to exert a decisive influence in that area. With the Soviet Union brought into it by the Czechoslovak-Russian Treaty, only British-Italian understanding could assure peace by providing a check on Soviet influence.<sup>24</sup> Tibor Eckhardt, member of the same Smallholder Party, of whom we shall hear much more in his role during the war in the United States, expressed the view in 1937 that the Czechoslovak-Soviet Treaty did not serve Soviet defense but rather attack, having been established for immediate mutual assistance necessary only if Czechoslovakia wanted Soviet interference in Central Europe. The Danube Valley, set between Germany and the Soviet Union as a buffer, could not fulfill its mission properly if it were to be

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., P. 269.

<sup>24</sup> Andrew B. Zsilinszky, "The Bolshevik Peril in the Danube Valley," Danubian Review, IV/1 (1936), 3-6.

attached to any one power; only if its independence were safeguarded in every direction could it form the real keystone to the European balance of power. If Czechoslovakia had the right to admit the Soviet Union into the Danube Valley, then Germany could not be kept out of it either. <sup>25</sup>

The official and actual maker of Hungary's foreign policy was Coloman Kánya, a former diplomat of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, who became foreign minister in 1933, and held that position until late 1938. According to a close associate, his deputy for many years and thereafter Hungarian Minister to Poland, Andrew Hory, Kánya led and brought up the Hungarian diplomatic service in the conviction that owing to Hungary's geopolitical position and to the common fate with Germany, there was no escape from following a pro-German orientation in Hungary's foreign relations. Hungary had to wait out Germany's recovery and then with German assistance to carry out revision of the past-war treaties. Until that time Hungary must cooperate with the enemies of her enemies.<sup>26</sup> He realized the dangers of a close cooperation with Hitler's Germany only in 1938,

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<sup>25</sup>Tibor Eckhardt, "Soviet Russia and the Danube Valley," Danubian Review, IV/10 (1937),3-11.

<sup>26</sup>András Hory, A Kulisszák Mögött (Vienna, 1965), p. 24.

at which time he made a complete turn in his views and assumed an anti-Berlin position which cost him his post as a foreign minister.

In his expose of Hungary's position in international affairs delivered during the Budget Debate in parliament<sup>27</sup> on May 26, 1937, Kánya observed that, through the extension of the network of alliances and the progress of the dissatisfied powers, a collective and indivisible insecurity spread over Europe resulting in more bilateral treaties and in the decline of the League's prestige. The failure of disarmament led to more armaments, except in Hungary, which was still virtually disarmed. The emerging facts in this situation were that the Versailles system was crumbling, bilateral agreements replaced collective security, the Little Entente was arming and disregarded its minorities, Italy and Germany were cooperating, and Great Britain also armed. "We hear that Great Britain, France and the USA must stand by one another for peace. This indicates a trend bent not so much on composing unresolved problems amicably as on making suitable preparations in the field of diplomacy for the conflict we are told is bound to come." In view of this, Hungary's interest is to maintain peace under all circumstances. As to

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<sup>27</sup>Coloman Kánya, "Hungary's Position in international Affairs," Danubian Review, V/1 (1937), 1-15.

Hungary's relations with the Little Entente, "it is a contradiction to be on good terms with us and continue rigidly adhering to anti-Hungarian conventions." Kánya continued that Czechoslovakia was well guarded against a non-existing danger from Hungary, but she forgot to provide against other eventualities. Rapprochement between individual Danubian countries might be hindered by pressures from third parties. Then he added that the hegemony of the victorious Great Powers had declined and Europe was on the eve of a gradual transformation, the object of which was to achieve a balance of power.

In the conclusion of his expose, Kánya said that Hungary's international position had gained in strength and her willingness to approach her neighbors grew in direct ratio to the consolidation of her position. Negotiations become easier when there is no danger of the hegemony of one party forcing unilateral interests on the other, and the other side is more ready to negotiate when it awakes to the fact that it can no longer dictate.

This final analysis referred to the negotiations going on with the Little Entente which in view of the conditions outlined did reach a conclusion a year later in 1938, but that was already too late to be of much value in the face of new and overwhelming developments.

There would be little doubt about the accuracy of this analysis. The sorry fact obtained that the 1919

peace settlements had imposed on the successor states ,in East-Central Europe the humiliating necessity of seeking protection in' Paris, Rome, Berlin and Moscow.<sup>28</sup> This took place in an area where peace could be effectively secured only by the exclusion of ambitious powers. To achieve this, they had to be brought to realize that it was not in their ultimate interest to be involved there, since none would enjoy a privileged position. <sup>29</sup> Unfortunately the uncertainties of the British policies and the one-sidedness of the French proposals only enhanced the chances of the totalitarian powers in the Danube Valley. <sup>30</sup>

By 1937 the actions of all of the states in East-Central Europe were to an overwhelming extent simply responses to German initiatives. <sup>31</sup>Henceforward their history was shaped by dominant German influences developing along the lines of Hitler's decisions. Hungary could not be exempt from their effect either.

In tracing the German-Hungarian relations after the mid-1930's, one has to consider the determined role Hungary's Prime Minister, Gömbös, was playing in their development. The signatories of the Rome Protocols of

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<sup>28</sup>Adam Maitland, "A Satisfactory Solution of the Danubian Problem," Danubian Review, V/2-3 (1937), 7.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>31</sup>Macartney - Palmer, 22. cit., p. 346.



1934 and 1936 watched sensitively the growth of Germany's power, knowing full well its implications for their independent political life. When, however, after the Ethiopian war and the occupation of the Rhineland both Italy and Germany attained a position of balanced interdependence, Gömbös envisaged Hungary in the role of mediator between Rome and Berlin, playing them off against each other.<sup>32</sup> As a matter of fact Gömbös was the one who first coined the term "Berlin-Rome Axis" for the Italy-German association. Ironically, the Axis came into being in October of 1936, only three weeks after the death of Gömbös. In the relationships of the three countries, the expectations of Gömbös were far from being realized. It soon became evident that Italy, too, had to respond rather than successfully initiate in her relations with Germany. This undermined the value of the Rome Block and exposed Hungary even more to German pressures.

On the death of Gömbös the Regent of Hungary, Admiral Horthy, appointed a more conservative prime minister in the person of Darányi, and Germany, having lost a devout friend in Gömbös, took offense at the new appointment, which manifested itself in Rosenberg's article in the November 15, 1936, issue of the

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<sup>32</sup>Ciano's *Diplomatic Papers*, ed. M. Muggeridge, trans. Stewart Hood (Hereafter C.D.P.) (London: Odham Press, 1948), p. 35.

Völkischer Beobachter declaring that Germany could not support revisionist endeavors, except to a very limited extent of frontier adjustments, if any at all. In addition, a very strong Nazi propaganda was started among Hungary's German minority population, accompanied by constant German complaints regarding Hungary's treatment of that same minority.<sup>33</sup>

Actually the Italian and German connections of Hungary meant more harm than help in her attempts to improve her relations with the Little Entente in the interest of its Hungarian minorities and her military equality rights. During the Little Entente-Hungarian negotiations, Hungary attempted to approach the members individually in order to split the group's united resistance to the Hungarian requests. Yugoslavia, being the most cooperative, Hungary was more inclined to renounce any territorial demands upon her and considered her the best prospect for bilateral agreements. As we have seen, this was eliminated by Italy's offer to conclude an agreement with Yugoslavia early in 1937. Similarly, the German-Hungarian difficulties had also helped the Little Entente to maintain its spirit of resistance to Hungary's claims, since they concluded that Hungary was isolated and becoming even more so.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Macartney, Hungary: A Short History, p. 227.

<sup>34</sup>Ádám, op. cit., p. 527.

Germany had further interfered in these Hungarian negotiations by strongly urging Hungary to concentrate her revisionist efforts in the direction of Czechoslovakia instead of Yugoslavia.<sup>35</sup> The futility of such efforts was assured by Czechoslovakia's determined stand to resist any territorial revision, even if Hungary joined an Austro-Czech-Hungarian bloc against Germany.<sup>36</sup>

During these more troubled German-Hungarian relations Hungary sought to realize her ambitions through appeals to Great Britain's sense of justice, an absurd hope indeed.<sup>37</sup> There were three distinct occasions which characterized the nature and outcome of the British-Hungarian contacts during 1937, resulting from Hungary's attempts to balance the primacy of Germany by bringing British interests into the area. First, at the coronation of King George VI in London, Kánya had an opportunity to talk with Eden who openly advised the Hungarian to form a breakwater against German pressures along with Austria and Czechoslovakia, but added that English interest in Central Europe could only be platonic. To this Kánya replied that Hungary, while

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<sup>35</sup>C.D.P., pp. 58-9.

<sup>36</sup>Magyarország és a Második Világháború (Hungary and the Second World War) hereafter M.M.V.), eds. Ádám Juhász, Kerekes (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1959), p. 113.

<sup>37</sup>Macartney - Palmer, op. cit., P. 353.

concerned at the possibility of the spread of German power, did not believe it possible to change her friendship with Italy and collaboration with Germany.<sup>38</sup> A few days later in May of 1937, while talking about his exchange in London with Ciano, the Italian Foreign Minister, then on a visit in Hungary, Kánya reflected on the English strength and on the democratic alliances which would automatically surround Great Britain were she attacked by Italy.<sup>39</sup> Second, in the same month Eden talked with the Hungarian Minister to the League in Geneva in similar vein, stating that he had refused a Little Entente request to him of a few days ago to mediate in its negotiations with Hungary on the ground that now "when the British-German relations are definitely improving and when the Italy-British relations are also becoming better, he wants to avoid the impression that Great Britain is interfering in Central European affairs."<sup>40</sup> Third, Kánya met Sir Robert Vansittart in Geneva on September 16, 1937, at which time he informed his English interlocutor about the progress of the

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38 C.D.P., p. 117.

39 Ibid., p. 118.

40 Diplomáciai Iratok Magyarország Külpolitikájához, 1936-1945 Diplomatic Papers on Hungary's Foreign Policy (hereafter D.I.M.K.), ed. L. Zsigmond Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1965) Volume II: A müncheni egyezmény létrejötte és Magyarország külpolitikája, 1936-1938, (The Establishment of the Munich Accord and Hungary's Foreign Policy), p. 222.

Hungarian negotiations with the Little Entente, eliciting the response that a successful conclusion of such negotiations would be looked upon with favor indicating the normalization of the situation at least in one part of Europe. <sup>41</sup>

In spite of these meager results, Hungary continued her pursuit of British friendship even at the cost of annoying Germany and Italy with it. On September 21, 1937, Kánya let the Germans know that England's interest in the Danube Basin was not great enough for her to undertake dangerous guarantee commitments there. She was, however, anxious to support all attempts to reach a settlement in that area.<sup>42</sup> On December 1, 1937, the German Minister in Hungary transmitted the views of the Regent in a report, quoting him as saying, "it would be a grave mistake to underestimate England's power, which was still enormous." <sup>43</sup> This attitude caused Ciano to enter in his diary on December 30, 1937, that "the Hungarians have sentimental leanings toward London, produced by two powerful influences: Jewishness and snobbery." At the same time, he told

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 246.

<sup>42</sup>U.S. Department of State, Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945, Series D (1937-1945) (hereafter D.G.F.P.), Vol. V (Washington, D. C.:U. S. Government Printing Office, 1953), Doc. 141.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

Bethlen that the democracies would give Hungary nothing beyond fine words.<sup>44</sup>

Against this background took place the Darányi-Kánya visit to Berlin in late November of 1937, arranged some time earlier to discuss economic and minority questions. Both the agenda and the importance of that meeting grew considerably owing to the coincidence of its date falling only about three weeks after the famous Hossbach Conference of November 5, 1937. At the Hossbach Conference, Hitler expounded his program of future action to a select audience composed of Neurath, his Foreign Minister, and his military chiefs.<sup>45</sup> The program involved the realization of his life achievement in the form of acquiring the necessary Lebensraum for the German people after Austria and Czechoslovakia had been overrun and incorporated according to a time schedule dependent on the international situation. He assumed Austria and Czechoslovakia were already written off by France and Great Britain.<sup>46</sup> This ambitious assumption was somewhat corroborated, at least in Hitler's mind, by the visit of Lord Halifax a little

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<sup>44</sup>Ciano's Hidden Diary, 1937-1938, trans. Andreas Mayor (New York: Dutton and Co. ,1953)p. 52.

<sup>45</sup>Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1946),III, 295-305, Doc.386-PS

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., III, 302.

later in November, when the English visitor indicated that one might assume that sooner or later changes in the existing order would take place in connection with Danzig, Austria, and Czechoslovakia; adding that Britain's interest was to see that the changes took place peacefully.<sup>47</sup>

Following these extremely important preliminaries, during the Hungarian visit from November 21 through 26, Hitler advised his guests not to let themselves be involved in a Czech-Austrian rapprochement and to concentrate their claims within the Little Entente against Czechoslovakia.<sup>48</sup> In his response, Kánya again stated emphatically that Hungary had no intention whatever of achieving her revisionist aims by force of arms and thereby possibly unleashing a European war.<sup>49</sup> On November 24, the day before the meeting with Hitler, Kánya had a conversation with Neurath at which the latter indicated that Halifax had shown some understanding toward the need for modification of the situation in Danzig, Czechoslovakia and Austria.<sup>50</sup> Kánya further reported that according to information received a little later from Schacht, President of the Reichsbank, Halifax

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<sup>47</sup>Macartney - Palmer, *op. cit.*, p. 371.

<sup>48</sup>D.G.F.P., V, Doc. 152.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup>D.I.M.K., II, 511. -

had suggested that Great Britain would not oppose a German-Austrian tariff union and would like to see Prague give some autonomy to the Sudeten Germans.<sup>51</sup>

November of 1937, then, marked the time when Hitler had decided to change the map of Europe and assumed it to be made possible by Western acquiescence. From that date on Hungary's history was little more than her relations with Germany. In view of their respective power positions, only diplomacy could have a significant bearing on this situation. Such a diplomacy, which could truly be referred to as the Hungarian quandary, posed two alternatives: one was to envisage in the cause of revision a complete German hegemony in the long run, should the West fail to check it; the other was to find some basis of cooperation in Danubia in the common interest. The latter course bore its own barriers and limitations of bitterness, hostility, and resentment. For the Little Entente countries, it was impossible to advocate a rapprochement based on mutual concessions; for Hungary it was similarly impossible to run counter to revision.<sup>52</sup> Having considered these realities of the general situation, the Hungarian leaders decided on their return

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<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Diplomaticus, "Hungarian Quandary," The Fortnightly (London), Vol. 148 (1937), 97



from Berlin not to alter their former endeavors for revision by differentiating their case from Germany's as far as possible, by pressing for mutually satisfactory reconciliation with the Little Entente states in a peaceful manner, and by supporting Austria to the last possible moment.<sup>53</sup> At any rate, they realized the necessity of putting themselves at a distance from Hitler, even though a direct resistance was hopeless, and of approaching their neighbors with their claims directly, even if that was also unpromising. Revision *per se* did not appear to them something basically wrong that would retard a resistance to German expansion, for even France and Britain had only the choice after 1937 between two appeasements, between two sorts of revisions. The first was concessions to Germany, the second to Russia. The *status quo* was impossible as Russia, upon whom any effective resistance against Germany had to rest, was a revisionist power also.<sup>54</sup>

#### 4. The American View of Hungary's Position in 1937.

Assuming the correctness of the Alsop-Kintner conclusion that neither the proposing Administration nor the disposing Senate makes foreign policy but the cables

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<sup>53</sup>Macartney, A History of Hungary, I, 204.

<sup>54</sup>François Fejto, Histoire des Démocraties Populaires (Paris:Seuil,1952), p. 33.

make it, a survey of the relevant diplomatic reports coming to the State Department may help to establish the United States' view related to the Developments outlined above.<sup>55</sup>

One of the closest observers of European events was William C. Bullitt, the American Ambassador in France at the time. As he was also a friend of President Roosevelt, he can give us rare insights into the shaping of American foreign policy. In an article he related that by 1936 the President had lost faith in Stalin after the latter resumed direction of the U. S. Communist Party, and had become disgusted by debt repudiations and France's failure to move in response to remilitarization of the Rheinland by Germany. These events put him in a negative mood favoring complete isolation.<sup>56</sup> The determination not to be involved in a coming European war, however, still called for prevention of any power's extending its political system to the Western Hemisphere, prevention of China's destruction, and prevention of hostile powers coming into control of the Atlantic coast.<sup>57</sup> America wanted peace and security, but for that somebody had to stop Japan

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<sup>55</sup>Joseph Alsop and Robert Kintner *American White Paper* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1940), p. 4.

<sup>56</sup>William C. Bullitt, "How We Won the War and Lost the Peace," *Life*, Vol. 25 (August 30, 1948), 86.

<sup>57</sup>*Ibid.*

and Germany. It was hoped that others would do that.<sup>58</sup> How unfounded that hope was became evident from Bullitt's report from Paris in April, 1937, when he foresaw that within a year French influence would diminish and German influence would increase throughout Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>59</sup>

Another observer, the U. S. Ambassador in Poland, John Cudahy, revealed a different approach in reporting to the President at the end of 1936 that the ultimate issue was not between ideologies but between the "intense internationalisms of Germany and Russia," and continued that the day of reckoning was coming between the Germans denied a full life and the uncivilized Russians in possession of the wealth of an empire. He concluded in pointing out the necessity to diagnose the cause of the existing conflicts and to propose a program eliminating this cause.<sup>60</sup> In his reply the President showed agreement with these conclusions.<sup>61</sup>

George S. Messersmith, former U. S. Consul General in Berlin, then Minister to Vienna and subsequently Assistant Secretary of State during the pre-war

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid.

<sup>59</sup>Charles C. Tansill, Back Door to War (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1952), p. 329.

<sup>60</sup>U.S. Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States (hereafter F.R.U.S.) 1937: 1; General Washington: U.S Government Printing Office, 1954), P.25.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., P. 26.

years, in his testimony to the Nuremberg International Military Tribunal summarized his views retrospectively based on his original reports regarding East-Central European affairs as they developed under the expansion of German influence.<sup>62</sup> He said that ever since 1933, the Germans had pushed a strong diplomatic campaign in order to pit the Little Entente and the other countries of Eastern Europe against each other and to separate them from France. This they did with generous but mutually exclusive promises to many of the countries involved. The political and economic objectives of Nazi Germany were further pursued in Southeastern Europe by assurances of peace and security to the Western Powers.<sup>63</sup> By 1936, France convinced the small countries that Germany would not be stopped. In this situation Germany promised Czechoslovak territory to Hungary and Poland<sup>64</sup> and played on the fear of Communism in the same two lands.<sup>65</sup> In 1934, he reported that Hungary preferred Austrian independence, even the status quo, over German domination, but also feared Germany increasingly. This was why Hungary was wavering and sitting on the

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<sup>62</sup>International Military Tribunal, Trial of the Major War Criminals (Nuremberg, 1948) XXX, 295-328, Doc. 2385-PS.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 296.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., P. 301.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., P. 305.

fence.<sup>66</sup> By October, 1935, Messersmith saw Hungary already as a fundamentally pro-German country led by the assumption that her revisionist hopes could be satisfied through Germany, but this, he predicted, would only be the forerunner of loss of her sovereignty.<sup>67</sup> Late in October, 1937, Messersmith, visited by the Hungarian Minister, Pelényi, in Washington, told his guest that both Austria and Hungary had followed a very clever policy, which, however, could not be continued on the old paths forever, not even that of the Czechoslovak Government. Referring to the situation of these three countries, "he applied the well-known saying: 'They must hang together or they will hang separately.'"<sup>68</sup> On Pelényi's further questions, Messersmith expanded that, of course, he also referred to Romania and Yugoslavia.<sup>69</sup> The way out of the dangers of the day was defined by Messersmith in a cooperation of the AngloSaxon powers with other "law-abiding" countries against the "lawless" nations.<sup>70</sup> One of the East-Central

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<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., P. 307.

<sup>68</sup>Diplomáciai Iratok Magyarország Külpolitikájához, 1936-1945, Volume I: A Berlin-Roma tengely kialakulása és Austria annexiója. 1936-1938 (The Formation of the Berlin-Rome Axis and the Annexation of Austria. 1936-1938) (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1962); p. 487.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid.

European local obstacles to such healthy developments was lucidly identified by the report of the American Charge in Paris of April 8, 1937, in which he quotes the Yugoslav Minister there as saying that "the Little Entente remained exactly what it always had been, a defensive alliance against Hungarian revisionist aims."<sup>71</sup>

An unofficial American review of Danubian Europe appeared in the Foreign Policy Reports in mid-1937. It observed that Danubia was brought to the center of attention by the German-Italian efforts to replace British-French influence there. In trying to resist such developments the confederative endeavors of the small nations there carried their own obstacles economically by seeking self-sufficiency, and politically because the division into status -quo and revisionist countries allowed the great powers to impose their rivalries on them.<sup>72</sup> To Hitler's determined drive to bring the internal governments under German influence either by Anschluss or by Nazi infiltration, and to split up the existing blocs and replace them with bilateral arrangements, the Rome Triangle, the Little Entente, and the Balkan Entente responded by attempts to increase cooperation within their groups and by

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<sup>71</sup>F.R.U.S., 1937:I, 69.

<sup>72</sup>Helen Fisher, "Cross Currents in Danubian Europe," Foreign Policy Reports, XIII (July 15, 1937), 102-3.

tentative approaches to each other. All saw the League as powerless<sup>73</sup> and recognized that they must solve their international problems by themselves through a rapprochement between the status quo and revisionist groups. The fate of Danubia depended on great power relations. French internal crises, British vacillation, Soviet weakness continued to lessen their influence, allowing the Fascist drive to gain strength. Correspondingly, the conflicting interests of Germany and Italy were diminished through their cooperation.<sup>74</sup>

Closer to the subject of this study, between 1933 and 1941, John F. Montgomery was the American Minister in Hungary. In his post-war book on his mission there, he gives his impression that with Hitler's rise Budapest attained great importance on the international chessboard.<sup>75</sup> A State Department briefing which he had received that Hungary was Italy's puppet, without independence of action, important only as a listening Post, he found incorrect, since up to the time when Germany and Italy were pushed together in 1936 Hungary "could and did balance herself between the two."<sup>76</sup> Montgomery found in view of the many assurances of the

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<sup>73</sup>Ibid., pp. 110-1.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>75</sup>Montgomery, P. 17.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

Possibility of revision contained in League Articles and political statements from the West that "revisionism cannot be considered identical with aggressiveness as we have been taught to believe." <sup>77</sup> He concludes that even slight territorial concessions to Hungary by the Little Entente could have cleared the situation, removing the great "obstacle to cooperation with her neighbors."<sup>78</sup>

The powers of the American Executive in the field of foreign relations, while quite broad, were still circumscribed by legislation, shaped by prevailing public views, and limited by reactions of other countries.<sup>79</sup> Although exposed to an increasing wave of aggressive actions in other parts of the world, the public opinion of this country failed to share the views of the Administration that a European war could vitally affect the United States' security and that American foreign Policy ought to aim at giving all possible support to those endeavoring to curb aggression.<sup>80</sup> To decrease the gap between the two views, the Administration put many efforts into making the American people realize

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<sup>77</sup>Ibid., P. 52.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., P. 55.

<sup>79</sup>U. S. Department of State, Peace and War, U. S. Foreign Policy, 1931-1941 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943), p.2.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., P. 3.



the danger it faced and the policy it had to follow to avoid such danger.<sup>81</sup>

Two of these attempts were of great significance. The first was Secretary of State Hull's statement of July 16, 1937, on the fundamental principles of American foreign policy designed to show everyone in the world where America stood. The second was President Roosevelt's "quarantine speech" of October 5, of the same year in Chicago, in which he tried to shake the nation into consciousness of the possibility of war coming to the Western Hemisphere. Both of these statements caused considerable diplomatic reaction, which will be examined in its impact on East-Central Europe.

The Hull statement, observing that "there are in a number of regions tensions and strains" and that serious hostilities anywhere will "affect interests or rights or obligations of this country," explained that the United States advocated maintenance of peace, self-restraint, abstinence from the use of force, adjustments by negotiation, observance of agreements, upholding treaties which were to be changed only by an orderly process of accommodation, respect for the rights of others, strengthening international law, promotion of economic security, removal of trade barriers, equal commercial opportunity, limitation of armament. Although

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<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

the United States avoided alliances and "entangling commitments," she believed in peaceful cooperative efforts in support of these principles.<sup>82</sup>

In a circular telegram on the following day Hull requested certain U. S. diplomatic representatives in Europe, Montgomery included, to call at their respective Foreign Offices to transmit any attitude they might have "toward keeping alive and making effective" the principles announced.<sup>83</sup> Hull clarified his intentions by wiring to Bullitt in France four days later that one way to contribute toward upholding these principles would be by the governments addressed "affirming themselves therewith."<sup>84</sup>

In Hungary the U. S. Aide-Memoire with this statement and the related inquiry was handed to the Acting Chief of the Foreign Ministry's Political Section on July 19.<sup>85</sup> The Hungarian response in the form of a note verbale, dated July 23, was received and transmitted the following day. It expressed satisfaction over the interest shown by the United States in the problems of the Danube Basin and over the identity in the

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<sup>82</sup>Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1938-1939, eds- S. S Jones and D. P. Myers (Boston: World Peace Foundation, 1939), pp. 3-4.

<sup>83</sup>F.R.U.S., 1937•2, pp. 700-1.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., P. 702.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., P. 717.

principles followed by the two governments in several instances, adding that these principles were considered primarily from the point of view of Hungary's problems. It stressed its agreement with the desire to solve problems by peaceful negotiations and to modify treaties in case of need by peaceful means. Since Hungary's Government does not consider the situation created in the Danube Valley final, "it aims at the just change thereof" exclusively by peaceful means. It accepted the sanctity of treaties in its entirety, particularly evident from the fact that Hungary had carried out even the heavy obligations of the Trianon Treaty, but it would also like to see the principle observed by others, who had obligations toward their Hungarian minorities. <sup>86</sup> Hungary would also welcome disarmament in view of her own one-sided disarmament. She would support all efforts to improve the economic situation. <sup>87</sup> A few days later the American Chargé in Hungary, Travers, reported upon conversations carried on by Professor Francis Deák, a Hungarian subject teaching law at Columbia University, with Kánya and Bethlen in Budapest. Kenya inquired about the meaning of American "rights or interests or obligations" being affected by hostilities anywhere, since sometimes he failed to understand the policies

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<sup>86</sup>Ibid., P. 707.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., P. 708.

enunciated by Britain and by the United States, and he asked if that meant that the United States was prepared to enter into international consultations on questions affecting her interests.

88 Deák's reply in his own name was in the affirmative. Kánya further asked whether the United States would protest if Hungary came under foreign occupation. Deák thought that the United States would go as far as she did in the Manchurian and Abyssinian affairs, but he was perfectly sure that that did not mean sending a single American soldier or gunboat in the eventuality mentioned by Kánya. 89 Bethlen asked similar questions concerning the significance of American obligations being affected, which he found unusual. Travers further reported that the local press carried the statement in full, implying that it related to the Far East only. 90

Soon it became obvious that the countries addressed, while all in full agreement with the statement, interpreted it as applying to their own particular problems; the status quo countries saw in it that treaties were to be upheld and not changed, whereas the revisionist powers discovered in it that the obvious

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88 Ibid., p. 717.

89 Ibid., P. 718.

90 Ibid., P. 719.

need for change must be satisfied by peaceful means.<sup>91</sup> The Hungarian reply was shown to the Czechoslovak Minister in Washington, who was much perturbed by it, considering it intemperate and inconsistent with the Secretary of State's attempt to formulate principles in that it dealt solely with Hungary's problems; but he failed to make Moffat, Chief of the Division of European Affairs, comment on it. Moffat could only get the impression that instead of clearing the situation, the American handout to the Czechoslovaks had only complicated matters from the Czechoslovak point of view.<sup>92</sup> Interestingly enough, even the dictatorial regimes responded as being in agreement with the principles set out in the Hull statement.<sup>93</sup> By August, Hull further clarified his intentions in a circular telegram to certain diplomatic representatives, the one in Hungary excluded, by saying that his statement was issued in the hope that if he "could obtain a series of messages from all over the world approving the principles of (his) declaration as a norm for international relations," the cumulative effect of their

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid., P. 727 for Bulgaria, P. 802 for Romania, P. 799 for Yugoslavia, P. 709 Poland, and P. 703 for Czechoslovakia.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., P. 773.

<sup>93</sup> Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1938-1939, pp. 4-5.

Publication would "strengthen international law and international morals,"<sup>94</sup>

Becoming worried over the growth of isolationist sentiment in the country, in September Hull suggested to the President that the latter make a speech in international cooperation.<sup>95</sup> The President agreed and delivered his speech on October 5, in Chicago, stressing that in the face of spreading international lawlessness and the contagion of war moral standards could be enforced only by an international quarantine of peace loving nations against aggressors.<sup>96</sup> The quarantine idea was his own and surprised even the State Department.<sup>97</sup> According to Hull, the reaction was quick and violent and amounted to setting back the educational campaign aimed at creating a public opinion in favor of international cooperation.<sup>98</sup> When a little later Undersecretary Welles drew up a peace plan calling for the President's appeal on Armistice Day to the nations to sit down at a conference table and work out the bases

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<sup>94</sup> F.R.U.S., 1937:1, p. 748.

<sup>95</sup> The Memoirs of Cordell Hull (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), I, 544.

<sup>96</sup> Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1938-1939, p. 156

<sup>97</sup> The Moffat Papers, 1919-1943, ed. N. H. Hooker (Cambridge; Harvard University Press, 1956), P. 153.

<sup>98</sup> Hull, op. cit., I, 545.

for peace, Hull opposed the idea with the realistic view that at that stage of the international developments, with Germany, Italy, and Japan armed for conquest, it would be "wholly impractical" to call for disarmament among the peaceful nations and to lull them into a sense of false security through a peace congress. <sup>99</sup> By that time increased military preparations were needed to be effective in trying to promote peace, and no treaties would be of value with Axis disregard for them. <sup>100</sup> The Welles plan, lacking Hull's and British support, was then given up.

The quarantine speech missed its mark not only on the home front but also on its intended foreign targets, such as the Germans. The German Ambassador reported that it was primarily directed against Japan and that America will not assume in the near future a more active role in Europe. <sup>101</sup> The Hungarian Minister in the United States, Pelényi, reporting on the President's speech on October 7, assumed that the speech expressed Roosevelt's convictions very closely, even if they had to be somewhat subdued in view of the realities unfavorable to him. At a subsequent conversation with Messersmith,

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<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 547.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 548.

<sup>101</sup> Tansill, *op. cit.*, p. 347.

Pelényi got the impression that his (Pelényi's) assumptions concerning the "quarantine speech" were correct. <sup>102</sup> The American reports on the November events -Hitler's decisions, the British and Hungarian visits to Berlin -- show great accuracy. Ambassador Bullitt, on a trip through Europe talked with Göring on November 19,' who said that the annexation of Austria was an absolute determination of the German Government. Schemes pushing for the union of Austria, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia, with or without a Habsburg at the head of the unit, offered a solution absolutely unacceptable to Germany, which would constitute an immediate casus belli for Germany, said Göring. <sup>103</sup>

On December 1, Montgomery had a talk with Kánya on the latter's November visit to Berlin. Kánya assured Montgomery that nothing occurred which altered

Hungary's determination to maintain an independent foreign policy. Hungary's desire to come to an agreement with the Little Entente remained unchanged, and, while hope existed for that, Kánya would not make any agreement with Germany, just as he had no intention to join the Anti-Communist Pact at that time, even if requested, <sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> D.I.M.K., I, 487.

<sup>103</sup> F.R.U.S., 1937:I, 171.

<sup>104</sup> Minister Montgomery to Secretary Hull,  
Budapest, December 1, 1937, 762.64/80, MS. Department  
of State.



Equally accurate reports were received by the State Department concerning another directly affected country bordering on Germany, Austria, and Hungary, one that was vitally concerned about maintaining the status quo i.e., Czechoslovakia. On his way from Moscow to Paris, Ambassador Joseph E. Davies had a meeting with president Benes in Prague on September 2. His report of the conversation reflects admirably the thinking of Benes and the impression it caused. The Czech President viewed the developments of those days in the framework of an ideological conflict between occidental liberal democratic thought and totalitarian authoritarian states. The first group, represented by England, France, Czechoslovakia, Switzerland and the Scandinavian States, was faced by the partly totalitarian Yugoslavia, Hungary, Poland, and by the entirely dictatorial Germany, Austria, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and Turkey. Benes continued that the antagonisms against his land were brought about by the fact that the Czechs were the earliest adherents of liberalism and democracy. The case he made for the justification of a homogeneous state, as Czechoslovakia was then constituted, was according to Davies a very powerful one, that compelled the admiration, respect and sympathy of the American visitor. <sup>105</sup> Unfortunately Davies gives no details on the Benes arguments that were

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<sup>105</sup> F.R.U.S., 1937:I, 125-7.

marshaled in support of the Czech case, but it is of value to know what kind of an impression those arguments made. Two weeks later the American Minister in Prague, Carr, reported another conversation with Benes in which the attention was turned to external affairs. Benes at that time felt that war would not occur because Italy could not and Germany was not ready yet to wage war. Benes further felt that Hitler, Stalin, and Mussolini were working for what would turn out to be democracy, but achieved through dictatorships. <sup>106</sup> A prime factor in the absence of understanding in that part of the world in 1937 was precisely that difference of approach and evaluation in viewing the realities of the day which reflected itself in the Benes and Kánya remarks. While Benes saw the problems originating in the differences between two types of internal political arrangements, and concluded that only his democracy made enemies out of his neighbors, who were still not ready to fight, Kenya looked at the international scene disregarding internal considerations, totally absorbed by his task to rectify the nationality aspects of the peace settlements by clever manipulations of the forces in the field influencing his own position. With this divergence of outlook, it was impossible to bring about the type of rapprochement that could have been beneficial to the

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106 Ibid., PP. 130-1.

area concerned but would still not have been a solution to the more essential problems posed by great power relations affecting Danubia.

In conclusion, it can be said then that the cables coming in to the Department were comprehensive, accurate, reflected events and attitudes alike. In a more general sense Ambassador Bullitt was the source of information with depth and wide scope, since he had reported on important events and trends outside France as much as inside. He always managed to relate information even from the remotest places with great power concerns and give a picture of the whole in contrast to the detailed reports coming from other missions. There is some trace of favoring or at least sympathizing with the positions of the governments to which they were accredited on the part of the American representatives stationed in East-Central Europe. Of course, there was a general dislike of the Nazi regime by all. This inclination toward the capital in which they served was only to the advantage of the Department, which thus was furnished with a healthy breadth of views and attitudes. The cables were there, bearing a wealth of information, enabling those concerned with policy-making to carry out their function. However, the more determined course of action called for by those cables was completely hampered in American foreign policy by legislation and public opinion. Shortly after the "quarantine speech,"

Moffat wrote in his diary that "nearly seven to three (are) in favor of passing stricter neutrality laws, rather than leaving the job of keeping us out of the war up to the President." <sup>107</sup> The existence of such apathy was not lost on those who expected and desired American inaction in the international field to allow them free movement on the Eurasian Continent. It also had its discouraging effects on those who saw in America that counterbalance which was urgently needed to curb Germany.

If one defined the main feature of pre-war international relations in Europe as the question of revision, it would be easy to detect the direction into which Hungary's position forced her to move. Surrounded by anti-revision countries and pressed toward revision by public opinion and demands both internally and externally on the part of the Magyar populations, Hungary did not rely exclusively for such revision on the help of revisionist great powers; on the contrary, she tried her best to bring about revision with the help of those powers which had been the makers of the settlements to be revised. Hungary felt that revision in itself was approved by the Western Powers in principle, which found its best expression in the "quarantine speech" in these words of the President:

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<sup>107</sup> Moffat, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

“It is true that the moral consciousness of the world must recognize the importance of removing injustices and well-founded grievances; but at the same time it must be aroused to the cardinal necessity of honoring sanctity of treaties, of, respecting the rights and liberties of others...” 108.

Both the Hull statement of July and the Chicago, speech excited hope in Hungary for a just revision. Unfortunately, the latter also took the force out of that hope inasmuch as it assured the world of American non-involvement. The problem for Hungary, then, was how to bring about a revision that amounted to anything and was still the fruit of peaceful understandings between interested parties. As the greatest setback in this respect, Germany's association with the cause of revision prejudiced all others, too, who hoped for revision. Thus the western approvals of a just revision were rendered ineffective by even the suggestion of a common cause with the totalitarian powers. Even though Hungary thought of Germany as a great power to be used as a means to effect rectification of the Trianon settlement, this was becoming increasingly impossible by Germany's transformation into a Nazi state bent on mastery of Europe and unwilling to be satisfied with a just revision. By November of 1937, a situation had developed that bore two distinctive marks of international

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108 Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1938-1939, P. 156.

relations which were to be present in European politics for many years: first, Germany acquired power sufficient to set out upon a program that would carry her ambitions beyond revision into outright conquest; second, the Western Powers, who were announcing high moral standards to be followed by everyone, never went beyond that in aiding Hungary to-realize even those aspects of her revisionist claims that were deemed to be reasonable and justifiable also by her adversaries. On the other hand, those same powers showed much more responsive to revisionist claims when they were supported by the power of an aggressive Germany. This impression brought back from their November visit to Berlin forced the Hungarians to take stock and evaluate their position with regard to future policies. The question boiled down to whether to rely or not rely on Germany in pressing for Hungary's revisionist claims. if Hungary did rely on Germany, that heralded the end of future independence, assuming that the West would be unable to restrain Germany's eastern expansion. Reliance on Germany in itself meant no help to Germany, nor did it impede the establishment of an effective alliance against Germany, since both of these contingencies presupposed the existence and presence of powerful states in Danubia, when there were in fact none. But if Hungary did not rely on Germany, no one else would have helped her, least of all the Little Entente members, nor could she

have impeded German expansion because of power differences and economic dependency.

in view of these considerations, the crux for Hungary's existence and future rested on one condition: will-or will not the West effectively interfere in time to achieve a balance of the situation that can assure the independence of all the small countries in East-Central Europe, with accommodation to each other on a just and peaceful basis. The answer to this question could not be very promising in the light of the November experiences in Berlin. Hitler's ambitious plans, combined with the reactions of Halifax, became known to Hungary, both pointed to difficult times. Hungarian leaders decided to follow the policies outlined in Montgomery's report of December 1: keep in hopeful touch with the West, keep a safe distance from Hitler, and contrive the heretofore fruitless efforts to achieve direct agreements with the Little Entente. America, watching this ominous situation, could only register the inherent dangers. She was not in a position for internal reasons to influence its course toward keeping a just peace.

## . CHAPTER IV

### THE AUSTRIAN ANSCHLUSS AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

#### 1. Background of Austria's International Position

The Habsburg Monarchy's significance in European politics was well evidenced by the fact that each time Austria, as a great power, disintegrated or was seriously weakened, instability was brought about on the European scene. Such a situation took place after World War I with the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in 1920, when the area it had occupied became balkanized. To provide economic viability of its constituent parts and political stability for East-Central Europe, a union of that area was obviously needed. Its realization, however, posed one of the greatest problems in international politics. Such union was difficult without outside great power Sponsorship, and was even more difficult with the availability of several self-appointed sponsoring candidates representing conflicting interests. It was also made difficult by the widely divergent objectives of the inhabiting ethnic groups.

As she was created by the 1919-1920 peace treaties, the new small Austria was economically unviable and politically isolated. Although enjoined by Article 88 of the Peace Treaty of Saint Germain to abstain from compromising her independence by participation in the



affairs of another power, Austria felt compelled by the demands of her economic situation to look toward Germany. Austrian plebiscites showed a 95% pro-Anschluss sentiment in the 1920's. Such feelings were not eliminated by successive League loans to help Austria's economy and by their attendant demands for renouncing an Anschluss. Even the attempt to create an Austro-German customs union in 1931 was objected to by France and found by the Permanent Court of international justice to be incompatible with Austria's international obligations. When the full impact of the 1931 financial crisis hit Austria, she turned to the League for a new loan, which she received in exchange for a guarantee to maintain her independence for another twenty years.

Curiously enough, the Austrian longings for a closer union with Germany were not reciprocated by the Germans until the arrival of the Hitler regime. From then on the Nazi movement, fostered by Germany also in Austria, grew stronger each year, but produced a corresponding cooling-off tendency on the part of the Austrians. Austria's precarious situation was further aggravated by unstable internal conditions. The Christian Socialist and Social Democratic parties, which were of roughly equal strength, were unable to cooperate constructively in the country's affairs. The crisis was resolved by Dolfuss, the Christian Socialist chancellor, who eliminated the opposing parties, including the Nazis,

and established a fascist-corporate state in 1934 which looked for outside support against an Anschluss with Nazi Germany in the Rome Protocols. Although Mussolini's dispatch of troops to the Brenner Pass prevented a Nazi attempt to seize the government and annex the country, Dolfuss himself was assassinated by Nazis in the summer of 1934. His successor, Chancellor Schuschnigg, faced by increasing Nazi pressures both from within and without, and by a decline in foreign support in the wake of the Diplomatic Revolution's realignments, was forced to a more compromising way in treating with the National Socialists, leading to the conclusion of the July 11, 1936, agreement with Hitler. It included a German promise to respect Austria's sovereignty, an Austrian promise to guide her policies in line with the fact that she considered herself a German state, and a mutual promise not to interfere with each other's internal affairs.<sup>1</sup> Additional secret clauses provided for the admission of two Nazi members to the Austrian Cabinet.<sup>2</sup>

The coming of such a development was already indicated in January of 1936 by Neurath telling Kánya that a German-Austrian agreement was possible, since Hitler was willing to declare Austria's independence in exchange

<sup>1</sup>Macartney-Palmer, op. cit., p. 349.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 350.

for an "appropriate gesture" toward the Nazis in Austria.<sup>3</sup> Sensing the change of times, Schuschnigg told the Hungarians in mid-March at a Budapest visit that the reoccupation of the Rhineland had caused great alarm in Vienna, and they were afraid the next German step would be against Austria.<sup>4</sup> A little later in the same month he expressed concern in Rome at the second Rome Protocol meeting that Austria, relying exclusively on her own power, could not reach a satisfactory agreement with Germany. He, of course, would not follow an anti-German policy, but would resist any German intrusion into Austrian affairs.<sup>5</sup>

While the negotiations for the Austro-German accord went on, reports continued to come to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry concerning Germany's final objective. In a casual conversation with the Hungarian Chargé in Washington, Herbert Scholz, first Secretary of the German Embassy in the United States remarked in May that the Germans got by without war when they announced rearmament and when they reoccupied the Rhineland; now their third step would be the Anschluss.<sup>6</sup> Early in June the Hungarian Chief of Intelligence heard in

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<sup>3</sup>D.I.M.K , I, 94.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., I, 154.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., I, 165. .

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., I, 201.

conversation with his German counterpart that there would be no military move against Austria because the international situation was not conducive to it, and Austria would fall into Germany's hand as a ripe fruit anyway.<sup>7</sup> Even on the eve of the agreement itself Göring told the Hungarian Minister in Germany that there is not much hope for improvements in Austro-German relations. "Schuschnigg should know that he is facing not a Germany as such but a National Socialist Party."<sup>8</sup>

Apparently even Hitler had to face the Nazi Party, for, according to Neurath's remarks at a visit in Budapest on September 20, he "could persuade Hitler only with difficulty to sign the July agreement in view of the Party's opposition."

<sup>9</sup> This was later confirmed by Göring, in Budapest for the funeral of Gömbös on October 11, 1936, with the addition that Hitler would keep his word, even though it would take only two divisions to overrun Austria, which did not mean that Germany was disclaiming Austria forever; that the full-blooded German State of Austria would have to join the Reich in one form or another; that Mussolini would have to understand that he could not parade in the role of Austria's protector forever; that, threatened by English

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., I, 201.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., I, 233.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., I, 273.

revenge ideas, Italy had a very great interest in securing Germany's alliance and support for a coming Anglo-German (sic) war. <sup>10</sup> Mussolini must have understood this, for a few days later Ciano told the Hungarian Minister in Berlin that "the Austrian question does not exist between Italy and Germany anymore." <sup>11</sup> In mid-November, Ciano using somewhat more subdued words told Kánya in Budapest that, although the Austrian question had come to a rest, "Austria's youth is Nazi, which will lead to important consequences." <sup>12</sup>

The agreement itself does not seem to have satisfied the parties to it. Still in July Minister Hornbostel of the Austrian Chancellery called the agreement a "necessary evil" which will not stop Germany from working for a "deathly embrace" of Austria. <sup>13</sup> Sztójay, the Hungarian Minister in Germany, got the impression early in 1937, that the German Foreign Office was dissatisfied with the agreement, owing to increasing propaganda for restitution in Austria. <sup>14</sup>

The reaction of other countries to Austro-German relations displayed themselves in a wide range of views.

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., I, 279.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., I, 284.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., I, 318.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., I, 248.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., I, 357.

Kánya let Lord Vansittart know that he was pleased with the agreement, removing the chief cause of Italo-German controversies, excluding the Anschluss, and not representing the creation of an aggressive bloc.<sup>15</sup> The Hungarian Minister in Moscow reported a new view in the Soviet Union: "Germany's attack against the Soviet Union will come through the Danube Valley" and not through Poland; for this, "Germany wants to annex Austria first."<sup>16</sup> Czechoslovakia sensed an aggravating factor to her own position in the agreement, since it specified that Austria would lead a foreign policy in harmony with Germany.<sup>17</sup> A further cable from the Hungarian Legation in Moscow shortly after the agreement indicated Soviet disappointment with it, in that it would facilitate the Anschluss and the German expansion toward the southeast and that it demonstrated German-Italian understanding.<sup>18</sup>

On the last day of July, 1936, the Hungarian Chargé in Washington summarized his impressions of American reactions to the Austro-German agreement by imputing to "circles" in the State Department, whom he did not name, the view that the agreement represented a

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., I, 247.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., I, 235.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., I, 2143.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., I, 245.

temporary relief. He further averred that these same circles accepted the thesis that successful solution of the Danubian problems was possible only through Italo-German cooperation. In the long run, the agreement was seen by the Americans as the first step toward a final absorption: the Americans did not believe in the possibility of Austria's permanent independence. The agreement was Hitler's victory and Italy's defeat, resulting in Germany's becoming a pivotal factor on the Continent. <sup>19</sup>

An interpretation of the developments similar to the one above imputed to the Americans was received from many Hungarian missions in the spring of 1937. From Moscow came the news that the Soviet ambassador in Italy felt that Italy had lost her independence in foreign affairs to Germany, and Mussolini had relinquished Austria to Hitler completely. <sup>20</sup> This was supported by a report from the Hungarian Minister in Rome in April saying that the Anschluss was of second-rate importance, and Italy would not fight to prevent it. <sup>21</sup> Yet only a few days later both Austrian sources and Ciano himself stressed to the Hungarians that the Mussolini-Schuschnigg meeting at Venice confirmed that Austria's

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., I, 264.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., I, 376.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., I, 391.

independence was the sine qua non of Italy's foreign policy. <sup>22</sup> Kánya gave his related views to Vansittart in May, surmising that Italy had not dropped Austria completely; true, Mussolini would not fight for her, nor was there a need to fight. <sup>23</sup> A somewhat revised version came also in May when Ciano told Kánya that the maintenance of Austrian independence continued to be a cardinal point of Italian policy, but "Italy will not fight for it with military power; Italy will only try to postpone its taking place." <sup>24</sup> By the summer of 1937, the Italian Ambassador in Germany, Attolico, warned his Hungarian colleague that the Anschluss would be disadvantageous both for Italy and Hungary, but that this was a European question in which France and England would also assert their positions. <sup>25</sup> The unreality of this assumption had already been made clear in May when the Austrian Secretary for Foreign Affairs on a visit to Paris told the Hungarian Minister there that Austria, unable to follow an anti-German policy, had asked France and England to refrain from issuing a declaration concerning Austrian independence. <sup>26</sup> Confirming words came

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., I, 406.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., I, 420.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., I, 427.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., I, 453.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., I, 423.



from Weizsäcker in Germany that Hitler wanted only an evolutionary, and not revolutionary, development in Austria. <sup>27</sup>

All these events pointed in the direction of a coming Anschluss, leaving only its time as an open question. By September, 1937, the Austrians became more and more aware of their precarious position resulting from the growing Italo-German friendship and the fading of effective western interest. In view of this, Schmidt, the Austrian Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, told Kánya in Geneva that Austria would welcome a closer cooperation with Hungary. <sup>28</sup> As to the Italo-German friendship, Weizsäcker continued to calm Hungarian nerves by referring on October 2, to the Hitler-Mussolini meeting as one at which both agreed on respecting Austria's "legitimate claims" and added that nothing had happened to alarm Austria. <sup>29</sup> That, of course, depended much on Hitler's interpretation of Austria's "legitimate claims," specifically, whether they also included her independence.

As to an effective western opposition to a threatening Anschluss, France was so weakened by her internal social and political divisions that she could

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<sup>27</sup>Ibid., I, 457.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., I, 472.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., I, 479.

hardly rate as a power of the first order,<sup>30</sup> and the relevant attitude of Britain, made known on November 19, to the Hungarian Minister in London by Sir Orme Sargent, chief of the European Division in the British Foreign office, was only that England as a European power "does not assume a position of desinteressement" in face of possible German actions directed toward the Southeast.<sup>31</sup> To these words the Hungarian Minister added his own cryptic observation that he found the formulation vague, just as he had found the information received three days earlier on the Halifax visit to Berlin, when he had been told that an exchange of views between Hitler and a distinguished member of the British Cabinet can only be useful, but "one ought not expect sensations to result from it."<sup>32</sup> The Hungarian envoy further concluded that it is possible that Britain was deliberately vague, in order to "let them guess."<sup>33</sup> Actually, the British position was made quite clear without leaving much to guess about during the Halifax visit and even earlier at the Vienna visit of the British Ambassador to Germany, Sir Neville Henderson, who assured von Papen, the German Ambassador in Austria, of England's understanding of the

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<sup>30</sup>Macartney-Palmer, p. 368.

<sup>31</sup>D.I.M.K., I, 498.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., I, 499.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

need for the Austrian question's solution in the Reich-German sense, hoping, however, that the Germans "will not rush" such a solution. <sup>34</sup>

It is worth mentioning in connection with Austria's deteriorating international position that a united Little Entente posture had also become possible ever since 1936, when the Yugoslavs let the Hungarians know that Austrian Independence was not a vital question of Yugoslav interests and that security arrangements to be established against Germany did not interest Yugoslavia; furthermore, she was opposed to an extreme rapprochement with Austria. <sup>35</sup> Beyond this, to the Little Entente countries even an Anschluss appeared better than a Habsburg restitution.

A further confidential report which the Hungarians received in mid-June of 1937, came from a London correspondent of the Hungarian Telegraph Office, the official news agency; it described a new proposal emerging on the British political scene to treat German demands: allow a free hand to Germany in Central Europe, so that she would leave the colonies in peace. This solution was made attractive to Britain for the following reasons: (a) It would avert the danger from the

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<sup>34</sup>D.G.F.P., Vol. I. From Neurath to Ribbentrop, 1937-1938 (Washington, 1949), pp. 427-28.

<sup>35</sup>D.I.M.K., I, 125.

British Empire for a long time; (b) it would drive a wedge between Italy and Germany; (c) The digestion of the central European nationalities to be conquered would tie Germany down for many generations; (d) It would make Germany the neighbor of Russia and would facilitate the playing of one against the other. <sup>36</sup>

## 2. The Acute Phase of the Austrian Crisis in 1938.

The picture which emerged from the Hungarian reports on the general international situation by the end of 1937, made Kánya call for another meeting of the Rome Triangle states to consolidate their weakening association. Already early in November, before his Berlin visit, Kánya asked Ciano for such a meeting, to which Ciano saw no objection in principle, wanting to give the impression that the Rome bloc was still solid, <sup>37</sup> but he was not available until the beginning of the following year. As a preview of his thinking, Ciano sent a draft of announcement to Budapest and Vienna on January 4, pledging both places to a closer pro-Axis line complemented by an anti-League and anti-Comintern policy. <sup>38</sup> The prevailing Hungarian feelings were

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<sup>36</sup> Horthy Miklós Titkos Iratai (The Secret Papers of Miklós Horthy, M. Szinai and L. Szücs, eds.(Budapest; Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1962), p. 191.

<sup>37</sup>Ciano's Hidden Diary, p. 29.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 60.

emphasized at the same time during Count Bethlen's private visit to Rome, who expressed his great concern to the Duce about the fate of Austria and the possibility of the Little Entente's shifting allegiance from Paris to Berlin. <sup>39</sup>

The last Rome Triangle meeting then took place in Budapest on January 10 through 12. Ciano, as indicated in his earlier correspondence, asked his Austrian and Hungarian colleagues to leave the League and join the Anti-Comintern Pact. Both resisted his considerable pressure successfully and with tenacity. All he managed to get from them was their expression of abhorrence of Bolshevism, their taking note of Italy's leaving the League, and their declaration of sympathy toward the Berlin-Rome collaboration. <sup>40</sup> On their part, the Austrians asked Ciano for a declaration on their independence, and the Hungarians asked for one on minorities Ciano refused both; the first because of Germany, and the second because

of Yugoslavia.<sup>41</sup> Italy's demonstration of her lack of any value to serve as a counterbalance to Germany's expansion did not discourage the Hungarians in continuing with their very close relations with Austria. The Pester Lloyd, a semiofficial German

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Macartney, A History of Hungary, p. 216.

<sup>41</sup> Ciano, op. cit., p. 63.

language Hungarian newspaper, called those relations most friendly on January 6, also expressing Hungary's continued intention to follow a western line, and concluding that the tripartite meeting in Budapest was to demonstrate that policy.

<sup>42</sup> In official policy, too, Hungary emphasized her friendship for Austria, <sup>43</sup> although the inevitability of the Anschluss was obvious to her. As a final certification of Italy's decision to abstain from preventing it, Ciano wrote in his diary on December 18, that the Budapest meeting was of little importance, the Rome Protocols having been superseded.

<sup>44</sup> Whereas Ciano hurried to inform the German Minister in Budapest about Italy's definite abandonment of Austria, Kánya told the same man that at the meeting Austria had insisted on her independence, complained about the Nazi agitation, and stressed the importance of good Austro-German relations, which unfortunately were not a fact. <sup>45</sup>

In January of 1938, Hitler was busy eliminating the internal resistance to his plans by replacing some of his leading political and military figures with men more favorably inclined to his ambitious program. In

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<sup>42</sup>Macartney, op. cit., p. 205.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 206.

<sup>44</sup>Ciano, op. cit., p. 45.

<sup>45</sup>D.I.M.K., I, 551.

the course of these transfers Ribbentrop became his Foreign Minister and von Papen was recalled from his Viennese ambassadorial post. Weizsäcker, who was soon to be promoted from Director of the Political Section to Secretary of State in the German Foreign Ministry, tells us that by that time Hitler alone was determining his foreign policy, and the foreign minister's function was only to retard or speed up its execution, with Neurath representing the first alternative and Ribbentrop the second.<sup>46</sup>

The occasion to press for more speedy action on the Austrian affair came when the Austrians discovered late in January a plot by Austrian Nazis designed to create a situation that would force Hitler to intervene.<sup>47</sup> Von Papen, reporting about that and the more successful negotiations progressing between the Austrians and Seyss-Inquart, representing the Austrian Nazis, impressed on Hitler the need for a meeting with Schuschnigg.<sup>48</sup>

Exactly at the same time, on January 25, a most unfortunate conversation took place in Budapest between Bohle, a German diplomat on visit to discuss matters

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<sup>46</sup>Ernst B. Weizsäcker, Erinnerungen (München: Paul List Verlag, 1950), p. 144.

<sup>47</sup>Macartney-Palmer, op. cit., p. 372.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid.

relating to Hungary's German minority, and Csáky, the chief of Cabinet in the Hungarian Foreign Office, foreboding the latter's future role as Kánya's successor. Departing from the main topic of his conversations, he felt called upon to make a remark privately that "Hungary will not rise to oppose the Anschluss, being convinced that Germany does not intend to annex Hungary, too." Bohle assured his loquacious host that Hitler is in principle against conquering strange peoples. Whereupon Csáky added that a strong and friendly Germany would be a more pleasant neighbor to Hungary than a weak and unreliable Austria.<sup>49</sup> When on March 4, the German Minister asked Kánya concerning the meaning of Csáky's "private remarks," Kánya replied that they were exclusively Csáky's personal views,<sup>50</sup> but by then, of course, the damage was done.

Having accomplished the reshuffling of the leading positions in the German Government, Hitler felt the time ripe to accept von Papen's suggestion to invite Schuschnigg to a meeting in Berchtesgaden on February 12. By that time he also managed to work himself up into a frenzy against his invited guest by listening to the anti-Austrian accusations of the Anschluss proponents in

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<sup>49</sup>Elek Karsai, Országgyarapítás - Országvesztés, I; 1933-39 (The Enlarging and Losing of the Country) Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1961), P. 52.

<sup>50</sup>D.I.M.K., II, 287.



his immediate environment. The demands Hitler presented to Schuschnigg were not very much different from the previous ones in content, only in form. He wanted to expand the jurisdiction of Spys-Inquart to include public security, but the demand was presented in abusive language and in the presence of military figures.<sup>51</sup> The Austrians informed the Hungarians immediately of the Berchtesgaden meeting with a cryptically short communication: "The Germans supported their internal demands with military threats."<sup>52</sup>

Simultaneously with this report arrived one from the Chief of Hungarian Military Intelligence regarding his conversations with his Italian counterpart, in which the Italian view was registered that the Anschluss was a matter of time and that Italy would not act any more as she did three years back.<sup>53</sup>

Kánya's views on the Berchtesgaden meeting were cabled to the Hungarian Minister in the United States for information of interested Americans on February 22. It appeared to Kánya that Schuschnigg had defended himself well and had received Hitler's promise of respecting Austria's independence. The Hungarian Foreign

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<sup>51</sup>Macartney-Palmer, op. cit., p. 372.

<sup>52</sup>D.I.M.K., I, 576.

<sup>53</sup>D.I.M.K., II, 272.

Minister concluded: "Hopefully, Austria will be able to prosper in the new atmosphere."<sup>54</sup>

As a side product of the Austrian crisis, Polish-Hungarian relations also became more active. The pessimistic attitude of the Poles reflected itself with respect to the July, 1936, Austro-German agreement, which they deemed to be the forerunner of an immediate Anschluss. In view of this, the Poles urged the Hungarians to consider together the situation emanating from the German activities. In the eyes of the Polish Foreign Minister, Colonel Beck, such a meeting became very urgent by December of 1937, and Regent Horthy was formally invited for a visit to Poland,<sup>55</sup> to discuss situations likely to develop from the impending "evolution" in Danubia. Hory, the Hungarian Minister in Poland, cabled on January 19, that Beck's concepts of the immediate future included a Warsaw-Budapest-Belgrade line, as the only one able to stop the German pressure to be expected after the

Anschluss.<sup>56</sup>

Horthy, accompanied by Kánya, arrived on February 5, in Poland and received a most cordial welcome, corresponding to the traditional Polish-Hungarian

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54D.I.M.K., I, 602.

55Hory, op. cit., P. 26.

56D.I.M.K., I, 555.

friendship. <sup>57</sup> While Horthy participated in more ceremonial occasions, Kánya had ample opportunities for political talks with Beck. These opportunities, however, were left unexploited, and Kánya's evasion of more serious discussions and reserved manner made Beck later complain to Hory about the outcome of the political discussions. <sup>58</sup> According to Hory, the lack of meeting of the Polish and Hungarian minds was due to the fact that Kánya, expecting the realization of Hungary's justified aspirations from a cooperation with Germany, considered the stressing of a Polish-Hungarian friendship from that point of view and just at that time a liability, whereas Beck, reckoning with a German expansion, supported revision, particularly a common Polish-Hungarian frontier, as an appropriate countermeasure. <sup>59</sup> Both expected the Anschluss to come; Beck by February 20, Kánya "sooner or later." This made Beck ask once more through Hory for Kánya's views, specifically in response to the Berchtesgaden meeting. <sup>60</sup> By that time Kánya, too, grew more concerned and decided to talk to Schuschnigg in person, <sup>61</sup> particularly

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<sup>57</sup>Hory, op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>60</sup>D.I.M.K , I, 577.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., I, 366.

after Hitler's February 20, speech, which contained no reference to Austria's independence and only a casual one to "the cordial friendship" with Hungary .<sup>62</sup> Kánya's visit to Vienna took place on March 2; letting the inquiring Germans know that he was visiting relatives, he used the occasion to see Schuschnigg also.<sup>63</sup>

It was in Vienna, presumably after his talks with the Austrian chancellor and foreign minister, that Kánya wrote his letter to Hory in response to the Polish questions, expressing his innermost thoughts on them. He said:

...As to the Anschluss, we would rather see an independent Austria than an empire of 80 million in our neighborhood. Being aware, however, of the determined intentions of the Nazi regime, we must reckon with the union of the two German lands. This is even more likely because neither France nor England are willing or able to take stronger steps. Mussolini, on the other hand, takes the position that, even though the Anschluss could be delayed, it cannot be averted. In view of our good relations with Berlin, I do not consider it impossible that we could get along with Germany even then, but owing to the strong dynamics of the Nazis, one must count on other eventualities also and, therefore, on my part I would deem it advisable for Poland and Hungary to discuss these matters, I cannot guarantee this, but my informations show that Italy is already occupied with the danger of a shift in the Central European balance and the necessary preventive measures. Within them, there emerged the thought of an Italian-Yugoslav-Hungarian-Polish line. . .<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid., I, 624.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., I, 615.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., I, 616-16.

The last reference must have been the result of a report sent after Kánya to Vienna from the Hungarian Minister in Rome quoting Ciano as saying that "the Anschluss or the complete Gleichschaltung is inevitable;" it must come sooner or later. Italy could not spare the German friendship, which could be assured only if Italy and other states close to her would create a horizontal line starting from Rome and leading through Belgrade and Budapest to Warsaw. <sup>65</sup>

On his return Kánya told the German Minister that the Austrians had not given up hope for a peaceful agreement with Germany. Schuschnigg would not be anti-German, nor could he relinquish Austrian independence. Whether Schuschnigg's hopes were justified or not, "you will know better than I," he told the German. <sup>66</sup> Somewhat of an answer to that question came from Berlin in the Hungarian Minister's report of his first visit with the new Foreign Minister, Ribbentrop, who said that the settlement of the Austro-German question was a family affair to which Eden showed desinteressement anyway. <sup>67</sup>

Following Schuschnigg's speech of February 24, asserting Austrian independence once more, there were widespread Nazi demonstrations, particularly in Styria,

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid., II, 286.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., I, 622.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., I, 621.

with plans for a gigantic German Day demonstration in March. Contemplating countermeasures to be taken, Schuschnigg first rejected the idea of a plebiscite at the time of Kánya's visit, but by March 8, a decision was reached to call for one. <sup>68</sup> When the announcement of a referendum was made on the 9th for four days later, Hitler, thrown in a rage, ordered immediate mobilization and plans for a move by the 12th. He also sent Seyss-Inquart to Schuschnigg to demand cancellation of the plebiscite and put Goering in charge of operations. When the Austrians agreed to the demand, Goering added a new one: Schuschnigg's replacement by Seyss-Inquart. Even that was accepted by the Austrian President, and Seyss-Inquart asked for canceling the plans for occupation, but Hitler refused to change orders, and the marching of German troops started on the 12th. According to Weizsäcker Hitler did not think that third states would interfere; militarily he was not prepared for them. <sup>69</sup>

The hopelessness of the Austrian situation reflected itself clearly in the cables landing on Kánya's desk in those fateful days. On March 11, Ciano informed his Hungarian colleague that Italy had advised the inquiring Schuschnigg not to hold a plebiscite. <sup>70</sup> The

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<sup>68</sup>Lukács, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

<sup>69</sup>Weizsäcker, *op. cit.*, pp. 148-49.

<sup>70</sup>D.I.M.K., I, 635..

next day Göring told the Hungarian Minister that Austria was being occupied to be followed by a referendum, and he added that Mussolini, in memory of Germany's support at the time of the Ethiopian war, had given Hitler a free hand in regard to Austria; what is more, Göring was certain that the Western Powers would do nothing. <sup>71</sup> By the thirteenth, Ciano sent a message once more that "in the far advanced state of affairs" nothing could be done by Italy. <sup>72</sup> Still on the same date, Austria was proclaimed a province of the German Reich, and the Anschluss was accomplished without bloodshed and third party intervention.

### 3. Reactions to the Anschluss and Its Consequences

Austria's absorption by Germany carried far-reaching political, military, and economic consequences. It made direct neighbors out of the Axis partners, dividing the Continent; it gave the Nazi leadership another seven million Germans; it transferred into German hands the Austrian economy with its various interests in Southeast Europe; it exposed the southern, less fortified borders of Bohemia to direct German pressure; it made Germany and Hungary contiguous, opening the way to German penetrations of all sorts, and

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<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 639.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 646.

conversely, closing Hungary's direct lines of communication to the West. Hungary's three-fourths encirclement by the unchanged Little Entente was sealed off by an overwhelming German presence, which also abutted on Yugoslavia.

Hungary's reaction to this vitally significant development in her international position, resulting from the virtual collapse of the old diplomatic order and from Germany's power looming at her frontier, was a congratulatory note to Germany "on union achieved without bloodshed," expressing also a hope for good neighborly relations. <sup>73</sup> Weizsäcker was "glad to receive" it and stressed that Hungary's note was the first to come. <sup>74</sup> A more general Hungarian evaluation was sent to all Hungarian missions in Kánya's circular telegram of March 20, instructing its addressees to stress in their conversations the widening of Italo-Hungarian and Polish-Hungarian friendships and to say that Hungary endeavored to maintain a policy of free hand, success of which will depend on Little Entente understanding toward minimal Hungarian requests during the negotiations to be resumed with them. <sup>75</sup> Significantly, the reference to the free-hand policy was not included in

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<sup>73</sup>D.I.M.K., I, 648.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., I, 649.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., I, 676-77.



the copies sent to Berlin and Rome. <sup>76</sup> As a final act of recognition, Kánya informed the Hungarian Chargé in Vienna on April 1, that the Legation was changed into a Consulate General by a "highest order" of March 25.<sup>77</sup> These steps were adjustments to the accomplished facts and did not reflect satisfaction with them, as was obvious from Kánya's letters and telegrams referred to above. Hungary was one of the very few countries still demonstrating friendship for Austria when many other powers, that could have afforded to resist it, resigned to the Anschluss in advance both by word and deed. It was Hungary that insisted on the January Rome Triangle meeting in Budapest attempting to show a united front of countries interested in Austria's independence. That Ciano found the meeting of no importance was not the result of any Hungarian resignation.

A further display of Hungary's attitude was that on March 11, the Hungarian Chargé agreed to motor Schuschnigg to Hungary; the offer, however, was not taken due to Seyss-Inquart's assurance that it was not necessary for Schuschnigg to flee. <sup>78</sup>

The United States Minister in Hungary, Montgomery, found it strange that when Hitler prepared to invade

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<sup>76</sup>Ibid., I, 677.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., I, 707.

<sup>78</sup>F.R.U.S. 1938 I (Washington: 1955), P. 479.

Austria, Benes, leader of a country most directly affected by such a move, "did not move a finger to bolster up Austrian resistance." <sup>79</sup> The Hungarians knew of the Czechoslovak reactions, since it was in the presence of the Hungarian Minister in Berlin that Goering assured the Czechoslovak Minister on the evening of the tenth that there would be no military steps taken against his country, to which the Czech minister replied on instructions from his government that Czechoslovakia did not intend to mobilize. <sup>80</sup> In February, when Schuschnigg turned to a possible Austrian-Hungarian-Czechoslovak combination to replace the Rome bloc, the latter having become ineffective due to Italy's stand, Hungary felt unenthusiastic about the plan in view of Czechoslovakia's adamant resistance to any revision as late as March 4, <sup>81</sup> and deemed it to be an irritant rather than an effective resistance to Germany. <sup>82</sup> Even if Benes had some plans of value within the Little Entente, their realization was rendered quite impossible by the Yugoslav posture taken on March 14, declaring that Yugoslavia was not concerned with Austrian events. <sup>83</sup>

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<sup>79</sup>Montgomery, op. cit., p. 92.

<sup>80</sup>D.I.M.K., I, 639.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., I, 638.

<sup>82</sup>Macartney, A History of Hungary, p. 206.

<sup>83</sup>Lukács, op. cit., p. 120. .

in direct German-Hungarian relations the Anschluss raised a difficult problem concerning the former West-Hungary, which had been transferred to Austria by the peace settlements under the name of Burgenland. Back in 1933, Hitler promised Gömbo's the return of Burgenland to Hungary; when the opportunity came in 1938, Hitler seemed to have forgotten about it, for it was not offered. The Hungarians did not press for it either, not wanting to take part in the spoliation of a friend. <sup>84</sup> Such a restraint might appear as natural, but, in view of the Hungarian obsession with revision, it was a display of unusual moral concern.

Of the new situation affecting Hungary, an unsigned article in The Round Table concluded that it brought spiritual and moral danger to Hungary by making out of a former potential half of a great power a Randstaat of Germany, exerting political and ideological pressures and canceling any Hungarian dreams of a fully restored Hungary. <sup>85</sup> With the Mittleuropa under German rule realized, good Hungary-German relations could have still been made possible by traditions and expectations, the article continued, but the companionship of World War I, the common revolt against injustices of the peace

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<sup>84</sup>Macartney, loc. cit.

<sup>85</sup>"Hungary After the Anschluss," The Round Table, (1938), 543-45.

treaties, and the expectation of a partial realization of revisionist aspirations was jeopardized by the reality of an oppressive economic influence. <sup>86</sup>

Kánya's own exposé in a closed session of the Hungarian Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee on March 23, went along roughly the same lines. Tracing the events leading to the Anschluss, he referred to the fact that,

the peace settlements, while heavily favoring the Slav and Latin ethnic groups in their application of the national self-determination principle, denied the Austrians their union with Germany on the same principle...The Allied Powers forced the independence on Austria but failed to provide the means to maintain it...Such an anomaly could be sustained until the supremacy of the victorious powers was assured... With the new developments in Italo-German relations this was no longer possible in face of Hitler's determined ambitions...Shortly after the union of the two German lands the world accepted this accomplished fact...The speech of Secretary Hull (of March 17th) does not at all seem to give the impression as if the United States would want to involve themselves in European affairs in connection with the Austrian events. -What was Hungary to do? The answer is simply this that an intervention into the Austro-German affair was not our task, for its solution fell outside our power and neither party would have welcomed our possible interference...Now that Austria is replaced by a Germany in close friendship with us... we cannot conceive of a German policy desirous to make enemies out of us... Only in view of this could Hungary express her congratulations to the Austro-German union...I admit that we may be exposed to stronger economic pressures on the part of Germany and that the Austrian Nazis will present themselves as more radical than the ones of the Reich, leading to difficulties with our German minority, but all these are opposed by the fact that

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., P. 547.

there are no essential differences between us in principal political questions. No doubt the presence of a huge country at our borders carries dangers in itself, but such dangers would become real only if there were strained relations between Hungary and Germany...of which precisely the opposite happens to be true... <sup>87</sup>

Similar hopes were advanced in an article by Bethlen, the chief proponent of a pro-British and anti-Nazi line. He called for a distinction between Hungary having become the neighbor of a Germany and of a totalitarian state. In any case, certainty followed the uncertainty of Austria's position, and the possibility of a war, and he continued that the disadvantages inherent in the new certainty included an overwhelming neighbor and the related economic dependency through which the Danubian countries could be played against each other. He saw an advantage in the fact that "the Little Entente dictatorship" was ended and that Hungarian

independence continued to be in the interest of the Axis as well as of the West. He explained that Germany's interest called for a strong, independent Hungary from which she could get what she needed by friendly means; such an interest would be greatly impaired by the introduction of Nazism into Hungary, ending the possibility of any cooperation satisfactory to Germany. 88

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87D.I.M.K., I, 696-98.

88 Count Stephen Bethlen, "Hungary's Position After the Austrian Anschluss," The Hungarian quarterly, IV (Summer 1938). 201-210. -

The very first dangers of the Hungary-German territorial contiguity appeared in the economic sphere. This was clearly demonstrated by the marked increase of Germany's participation in the Hungarian foreign trade. In 1934, 19.7% of the Hungarian imports came from Germany; and by 1938, that percentage rose to 41.6; correspondingly the German share of the 1934 Hungarian export of 11.2% jumped to 45.7% by 1938.<sup>89</sup> These data were alarmingly impressive to all those concerned about Hungary's economic independence, serving also as a base of her political independence.

All the views presented above recognized the uncomfortable facts of the new post-Anschluss position of Hungary. The hopes they expressed only tried to point to the few remaining possibilities of a continued Hungarian independence. The general concern of the public about the country's fate made Regent Horthy deliver a radio address on April 3, to the Hungarians designed to calm their excitement and allay their uncertainties. He said that Austria's union with Germany "means nothing else to us but that one of our good old friends, pushed in an impossible situation by the peace treaties, united with another good old friend of ours. . . . That is all;

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<sup>89</sup>I. Berend and G. Ránki, Magyarország a fasiszta Németország "életterében," 1933-1939 (Budapest: Közgazdasági és Jogi Könyvkiadó, 1960), p. 175.

from our point of view nothing more has happened...”<sup>90</sup> In his memoirs, Horthy gives the reason why Hungary had to resign herself to the Anschluss: Hungary was neither called nor in a position to put herself up as a guarantor of the peace treaties after the Western Powers, Mussolini, and even a Little Entente state, namely Yugoslavia, had fortified Hitler in his resolution.<sup>91</sup>

On March 26, came the report on the Soviet reaction quoting Litvinoff as saying that the Anschluss had destroyed the political balance in Central Europe, which will lead to a general rearrangement of powers. He further said that the economic and political independence of the Danubian countries had suffered and thus it would be the task of the great powers to help the small ones economically and politically to maintain their independence. As to Soviet-Hungarian relations, he said: "We are increasingly interested in the maintenance of Hungary's independence."<sup>92</sup>

With the Anschluss the reality of Germany's Primacy in Europe was demonstrated once more. The Western policies are too well known to be repeated here, since they had no bearing on Hungary's position, having

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<sup>90</sup>Horthy Miklós Titkos Iratai, p. 176.

<sup>91</sup>Nikolaus von Horthy, Ein Leben für Ungarn (Bonn: Athengum-Verlag, 1953), p. 196.

<sup>92</sup>D.I.M.K., I, 701.

only verbally reacted to, without counteracting, the course of events. There were some views that Italy must be sure of her position in the Mediterranean before becoming able to give more effective attention to the north and that this could come about only through an Italy-British reconciliation. For this reason the Anglo-Italian negotiations ending in their Agreement of April 16, 1938, was welcomed with great hopes and expectations in East-Central Europe. In retrospect it is worth noting that during the Italo-British conversations in February, already in the acute phase of the Austrian crisis, no mention was made of Austria or Central Europe. <sup>93</sup>

#### 4. United States Reactions to Austria's Annexation

President Franklin D. Roosevelt's plan for concerted international action to promote world peace, referred to above in Chapter III, was only postponed in November of 1937 without being given up. As to its practical steps, still on January 10, Undersecretary Welles had the following sequence in mind: after confidential exploration of the plan with the great powers, all diplomatic representatives would be handed the proposal, which, if favorably received, would obtain a more detailed formulation from representatives of a

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<sup>93</sup>Lukács, *op. cit.*, p. 724.

select group of small nations, Hungary included, to serve in reaching the bases "for a practical understanding with Germany on colonies and European adjustment." <sup>94</sup> Two days later, the proposal suffered an immediate rejection by Britain in view of the latter's interest in keeping her efforts at appeasement with Germany and Italy undisturbed. <sup>95</sup> The President, who already in his January 3, address to Congress had said that in a world of high tension and disorder, "we must keep ourselves adequately strong in self-defense," <sup>96</sup> called on the 28th <sup>97</sup> for increased armament, having abandoned all thought of pressing for his original peace plan.

The failure of the American plans to get off the ground was followed by a continued flow of alarming dispatches referring to Hitler's determination to conquer Austria. From Vienna came the report on February 4, that the French and British did not find it feasible to work out a suitable formula for a statement on behalf of Austrian independence. <sup>98</sup> Ambassador Bullitt had a French information to share on the



Berchtesgaden meeting, with the conclusion thereon that  
Hitler had resisted Party

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94F.R.U.S., 1938: I, 115-16.

95Hull, op. cit., I, 573•

96Documents on American For. Rel., 1938-39 P. 5.

97Hull, op. cit., I, 573.

98F.R.U.S., 1938: I, 389.

requests to solve the Austrian problem by force, for militarily he was not yet prepared, and a military move could have resulted in an unfavorable awakening in the West.<sup>99</sup> This was not the most accurate interpretation of the event actually taking place, but it was still close enough on matters of military realities. Two days later, on the 17th, the same source attributed a manifestation of Anglo-French interest in Central Europe to the two governments asking the Germans for information on the Berchtesgaden talks.<sup>100</sup>

An excellent summary of State Department information on the Austrian developments is given in a Messersmith memorandum dated February 18, 1938. It saw the German objective in Austria's disappearance; it knew of the Berchtesgaden meeting which forced on Austria demands leaving her without any real independence; it portrayed Hitler as one whose "agreements are valid only as long as he believes they should be kept"; it averred that, barring a major change in Europe, Austrian independence was gone in fact, if not in form; it predicted that Germany, greatly in need of economic relief, would, after taking Austria press on with an economic penetration program toward Southeast Europe, thereby jeopardizing American trade agreements in the same area;

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<sup>99</sup>Ibid., 1, 395•

<sup>100</sup>Ibid., I, 402.

it admitted failure to discover a way to stop the disintegrating movement in Southeast Europe, but it did predict that with Germany in control of that area, she would be in a position to immobilize England and France, leaving America to stand practically alone. 101

The accuracy of this evaluation was borne out by cables coming in from Europe over the following few days. The Chargé in Germany confirmed that British "expression of interest" in Austria was meaningless, 102 and that Hitler wanted to accomplish the Anschluss before the end of the Spanish Civil War and an Italo-British understanding. 103

Benes pointed out to United States Minister Carr that Germany by gaining economic control over the small states would be in a position to wage a war; therefore, the only sound position was resistance even to the point of fighting.

104 Bullitt relayed the French Prime Minister's estimate that Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Romania in German hands would represent such an enormous power that it could destroy France within a few years, in view of which Chamberlain's contemplation of this situation with

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101 Ibid., I, 17-23.

102 Ibid., I, 404.

103 Ibid., I, 409.

104 Ibid., I, 411-12.

equanimity was disturbing the French. <sup>105</sup> From Yugoslavia arrived the report that, in the absence of Western action, the Balkan Entente had found any action on its part useless. <sup>106</sup>

The actions in response to these most accurate assessments of the situation were negative. When on February 14, the United States Chargé in Austria, talking with the Austrian Foreign Minister, quoted himself 'has expressing the hope that America would firmly resist threats against Austrian independence, <sup>107</sup> Hull rebuked him within twenty-four hours by saying:

You should very carefully avoid... making any statements which can possibly be construed as implying that your Government is involving itself, in any sense, in European questions of a purely political character' or is taking any part, even indirectly, in the determination of such questions. . . .<sup>108</sup>

This, of course, was made in response to public opinion, while the Secretary's true feelings were convinced of the "fatal fallacy of isolating ourselves." <sup>109</sup>

To Moffat in the State Department, the Hitler Speech of February 20 carried on significant aspect: it took his dominance over Central and Eastern Europe as

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<sup>105</sup>Ibid., I, 26-27.

<sup>106</sup>Ibid., I, 417.

<sup>107</sup>Ibid., I, 392.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid., I, 396.

<sup>109</sup>Hull, op. cit., I, 575,

granted, which to the small states meant that totalitarianism could proceed unchecked. <sup>110</sup> The Germans must also have gathered the same impression when their ambassador in the United States overheard the remark in the State Department in connection with Schuschnigg's March 9 decision for a referendum, that "that fellow is asking for trouble." <sup>111</sup>

When the Anschluss did come, in the Department only Hull, Moffat and Feis believed that the Axis would survive the strain produced by it. <sup>112</sup> Its official product in the United States was another speech by Hull on March 17, on the principles of American foreign policy, which included the maintenance of peace and adherence to moral standards, elaborating in addition upon the necessity for American rearmament and on the advantages of a middle position between the extremes of internationalism and isolationism, expressed in such brave words as: "Isolation is not a means to security; it is a fruitful source of insecurity." <sup>113</sup> Even though there was a very strong condemnation of Austria's "execution" in the unofficial American press, it was still obvious that these reactions did not signify United

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<sup>110</sup>Moffat, op. cit., p. 190.

<sup>111</sup>Lukács, op. cit., p. 121.

<sup>112</sup>Moffat, op. cit., p. 192.

<sup>113</sup>Documents on Am. For. Rel., 1938-39, pp.6-16.

States involvement in European affairs. The Hungarian Char é, reporting on these developments from Washington, concluded on March 18, that the U. S. Government restricted itself to the settling of the details of the Austro-American relations, refraining from interfering into European politics at this time. <sup>114</sup> On the day before, when the Chargé inquired about official reactions to the events in Austria, Moffat told him that the problem was being studied as to its diplomatic and trade aspects and remarked that Hungary was the first to reduce its Vienna Legation to a Consulate General. The Chargé replied that Hungary pursued a policy of friendship with her big neighbor and that she was not going to take any action that might be resented by Germany, the most powerful country on the Continent. <sup>115</sup>

Moffat's reference to the change in the Hungarian Legation's status in Vienna was not accurate, since it was ordered only on March 25, and the Legation itself was not notified of it until April 1. <sup>116</sup> If the Hungarians were faster in some respect than consisted with dignity, it was the congratulatory message sent to Germany on the Austro-German union, which proved to be

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<sup>114</sup>D.I.M.K , 1, 659.

<sup>115</sup>Memorandum by P. Moffat Chief Division of European Affairs on March 17, 1938. 863.00/1690 M.S. Department of State.

<sup>116</sup>D.I.M.K., I, 707•

the first coming from any nation. The State Department's deliberate delay in liquidating the United States Legation in Vienna for three more weeks <sup>117</sup> might have been a demonstration of a great power's ability to bide its time, but it did not impress the Hungarians as an effective act of resistance which they could have afforded to emulate. <sup>118</sup> There was another report which put Hungary in an unfavorable light. It came from the United States Ambassador in Germany and said that Hungary was the possible exception in Europe which could see an advantage to herself in the Anschluss, hoping that it might help her territorial ambitions. <sup>119</sup>

It appears that the Americans and Hungarians were mutually dissatisfied with the speed of their reaction to the Austrian events. On April 15, in his final report on American reactions to the Anschluss, the Hungarian Minister in Washington concluded that the American Government dropped the Austrian matter surprisingly fast, but the anti-German feeling grew extensively. He continued that this seeming contradiction, so typical of American politics, could find its explanation in the fact that for internal reasons nothing else could have been done regarding recognition, whereas the German

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<sup>117</sup>F.R.U.S., 1938: I, 452.

<sup>118</sup>D.I.M.K., I, 696, 709.

<sup>119</sup>F.R.U.S., 1938:I, 470.

actions and the subsequent loss of hope for their trustworthiness made Germany more hated than she had been just before the Lusitania case. It appeared to the Hungarian Minister that even though Germany was "in possession" in Austria, she had paid dearly for it in American relations by losing whatever trust she may have had. Quite significantly he added that anybody who knew how difficult it was for the American diplomats to make any statements in view of the isolationist sentiments must realize the seriousness of the public utterances made concerning the Anschluss, <sup>120</sup> like that of Hull on March 19:

The extent to which the Austrian incident . . . is calculated to endanger the maintenance of peace and the preservation of the principles in which this Government believes is of course a matter of serious concern to the Government of the United States. <sup>121</sup>

The Hungarian Chargé in Washington sensed quite accurately the future trend of American political developments. On March 21, he reviewed such "antifascist phenomena" as the voices against the Neutrality Laws and isolation and concluded from them that the United States will be one of the members of the democratic front about to be established against Germany. <sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup>D.I.M.K., I, 715-16.

<sup>121</sup>Hull, op. cit., I, 575.

<sup>122</sup>D.I.M.K., I, 714.



The hopes attached by East-Central Europe to the British-Italian agreement of April were not shared by the United States. In Europe it was assumed that such an agreement would release Italy's attention and energies to influence Germany in a favorable direction; actually it afforded Italy the possibility to practice her sacro egoismo in the Mediterranean and to enjoy the fruits of her African victory without interference. This latter and more accurate interpretation was given the agreement by Hull, who opposed it in principle, as throwing overboard the non-recognition doctrine and amounting to "a confession of weakness and an incitement to the dictators." The President, wanting to give moral support to the British Government, issued a statement on April 19, expressing "sympathetic interest" toward the agreement, representing "proof of the value of peaceful negotiations." 123

A somewhat more gratifying aspect of United States-Hungarian relations was the Hungarian offer in August of 1937, to resume payments on her relief debt of \$1,939,000 to the American Government by semiannual payments of \$10,000, representing one quarter of the amounts falling due. Hull recognized that this proposal represented the first resumption of payment by any Government which had suspended payment of its funded

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123Hull, op.cit., I, 581-82.

indebtedness to the United States and asked for the president's approval, which was granted. <sup>124</sup> By February of 1938, the final Hungarian formulation of the plan, aiming at the exact and full discharge of the relief debt, was transmitted to the State Department for the President, who in turn recommended it to the consideration of the Congress, calling it a noteworthy wish and effort of the Hungarian Government. <sup>125</sup> The first payments, made on June 15, and December 14, respectively, were recognized by the acting Secretary of State "with gratification." <sup>126</sup> This was another demonstration on the Hungarian Government's part of its desire to maintain good relations with the West. It was made possible by a slow economic recovery, reaching its height in 1937. This moderate prosperity was then threatened by the oppressive post-Anschluss nearness of the German economic colossus.

## 5. Conclusion

Externally the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy's role was to exclude from the Danube Valley any other great power which, by possessing Danubia, could have gained a

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<sup>124</sup>F.R.U.S., 1937: I, 850-51.

<sup>125</sup>Documents on Am. For. Rel., 1938-39, pp. 416-20.

<sup>126</sup>Ibid., pp. 421-22.

preponderance injurious to the European political balance; internally its role was to accommodate within its frame the interests of its different nationalities living in a prosperous economy provided by the integration of complementary regions. The dual Monarchy, having failed to carry out its role effectively, was dissolved in the face of some of its nationalities' successful claims for separate and independent existence.

On this dissolution, Austria, one of the successor states, having suffered serious political and economic disturbances, could not find her place in her newly gained independent misery which she was obligated to maintain by the peace settlement. The new situation marked by economic insolvency and internal unrest called for a solution which the Austrians thought to find, in line with the national self-determination theory, in some type of a union with Germany. Weizsäcker remarked that an Anschluss could hardly have been helped more than "by exiling the Habsburgs and refusing self-determination rights to an isolated, barely viable Austria."

<sup>127</sup> over the years the character of this movement changed from a union of German-speaking brethren, sought primarily by the Austrians, to an annexation of Austria by Germany, sought by the Nazis to increase German power, the international situation permitting.

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<sup>127</sup>Weizsäcker, op. cit., p. 150.

Europe's reaction to the Austro-German problem, owing to the Continent's division into revisionist and anti-revisionist camps, depended on the relative power position of the two blocs. In the nineteen-twenties, when such a union was desired by the population involved, and when it could have had a beneficial effect on the democratic development of the German-speaking lands, it was disallowed by the powers interested in the maintenance of the situation it intended to remedy. By 1938, when an aggressive Germany sought to occupy a reluctant Austria, enabling the former to carry out further aggression from an enlarged base, the very same powers that had resisted such a move in the past did their best to impress Hitler that his step would be unopposed.

With the Diplomatic Revolution completed, with Austria's precarious situation given as a reason, and with Hitler's ambitious plans set, the coming of the Anschluss could not be unexpected; only its time and form were unknown. When it did come, its course was determined by Hitler alone, others could only react. And react they did with a uniform recognition, the countries differing only in their explanations given for it.

A fair criticism of their reactions presupposes the availability of alternative courses of action and the ability to carry out the chosen one. In March, 1938, the small powers lacked this political luxury, even in

combination, but the great powers facing Germany did possess it, for she was not yet strong enough to challenge them collectively. Nevertheless, even though Hitler was not ready for them militarily, they were made ready for Hitler's plans psychologically. This was an exclusively great power game. Its outcome cast ominous shadows over the future of Europe.

The Anschluss marked a fundamental change in the European power balance. It upset the Versailles system by overthrowing one of its tenets, the Austrian independence, while its guarantors looked on with hands behind their backs. It increased German power enabling it even more to disrupt the old system. The objectionable part of the new development was that, while it changed the rigid status quo, it did not serve the cause of rectifying old injustices, it only served German power interests. For the first time, the former Monarchy's balkanized area, with its nominally independent, but economically and thus internationally very dependent states, separated by artificially high tariff barriers and by the conviction that the prosperity of each could only be achieved at the expense of the other, was invaded by a great power alien to the region.

Hungary's international position was basically affected and altered by the absorption of Austria into the Reich. The fact that it could take place signaled for Hungary the establishment of a new European balance,

unable to show sufficient power or will to prevent aggression; the fact that it did take place put Hungary in a more exposed economic position vis-a-vis Germany, rendered her politically weaker by the loss of her Rome Triangle support, and made her relative military weakness even more pronounced next to the German giant.

Hungary's immediate reaction to the Anschluss was a diplomatic note expressing relief over the avoidance of bloodshed and war. On a long-term basis, being fully cognizant of the dangers inherent in her new position, she decided to pursue her policy of peaceful revision by continued direct negotiations with the Little Entente, constantly seeking supportive western understanding and approval of her case and course. She also hoped that, being a victim of the peace settlements and thus a revisionist power, she would be able to maintain her independence through peaceful relations with her newly-won neighbor. Her continued payments to the United States were also designed to manifest the high value she laid on her western relations. America was viewed by the Hungarians as a very likely member of a future anti-German bloc, although at that time entirely withdrawn from the active scene of Europe. They realized that in view of the great powers' inaction any resistance to German ambitions by the smaller states could only mean suicide. They further recognized that the American utterances on the fundamental principles of

international conduct could only have served as a definition of the American position, but could never have impressed Hitler as an effective barrier to his plans when the list of his power considerations had obviously not included the yielding to moral lecturing.

Based on continued accurate reporting, Hungary's position was clearly seen by America. The Hungarian efforts, particularly in the field of finance, were appreciated. The few remarks critical of Hungary's speedy recognition of the Anschluss or even of her assumed favoring it contained a kernel of truth, but they also imputed an attitude to Hungary which was not real and could only have reflected the views of a potential enemy of Germany about a potential ally of hers. Still, America objectively realized Hungary's compelling difficulties, Germany's dangerous ambitions, and the fact that Hungary was in no position to oppose Germany openly.

Actually both America and Hungary saw each other's position, as established by the Anschluss, very accurately. With reference to their evaluation of the future course each thought the other would take, each failed to discover in the other an immediately potential partner to the common objective of opposing the threat of unlimited German expansion, while favoring a peaceful rectification of the status quo. Hungary saw no indication of the United States throwing herself in the

scales of the power balance in Europe; a not too inaccurate assessment; whereas the United States singled out Hungary as the country ready to go along with the German moves for the sake of revision, an estimate also not too far from the truth at that time.

## CHAPTER V

### THE CRISES AND SUPPRESSION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

#### I. Czechoslovak-Hungarian Relations Before 1938

Emerging from the dissolution of Austria-Hungary, Czechoslovakia, as an independent state of the interwar years, was a product of the Paris Peace Settlements. Its arrangements were to be based on the peace plans of President Wilson, calling for a self-determined existence of all nationalities and for a league of nations to prevent war and correct wrongs by peaceful process. Many of the actual solutions, however, fell short of the Wilsonian ideals, and new grievances were created. The deviations from the original Fourteen Points of President Wilson were the outgrowths of subsequent realities of the war and immediate post-war developments, such as the recognition of the Czechoslovak National Council as a de facto government and secret territorial agreements among the Allies.

Consequently, in an age when technological developments and economic needs demanded federal integration of larger areas, the new settlements were fragmenting already existing, economically complementary units. Furthermore, territorial transfers were made which not only retained but accentuated, through the concept of the national state, the conflicting national aspirations



of the mixed populations. The resulting economic disadvantages coupled with the dissatisfaction of large national minorities poisoned the atmosphere, reducing the chances that a reasoned approach would be taken to a solution by the victors and the vanquished of World War I.

In the case of Hungary, her frontiers were drawn by the claims of her new neighbors, which, going beyond the mere joining of her non-Hungarian nationalities with their respective racial kin, also included extensive economic, strategic and other non-nationality considerations. Such was the Czechoslovak-Hungarian border, drawn according to Czech claims supported by the French General Staff with a view to military requirements for the defense of Europe from a Hungary expected to go communist. Upon information confirming this fear, President Wilson went along with the French proposals, although they were clearly in violation of the national self-determination principle by attaching to Czechoslovakia close to a million Hungarians, most of them living in compact masses near the new frontiers. But the President did so on the assumption that inequities in the settlement would be cured through the machinery of the League of Nations.<sup>1</sup> Beyond this strategic reason, an economic consideration was also

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<sup>1</sup>Montgomery, *op. cit.*, pp. 57f.

confirmed by Thomas Masaryk, the first president of Czechoslovakia, when he told a Hungarian diplomat in 1923, that purely Magyar areas had been claimed only because there had been no transverse railways north of them.<sup>2</sup>

Actually even the Czechoslovaks were surprised at the ease with which their desires and demands were satisfied. Benes himself told the editor of the Journal de Geneve, "I am alarmed when I see that they give me anything I ask for. . . . They never deny me anything."<sup>3</sup> By "they," he meant the Allied Powers, who, according to Gustav Habrmann, a Czech social democrat, "took the view that they leave it to us how much territory we want . . . (and) advised us to press down to the Danube."<sup>4</sup>

Once, however, the borders were drawn, they stayed fixed. The close affinity of the new political order so established and of the League of Nations was clearly demonstrated by the identity of the first twenty six chapters of their respective documents; namely, the Peace Treaties and the League Covenant. Consequently the League was looked upon by both the advantaged and

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<sup>2</sup> Hungarian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Hungary at the Conference of Paris (Budapest: University Press, 1947) Vol. IV, Annex I, point 2.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., Annex I, point 1.

the disadvantaged nations in the new situation as the instrument which would serve for maintenance or change of the status quo, depending on the individual nation's interests. Whereas Czechoslovakia considered the status quo of 1919 as the perfect embodiment of international justice to be preserved through the League, Hungary could not reconcile herself to the fact that every fourth Hungarian was placed under alien rule by the peace settlements, which she, too, sought to revise according to the provisions of the same League Covenant. In this the Czechs depended on League Article 10, which stipulated the obligation that the members respect each other's territorial integrity and political independence, and the Hungarians laid their hope on Article 19, which made a vague reference to the possibility of reconsidering treaties which have become inapplicable and considering situations which might endanger peace. According to the original proposal by Colonel House, Article 19 could have served as a peaceful change formula by subjecting the status quo to modifications necessitated by changes in racial conditions and aspirations based on the principle of national self-determination and supported by three-fourths of the League delegates.<sup>5</sup> Actually, in its final form, it

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<sup>5</sup>Georg Schwarzenberger, Power Politics (New York: F.A. Praeger, 1951), p. 487.

became a dead letter, and the League in this respect was ineffectual. The League, meant to provide an effective means for peaceful change, only refrained from opposing change, should it come about by mutual agreement of the parties to a dispute. Thus, prevention of war was achieved by a preponderance of the victors, instead of peace being attained by compromise, adjustment of interests, and cooperation within the frame of the League.

Set against this genesis and international framework, Czechoslovak-Hungarian relations turned out to be most unfriendly. In this relationship, Czechoslovakia was always considered by the West as a builder of peace and democracy. Horthy-Hungary, on the other hand, was viewed as a reactionary regime obstructing peaceful developments in the Danube Valley.<sup>6</sup> This arrangement of sympathies was rooted in the fact that Czechoslovakia was a product of Allied victory and peacemaking, the main pillar of France's eastern alliance system, the claimed exemplar of the principle of national self-determination, and well known to the Western Democracies through personal contact with her leaders; whereas Hungary represented in western eyes an ex-enemy state, condemned by the war guilt clause in the Peace Treaty,

<sup>6</sup>Stephen Borsody, The Triumph of Tyranny, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1960), p. 72.

and having a regime that did not even call itself a democracy. It was claimed that the Czechs could have gotten along with a democratic Hungarian regime well, but this was impossible with the post-war Horthy regime that fought for revision only to regain areas over which to extend its feudalistic rule, a contention also favored by the present Hungarian communist regime's historiography.<sup>7</sup> C. A. Macartney points out, however, that the desire and determination to achieve some revision were nationwide in Hungary and that the regime, which used simple suppression against social discontent, did not need the diversion of a revisionist policy.<sup>8</sup>

As to the claim that Czechoslovakia could get along only with pure democracies, this becomes somewhat lame and misleading in view of her very close association and sympathies with such regimes as that of the Soviet Union, Romania or Yugoslavia. Interestingly enough, it was precisely at times when Hungary had democratic regimes -- Károlyi's in 1918 and Nagy's in 1946 -- that Czechoslovakia committed the less friendly acts of incorporating purely Hungarian areas after World War I and expelling Hungarians after World War II.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, Benes himself told the leader of the

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<sup>7</sup>M. M. V., P. 98.

<sup>8</sup>Macartney, A History of Hungary, I, 5.

<sup>9</sup>Borsody, op. cit., P. 73.

Hungarian Party in Czechoslovakia that he knew of views that tied the possibility of revision to the democratization of Hungary, but this assumption was wrong, since revision was entirely out of the question.<sup>10</sup>

Expressed in the words of a pro-Czechoslovak German democrat, Venzel Jaksch, the crux of the matter was that "the forces of democracy tied themselves to the status quo of a dictated peace, whereas the cause of change became expropriated by the dictators.,<sup>11</sup> Under these circumstances the choices open to Hungary's governments, democratic or reactionary, were to deny revision and be swept away by public sentiment or to pursue revision peacefully by relying on international developments. They took the second choice, but it was beyond their control to determine who would pick up the cause of self-determination for them.

Benes based his rigid resistance to any change on the conviction that with the support of the Western Powers and the overwhelming superiority of the Little Entente over Hungary he would always be able to keep Hungarian revisionism down by force. His certainty in this was well demonstrated by his repeated threats to Hungary that he would "take her to hell," so eloquently

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<sup>10</sup>D.I.M.K., II, 152.

<sup>11</sup>Jaksch, op. cit., p. 284.

put in League Council debates, 12 to which Hungarian revisionist propaganda responded in no less specific terms related to Czechoslovakia and her leaders. The obvious result of such exchanges was further petrification of the attitudes of the two neighbors, and an expanding gap between their relative positions, well illustrated by their slogans: "Any revision means war," and "We want everything back," for the Czechs and Hungarians, respectively.

Actually both parties departed from the real basis of their dispute -- the forcible incorporation of a million Hungarians into Czechoslovakia -- the Hungarians by reclaiming even the non-Hungarian inhabited areas on historic grounds and the Czechoslovaks by maintaining that their newly won Hungarian minority would have enjoyed its position under a democracy had it not been for revisionist agitation.

Whatever the attitudes, the two neighboring countries pursued their policies in deplorably impractical ways. In their national minority affairs they maintained a vicious circle of reciprocity in repressive Practices. <sup>13</sup> In their direct negotiations they only

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<sup>12</sup>Tibor Eckhardt, Regicide at Marseilles New York: American Hungarian Library and Historical Society, 1964) P. 221.

<sup>13</sup>C. C. Palkert, "Hungary's National Minority Policies, 1920-1945," The American Slavic and East European Review, XII (1953), 201

registered their differences without resolving them. Early in 1923, President Masaryk disclosed to a Hungarian diplomat that he preferred to be without national minorities because they presented a considerable burden; therefore, he was ready to start negotiations for the return of those Magyar territories on suitable conditions, including material compensation by building new railways, moral compensation by developing mutual confidence, and minority rights guarantees to be given mutually to all Little Entente countries.<sup>14</sup> The original plans were later dropped and never taken up again by Masaryk's successors.

Externally, Hungary and Czechoslovakia also hoped for general international situations favoring their respective positions. The Czechs relied on their western allies as a support and on the League as a means to maintain the status quo of 1919, and successfully opposed any development that might have challenged it. They expected to strengthen their position by involving in the Danube Valley the Soviet Union through their alliance with her. Thus, instead of keeping the dictators out of East-Central Europe, as intended by the peace settlement, Czechoslovakia attempted to balance the dictators against each other, a most dangerous game

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<sup>14</sup>Hungary at the Conference of Paris, IV, Annex I, Point 2



taking the calculated risk that they would keep each other in balance indefinitely. The Hungarians, on the other hand, also pursued their revisionist hopes through the League, which was a definite dead-end street for such efforts, owing to its Charter and power structure.

Changes and developments, however, could not be stopped, whether the pro-status-quo forces wanted them or not. Thus it would have been wiser to prepare for and channel them into more constructive results than the ones produced by a policy of indefinitely continued negation. A successful international instrument to preserve peace either had to muster sufficient force to prevent change, the Czech objective, or it had to show itself capable of facilitating inevitable changes and readjustments, the Hungarian desire. When in the early thirties, developments altered power relations, rendering them unable to prevent change forcibly, an instrument to measure up to the second alternative was called for, since the League was definitely not capable of serving as such. Mussolini's four-power plan of 1933 came closest to fill such a need. Afraid of the German growth and advancement from pupil to master, dissatisfied with the peace settlements, desirous to enhance Italy as a balancer by checking France and Germany with the help of Britain, Mussolini attempted to revive the old Concert of Europe idea, committing the combined power of the four larger states to assure peaceful change through

maintaining a balance among themselves. The plan as it was presented to the British Prime Minister on his visit in Rome on March 18, 1933, called for the four great powers' cooperation to maintain peace in the spirit of the Kellogg-Briand Pact and for their confirming the principle of the revision of treaties within the framework of the League in a spirit of mutual understanding and solidarity of reciprocal interests. Owing to the great weight that Benes and his Little Entente colleagues carried in the League, they managed to resist even that suggestion of revision by persuading the French to draw up a counter proposal. The French, not wanting to antagonize either the great powers or the Little Entente, prepared a compromise draft which watered down the original plan to one that made the final pace accepted in June a failure. It called for great power cooperation and examination of proposals related to procedures designed to give due effect to the League's Articles 10 and 19.<sup>15</sup> This change blocked the establishment of a possible check on Nazi Germany's excesses. Unfortunately this negative power was not matched by one that could have replaced the potential counterbalance to Hitler so vitiated.

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<sup>15</sup>René Albrecht Carrie, "Four Power Pacts, 1933-1945," Journal of Central European Affairs, V (April, 1945), 17ff.

Hungary's relations with the Little Entente from Hitler's ascent to power up to the Anschluss were treated in Chapter III, where it was shown that there were no essential changes in them, and they continued to maintain their distant positions. Any proposals and plans for cooperation between the Little Entente and the Rome Triangle states in face of the emerging German threat were rendered ineffective by their attitudes; Benes refused even the mention of revision, and correspondingly Hungary refused to pursue a rapprochement at the cost of unconditional surrender of her claims for any revision.

Up to the Anschluss, then, both pro-status-quo Czechoslovakia and pro-revision Hungary misjudged their respective positions in relation to the great powers. Czechoslovakia relied on the Western Powers, who did not live up to her expectations, and on the Soviet Union, that was a threat and not an aid in East-Central Europe, Hungary, on the other hand, also tried to get the assistance of the Western Powers and was equally disappointed by them, while in her reliance on the Axis she saw only the power that could counterbalance the Soviet menace, and, being a revisionist power, could effectively help with revision. These policies, however, were mere adjustments to, and not the causes of, developments that reflected the punitive character of the peace treaties with a one-sided enforcement of national

self-determination, leading to new grievances preserved rather than rectified by the League of Nations. This being the case, an objective evaluation of the Czechoslovak-Hungarian relations is served very little by assigning blames to either one of them for the developments in that part of the world, which, in fact, depended on the great powers, primarily on Hitler's Germany. The plan to establish a cordon sanitaire between Germany and Russia, and against both, was a most unrealistic conception and could be maintained only as long as both great powers stayed weak and defeated. But even the most optimistic minds must have seen that two countries with the largest population in Europe could not have been expected to refrain forever from claiming to be great powers. Yet when this did come about, the other great powers had no feasible ways to deal with it, mostly due to their rigid pro-status-quo policies, nor was the cordon sanitaire fit to perform its assigned task, owing to its low internal cohesion.

## 2. The Prelude to Munich

With the Anschluss accomplished, Hitler's attention became focused on Czechoslovakia. His plans were set, with timing as the only open question. Writing in 1908, Benes had foreseen the predicament he got into three decades later. He said then that the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy would bring about an

eventual Anschluss in which case Bohemia would be surrounded on all sides by a German ocean exercising such an attraction that sooner or later she would be absorbed completely into the German Empire. <sup>16</sup> When this prediction started to materialize, he was still confident in his ability to avert its fulfillment. Talking in Prague with a former Hungarian Foreign Minister on March 5, 1938, President Benes, Prime Minister Hodza, and Foreign Minister Krofta, while expressing their concern about the dangers inherent in an Anschluss, showed great confidence in French support. They also said that should France refuse to help Czechoslovakia in case of a German attack, which they judged to be most improbable, then the Czech people, having lived for centuries within the Holy Roman Empire, would be able to endure another century or so in the belly of another German Empire. The Czech leaders reconfirmed their policy of refusing any revision, showing willingness only to talk about the settlement of the lot of their national minorities. <sup>17</sup>

Shortly after the Anschluss, on March 29, the Czechoslovak Minister in Hungary suggested to Kánya that the two countries should join together for their common, if need be military, defense in view of the growing

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<sup>16</sup>Eduard Benes, Le problème Autrichien et la question Tcheque (Paris, 1908), pp.307f.

<sup>17</sup>D.I.M.K., I, 636-7.

German pressure, likely to be directed primarily against Hungary because of the immediate economic advantages offered by her and because she did not have the type of western protection that Czechoslovakia enjoyed. Kánya responded negatively, claiming to have had no reason to be afraid of Germany.<sup>18</sup> In the same days, Hitler instructed the Sudeten leader, Henlein, to proceed with the political demands on Czechoslovakia and a month later he also ordered Keitel to work out the military details of an attack on her.

The Hungarians knew of Hitler's intentions to raise the question of the German minority in Czechoslovakia, without being further informed as to its details. On March 2, Ciano let the Hungarian Minister know that "Czechoslovakia as an independent state will soon cease to exist."<sup>19</sup> About the same time the Polish Foreign Minister, Beck, informed the Hungarians of his talks with Hitler and suggested a closer PolishHungarian cooperation in view of the coming events in relation of Czechoslovakia.<sup>20</sup> Not wanting to be left out of the developments that might lead to the peaceful realization of their revisionist aims, the Hungarians Inquired constantly about the German plans, but exactly

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<sup>18</sup>D.I.M.K., I, 706-7.

<sup>19</sup>D.I.M.K., II, 286.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., pp. 288ff.

at that time the Germans decided "to evade the issue" with the Hungarians. <sup>21</sup>

This was a time of extreme importance to the Hungarians concerning their foreign policy. They wanted revision, as ever; they were militarily weak, virtually disarmed in relation to their neighbors; they discovered in the changes taking place an opportunity to realize their claims. The question was: how to accomplish it? There were two schools of thought on that. One, led by Kánya, assuming German defeat in a coming conflict, sought for its claims western approval and direct agreement with the individual Little Entente states and did not push for rearmament, thereby hoping to avoid being drawn into a conflict on Germany's side. The other, assuming German success, was convinced that the revisionist claims could be realized only by the help of Germany, since neither the West nor the Little Entente was willing to effect a meaningful accommodation with Hungary, and for this reason Hungary should rearm with all possible speed to be able to support her claims with force. <sup>22</sup> This divergence of opinion continued within Hungarian politics all through the war. There was no difference in its aim, which remained revision, but there was an essential difference as to the means

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<sup>21</sup>D.G.F.P., D. II, Doc. 65, 66.

<sup>22</sup>Macartney, A History of Hungary, I, 213.

of its realization. For the time being, however, the more cautious ways of Kánya prevailed.

In a note submitted to Germany on April 11, Kánya called attention to Hungary's absolutely peaceful policy, relying upon the Czech question being settled by peaceful means; however, in view of the general nervousness, it did not seem to him impossible that an explosion might come there, in which case military intervention might be necessary

<sup>23</sup> The German responses continued to be non-committal until the May crisis, brought about by the kind of nervousness the Hungarian note mentioned, for rumors started concerning an impending German Invasion and Benes ordered partial mobilization. Hitler, who, in fact, did not prepare such an invasion, did not move. This led to the conclusion in the Czech and western press that Hitler had retreated, an unforgivable assumption in his eyes. Thus, instead of having successfully discouraged Hitler's intentions against Czechoslovakia, the precipitous Czech move made him change his original directive by deleting the word "not" from the sentence: "It is not my intention to smash Czechoslovakia by military action in the immediate future . . .," and to set the date for October 1, 1938, explaining that it was essential to create a situation which demonstrated to the hostile

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<sup>23</sup> D.G.F.P., V. Doc. 190.



nations the hopelessness of Czechoslovakia's case and which would give an incentive to nations with territorial claims, like Poland and Hungary, to intervene. <sup>24</sup> on the American scene, during the May crisis, Bullitt sent a cable of desperation to the President expressing hope that it would reach its destination before Europe blew up in a general war which apparently the Czechs had decided for rather than give up the Sudeten land. The question was whether or not France would march when the Germans crossed the Czech frontier; that could only lead to the destruction of Europe and to bolshevism. This was not an American interest, and Bullitt suggested finding a way of letting the French out of their moral commitment by calling a conference at the Hague to work out a peaceful settlement which would most likely be a recommendation for plebiscites. If the Czechs refused, France would be free of a moral dilemma. <sup>25</sup> A reply to Bullitt came in Hull's statement of May 28, expressing the American Nation's desire for stable and permanent conditions of peace, the kind of statement that Bullitt had termed useless under the newly developed situation. <sup>26</sup> In spite of that, the

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<sup>24</sup> Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression (Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office, 194b), III, 317, Doc. 388-Ps.

<sup>25</sup>F.R.U.S., 1938: I, 509ff.

<sup>26</sup>Documents on Am. For. Rel., 1938-39, p. 286.

German Ambassador in the United States still concluded on May 31,

If, as a result of the Czech affair, a large scale conflict should arise. . . the United States would not permanently stand aside but would enter the conflict against us....<sup>27</sup>

Meanwhile the negotiations continued between the Sudeten and the Czechs; the Hungarians, expecting the same treatment for their minority in Czechoslovakia that the German would get, remained uninformed about the German plans and were uncertain about the reaction of Yugoslavia and Romania to a possible Hungarian move in a German-Czechoslovak conflict. They knew that Poland pursued an independent policy of planning for a Polish-Hungarian common frontier to eliminate the establishment of a German satellite Czechoslovakia between the two countries.<sup>28</sup> They also knew that Biddle, the American Ambassador in Poland, on his return from the United States, told the Hungarian Minister that in case of a Czech-German conflict England would stay neutral, France would be unable to show any force of consequence, and Czechoslovakia would fall apart to its component parts even without a war.<sup>29</sup> This view was confirmed by reports received from Berlin<sup>30</sup> and London, the latter

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<sup>27</sup>D.G.F.P., II, Doc. 227.

<sup>28</sup>D.I.M.K., II, 433.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., P. 314.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 379.

giving the impression that the Germans were told: „Don't shoot -- just strangle.”<sup>31</sup>

During the entire summer the negotiations went on between the Little Entente and Hungary to achieve an agreement on (a) the improvement of the Hungarian minority situation, (b) the acknowledge of Hungary's equality in military rights, and (c) the drafting of mutual non-aggression declarations. Their success was somewhat delayed by the Little Entente's insistence on reciprocity regarding point (a), and on the Hungarian demand that points (b) and (c) should be dependent on the accomplishment of (a), which would be differently and bilaterally settled with each of the Little Entente states due to the differences in the conditions of their Hungarian minorities.

To get a better picture of their own position, the Hungarians made two important visits during the summer: one to Rome in July and the other to Germany in August. The new Hungarian Prime Minister, Imrédy, of Pro-English reputation, and Kánya talked with Mussolini and Ciano on July 18, and their interest centered around the Czech question. Ciano failed to convince his guests that in a Czech conflict Yugoslavia would remain neutral, since the Hungarians had information to the contrary.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., P. 398.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., PP. 506-12.

Still Mussolini suggested to them to adopt an attitude of initial waiting and to seize the favorable opportunity after Czechoslovakia had been broken up.<sup>33</sup> The Italian requests to leave the League of Nations and to join the Anti-Comintern Pact were rejected by Kánya with the explanation that they could not antagonize the British and the French.<sup>34</sup> The Hungarians, afraid of increasing German influence, asked for the reconfirmation of the old Rome Protocols, by then reduced to Italy-Hungarian relations. All this made the Hungarians conclude that Italy's interest in them had abated, and the Italians let the Germans know that for Italy Hungary occupied only the third place after the Axis and the Anti-Comintern Pact.<sup>35</sup>

The reports reaching Washington indicated during the summer of 1938, prior to the Hungarian visit to Hitler, that Hungary had not lost her independence of action to Germany. As to the negotiations with the Little Entente, Gunther reported from Bucharest that no progress had been made toward the regularization of the Hungarian minority in Romania, although it appeared to be to the advantage of Romania to cultivate better relations with Hungary. He added that according to

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<sup>33</sup>Ciano's Diplomatic Papers, p. 229.

<sup>34</sup>D.G.F.P., T, Doc. 795.

<sup>35</sup>ibid.

Bárdossy, the Hungarian Minister there, the Romanians were erroneously satisfied that Hungary was already under German influence; on the contrary, the Magyars being a wholly indigestible element, Germany would not commit an aggression against them. <sup>36</sup> In May, Biddle cabled from Warsaw that Hungary, offering Hitler a strategic position vis-a-vis the backdoor of Czechoslovakia, might be expected to become steadily more the object of German machinations. <sup>37</sup> The American Chargé in Budapest further characterized these negotiations by quoting the Secretary General of the Hungarian Foreign Ministry that Hungary was not prepared to concede anything for recognition of the right to rearm, that right already having been realized, but that Hungary was still ready to negotiate on the basis of Hungarian minority claims, refusing to be satisfied with mere Promises of future amelioration of the minority situation. <sup>38</sup> Concerning Hungary's position in the German-Czechoslovak crisis, Montgomery, the United States Minister in Budapest, had the impression on talking both

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<sup>36</sup>Minister Gunther to Secretary Hull Bucharest, April 6, 1938. 871,4016/212, MS, Department of State.

<sup>37</sup>Ambassador Biddle to Secretary Hull, Warsaw, May 11, 1938. 740.00/380, MS, Department of State.

<sup>38</sup>Travers to Secretary Hull, Budapest, August 8, 1938 864.20/150, MS, Department of State.

with official and opposition circles in May, that there was no secret understanding between Germany and Hungary on Czechoslovakia, and that Hungary followed a cautious policy of remaining completely neutral with no action toward Czechoslovakia that would disturb European peace because, (a) the Little Entente bound Yugoslavia and Romania to aid their third member if attacked by Hungary, (b) Hungary could not afford to act in conjunction with Germany, thereby risking involvement in a possibly resulting war as a German ally, and (c) in a break-up of Czechoslovakia, Slovakia would return to Hungary anyway. By not disturbing the peace, Hungary's chances were better to recover lost areas. A member of the American Legation was also told by a high Hungarian official that any agreement with any larger power would lead to Hungary's domination by that power. All this convinced Montgomery that Hungary would take no hasty or ill-considered action. <sup>39</sup> Discussing the possibility that Hitler might feel very sure of adding Hungary to the ranks of Fascist states, Bonnet told Bullitt that the French Minister in Budapest had given a very optimistic report on the Hungarian situation. <sup>40</sup> A few days later, on the 18th of July, Bonnet again informed the United States Ambassador of having told Benes that the only

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<sup>39</sup>F.R.U.S., 1938:I, 55-56.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 531.

country which would gain nothing from a general war would be Czechoslovakia, since whichever side might win, "no statesman would ever again be so idiotic as to put together a state even faintly resembling Czechoslovakia." <sup>41</sup>

Shortly before the Hungarian visit to Germany, the Little Entente countries also expressed faith in Hungary's attitude. Masaryk, the Czech Minister in London, told the American Chargé there on August 16, that with Hungary occupying a position of vital significance in the Danubian area, he attached utmost importance to the forthcoming visit of Regent Horthy. <sup>42</sup> Three days later, the Czech and Yugoslav Charge's expressed their conviction to Moffat that Hungary would resist German pressure to the utmost and that the forthcoming visit of the Regent would not change this policy. <sup>43</sup>

Regent Horthy, accompanied by Imrédy and Kánya, started his visit to Germany on the 22nd of August with a launching of the cruiser Prinz Eugen and a review of the German fleet at Kiel in honor of Horthy's naval past. The political discussions that ensued have only meager documentation. There are no papers to be found in the Hungarian Foreign Ministry's archives related to

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 533.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., P. 547.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., P. 549

the Kiel visit-<sup>44</sup> The German documents are brief and drawn up by the same man, Weizsäcker. Horthy himself wrote down his recollections of the visit in his memoirs, but the impressions of the other Hungarian participants have been retained only in the minds of those to whom they were imparted.

The picture emerging from these sources does show some contradictions, but in the light of subsequent events and retrospective references to the event in question, it is possible to arrive at a clear reproduction of what had happened at the visit.

Still on the 22nd of August, following the naval review, Hitler and Horthy had a conversation only between the two of them during which, according to Horthy, Hitler outlined his plans, which became to be known "Operation Green," to smash Czechoslovakia. Hitler appeared to be set for war and asked Horthy for Hungarian cooperation by attacking Slovakia simultaneously with the German move, leaving it tacitly understood that the areas so conquered by Hungary could be retained by her.<sup>45</sup> Horthy's reply was "No," because for one, Hungary intended to realize her revisionist aims only by peaceful means, and for another she did not have the necessary military forces. Hitler's offer of arms did not change

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<sup>44</sup>D.I.M.K., II, 545.

<sup>45</sup>Horthy, Ein Leben für Ungarn, p. 199.



Horthy's Position, who then warned Hitler of the dangers of a large conflagration that would follow a German attack on Czechoslovakia. This exchange cast a shadow over the rest of the Hungarian stay. <sup>46</sup> Weizsäcker's minutes-of that meeting, which he did not attend, say that Horthy, "while not keeping silent on his misgivings as to the British attitude, . . . made it clear that Hungary intended to cooperate," <sup>47</sup> without telling in what and to what extent

The discussions between the Hungarian ministers and Ribbentrop took place in equally dampened spirits due to the Little Entente announcement in Bled on the same day that they had agreed with Hungary on mutual non-aggression, equality of military rights, and on further negotiations to establish statutes for the Magyar minorities in the three Little Entente states. <sup>48</sup> Kánya explained the Bled Agreement as producing nothing new, only registering a situation in which Hungary would make the validity of the first two points dependent on the success of the third. Ribbentrop interpreted this as Hungary blocking the road to intervention in Czechoslovakia and giving up revision. Kánya's repeated arguments in defense of the Hungarian position appeared

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>D.G.F.P., II, Doc. 383:

<sup>48</sup>D.I.M.K , II, 548-50.

„unconvincing” to the Germans. <sup>49</sup> They might have appeared even more so due to the manner of their delivery, for Kánya introduced his arguments with the remark: "I repeat once more quite slowly so that perhaps even Herr Ribbentrop will be able to grasp it," and responded later to Ribbentrop's rebuffs with: "I, too, am as smart as you, young man." <sup>50</sup> These remarks registered not only Kánya's contempt for his younger and inexperienced German colleague but also his fear that the German plans manifesting themselves during the conversations would obviously lead to very dangerous consequences from which he wanted to save Hungary. He told Horthy shortly after the meeting that "this insane man (Hitler) wants to unleash a war at all costs." <sup>51</sup>

The discussions related to the Czechoslovak conflict fared no better. Asked by Ribbentrop how Hungary would act if Hitler applied force in response to Czech provocations, the Hungarian guests hedged, fearing Yugoslav intervention against them and knowing that their rearmament would need another year or two to complete. The German Foreign Minister's reaction to that was an explanation that neither the other Little

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<sup>49</sup>D.G.F.P., II, loc. cit.

<sup>50</sup>Notes of interview, 11 August 1966, with András Hory former Hungarian Envoy in Poland, who had had a talk with Kánya a few days after the Kiel visit.

<sup>51</sup>Hory, op. cit., P. 33.

Entente states nor England and France would move. He added that those who desired revision also had to participate. <sup>52</sup>

In view of the Hungarian reluctance, Hitler told Imrédy that he required nothing of Hungary and added the notorious warning that "he who wanted to sit at the table must, of course, help in the kitchen." <sup>53</sup> Weizsäcker summarized the Hungarian position as being glad at not having to expect ultimative German demands and being convinced of their military inability to intervene. <sup>54</sup>

At the meetings two days later in Berlin the exchanges continued to treat the same subjects with the same differences of views, except that Kánya revised his estimate of the time needed for Hungary to be prepared militarily from one year to one month. <sup>55</sup> According to Horthy, this change was due to Kánya's effort to placate the increasingly hostile Ribbentrop. <sup>56</sup>

While still out at sea, Horthy took the opportunity to talk with General Brauchitsch: concerning Hitler's plan and Hungary's practical considerations in

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<sup>52</sup>D.G.F.P., II, loc. cit.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>54</sup>Ibid.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., Doc. 390.

<sup>56</sup>Horthy, op. cit., p. 202. .

opposing it.<sup>57</sup> The German general's agreement with Horthy's views should not have come as a surprise to the latter, who had just then received a report sent after him from Budapest by his General Staff that the German military leaders were told by Hitler that he was sure of western non-involvement in an attack against Czechoslovakia and would not let himself be dissuaded by their views to the contrary. The German military looked with anxiety at Hitler's endeavors to unleash a war, which they were unable to influence.<sup>58</sup> At another conversation between the two heads of state in the afternoon of the 25th, Hitler reproached Horthy for having talked to Brauchitsch on political matters, which the Führer alone was to determine. Horthy, used to choosing his own partners and subjects of conversation, rejected this tone and found the exclusion of generals from military decisions a very dangerous practice.<sup>59</sup>

Subsequent documents shed a little more light on the details of that unpleasant visit, Weizsäcker notes in his memoirs that when the Hungarians advised him not to risk a war for the Sudetenland but to settle the matter through negotiations, he suggested that this be mentioned to Hitler, who was really in need of such an

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<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

<sup>58</sup>D.I.M.K.,II, 545.

<sup>59</sup>Horthy, op. cit., P. 202.

advice. Whether or not the Hungarians had done that, the German State Secretary does not know, making it clear that his records of the events could not have been complete. <sup>60</sup>

Nevertheless, in his circular of August 26, to the German diplomatic missions, he concluded that the Bled Agreement "appears undesirable to us, especially at the present moment."

<sup>61</sup> According to Erdmannsdorff, the German Minister to Hungary, on the way back to Budapest, Horthy, who ardently desired revision, sounded a note of warning due to the international situation and the always cautious Kánya proved to be unwilling to take chances of a suicide. <sup>62</sup>

The visit, then, had been a totally unsatisfactory one for both parties. The German displeasure was amply manifested by Hitler's and Ribbentrop's later references to it that "Hungary stood apart. . . . Kánya did not want to use aggressive means. . . . The Bled Agreement was a stab in the back. . . . Kánya was an enemy of Germany. . . ." <sup>63</sup> The Hungarians, on the other hand, although definitely interested in revision, could not afford to press for it by risking involvement in a war that could only destroy even what was still left of

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<sup>60</sup>Weizsäcker, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

<sup>61</sup>D.G.F.P., V, Doc. 221.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, II, Doc. 402.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, IV, Docs. 62, 400; V, Docs. 119, 272.

Hungary. Thus it was absolute nonsense to conclude from appearances that it was actually Hungary that pressed Germany at the visit for a speedy revision through armed aggression. Yet, when told that no agreement had been concluded, the British Foreign Office surmised in disbelief without foundation that "the large retinue covers far-reaching aims."<sup>64</sup> In the Czech Foreign office, on the other hand, still no information was obtainable about the visit a month later.<sup>65</sup>

The meeting's immediate result was the mutual and very intense dislike for each other of the two foreign ministers, the cooling off of Hungary-German relations, and Hungary's being dropped out of the German military planning.

### 3. Munich and the Vienna Arbitration

In view of the negative outcome of their visit to Germany, the Hungarians started to concentrate on obtaining Britain's mediation to secure their objectives, reduced to the strictly Magyar minority in Slovakia-Ruthenia. Already on August 3, Lord Vansittart

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<sup>64</sup> Hungary's Responsibility in World War II (1946), p. 13, a collection of Hungarian documents constituting accompaniment No. 4 to dispatch No. 1369, dated April 15, 1946, from the American Legation, Budapest, Hungary. Its author was identified as Iván Lajos, in a letter on October 17, 1966, by C. A. Macartney to Paul Rupprecht. Hereafter referred to as "Lajos."

<sup>65</sup>F.R.U.S., 1938:1, 629.

told the Hungarian Minister in London that in the British view all Czech concessions made to the German minority must also automatically be applied to the Hungarians, <sup>66</sup> On August 5, however, the British Minister in Prague told the leader of the Hungarian minority that he was convinced that the Germans would get territorial autonomy but the Hungarians would get considerably less. <sup>67</sup> This prompted another visit to the Foreign Office in London on the 31st of August, when the Hungarian Chargé was given only an evasive answer. <sup>68</sup> On the next day the Hungarian Chargé in Prague reported a very unsatisfactory exchange with the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister, Krofta, who, instead of confirming his Foreign Ministry's statement that the Hungarians would receive the same treatment granted the Germans, accused Hungary of allowing herself a lot in view of Czechoslovakia's difficulties, which would not last forever. <sup>69</sup> To strengthen his hand in the developments brought about by the Sudeten-Czech negotiations, Kánya concluded with Beck a Hungary-Polish "Gentlemen's Agreement" on September 10, expressing their desire for cooperation and noting the mutuality of their interests

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<sup>66</sup>D.I.M.K , II, 517.

<sup>67</sup>Lajos, P. 15.

<sup>68</sup>D.I.M K., II, 562f.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., II, 570•

in East-Central Europe. <sup>70</sup> Their respective views on Germany's chances of success in a war remained far apart' however, Beck maintaining that Germany would be invincible whereas Kánya believed that she would not win a war. <sup>71</sup>

While the Hungarian Military Attaché in Berlin continued to send accounts of the German military leadership's alarm concerning Hitler's determination to wage war, reports on the Sudeten-Czech discussions also confirmed that Hitler's intentions were not to reach agreement but to force a military clash. <sup>72</sup> The new Czechoslovak proposals concerning the establishment of a system of cantons based on the principle of self-determination only induced Hitler to raise his demands again on September 12, at the Nürnberg Party Conference, which prompted the Sudeten to ask for secession. In view of the new situation Kánya sent Sztójay to tell Weizsäcker that the Hungarian Government considered any discrimination in the treatment of the Hungarian minority as intolerable, leading to Hungary's disclaiming any responsibility for the consequences. <sup>73</sup> Similar communications were delivered to the Western Powers, yielding

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<sup>70</sup>Ibid., II, 577.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid. „ II, 596-7.

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., II, 568.

<sup>73</sup>D.G.F.P., II, Doc. 477.



only noncommittal responses. <sup>74</sup> On the 16th, from Berlin, came the news that Chamberlain at his visit in Berchtesgaden the day before had agreed to use his influence to obtain the secession of the Sudeten areas. <sup>75</sup> This led Horthy to write to Hitler that the peace of Central Europe could only be served by a complete solution of the Czech question without being restricted to the Sudeten alone. Kánya also told the British Minister that the Czech problem had German, Polish and Hungarian components and not just one of them. Mussolini, too, was asked to champion the Hungarian cause for equal treatment. <sup>76</sup> On the 17th, Rome informed the Hungarians that the French would not tolerate a German attack on Czechoslovakia, Japan was on the German side, England endeavored to secure a plebiscite, Yugoslavia would stay neutral, Romania would follow England and resist a Russian transit, and the American neutrality statement had greatly strengthened the German position. <sup>77</sup> When on the 18th of September, the British and French Governments told Benes that without the secession of the Sudeten Czechoslovakia herself and European peace would be imperiled, they also added that they would be prepared

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<sup>74</sup>D.I.M.K., II, 598f.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., II, 609.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., II, 615f.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., II, 617f.

to join in an international guarantee of the new Czechoslovak boundaries against unprovoked aggression. <sup>78</sup> This, in connection with a cable from Warsaw to the effect that the Poles and Hungarians should press for equal treatment against the discriminatory western moves, made the Hungarians eager to accept Hitler's invitation to present their claims. Both Imrédy and Kánya visited Hitler in Berchtesgaden on the 21st, facing the expected unpleasanties, Hitler reproached them for their undecided attitude in the situation that he had been ready to settle at the risk of war and advised them to demand a plebiscite in the Hungarian-claimed areas without guaranteeing any new proposed Czechoslovak frontiers. Imrédy promised a document on Hungarian demands for Hitler's use at his impending meeting with Chamberlain at Godesberg. <sup>79</sup>

These tense days were watched with great concern by the United States. The general American political atmosphere, however, continued to prevent any action beyond mere statements favoring peace and order. President Roosevelt felt it necessary to deny at his September 9, press conference that he was ready to support the democracies against the totalitarian bloc. <sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>D.G.F.P., II, Doc. 523.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., II, Doc. 554.

<sup>80</sup>Tansill, *op. cit.*, p. 407.

Secretary Hull, too, responded negatively to French requests and inquiries concerning secret communications with Berlin and Prague stressing that "this Government has already done and said any and everything within its policy" to promote peace. <sup>81</sup> According to one view the President's remark on the 9th made the French swing to "peace at any price," and weakened the spirit of French resistance. <sup>82</sup> According to another view, it was Benes who, by rejecting a plebiscite while raising the possibility of partial cession with the French Minister on the 15th, had actually forced the French to make their suggestions with the British on the 18th. Two days later the Czech leaders requested a statement that France would not march, which they needed as a cover to accept the Anglo-French proposals. <sup>83</sup>

The American decision not to get involved,-however, did not mean that the developments were not seen realistically. On the

21st, Hull confided his theory to the Hungarian Minister that "Germany is . . . bent on becoming the dominating colossus of Europe." <sup>84</sup> On the same day reports came from Carr in Prague that in

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<sup>81</sup>F.R.U.S., 1938:I, 598.

<sup>82</sup>John McVickar Haight, Jr., "France, the United States and the Munich crisis," Journal of Modern History, XXXII (1960), 348.

<sup>83</sup>Jaksch, op. cit., pp. 304-5.

<sup>84</sup>Hull, op. cit., I, 590.

the Czechoslovak Foreign Office it was expected that the same treatment would be demanded for the Hungarians as might be given the Germans, even though the merits were not regarded as equal, and Bullitt reported that French and British sources thought it probable that the Hungarian minority will be given to Hungary outright. <sup>85</sup> This was changed the next day by a cable from London that chamberlain decided not to discuss anything beyond the Sudeten, as, in fact, he did not. <sup>86</sup>

Still on the 22nd of September, the Hungarian claims for reincorporation into Hungary of Czechoslovakia's Magyar inhabited areas and for a guarantee of self-determination for the Slovaks and Ruthenians were transmitted to Godesberg. <sup>87</sup> Simultaneously the Hungarians made their desires known to the Czechs also, <sup>88</sup> while a British note arrived in Budapest protesting Hungarian military preparations judged to be designed to intimidate Czechoslovakia and warning that in case of an act of aggression the British Government would not be responsible for the consequences. Kánya, in his reply to Sir Geoffrey Knox, expressed great disappointment over the note, added that it is the general impression in

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<sup>85</sup>F.R.U.S., 1938:I, 629f.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., I, 631 and D.G.F.P., II, Doc. 562. <sup>87</sup>D.G.F.P., II, 586.

<sup>88</sup>D.I.M.K., II, 635f.

Hungary that "England gives way to force and does not take any notice of the interests of small countries," explained that the Hungarian military measures were of defensive nature in response to Czechoslovak moves, and also gave the fullest assurance that "there would be no aggression or military initiative by Hungary." <sup>89</sup>

The British-French proposal to Czechoslovakia to go along with the secession of the Sudetenland was viewed by President Roosevelt as "the most terrible remorseless sacrifice that had ever been demanded of a state," without blaming, however, the British or French for it. He thought that the Czechs, if attacked, would fight, be overrun, and further pillaged by Poland and Hungary. As another alternative he assumed that the Western Powers, if involved in the fight, would also be beaten. As a third case, if the Western Powers would choose to call a world conference to reorganize all unsatisfactory frontiers on rational lines, he himself would be willing to go to it. <sup>90</sup> By the 23rd, Moffat still expected Czechoslovakia to refuse Polish and Hungarian claims and to fight if attacked. But he did not expect anyone else to fight for her. <sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup>Ibid., II, 645.

<sup>90</sup>Documents on British Foreign - Policy, 1919-1939, Third Series London: HM Stationery Office, 1954), VII, Appendix IV (v). Hereafter D. Br. F. P.

<sup>91</sup>Moffat Papers, p. 210.

The Godesberg meetings at which Hitler had again increased his demands, that were not acceptable to the Western Powers and to Czechoslovakia, created a new crisis. In these demands, Hitler asked for immediate cession of territories after which he would still not guarantee the remaining Czech borders until the Polish and Hungarian claims should also be satisfied. The Hungarian situation in this connection was very well evaluated by Bullitt in his cable of the 25th:

...by placing the entire affair on the basis of cession of territory instead of the basis of plebiscites and by ignoring completely the Poles and the Hungarians, the British and French Governments were thrusting the Poles and Hungarians into Hitler's camp and were placing themselves in a foul position before the public opinion of the world. Hitler had taken full advantage of this diplomatic error and now was in a position to say to Poland and Hungary that it was he and he alone who would procure their minorities for them. <sup>92</sup>

A similar explanation was sent by Ambassador Kennedy from London quoting the Polish Ambassador, who added that the Hungarians "wanted to be awfully sure before they took action." <sup>93</sup>

President Roosevelt, impressed by the resistance to the Godesberg demands, and disturbed by what the State Department called a Czechoslovak "sell-out," decided to act and asked for a draft message from the State Department. The latter first suggested to tender

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<sup>92</sup>F.R.U.S., 1938:I, 646f.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., I, 653.

good offices, then rejected that course on the objections of Norman Davis, who was violently against revision. The President's final decision in face of the alarming reports pouring in from Europe was an appeal to the heads of state involved in the crisis which was actually sent on the 26th of September. <sup>94</sup> In it, he called attention to peace being in danger with incalculable consequences and that it was imperative that pacific means be employed to solve controversies. Then he appealed to the addressees not to break off negotiations. <sup>95</sup>

On the same day Bullitt relayed the Polish view that unless Hungary got Slovakia Germany would be able to dominate that land, too. <sup>96</sup>

Also on the 26th, the Hungarian Minister Pelényi showed to Undersecretary Welles a summary, which in part read:

Hungary's only aim is that the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia should not receive a more unfavorable treatment than any other racial minority.

...No Hungarian Government could agree to guarantee the territorial integrity of Czechoslovakia without being swept away by public indignation.

...In its dilemma the Hungarian Government asked Prague to deal with her Hungarian minority in the same way as she had dealt with the Sudeten. A request for support of her position was made in all European capitals. . . . Unfortunately, Hungary had

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<sup>94</sup>Moffat Papers, pp. 211-12.

<sup>95</sup>F.R.U.S., 1938:I, 657-58.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., 1938:I, 664-65.

not received in her peaceful efforts to remedy...Trianon any encouragement by the Western Powers. If the Western democracies help Hungary to obtain satisfaction of her reasonable and legitimate aspirations, Hungary would be indebted to England and France. If they fail to do so ... then it will be they who have thrown Hungary into the very, current against which she has manfully struggled."

Then Pelényi asked unofficially whether America could support the Hungarian claims. In his reply Welles referred to the President's plea and said:

If Hungary refrained from the exercise of force, she would win the sympathies of the Western countries, Should war be averted and a negotiation be undertaken to solve the present crisis, it would be difficult to see how a dispassionate request on Hungary's part for an equitable consideration of her alleged grievances could not be undertaken, particularly if Hungary stood up for the settlement by negotiation rather than by force.

He added that he wanted the President and Secretary to read the Hungarian summary.<sup>97</sup> Apparently unimpressed by this plea, the Secretary observed that "Hungary had added (her) voices and menaces to the crisis by claiming sections of Czechoslovakia."<sup>98</sup> In contrast, the Czech Minister told the Secretary the next day that Hungary would stay neutral in the event of a war.<sup>99</sup>

In his reply to the President, Hitler made peace or war dependent on Czechoslovakia's acceptance of his

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<sup>97</sup>Memorandum by Undersecretary Welles on September 26, 1938. 864.00/920\_, M.S., Department of State

<sup>98</sup>Hull, op. cit., I, 592.

<sup>99</sup>F.R.U.S., 1938:I, 676.



demands. The President in his new note again urged the continuation of negotiations and added that America would assume no role in them. <sup>100</sup> Actually it was Chamberlain's appeal to Mussolini that moved the latter, unprepared as he was for war, to ask Hitler on the 28th for a conference, whereupon Hitler invited the other three great powers for the following day to Munich. <sup>101</sup>

To keep in touch with events so significant for Hungary, Kánya sent his chief of Cabinet, Csáky, to Munich. The German leaders were too busy to receive him, but Mussolini did grant him an opportunity to present the Hungarian claims in greater detail. Mussolini promised to raise at the meeting the Hungarian claims as soon as the Sudeten question was settled. Should they refuse a Hungarian settlement similar to the Sudeten one, then he would demand a settlement within a month, should that also fail, Hungary should attack and bring about a fait accompli. <sup>102</sup>

At the conference of the Big Four, Mussolini did keep his promise and pressed for the adoption of a minorities draft calling for a general application of the principles which permitted the solution of the Sudeten problem. The Western Powers wanting to avoid

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<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 1938:I, 669-72 and 684-85.

<sup>101</sup> Tansill, *op. cit.*, p. 426.

<sup>102</sup> D.I.M.K., II, 680-1.

the appearance of their agreement to the display of force for the transfer of Magyar areas, presented a new draft which was accepted and stipulated:

The problems of the ...Hungarian minorities, if not settled by agreement between the respective governments, shall form the subject of another meeting of the heads of the Governments of the four Powers...<sup>103</sup>

President Roosevelt was "not a bit upset over the final result" of the Munich Conference. <sup>104</sup> Secretary Hull, while having a sense of relief, refrained from passing on the merits of the agreement, about which he was skeptical. Undersecretary Welles, however, was more optimistic and viewed Munich as an opportunity for a new world order "based upon justice and law." <sup>105</sup> In a more detailed memorandum drawn up while the conference was in session Assistant Secretary Messersmith feared that promises at Munich "will either make Germany the master of Europe or a war will be made inevitable," and predicted:

...through the avoidance of war now we should only have put Germany in a position to carry through the war which she intends to fight and which she is not in a position to fight successfully now. <sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup>D. Br. F. P. Third Series (London: HM Stationery office, 1949), II, 1938, Doc. 1227 with Appendices C and D.

<sup>104</sup>Tansill, *op. cit.*, 428.

<sup>105</sup>Hull, *op. cit.*, I, 595-6

<sup>106</sup>F.R.U.S., 1938:I, 705f.

The American diplomats in Hungary and Poland felt that the United States could possibly be of service in facilitating a peaceful accommodation. Talking for himself, the American Chargé in Budapest asked the Hungarian Deputy Foreign Minister whether it would be a good idea for America to recommend the Hungarian claims to other governments. His Hungarian host found the proposal salutary, particularly because Roosevelt's plea of a few days back was considered to be decisive and because a similar American manifestation with the great powers would no doubt facilitate a peaceful development. <sup>107</sup> Similarly, Ambassador Biddle urged the President to suggest an international conference of those still interested in the Czechoslovak problem, in the event that all other means should appear insufficient to prevent a clash, <sup>108</sup> Secretary Hull did not seem to share the views of his envoys. He replied to Biddle that "the Polish-Czechoslovak controversy was within the scope of the Munich Conference. Therefore there is no reason to give consideration to your suggestion. "<sup>109</sup> He further observed that the Polish and Hungarian demands on Czechoslovakia still created a dangerous situation. <sup>110</sup>

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<sup>107</sup>D.I.M.K.,II, 689.

<sup>108</sup>F.R.U.S., 1938:I, 708-9

<sup>109</sup>Ibid. p.709.

<sup>110</sup>Hull, op. cit., I, 596.

The Hungarian Minister Pelényi gathered the impression on October 5, that the American diplomats in Budapest, both Minister Montgomery on vacation in Washington at the time and Chargé Travers, had reported favorably on Hungary. Pelényi, while gratified by the information he had received at the State Department, found no reason to be optimistic about it. First, because even if the Hungarian claims had been considered as legitimate, they were explosive in nature and likely to work against a European consolidation; secondly, because the American Government tried its best to avoid any involvement with European politics in view of the approaching elections, a consideration that had made the President's plea also so cautious that it had actually diminished its weight. 111

On the same day Pelényi in another report quoted a remark of the German Ambassador Dieckhoff, back from Germany, that "in spite of the complications caused by the Hungarian demands at Munich, hopefully it will be Possible to liquidate the Czechoslovak question," a view also expressed by the Italian Chargé in Washington, who spoke of German displeasure at Mussolini's support of Hungary at the conference .112 The Hungarians also learned of Goering's remark to the Romanian Minister in

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111D.I.M.K., II, 722-23•

112Ibid., II, 724.

Germany to the effect that excessive strengthening of Hungary was no German interest and that if Romania and Yugoslavia would stay neutral Germany would not support any Hungarian actions against them. <sup>113</sup> This German attitude was further corroborated by an indiscretion in London which let the Germans know that Kánya had told the British already on September 22 that there would be no aggression or military initiative by Hungary against Czechoslovakia. <sup>114</sup>

Although the British told the Czechs. that "some cession of territory on the Hungarian frontier may prove unavoidable, "<sup>115</sup> and recommended to Chvalkovsky, the new Czechoslovak Foreign Minister, to meet immediately Hungarian claims to Magyar inhabited regions bordering on Hungary, <sup>116</sup> in their direct contacts the Hungarians gained the impression that their claims did not interest the Western Powers. It thus became clear that the Hungarian-Czechoslovak question could not be solved if Germany, which emerged from the conflict stronger than ever, were to be against this. <sup>117</sup>

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<sup>113</sup>*Ibid.*, II, 681-2.

<sup>114</sup>*Ibid.*, II, 662, of D.Br.F.P. Series, (London: HM-Stationery Office, 1950), III, 1938-39, Doc. 26.

<sup>115</sup>D. Br. F. P., III, Doc. 105.

<sup>116</sup>*Ibid.*, Doc. 163.

<sup>117</sup>Lajos, p. 16.

Following the Munich Agreement there was a change in the Czechoslovak Government, which included the resignation of President Bends. In a farewell address, he reconfirmed his conviction that Czechoslovakia had supported the post-war balance of power system which she had been willing to modify in an evolutionary manner, but "the forces of opposition had been too strong for her attempts to maintain peace and to foster cooperation with her neighbors." 118 Whatever validity this claim may have had, the Hungarians could discover no signs of those evolutionary modifications during their contact with Bends for two decades in his absolutely no-revision stand. The Hungarians further found that the new Czechoslovak leadership was also unenthusiastic in its efforts to get an accommodation with Hungary, but this was for a different reason. The German Supreme Command of the Wehrmacht put it this way on October 6;

The creation of a compact bloc of succession states on Germany's eastern frontier . . . will not be to our interest . . . a common Hungarian-Polish frontier was undesirable . . . the "Czech and Slovak" Rump state will . . . depend on Germany. . . It is in our interest that Slovakia should not be separated from the Czech union . . . under strong German influence. 119

This development was clearly assessed by the American Military Attaché in Berlin who concluded that "Hitler

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118 D. Br. F. P., III, Doc. 166.

119 D. G. F. P., IV, Doc. 39.

found himself in accord with Great Britain and France and opposed to his allies in the Slovak-Hungarian issue.“ 120

In the direct negotiations taken up between Czechoslovakia and Hungary on October 9, the Hungarians demanded a transfer of Magyar inhabited areas and an internationally supervised self-determination for Slovakia and Ruthenia. The Hungarian criterion of Magyar inhabited area was a 50% Magyar population according to the 1910 census. The Czechoslovak representatives declared that the question of Slovakia and Ruthenia did not come within the purview of the conference and that neither the 1910 census data nor economic considerations provided sufficient ground to make a strictly ethnic frontier acceptable. The Hungarian reply stressed that their suggestions coincided with the methods evolved in the Sudeten solution, and that Hungary's economic interests had not received any consideration at Trianon either. The Slovaks and Ruthenians on their part returned to a proposal of territorial autonomy for their Magyar-inhabited areas which would not have disturbed the economic interdependence of the territory concerned. When the Hungarians refused to discuss autonomy only, the Czechoslovaks offered the cession of the Csallóköz, a large island

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120F. R. U. S., 1938:I, 716-9..

formed by two branches of the Danube, amounting to a fraction of the Hungarian demands. Thereupon, the Hungarians, unsatisfied with the offer, decided to break off their negotiations and request the Four Powers to settle their claim against Czechoslovakia. <sup>121</sup>

To obtain diplomatic support for their new move, the Hungarians sent Darányi, a former Prime Minister, to Hitler and Csáky to Mussolini on the 14th of October. Mussolini promised again wide support and welcomed the request for a four-power arbitration. Hitler, on the other hand, after repeating his usual criticisms of Hungary's standing apart from German action and of her unwillingness to use aggressive means to achieve her objectives at the right moment like Poland did, opposed a four-power settlement and urged continued negotiations. <sup>122</sup> He also suggested to Chvalkovsky the same day that the Hungarian majority areas should be transferred to Hungary and then plebiscites should be arranged for areas in doubt. <sup>123</sup> In view of this the Hungarians asked for a new Czechoslovak proposal, and if that would be unacceptable, then they would ask for an arbitration by the Axis powers, since there were indications from Paris and London that the

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<sup>121</sup>D.I.M.K., II, 738-72.

<sup>122</sup>D. G. F. P., II, Doc. 62.

<sup>123</sup>Ibid., II, Doc. 61.



latter two would not readily accept the task of arbitration.<sup>124</sup> The new proposal was unacceptable, of course, and so both Prague and Budapest agreed to ask the Axis for arbitration. Faced by this request, Ribbentrop was against it, and now he suggested a four-power conference to Ciano. Five days later, on the 28th, Ribbentrop and Ciano agreed in Rome on accepting the arbitration request after Ciano persuaded his guest that the British were in favor of the German-Italian arbitration and that it would demonstrate to the small nations that Britain and France had finally vanished from the Balkan scene.<sup>125</sup> During the Rome conversations, Ciano had to abandon the request of a common Polish-Hungarian border but was able to secure for Hungary the three cities which the Hungarians considered indispensable for an acceptable solution.<sup>126</sup> In its final form the arbitral award was announced in Vienna on November 2, returning to Hungary an area of 12,400 square kilometers with 1.1 million inhabitants. Hungary considered the award undeniably gratifying but primarily attributable to Italy's support, particularly since Hitler forbade Hungary to establish a common frontier with Poland,<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>124</sup>Lajos, P. 17.

<sup>125</sup>D. G. F. P., IV, Doc. 400.

<sup>126</sup>D. I. M. K., II, 880.

<sup>127</sup>Lajos, P. 18.

Ambassador Biddle observed that after the British and French "evacuation" of Eastern and Southeastern Europe, the small countries there were determined to avoid any conflict between the major powers. In this they attempted to rely on Italy, but "Mussolini again succumbed to Hitler, blasting the hopes of smaller countries." <sup>128</sup> Secretary Hull said at the time that America kept entirely aloof from the crisis and refrained from passing on the particular behavior of any of the countries involved. As his individual view, he added to the Polish Ambassador that lack of adequate military preparation by some of the countries immediately concerned was a big factor in the crisis. <sup>129</sup>

#### 4, The Dissolution of Czechoslovakia in 1939

Following the Vienna Award Hungary and Poland continued to work for their common frontier, involving the reincorporation of Ruthenia, the eastern-most province of Czechoslovakia, into Hungary. Besides the obvious revisionist consideration, they were also motivated by the same reasons that had led the Germans to oppose such a move. Biddle summarized them as follows; (1) Ruthenian autonomy might encourage similar claims by Polish Ukrainians; (2) Reincorporation might

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<sup>128</sup>F. R. U. S., 1938:I. 731-2.

<sup>129</sup>Ibid., pp. 97-8.

strengthen Hungary against Germany; (3) Through the area Poland could maintain direct contacts with friendly countries; (4) Ruthenia would cease to be a springboard of Soviet propagandists. <sup>130</sup> Ruthenia or the CarpathoUkraine, a small, mountainous area, economically very much dependent on others, was attached to Czechoslovakia in 1918, with the promise of autonomy, which it did not receive until 1938. Benes thought of it as a likely component of an independent Ukraine, should one come into existence, <sup>131</sup> and when the Soviet Union laid claim to it at the end of World War II Benes showed no resistance. To the Germans, it meant an area to be kept out of Polish or Hungarian hands and to be turned into an ally. <sup>132</sup> For Hungary it also represented a headwater region controlling the water supply and floods in the Hungarian lowlands. What type of international associations its inhabitants wanted was never found out; they were never asked. Their political parties, supported by outside polish,

Hungarian and Ukrainian sources lacked the independence for true representation.

Prepared by the infiltration of irregulars into Ruthenia, Hungary and Poland planned a Hungarian military October

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130Ambassador Biddle for the President, Warsaw,  
October 15, 1938, 760F.64/178, MS, Department of State.

131D. Br. F. P., I, Doc. 273.

132D. G. F. P., IV, Doc. 45.

move to occupy that land on November 20. As the diplomatic groundwork for the action, first the Hungarians attempted to impress the Germans, but with no avail, that requests were pouring in from Ruthenia to Hungary to put an end to the untenable conditions there. Then with reference to a previous German remark, that Germany could give no support to such an inopportune move, conveniently interpreted by Hungary as lacking German disapproval, the Hungarians approached Mussolini for his approval which was obtained and in turn presented to Ribbentrop to get his consent. The maneuver failed for more than one reason. First the troops assigned to the surprise attack arrived at their deployment exhausted, unable to carry on; secondly, the fait accompli aspect of the move having been lost, the Germans and the Italians, equally miffed by the implications of the scheme, found ways to express their displeasure, indicating in stiff words that a Hungarian Occupation of the Carpatho-Ukraine would discredit the Axis, a warning that Hungary could ill afford to ignore openly. <sup>133</sup> In a placatory effort Sztójay presented Ribbentrop a note designating the association with the Axis as Hungary's basic policy and expressing readiness to adhere to the Anti-Comintern Pact. <sup>134</sup>

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<sup>133</sup>Ibid., IV, Docs. 118, 127, 128, 131, 132.

<sup>134</sup>Ibid., V, Doc. 252.

The first head to roll for the fiasco was Kánya's, who was equally blamed by both members of the Axis for his reluctance in September and for his eagerness in November. His replacement was Csáky, who assumed office on December 10. Five days later Csáky received and told Minister Montgomery that Hungary did not consider withdrawing from the League, signing the anti-Comintern pact, or adhering to the Axis, although these remained possibilities; the first no longer had any significance, the other two would be taken only for appropriate compensation and would not mean any Hungarian obligation to enter a war. He added that whatever course Hungary followed vis-à-vis Germany would be dictated by expediency. Montgomery who had found Csáky prejudiced in the past hoped that this trait might disappear with the new office.<sup>135</sup>

Before decisions were made concerning the above possibilities, the Hungarians wanted to orient themselves as to the likely reactions of the other great Powers. Ciano visited Hungary on December 19 and 20, round his hosts afraid of Germany, and assured them of Italian support.<sup>136</sup> A week later, Csáky instructed his Ministers in Washington, London, and Paris to inquire

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<sup>135</sup>Minister Montgomery to Secretary Hull,  
December 15, 1938. 864,00/934, MS, Department of State.

<sup>136</sup>Ciano's Hidden Diary, p. 207.

about the probable reaction at their respective capitals to Hungary's Joining the Anti-Comintern Pact in the hope of serious political support by Germany. The replies arrived early in January, 1939, and were reassuring. The only unsolicited reaction came from Moscow objecting on the ground that the Pact was not ideological but political, serving aggressive aims, particularly those of Japan.<sup>137</sup> These responses coupled with the German-French Non-Aggression Declaration of December 6, 1938, prompted Csáky to present himself in Berlin with his formal offer. On January 16, Hitler started the meeting by listing Hungary's, particularly Kánya's, crimes and ingratitude and added, "Had Hungary cooperated at the right time, he could have laughed in Chamberlain's face." Then he hinted at the territorial solution of the Czechoslovak question which needed German-Polish-Hungarian cooperation and careful timing, possibly March.<sup>138</sup>

While Csáky tried to compose German-Hungarian relations in Berlin, the Regent, abhorred by the German regime, told Montgomery that in case of war Hungary would stay neutral and would resist at whatever cost any German attempts to traverse the country.<sup>139</sup> Horthy

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<sup>137</sup>M. M. V., PP. 198-202.

<sup>138</sup>D. G. F. P., V, Doc. 272.

<sup>134</sup>Minister Montgomery to Secretary Hull, January 12, 1939, 762.64/128, MS, Department of State.

also said that Germany would be insane to use Ruthenia as a base for operations against Russia because even were it to succeed, it would serve to unite the Russians and also as a basis for building up a Slav empire, which in turn would destroy Germany. <sup>140</sup>

In spite of Soviet protestations, the Hungarian adherence to the Anti-Comintern Pact was announced by mid-January and signed by February 26. The timing was due to changes in the Hungarian Government, Imrédy being replaced by Teleki. The latter, who intended to rely more on Italy and the Western Powers to counterbalance Germany, did not enjoy full trust in Berlin. Csáky concluded the agreement as proof of his own reliability in spite of the change in the person of the premier. But his haste was not honored with an immediate approval of Hungary's Ruthenian aspirations.

Teleki's revisionism was primarily an internal one of mentality and outlook. To him revision meant that of the spiritual, social, economic, and national organization of Europe, leading to industrialization, democratization, knowledge, i.e., a true Europeanization of its countries. In his mind revision was not only a request of the vanquished of World War I, but also an existential need for Europe as a whole.

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<sup>110</sup>Minister Montgomery to Secretary Hull, January 12, 1939. 762,64/133, MS, Department of State.

Within this concept, as a geographer, he looked at Ruthenia as an aid to the industrialization and stabilization of the Hungarian Lowlands through the regulation of the water supply by its headwater region providing hydroelectric power, irrigation, and flood control. 141

Failing in Germany, Csáky approached the Czechs directly on March 6, stressing the economic considerations. Chvalkovsky responded positively to a deal involving Ruthenia for proper compensation, but only on German approval. 142

A different German approval came on the 13th, when Hitler decided to liquidate the remaining Czechoslovakia by occupying Bohemia and Moravia, by establishing a Slovakia under his tutelage, and by removing his "restraining hand" from the Hungarians as to Ruthenia. 143 As a result the Hungarian Army occupied the area in three days and established the much desired common frontier with Poland on the Carpathian ridge.

During these early months of 1939, there was also reported an almost uniform support by British circles concerning the Hungarian plans which they

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141 Géza Teleki, "Teleki Pál," Új Magyar Út, II (April 1951), P. 6.

142 M. M. V., P. 213.

143 D. G. F. P., IV, Doc. 205.



judged to be serving to establish a barrier against Germany.  
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In America, acting Secretary Welles condemned the acts resulting in the suppression of Czechoslovakia, with whom the "United States have maintained specially close and friendly relations." 145 Germany's permission of a common Polish-Hungarian frontier was viewed by Moffat as liberating her back and holding in abeyance the Ukrainian movement in the hope of an agreement with Russia. Welles, on the other hand, looked at the new move as Germany's turning east, having been satisfied in the west. Of the two, Moffat was right. 146

A week after the events, Montgomery sought Horthy's estimate of the situation. The Regent denied commitment to Germany and predicted Hungarian neutrality, awaiting the turn of the tide. In view of western inattention to Hungary's pleas, although detesting the Germans, he could achieve something only with Axis aid. This he was willing to accept, provided it did not call for extreme commitments. Montgomery concluded that Hungary's policy would be that of expediency to retrieve lost territories and maintain independence. In

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144Lajos, pp. 20-21.

145F.R.U.S., 1939:I General (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1956), P. 50.

146Moffat Papers, p. 231.

that situation, the American minister felt that Germany did not present the "permanent, predominant coloring," and thought that a western offer of some tangible solution to Hungary's problems still could exert a large influence. <sup>147</sup> Two weeks later this view was modified:

A veering toward Germany away from the democratic powers was noticeable after the occupation of Ruthenia. Despite general hatred of Germany, Hungary appears to be the latter's ally in all but name; and there appears to be no other position to assume, especially since the democratic powers have made no attempt to make an alternative position possible. <sup>148</sup>

The official American reaction to the annexation of Czechoslovakia was a de facto recognition, and the Czechoslovak Minister continued to be received by the Department of State. Thus ended another episode of Hitler's growing mastery over Europe.

#### 4. Conclusion

The realities of East-Central Europe -- a great multiplicity of closely intermingled nationalities, need for a protective organization excluding outside great powers, similarity of traditions and living conditions dependent on the advantages of larger economic units, called for self-determination, better assured

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<sup>147</sup>F. R. U. S., 1939:1, 85-6.

<sup>148</sup> Minister Montgomery to Secretary Hull, April 5, 1939. 762.64/154, MS, Department of State.

Within a federal structure than in national states, and continued to determine Hungary's international position, particularly her relations with Czechoslovakia. The faulty application of the original Wilsonian ideals to these realities had contributed greatly to the breakdown of the Versailles settlement and to the demise of the League.

In the specific Czechoslovak-Hungarian relations, the Czechs were too exuberant with their victory and the Hungarians too stunned by their defeat to forget the past and to cooperate. Instead of practical approaches, emotionalism characterized their relations. A compromising reconciliation along purely ethnic lines would have called for giving up historical claims and trying a new solution through cooperation. Neither was prepared for that. The Czechoslovaks denied the prerequisites of a minimal cooperation by insisting on the maintenance of the entire status quo, and by being willing to accommodate only in direct proportion to outside threat. The Hungarians depended on two potential supports for their claims: on Germany, that made participation in war, which Hungary refused, a condition of aid; and on the West, that did not appreciate their cause beyond occasional good words.

In their respective relations with the dominant German danger, contrary to expectations, it was Benes who would have been able to get along with Hitler, only

Hitler would not get along with Benes during their 1936-1937 negotiations; whereas it was Horthy who showed a reserve irritating to Hitler when asked for a revisionist participation in 1938.

Unfortunately the inability to compose their direct relations amicably was compounded by the fact that Germany's intervention in that relationship rendered great power rivalries sharper, more intensive. The Munich Agreement only confirmed such existing power situations. And the Vienna Award further reflected Hitler's free hand to blackmail the Czechoslovaks and the Hungarians against each other. By the spring of 1939, the Carpatho-Ukrainian case further demonstrated that developments depended on Germany alone.

The American diplomats observed these new developments with their customary accuracy and political detachment. The world at large, however, viewed Czechoslovakia and Hungary each as being the favorite of her political sponsor, while in fact each was considered as a threat by these sponsors to their respective plans.

The suppression of Czechoslovakia foreshadowed many of the developments to come. It completely destroyed whatever political credit Germany may still have had; it put an end to appeasement as a western Policy; it cast doubt on the merit of a nationality

solution to the shortcomings of the peace settlements; it discredited Hungary's claims by being presented in association with those of Germany; and it indicated the true Hitlerian political modus operandi.

Regardless of the merits of Hungary's case, recognized and registered by the American diplomats, Germany's brutal abuse of the self-determination and nationality principle was such an overwhelming consideration that it did not permit America in general to engage in the luxury of distinguishing between the German and Hungarian cases and causes. For Hungary this carried tragic consequences; for the West it represented a missed opportunity to establish and develop potential political bases in a country still struggling for its independence in a growing ocean of German expansion.

## CHAPTER VI

### HUNGARIAN NON-BELLIGERENCY IN 1939-40

#### 1. Events Leading to the German-Polish War.

With the disappearance of Czechoslovakia, Hungary's international position underwent great changes which were more apparent than real. Internally, Hungary's foreign policy continued to be shaped by the Regent, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister, who, even after some changes in their persons, on balance remained to represent a policy of territorial recovery with maintenance of independence. Regent Horthy saw no reason to change his belief that in a conflagration Germany could not win and that no Hungarian action was to run counter to western views. The very cautious Foreign Minister Kánya, aware of Hungary's need of western sympathy, was succeeded by the more impulsive, young Csáky, who pressed for revision at every opportunity in the hope that a Hungary thus strengthened would be able to pursue a more independent policy in the event of a war. This stand was somewhat balanced when by the spring of 1939, in the Prime Minister's chair, Imrédy, who in view of the western performance at Munich had become increasingly pro-Axis, was replaced by Teleki, who held the same view<sub>s</sub> as the Regent, if not even more concerned to avoid a clash with western policies.

Externally, in the new situation, post-Munich Czechoslovakia, already under German direction, became replaced by a Slovakia under German "protection." Whatever potential strategic or political advantage the establishment of the common Polish-Hungarian frontier may have had as part of a scheme to resist Germany, it was neutralized by the concurrent increase in German power. As to the great powers, Italy was humiliated by a delayed German announcement concerning the mid-March move; thus, Hungary's reliance on Italy had lost in its practical value. The Western Powers, having delivered their customary protestations to Germany, showed no definite objections to the Carpatho-Ukraine's reincorporation into Hungary, or so it appeared to the Hungarians. Even the Soviet Union indicated to the Germans that she was satisfied with the Hungarian occupation of the Carpatho-Ukraine. <sup>1</sup>

The primary factor in the new situation then remained Germany. Hitler told the Yugoslavs that he gave UP the Carpatho-Ukraine as something untenable, <sup>2</sup> and Ribbentrop indicated that in mid-March they were still Prepared to concede to Poland the leading role in the Ukrainian problem. <sup>3</sup> They told the Romanians, too, that

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<sup>1</sup>D.G.R.P., VI, Doc. 51.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., Doc . 271.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., Doc. 73.

a larger Hungary could be disturbing to Germany.<sup>4</sup> Also, when the Soviet Union broke off diplomatic relations with Hungary upon the latter's joining the Anti-Comintern Pact, the Germans refused to demonstrate the solidarity of the Pact by a temporary withdrawal of their ambassador.<sup>5</sup> All this indicated that the German acquiescence in the occupation of Ruthenia by Hungary was more of a gesture toward Poland than toward Hungary.

At that time, the question was not whether, but where, Germany would move next. Poland and Hungary appeared with equal frequency as potential directions in the diplomatic speculations. Regarding Poland the question had the further alternatives of a German move against Russia with Poland falling in line, or only against a Poland unwilling to fall in line. The Poles were offered a guarantee of the Polish-German frontier in exchange for Danzig and a German highway across the Polish Corridor. The offer, coming at the psychologically most inopportune time, Germany having forfeited all confidence in the worth of her word, was rejected, which helped Hitler to make up his mind in concentrating on Poland as his next victim. As a preparatory move on March 23, he occupied the Memelland at the expense of Lithuania and concluded a trade agreement with Romania

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., Doc. 234.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., IV, Doc. 492.

to assure his oil supplies. Fear and rumors of a sudden German move to seize Danzig prompted Prime Minister Chamberlain to declare on March 31 a joint BritishFrench guarantee to meet any action threatening Polish independence. Hitler's response came on April 11, in the form of the directive "Operation White," a plan to destroy Poland, which also said that "Germany cannot count on Hungary as a certain ally." <sup>6</sup>

Meanwhile, rumors from Romania led the British to believe that Germany was massing troops in Slovakia which, together with Hungarian troops, were ready to invade Romania in support of the German economic demands presented during the German-Romanian trade negotiations. This combined with news from Germany that she would be unable to wage a war on two fronts led the British to extend their guarantee to Romania on April 13 in an attempt to discourage German moves that would lead to an automatic two-front involvement. <sup>7</sup> On the same day, the Hungarians were assured in London that such a guarantee was for Romania's independence but not necessarily for her territorial integrity. <sup>8</sup>

Aware of the threat of a world war, deeply conscious of their moral obligations toward Poland, and

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<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, VI, Doc. 185.

<sup>7</sup>Macartney-Palmer, *op. cit.*, p. 402.

<sup>8</sup>D.I.M.K., IV, 166.



equally concerned about German pressure, the Hungarians prepared to undertake their periodic trips of orientation to Rome and Berlin. This order was important to them, for they intended to rely on the first in their resistance to the second. The value of this distinction was further corroborated in their minds by a report from Palényi in Washington, who had detected a definite differentiation in the American evaluation of Italian and German policies to the detriment of the latter, and who had been told by Sumner Welles that the United States endeavored to improve her relations with Italy.<sup>9</sup>

Still, as a sequel to his original promise, and in preparation for the trips, Csáky announced on April 11, that Hungary would leave the League of Nations. His reasons, given in an exposé before the Hungarian Parliament, were that the League subordinated its aims of maintaining international peace to the cult of the status quo, failed to take seriously minority protection (of 881 petitions, 6 got before the Council), neglected international arbitration, failed to enforce disarmament provisions, neglected Article 19, while preoccupied with article 10, and failed to solve political questions (of the 42 matters submitted, 11 were dealt with on merit, all related to the liquidation of

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., P. 137.

the World War).<sup>10</sup> Whatever merit these arguments may have had, he neglected to mention the only real reason for the move, i.e., an Axis demand for it.

Teleki and Csáky were already on their way to Rome when the news broke that President Roosevelt had called on Hitler and Mussolini for assurances that they would not attack thirty-one listed nations, including Hungary. If given, the President agreed to obtain like assurances from the thirty-one named countries regarding Germany and Italy.<sup>11</sup> Upon the German inquiry whether Hungary was feeling threatened by Germany or whether Hungary had urged Roosevelt to make such an offer, Csáky, of course, replied from Rome in the negative. The next day, on April 19, Montgomery presented to Csáky's deputy in Budapest the official text of the Roosevelt message and asked for the recipient's views on it. When told that the move would hardly be successful, Montgomery said that that was not its purpose, for only by its rejection could the action begin against Germany, and added that the Central European nations would have to make a choice economically between Germany and America, which would eventually lead to war. Montgomery further opined that England was strong and

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<sup>10</sup>Csáky Before Parliament, "Danubian Review, VI (May, 1939) pp. 28-34

<sup>11</sup>F.R.U.S., 1939:I, 132.

her tolerance should not be taken as a sign of weakness. <sup>12</sup>

Discussing this same matter in Rome, Mussolini thought that the American move had been prompted by internal political reasons, and he said that after initial hesitation Hitler had decided to reply only because that would enable him to force some nations to take sides. <sup>13</sup>

The Rome meetings turned out to serve no useful purpose. Ciano could find only fault with Csáky's behavior and reasoning. <sup>14</sup> When Csáky asked what Italy would do if Hungary's sovereignty were disregarded by Germany, Mussolini felt this eventuality to be unlikely, but said that should it occur, Italy would stand by Hungary. The Hungarians could not impress Mussolini with their view that a German-Polish conflict could not be kept isolated, nor could they interest him in their relations with Romania. <sup>15</sup>

Back in Budapest on April 25, Csáky complained to Montgomery that the President's message put Hungary in an awkward Position because it generated uncomfortable

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<sup>12</sup>D.I.M.K., IV, 175-7.

<sup>13</sup>*ibid.*, pp. 182-3.

<sup>14</sup>*The Ciano Diaries, 1939-1943*, Hugh Gibson, ed. (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1946), pp. 67-69.

<sup>15</sup>Minister Montgomery to Secretary Hull, Budapest, April 25, 1939. 740.00/1144, MS, Department of State.

German inquiries. <sup>16</sup> At the same meeting Csáky asked Montgomery about Benes' activities in the United States. Secretary Hull in his reply found the question unusual, deserving only a short oral remark to the effect that,

Mr. Benes has not formed a "government" in the United States . . . and that it could not be expected to discuss with a foreign government the activities of former officials . . . of a country from which we still receive a diplomatic representative. <sup>16</sup>

The Secretary's reply was not yet known to Csáky when he, together with Teleki, visited Hitler in Berlin on the 29th, where Hitler gave a discourse on the superiority of German military might, on a need for a breathing spell which included a reconciliation between Hungary and her neighbors, Romania and Yugoslavia, and on the impossibility of American trade policies. At this point, Csáky chimed in with agreement regarding the foolishness of American trade attitudes and indulged in his customary disapproving references to the American Minister in Hungary. Csáky related that he had been reproached by Montgomery for having been the first to give a negative reply to the Roosevelt message, which Csáky explained with the unpleasant experiences that the Hungarians had had with the Fourteen Points of President Wilson. When Csáky continued that Hungary's fall and

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<sup>16</sup>Minister Montgomery to Secretary Hull, Budapest, April 25, 1939. 860F.01/217, MS, Department of State; also under same file number, Secretary Hull to Minister Montgomery, Washington, April 27, 1939.

rise was tied to Germany's, Montgomery warned: "Be careful." Csáky also referred to his inquiry concerning Benes, mentioned above.<sup>17</sup> Already at his first visit to Hitler on January 16, 1939, Csáky had proved to be quite gossipy concerning the American Minister, attributing to him the view that a world war would come that same year, for "America is fed up with Germany."<sup>18</sup> Such jovial chat should not, however, give the impression that on the other hand Csáky had a high esteem for his German host, for just nine days before that he had told Ciano that he, Csáky, was convinced that Hitler was crazy.<sup>19</sup> Interestingly enough, while Csáky had a very poor reputation with other diplomats for confidentiality and reliability, he managed to make a favorable impression upon the Germans, which was beneficial under the circumstances.

The trips to the Axis capitals then clarified little for the Hungarians, except that Germany was prepared to "settle the Polish question," that Italy was not ready for war, and that the political calm demanded by the Axis for South Eastern Europe was tying their hopes and hands regarding Romania. As to the expected role of the United States, they were told by Ribbentrop

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<sup>17</sup>D.G.F.P., VI, Doe. 296.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., V, Doc. 273.

<sup>19</sup>Ciano Diaries, p. 68.

that America would send only material, but no soldiers, and that the Japanese fleet had a superiority of 3:1 over its American counterpart, a figure arrived at by some ingenious calculation, since the actual ratio was 3:2 in America's favor.

<sup>20</sup> The question that the Hungarians had expected to be asked as to their attitude toward a German-Polish conflict was not raised at all. Anticipating it, however, in view of their very strong sentimental and traditional bonds with the Poles, the Hungarians decided to decline any German request for cooperation against Poland and to announce in advance that they would resist with arms any German attempt at crossing Hungary's frontiers on the way to Poland. Csáky relayed this decision to Ciano on the 27th, with the request that it be supported and conveyed to Ribbentrop at the latter's visit to Rome, which marked the conclusion of the Steel Pact between Germany and Italy. Csáky's letter continued that even if Hungary's basic policy was a friendship with Germany and Italy, it could be that only within the borders of national honor and self-respect. <sup>21</sup> Mussolini's reply or advice was conditional: if the conflict were localized, German requests ought to be resisted; if it expanded into a

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<sup>20</sup>D.G.F.P., VI, Doc. 295.

<sup>21</sup>D.I.M.K., IV, 200-203.

general conflict, Hungary's place would be on the side of the Axis. <sup>22</sup>

Meanwhile Hitler's speech of the 28th repudiated the Anglo-German Naval Agreement and the German-Polish Non-Aggression Treaty, as well as rejecting the President's suggestion. In Washington this was viewed as a definite turn in the direction of a conflict with Poland and as a complete misinterpretation of the President's intent. <sup>23</sup>

Although Hungary's policies, particularly regarding Poland, were not all indicative of complete subservience to Germany, Csáky's behavior in connection with the President's message caused his predecessor and severe critic, Kánya, to tell Montgomery:

[Csáky] had sacrificed the interests of his country thereby. . . . It was suicidal . . . to lose the friendship of the [West], since this pushed her into a position where neutrality would be more difficult to maintain. [This] was due to Csáky's apprehension of showing friendship to America . . . for fear of offending Germany. . . .<sup>24</sup>

Nevertheless, during the entire summer of 1939, Csáky continued informing his missions that Hungary, not being tied down in any direction, maintained her complete freedom of action in the event of a European

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 210-2.

<sup>23</sup>Moffat Papers, p. 241, cf. D.I.M.K., IV, 217.

<sup>24</sup>Minister Montgomery to Secretary Hull, Budapest, May 4, 1939. 740.00/1504, MS. Department of State.

conflict. <sup>25</sup> On July 13, Csáky informed the Polish Minister that Hungary would under no conditions take up arms against Poland, would maintain her neutrality depending on circumstances, and would not attack Romania. <sup>26</sup> On the same day he also discovered the "present importance of cordial Hungarian-American relations," and told Travers, the Chargé, that Hungary and the United States shared a common danger in the form of Nazi propaganda, as insidious as the Bolshevik propaganda. <sup>27</sup>

At the other end of American-Hungarian contacts, Pelényi, on his return from leave in Hungary, called on Welles on July 22, who hoped that the chances of Hungary's claims on Romania would not be spoiled by an arbitrary Hungarian action, which would inevitably be interpreted by the outside world as a move on behalf of Germany. Welles also felt that the Hungarians were justified in asking for the solution of the Transylvanian problem which was a prerequisite of European peace. Concerned that Hungary's claims on Romania might be interpreted as a German move in disguise, Pelényi explained to Welles that it was in German interest to maintain Romania's integrity, and that a

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<sup>25</sup>D.I.M.K., IV, 363.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 362.

<sup>27</sup>Chargé Travers to Secretary Hull, Budapest, July 13, 1939. 764.00/99, MS, Department of State.



Hungarian move could only jeopardize the oil shipments to Germany which the latter could more easily obtain from a friendly Romania; furthermore, the Germans in Transylvania had no desire to come under Hungarian rule, Consequently Hungary would not risk an adventure, least of all in the service of Germany. On the other hand, the British-French guarantee had caused the Romanians to be even more uncooperative on minority matters than before. From the visit Pelényi gathered that in spite of the understanding words of Welles any American sympathy toward Hungary's case in Transylvania would be neutralized by its having been viewed "through the glasses of anti-German feelings." 128

The persistent British view which wrote Hungary off as a hopeless German satellite, expected her to participate against Poland and attack Romania to promote German objectives, was without foundation. In view of it, it was surprising for the Hungarians to hear that the British were negotiating about a loan or possibly even more for Germany. 29 Csáky expressed his disappointment of this to Travers on July 27, about this and also of the failure of Congress to pass the Neutrality Act. He called these events the greatest dangers to peace, the latter, because it precluded the democracies from

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28D.I.M.K., IV, 375-8.

29D.I.M.K., IV, 382-3.

achieving definite military preponderance, the former, because Hitler would seize on the idea as a sign of British weakness.

<sup>30</sup> It was further disturbing to the Hungarians that the German and Western negotiations with Russia carried on simultaneously could, whatever their outcome, lead only to Russia's deeper involvement in the affairs of Europe.

By mid-summer the State Department still received reports from Ambassador Kennedy in London that the British were getting an "undercurrent of confidence that Hitler's next move, instead of against Danzig, is to be against Hungary."

<sup>31</sup> Travers also got the impression from his colleagues in Budapest that "Danzig is only a diversion shielding Germany's real intentions of 'Drang nach Osten' wherein Hungary is the first step." <sup>32</sup> Even the Poles believed that Hitler would first bring about the downfall of the Hungarian Government, and only six months thereafter would he attack Poland. <sup>33</sup> In the Department itself, Welles shared the assumptions of these reports, whereas Moffat persisted in his conviction that the "showdown would occur between Germany and

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<sup>30</sup>F.R.U.S., 1939:I, 670.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 286.

<sup>32</sup>Chargé Travers to Secretary Hull, Budapest, August 11, 1939. 740.00/2041, MS, Department of State.

<sup>33</sup>F.R.U.S., 1939:1, 207.

Poland," for a southeasterly move would bring Germany in opposition to all European great powers, while an advance against Poland would confront Hitler with only some of them.

<sup>34</sup> It appears that Moffat was always able to evaluate the European situation with remarkable correctness.

Teleki, observing the danger of a conflict becoming more acute, felt obliged to bring to the attention of Hitler and Mussolini the Hungarian position in two letters dated July 24. In the first he said that Hungary would coordinate her policies with those of the Axis in a conflict, but in the second he was also compelled to say that for moral reasons Hungary was not in a position to start hostilities against Poland. <sup>35</sup>

Teleki's letters to Hitler and Mussolini produced a disastrous effect <sup>36</sup> but drew no immediate replies from their addressees. Their thunderous silence was broken only on August 8, when Csáky, vacationing in Germany, was called by Ribbentrop and then taken to Hitler. Ribbentrop opened the conversation by saying that he:

must urgently request Count Csáky to give instructions to the Minister in Berlin to inform the Foreign office that they should consider the two letters written by Count Teleki to the Führer . and the Duce on July 24th as not having been

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<sup>34</sup>Moffat Papers, p. 246.

<sup>35</sup>Lajos, p. 231 cf.D.G.F.P., VI, Doc. 712. <sup>36</sup>D.G.F.P., VI, Doc. 739

written. The letters have put Hitler in a very bad temper. It is his impression that Hungary has fallen a victim to certain foreign intrigues and is distancing herself from the Axis. He (Ribbentrop) had proofs, too, that the Polish Government knew the contents of the letters, and that even the British and French knew of them. . . <sup>37</sup>.

Later, Csáky was told by Hitler that the Germans were "shocked" by the letters, particularly because no Hungarian military participation was expected. The usual warning that if Germany were defeated, Hungary's revisionist aims would also come to an end, was uttered. Csáky replied that that was also confirmed by a British communication to him of a few days back. Hitler said he was not afraid of the British and French and indicated that by September 1, an ominous date, his air force would number 490,000 men. Csáky gave in under these reproaches and withdrew the two letters, which "had apparently been misunderstood." He added that should his Government disapprove of his action, he would resign. <sup>38</sup>

The Hungarian Minister in Berlin was indeed instructed the next day to deliver an official cancellation, which he reported having executed the following day. <sup>39</sup> The story of the letters does not end here, however, because on August 18, Csáky cancelled his

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<sup>37</sup>Lajos, p. 24.

<sup>38</sup>D.G.F.P., VI, Doc. 784.

<sup>34</sup>D.I.M.K., IV, 408-9.

previous instructions to his Minister in Berlin. <sup>40</sup> According to the Hungarian documents this may have related to the cancellation of the Teleki letters, but it also may have referred to another unknown instruction presumably to inquire about the possibility of a pact of alliance with the Axis. <sup>41</sup> This latter assumption is supported by the fact that on the same day Csáky appeared in Rome with the idea of an alliance in order to "save Hungary from a German invasion or from a 'friendly occupation.'" <sup>42</sup> The idea was unfavorably received in Rome, and it was also cancelled by Teleki who recalled Csáky to Budapest immediately. <sup>43</sup> Whether the cancellation related to the withdrawal of the Teleki letters or to the alliance negotiations, essentially it meant the same thing. Canceling the alliance idea eliminated the positive aspect of cooperation; restoring the refusal to go along with Germany against Poland, confirmed the negative. In either case it amounted to an open dissociation from Germany, which was duly acknowledged by the German cancellation of war-material deliveries to Hungary. <sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 422-3.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 423.

<sup>42</sup>*Ciano Diaries*, p. 123.

<sup>43</sup>*D.I.M.K.*, IV, 423.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 452, of *D.G.F.P.*, VII, Doc. 489.

The spirit of Teleki's letters, cancelled or not, remained the same in Teleki's actions. He let the British know that Hungary would not collaborate with Germany against Poland, not even for territorial offers, and that in a conflict she would aim at neutrality without making neutrality declarations.  
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Csáky had similarly informed the Italians and told Ciano that "95% of the Hungarian people hate the Germans." <sup>46</sup> The American Chargé was also informed that the rumors of a Hungarian military alliance with Germany were false. <sup>47</sup> This was confirmed by Pelényi, informing Moffat on August 18 that "Hungary would remain neutral in a war, and in no event would help Germany to attack Poland."  
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Hearing of the German-Russian Non-Aggression Pact, Csáky again felt it important to renew his pledge to the Poles about remaining neutral in a Polish-German war. Hory, who was in Budapest to receive the above message for Beck in person, was also told by Csáky that Ribbentrop expected the war to stay localized, since

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<sup>45</sup>D.Br.F.P., VII, Doc. 494.

<sup>46</sup>Ciano Diaries, p: 124.

<sup>47</sup>Chargé Travers to Secretary Hull, Budapest, August 11 1939. 740.00/2041, MS, Department of State.

<sup>48</sup>Memorandum by P. Moffat, Chief of Division of European Affairs, on conversation with J. Pelényi, Hungarian Minister, Washington, August 18, 1939. 762.64/195, MS, Department of State.

"the Western Powers were unable to intervene." <sup>49</sup> Moffat's keen insight comes to the fore again when one considers his pessimism caused by his correct judgment of Ribbentrop's misjudgment. <sup>50</sup>

The Poles believed and appreciated the Hungarian messages and so informed their western contacts. Bullitt reported that the Poles would certainly fight and that "Horthy and Teleki are remaining firm in their opposition to German threats . . . and are unwilling to enter the German orbit. . . ."

<sup>51</sup> On August 28, Biddle was told by the Poles that they had reason to believe that Hungary would declare neutrality at the outset of a war. <sup>52</sup> Also Travers talked with Csáky on August 24, and heard that no Axis demands had been advanced on Hungary at Csáky's latest visits. On reiterating the Hungarian stand on Poland, the Hungarian Foreign Minister declared that Hungary would not attack Romania, "if only for the fear of being considered to have acted in concert with Germany, from whom she wished to remain dissociated." <sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup>Hory, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

<sup>50</sup>*Moffat Papers*, p. 248.

<sup>51</sup>F.R.U.S., 1939:I 308.

<sup>52</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 378.

<sup>53</sup>*Chargé* Travers to Secretary Hull, Budapest, August 24, 1939. 762.64/201, MS, Department of State.

This massive demonstration of friendship toward Poland was viewed with disbelief by the British. They disagreed with the Poles on the latter's expectations concerning Hungarian behavior, and assumed that Hungary "would throw in 14-21 divisions of low value."<sup>54</sup> Even the British Minister in Budapest, O'Malley, said that if the news of Hungarian resistance were true Teleki misled him,<sup>55</sup> and he was quite disappointed that Hungary did not live up to the unreliable reputation ascribed to her. In the Foreign Office, Lord Halifax viewed Hungary's neutrality as important, but he held out no hope of reconsidering the negative British reply to Hungary's inquiry on territorial questions, nor of any other form of practical assistance.<sup>56</sup>

The true test of Hungary's determination and ability to resist German demands in relation to the German-Polish war came only one week after its outbreak. On September 5, Sztójay reported from Berlin that Ribbentrop, in a very congenial mood, asked that Csáky come to Germany for a discussion of "special issues," among them whether Hungary had any territorial demands against Poland. Sztójay assumed this invitation to signal the first step toward a German request for troop

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<sup>54</sup>D.Br.F.P., VI, Appendix V.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., VII, Doc. 95.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., Doc. 181.



transit through Hungary. <sup>57</sup> On the same day the Germans also expressed their dissatisfaction with Hungarian press reports on the German-Polish war. <sup>58</sup> The Csáky visit to Ribbentrop at the German Headquarters took place on September 7, at which Ribbentrop emphasized to Csáky that there must be no Hungarian attack on Romania under any circumstances, particularly because Germany was in no position to assist Hungary in such a venture. Having been reassured by Csáky on that, Ribbentrop asked whether Hungary had any territorial aspirations against Poland, to which Csáky replied that Hungary's policy was one of revision, but not of imperialist annexation. <sup>59</sup>

It was only during a surprise telephone call by Ribbentrop to the private quarters of Csáky, back in Budapest, on September 9, at 4 p.m., that the German request for permission of a German transit to Poland was presented with a demand for a reply by 8 p.m., since the transports were scheduled for that night. Csáky replied that it would be impossible to give an answer within the time limit given and promised one for noon of the 10th. Thereupon, still on the 9th, the Regent with Teleki, Csáky, and the Chief of General Staff decided to

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<sup>57</sup>D.I.M.K., IV, 487-8.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., pp. 488-91.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 505, cf. D.G.F.P., VIII, Doc. 30.

refuse the request, and the Council of Ministers concurred on the morning of the 10th. After the decision, Mussolini's counsel of polite refusal had also arrived. The decision was given by Csáky to, and acknowledged by, Ribbentrop over the telephone at noon of the 10th. <sup>60</sup>

The next day the Slovak Government asked the Hungarians for the use of the very same railway for their military transports. This time the Hungarian reply was not only negative but also indignant, indicating that the move would be considered an aggression. Csáky suspected a German-Slovak collusion in this request and said so, to which the German reaction was "astonishment" and the threat that "any unfriendly act . . . toward Slovakia under (German) protection would cause a corresponding reaction in Germany." <sup>61</sup>

By September 17, Warsaw was encircled, the Soviet Union also attacked Poland from the rear, and the Polish Government fled to Rumania, where it was interned. Then the significance of the Carpatho-Ukraine in Hungarian hands became manifest in two ways. Its use to the German Army was denied, which was a moral stand on the part of Hungary and more of a moral support than a practical one for Poland; but it was made open to the Polish refugees

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid., PP. 505-7; for text of reply, see D.G.F.P., -VIII, Doc. 45.

<sup>61</sup>D.G.F.P., VIII, Docs. 49, 67.

pouring into Hungary, including 50,000 soldiers who were given an opportunity to escape to France <sup>62</sup> and contribute to the Polish contingent of the Allied Forces. This was duly noted by the Germans, who protested the Hungarian practice as "incompatible with neutrality." <sup>63</sup>

Montgomery, back from his leave in the United States, summarized his information, from and about the Hungarians, also confirmed by the British Minister, on September 16:

Csáky asked for Mussolini's advice on permission of German transit to Poland via Hungary. . . . Mussolini advised not to permit such move, following the actual refusal. . . . Hope is that Hungary will remain neutral as long as Italy remains neutral. . . . There is fear in Diplomatic Corps that Germany ultimately will take over Hungary as it is impossible for Hungary to supply Germany with all that the latter demands since Germany can make no payments whatever therefor. Hungarians say they will continue to furnish Germany with everything possible even without payment, considering this as a cheap price for avoiding German invasion. <sup>64</sup>

The outbreak of World War II and its immediate results affecting Hungary indicated that she was successful in her attempts to maintain a neutral position and to avoid a clash with the Western Powers even at the risk of offending Germany. This determined stand was compensated by no western support of any kind; it caused

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<sup>62</sup>Lajos, P. 26.

<sup>63</sup>D.I.M.K., IV, 564-5, 575.

<sup>64</sup>Minister Montgomery to Secretary Hull, Budapest, September 16, 1939. 762.64/215, MS, Department of State.

only a pronounced German displeasure. Yet it was taken primarily for the purely moral concern to avoid a dishonest act against the most intimate friend, Poland. Strict neutrality was the only right course open. For Hungary to be anti-German would have been political suicide; to be anti-Polish, moral suicide. This was duly recognized and accurately reported by the American diplomatic representatives, but in a world beset with immense problems, it could be of only little consequence.

## 2. Uneasy Neutrality After the Fall of Poland

The fall of Poland altered Hungary's international position in most respects. Gone was the only friendly neighbor of some power on which Hungary could rely in resisting German penetration. It was placed on Hungary's northeastern frontier by the newly expanded Germany and Soviet Union.

From among Hungary's relationships with other countries, the ones with Russia, as a new neighbor, were of paramount importance. Diplomatic relations, after an interruption of some seven months, were restored at Russia's request on September 23, <sup>65</sup> helping to allay earlier Hungarian apprehensions whether the advancing Red Army would move into the Carpatho-Ukraine. The American Legation in Budapest reported extensively on

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65D.I.M.K., IV, 539-40.

the new Russo-Hungarian relations. By October 10, they were found to be "cordial" by the Regent and "excellent" by Csáky, who went as far as even discovering in them a potential check on Germany.<sup>66</sup> Half a month later the reports still talked of how well the new Hungarian Minister had been received at Moscow, how understanding the Russians had been concerning Hungary's joining of the Anti-Comintern Pact, and how uninterested the Russians had been in the half-million Subcarpathian Slavs. Regarding the latter, Montgomery concluded with great foresight: "Subcarpathia may become the Sudeten of Hungary," which in the hands of Russia "would establish [the latter militarily] in the Danube plain."<sup>67</sup> All this still left the impression with Csáky that Russia was the only danger to Hungary inasmuch as Germany desired peace in that region to obtain necessary supplies.<sup>68</sup>

Relations with Germany, however, were cool at best, marked by extensive and continued German dissatisfaction with Hungary's conduct during that fall and winter. Accusations of unduly pro-Polish manifestations,

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<sup>66</sup>Minister Montgomery to Secretary Hull,  
 Budapest, October 10, 1939. 761.64/57, MS, Department of  
 State.

<sup>67</sup>Minister Montgomery to Secretary Hull,  
 Budapest, October 26, 1939. 761.64/59, MS, Department of  
 State.

<sup>68</sup>Minister Montgomery to Secretary Hull,  
 Budapest, October 27, 1939, 761.6411/1, MS, Department  
 of State.

pro-British policies, and delayed food deliveries were made through the Hungarian Minister in Berlin, with the advice that only fast and large deliveries "would divert the hungry eyes of certain hungry people" from Hungary.<sup>69</sup> Hitler's displeasure with the Hungarian leadership was also manifest in his view, shared with Slovak leaders on October 21, that the Polish-Hungarian bond had been based on the common practices of the ruling magnates in the two countries, lacking any sense of social obligation and ruthlessly exploiting their poor countrymen.<sup>70</sup> This statement was as false as it was revealing of Hitler's contempt. However singularly unenlightened the Hungarian and Polish leadership's social policies may have been, they happened to be totally irrelevant to the issue at hand. The deep sympathies between the two peoples had been general, were without any social distinction, and were shown by mutual aid and hospitality in response to quite frequent manifestations of German and Russian oppressive measures against them over centuries of common fate. To explain the realities of Polish-Hungarian cooperation in terms of internal social conditions is a tempting but misleading exercise. After all, the German and Russian presence and threat to East-Central Europe had not been

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<sup>69</sup>Lajos, pp. 26-27.

<sup>70</sup>D.G.F.P., VIII, Doc. 286,

brought about or even influenced to a great extent by the internal conditions of its small countries. The social and political set-up of a given small country may have influenced the policy pursued within the framework of great power relations, but it could never disregard the basic requirements of maintaining its independence.

Besides independence, the recovery of lost territories constituted the permanent feature of Hungary's foreign policy, which maintained primacy over any internal political consideration. The methods may have varied with the coloring of a particular government, except when under foreign occupation, but not the basic objectives pursued. But, as Montgomery concluded, "no matter what policy had been adopted [by Hungary] at any Particular time, the result would have been exactly the same." <sup>71</sup>

Concerning the effects of the Russo-German relations on Hungary, American reports indicated no Hungarian concern regarding the possibility of a joint aggression on them. Horthy thought that the definite imperialistic designs of Russia were to be prevented by ending the war and driving Russia from Europe with the forces of a coalition composed of the then belligerents

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<sup>71</sup>Montgomery, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

joined by Hungary. <sup>72</sup> By the end of November, Csáky talked of his fears to Montgomery that Germany would attack, if facing defeat, or Russia would use any opportunity offered by German preoccupation elsewhere. <sup>73</sup>

Hungary's relations with the United States continued to be influenced by their common neutrality, in which no promises were exchanged as to future commitments in regard to each other. It was quite obvious that America wanted to prevent an Axis victory, without becoming entangled in European politics. This aim was somewhat neutralized by the attached condition, but by November 4, the Fourth Neutrality Act indicated to the Hungarians that the "cash and carry" arrangement would be of help as an anti-Nazi measure. Still Hungary's isolated position in the back of Germany did not allow much more in attempting to counteract German economic pressures than to support the dilatoriness of American oil companies in Hungary in their production of and search for oil. <sup>74</sup> Also, in December, Teleki confided to Travers that to preclude Hungarian military dependence on Germany he thought of purchasing American planes. <sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup>F.R.U.S., 1939:I, 472.

<sup>73</sup>Minister Montgomery to Secretary Hull, Budapest, November 30, 1939. 762.64/227 MS, Department of State.

<sup>74</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup>Chargé Travers to Secretary Hull, Budapest, December 21, 1939. 764.00/17, MS, Department of State.



Hungary's conduct during and following the fall of Poland met with full approval in London. Already on September 12, Cadogan spoke warmly of Hungary's cautious but unexceptionable attitude and hoped that she would be successful in forming some kind of a bloc with her neighbors.

<sup>76</sup> By the end of October, it was made clear in London that neutrality was the British aim in South-East Europe. <sup>77</sup>

Similar reports reached Hungary from Paris, where there was already talk about post-war reconstruction, including some federalization of Central Europe with considerations promising to be favorable to Hungary. <sup>78</sup> The idea of a bloc of all South-East European peoples, to avoid being drawn into the war, was broached as soon as hostilities broke out. Romania was most interested first, but later she became less ready to make the sacrifices for unity, which both Bulgaria and Hungary found indispensable for their joining. Since such a bloc would be primarily interested in preserving the interests of the members in the midst of belligerent great powers, it could become a reality only if the outstanding problems among the members themselves were settled or solved. Whereas the Romanians said that the

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<sup>76</sup>Lajos, P. 28.

<sup>77</sup>D.I.M.K. j IV, 592.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., PP. 541-2.

settlement of such questions should be deferred until the end of the war and were unwilling to consider them at the time, the two revisionist countries involved, Bulgaria and Hungary, saw no reason to cooperate in maintaining a situation that they sought to revise.<sup>79</sup> The great powers, of course, would push only for the kind of bloc formation that was against their respective opponents, which again defeated any effective organization of the small countries.

All in all, by early 1940, Hungary appeared to be satisfied with having avoided becoming a belligerent and having created the impression of her conduct in the West that she had. In this situation, the cardinal objectives of her foreign policy, independence and revision, called for new approaches. The Hungarian views related to these matters were summarized by Teleki when he told Montgomery in December that no permanent reconciliation was possible with Romania unless she did something about revision in Transylvania. In other respects, Hungary had everything to gain by staying out of the conflict. Teleki went so far as to say: "Hungary is Probably in the best position of any country in South East Europe."<sup>80</sup> Still this "best position" was

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<sup>79</sup>Ibid., pp. 617, 692.

<sup>80</sup>Minister Montgomery to Secretary Hull, Budapest, December 11, 1939. 764.71/185B, MS, Department of State.

not secure enough to be enjoyed without preparing for any eventuality. Such preparations had two aims: prevention of impairment or loss of independence, and, if independence could be preserved, the realization of revision regarding Transylvania.

The response to the first of these was a plan for a Hungarian exile government to be established in the West.<sup>81</sup> The increasing German pressure, manifested in an encircling presence, Hungary's economic dependence, and internal Nazi agitation, prompted Pelényi on his leave in the fall of 1938, to outline to Csáky a plan whereby a well-known Hungarian personality, trusted both by the West and the Hungarian regime, would stay in the West to represent, in case of need, "the millennial interests" of Hungary, "independently of the fate of Budapest."<sup>82</sup> This "Representative Abroad" would function either when Hungary would be forced into the German camp or when she would be occupied by Germany. He would also be supported by Hungarian diplomats in the West resigning in due time to maintain their

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<sup>81</sup> Details of the plan are preserved in twelve documents of John Pelényi, Hungarian Minister at Washington, 1933-40, deposited with the Baker Library, Dartmouth College, Hannover, N. H. Five of the documents with a description of the plan are given in John Pelényi, "The Secret Plan for a Hungarian Government in the West at the Outbreak of World War II," Journal of Modern History, XXXVI (June, 1964), 170-177.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., pp. 170, 173.

valuable contacts there. This plan also called for some funding to support the proper functioning of its personnel. Afraid of Hungary being treated more and more like Germany with a corresponding decrease in meaningful official contacts with the West, Pelényi sent a memorandum detailing his plan to Csáky and Teleki on April 17, 1939.<sup>83</sup> During Pelényi's last leave in Budapest in August, 1939, Teleki responded to the plan approvingly, and designated himself as a likely candidate for the envisioned "Representative Abroad." He also sent along with his Minister in Washington two messages for the Americans: to ask whether they could induce their big business to compete with Germany in Hungary to prevent Nazi control of Hungarian key industries; and to tell the United States Government that, looking for shelter in face of the approaching storm, "Hungary is willing to join a federation with all her small neighbors." On his return to Washington, Pelényi found "only faint academic interest" in his presentations there.<sup>84</sup>

More teeth were put in the plan when Teleki wrote two letters to Pelényi on March 17, 1940. The first was an official communication informing the recipient that

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<sup>83</sup>Memorandum sent by the Hungarian Minister in Washington to his Government on April 17, 1939. MS, Pelényi documents.

<sup>84</sup>Pelényi, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

he would receive for safekeeping five million dollars for the use of a future exile government, primarily Regent Horthy, or if he should be incapacitated, eight other individuals, including Teleki and, as the only American, Royall Tyler, a League of Nations representative in Hungary in connection with the League loan. This first directive also outlined under what circumstances and in what manner the funds transferred to Pelényi could be used. In the second, a hand-written document, Teleki relayed the Regent's view to Pelényi that the plan should be made operational to face any situations, although there appeared to be no immediate danger establishing the need for it. The letter also assured the addressee that the Regent would see to it that Pelényi should stay at his post even if a change of regime should take place in Hungary. <sup>85</sup> To the bearer of the letters, a cousin of Teleki, Pelényi gave a new memorandum calling attention to the immediate and urgent need for sending an emissary to the West quickly before the Regent could be prevented from leaving the country and could be forced to appoint a government which would only compromise the country's position in the West. <sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Two letters by Hungarian Prime Minister Paul Teleki to John Pelényi, dated March 17, 1940. MS. Pelényi documents.

<sup>86</sup> Undated memorandum by Pelényi on retaining diplomatic recognition and measures to assure leadership in the emigration. MS, Pelényi documents.

Four days later Pelényi received a telegram from the president of the Hungarian National Bank, requesting to „pay total amount . . . to Federal Reserve Bank for account of National Bank . . . ,”<sup>87</sup> Since such transactions were automatically reported by the Federal Reserve Bank to the National Bank of Hungary, Pelényi felt no need to report separately his having carried out the request, but he did send a cryptic telegram on May 27 to Teleki's cousin indicating that should Hungary actively collaborate with Germany, he, Pelényi, would be forced to resign his post in order to maintain the position enjoyed by him with official American circles.<sup>88</sup> To this planned course of action Teleki and his cousin cabled on June 16, that they "fully agree."<sup>89</sup>

Pelényi was never informed of the reasons for the cancellation of the secret plan for an exile government, but he "surmised that in view of the total collapse of the Allied Front in the West by that date, it was felt that [it] no longer fitted the international situation."<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup>Telegram from Baranyai to Pelényi, May 25, 1940. M-S, Pelényi documents.

<sup>88</sup>Telegram from Pelényi to Andor Teleki, May 27, 1940. MS, Pelényi documents.

<sup>89</sup>Telegram from Andor Teleki to Pelényi, June 16, 1940, MS, Pelényi documents.

<sup>90</sup>Pelényi, op . cit., p. 171.

Teleki must also have talked with Royall Tyler about the two messages sent through Pelényi in August of 1939) for these same items formed the subject of Tyler's memorandum presented to Moffat at the State Department on March 11, 1940, in which it was foreseen that "Hungary cannot hope to remain independent unless she has access to free-exchange markets," and that plans for a Danubian federation were viewed with skepticism by the Hungarians, who were disinclined having to fight some day "in defense of a combination designed primarily to keep Germany under." <sup>91</sup>

The second major question occupying Hungarian policy-makers was that of realizing revision while independence was retained. In the realm of immediate reality, this involved Romanian-Hungarian relations in connection with the Hungarian minority in Transylvania. In this regard there had been no clear-cut and solid plans in the Hungarian minds. At his first meeting with Hitler in January, 1939, Csáky expressed his idea of a separate new Transylvanian state, in which "the German, Hungarian and Romanian elements would rule side by side with equal rights." Accordingly an annexation to Hungary was out of the question because of its "indigestible" consequences. <sup>92</sup> Teleki, with a more detached

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<sup>91</sup>Memorandum by Royall Tyler presented to P.Moffat, March 11, 1940. 864.00/983, MS, Department of State.

<sup>92</sup>D.G.F.P., V, Doc. 273.

attitude, viewed the future in the hope that the community of life and traditions in the Danubian region presented a type of symbiosis that would be able to overcome the artificial political divisions and lead to a cooperative solution replacing the tragic "oppress or be oppressed" cycle. Stephen Bethlen, former Prime Minister and at the time still very influential with the Government, assumed a German defeat in the war and saw a possibility for revision within the framework of a post-war peace settlement. In a memorandum filed with the Foreign Ministry on March 23, 1940, Bethlen proposed that, should Germany be dismembered by the peace settlements, and should Austria be federated again with other Danubian states, Hungary ought to ask for revision as a price for her joining the new federation and thus also obtain the sanction of the Western Powers; should, however, Germany be left with her December, 1938, frontiers, Hungary ought to strive for a Danubian solution encompassing a Romanian-Hungarian federation with an autonomous Transylvania under a Romanian-Hungarian condominium, some population transfers, and frontier rectification, in the purely Hungarian and purely Romanian border areas. To support such plans, Bethlen also proposed intensive military preparations.<sup>93</sup> The military also did its planning for operations against

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<sup>93</sup>D.I.M.K., IV, 760-1.



Romania already in May, 1939, involving heavy reliance on sabotage and uprising by the Hungarian minority in Transylvania. <sup>94</sup> A plan to organize the Transylvanian Hungarians for such purposes was accepted by the Cabinet on May 22, 1939, with the proviso that this would not be done in a manner "injurious to the Hungarian minority's interests." <sup>95</sup> Apart from these ambitious military ideas, the actual policy followed by Hungary in relation to Romania was that of maintaining pressure with revisionist demands and waiting for the appropriate moment offered by general international developments for their more practical realization. The international situation, however, was anything but accommodating to the Hungarians, for both the Axis and the Western Powers wanted peace there, which could only be disturbed by raising Hungarian claims against Romania. Nevertheless, Hungary continued to talk to Romania about them with the usual lack of success. When the Hungarians asked for a minority treaty guaranteeing some rights to the Hungarian minority in Romania, the Romanians in turn asked for a non-aggression treaty, which the Hungarians made conditional upon the acceptance of their initial request. <sup>96</sup> This vicious circle

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<sup>94</sup>Ibid., pp. 229-232.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., pp. 238-9.

<sup>96</sup>Ibid., pp. 545-7.

prevented any real solution and kept matters in the same condition until the spring of 1940. Since direct contacts yielded no results satisfactory to the Hungarians, they also attempted some preparatory work with the great powers against great odds in view of the latter's opposition to any Hungarian move that would be likely to disturb peace in the Balkans. In response to a British hint, it was decided to present the Transylvanian question on its merits, with reasonable claims, and avoiding the suspicion of complicity with either Germany or Russia.<sup>97</sup>

What then was the Transylvanian question? It resulted from two different countries laying claim to the whole of the same territory, which was only partially inhabited by their respective Irredentist groups. The wide array of arguments marshaled by each claimant in favor of its position could neither impress its opponent nor deny the intermingled existence of both nationalities there. There was also quite a bit of face saving involved for the parties of the Transylvanian dispute, which rendered them unwilling or unable to modify their respective positions. Yet as the chances of their realization increased, Hungary's revisionist claims became reduced to more realistic levels. Still, Transylvania, the home of one and a half million

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<sup>97</sup>Macartney, A History of Hungary, I, 387.

Hungarians and representing much of historic significance and emotional involvement for Hungary, remained the chief objective of Hungarian irredentism. In the light of this the Hungarian memoranda submitted to the western Powers stressed that until the Transylvanian problems were solved, European peace would be in danger; that an exchange of populations would not be a feasible solution since there were only 16,000 Romanians in Hungary in contrast to the 1,550,000 Hungarians in Romania; that therefore half of the 40,000 square miles lost to Romania in 1919, should be returned to Hungary with a population of some 2,700,000 equally divided between Romanians and Hungarians.<sup>98</sup> This was somewhat of a Hungarian compromise view considering the previous irreconcilable stands, in which Romania viewed Transylvania as a central Romanian fortress dominating the surrounding Romanian and Hungarian lowlands, and Hungary looked at it as a Hungarian bastion against the East within the framework of the Carpathian basin. In fact, Transylvania was a common homeland both to Romanians and Hungarians, which constituted a unit even in itself.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup>*Ibid.*, pp- 387-8.

<sup>99</sup>Ladislas Makkai, *Histoire de Transylvanie* (Paris: Les Presses Universitaires de France, 1946), p.18.

When late in 1939, there were indications that Russia might move against Romania to recover Bessarabia, the Hungarians felt that this presented them with an opportunity to plan for an intervention, but only if either of these three conditions would come about: bolshevization of Romania, threat to the life of the Hungarian minority there, or Romanian discrimination against Hungary by refusing her territorial concessions while granting them to Russia or Bulgaria.<sup>100</sup> These views were communicated to the great powers, whom they failed to impress. At the same time, Romania, also aware of her perilous position in facing some Russian demands, turned to the same great powers inquiring about what assistance she could get from them. The replies from London and Paris made it clear that the British guarantee would not be operative against Russia. Italy was more accommodating by promising restraints on Hungary to relieve Romania on the rear. This promise was made good early in January, 1940, when Csáky visited Ciano in Venice. Ciano asked the Hungarians not to move against Romania under any conditions, not even the three mentioned above. Csáky agreed with Ciano to defer the solution of the Transylvanian question provided Romania would resist a Russian aggression and treat her Magyar minority decently. Thereupon Ciano confided to

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<sup>100</sup>D.I.M.K.,IV, 670.

Csáky that should Hungary keep her peace while Romania resisted Russia with Italian material aid, the Hungarians could count on the return of some border areas. Csáky found such a very limited territorial adjustment unsatisfactory to Hungary and added that she would have to retrieve areas large enough to enable her to exert a decisive influence in the defense of the Carpathians. Ciano thought that the Romanians would never consent to that without a fight, whereupon Csáky indicated that Hungary was ready for that at a time to be determined by circumstances.<sup>101</sup> A fortnight later, these circumstances were discussed by Genera Tippelskirch of the German General Staff, on a visit in Hungary, according to whom Germany did not expect a Russian move against Romania at the time, but should one take place with Romania successfully resisting it, it would not be in German interest if Hungary intervened to recover Transylvania; should, however, the Russian move lead to a Romanian internal collapse, Germany would do

everything to save the oil wells and for that reason a Hungarian move would be called for. Tippelskirch also thought that the Western Powers would not get involved in military moves on the Balkans, and that the United States would not gear her war production to British-French demands because "war debts are hard to collect

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<sup>101</sup>Ibid., pp. 669-72.

and it is difficult to retrench an overextended war industry with the coming of peace." 102

Having received only discouragement for the immediate realization for any of their Transylvanian plans, the Hungarians turned to the United States for moral and political support in connection with the European trip of Undersecretary Welles. On January 29, 1940, Wed. assured Montgomery that Hungary would not take advantage of any Russian attack on Romania, nor would she consent to Germany going through Hungary to Romania. 103 Then in response to his inquiry, Pelényi was instructed to bring to the Undersecretary's attention that Hungary-Romanian relations were the key to the Central European situation; that their dispute could be solved only if Hungary obtained a decisive influence in the Carpathian Basin and thus became able to perform her "geopolitical task", that Hungary was dissatisfied with the minority agreements; that she was determined to solve her dispute with Romania, although she did not intend to change her peace policy at the moment; and that Hungary would be grateful if the United States could convince the Government of Romania that in its long-term' interest it was desirable to come to an agreement with Hungary for the rectification of the Transylvanian

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102 *Ibid.*, pp. 674-77.

103 F.R.U.S., 1940:I, 456.

frontier. <sup>104</sup> Pelényi delivered the message on February 12, to Welles who listened to the first three points with sympathetic nods, which, however, were absent with the last two. Then the Undersecretary remarked:

Anxious as the United States Government was for a peaceful and fair solution of all controversies in Europe, it could not inject itself into political questions of this purely European character. <sup>105</sup>

During the same days American diplomatic missions in all neutral countries, including Hungary, informed the respective foreign ministers that the President was considering an exchange of views with other neutral countries on "problems related to the future maintenance of peace after the termination of existing hostilities ." <sup>106</sup> In his reply, delivered to Montgomery on February 20, Csáky agreed with the necessity of arms reduction, provided that, in Hungary's case, first the Hungaro-Romanian dispute would be settled peacefully, and he wanted to maintain free economic exchanges. To discuss these matters, he invited Welles to visit Budapest in the course of his European trip. <sup>107</sup> No specific American reply was received, except that "the Department is waiting until all of the Governments circulated on

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<sup>104</sup>D.I.M.K., IV, 702-3, cf. F.R.U.S., 1940:I, 457.

<sup>105</sup>D.I.M.K., IV, 705, cf. F.R.U.S., *loc. cit.*

<sup>106</sup>F.R.U.S., 1940:I, 117-9, cf. D.I.M.K., IV, 704.

<sup>107</sup>D.I.M.K., IV, 712.

February 10, shall have replied." <sup>108</sup> In view of the Welles mission being already in progress, the Hungarians tried to arrange a meeting in Rome between him and Teleki, who intended to visit there later in March. <sup>109</sup> Welles, however, having refused meeting with other neutral leaders, could not commit himself to meet with Teleki either. <sup>110</sup> Simultaneously, Mussolini also advised Teleki not to meet with Welles in order to , avoid "complications." <sup>111</sup>

Meanwhile, alarming news reached Budapest that Hitler had told Welles that he wanted absolute hegemony not only over Czechoslovakia and Poland, but also over Hungary, and that the Germans were preparing with full speed for their attack in the West. <sup>112</sup> The first item may have been what

Welles reported as Germany's aim to obtain "recognition for her economic priority in East and Southeast Europe." <sup>113</sup> The second item was one of the reasons why Teleki went to Rome, besides his original intent to see Welles, namely, to clarify whether Hungary should make an open declaration of neutrality as

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<sup>108</sup>Ibid., p. 722.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid., p. 726.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid., pp. 736-7.

<sup>111</sup>Ibid., p. 736.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid., pp. 724, 735.

<sup>113</sup>F.R.U.S., 1940:I, 48.



soon as Germany's western offensive took place. <sup>114</sup> Teleki was meeting with Mussolini and Ciano from March 26 through 28, and was greatly disappointed at Mussolini's readiness to enter the war at "the appropriate moment"; after all, Teleki came with the idea of basing his policy on Italian neutrality. Mussolini also suggested that Hungary stay neutral without making a neutrality declaration. As to the Romanian question, Mussolini hinted that the Romanians had been told that Italy would talk to them seriously only if they would order their outstanding affairs with Hungary. Privately, Ciano did not believe in a final German victory because the United States would not allow the defeat of France and Britain. Both Italian leaders intimated that they had told Welles that in a new general settlement Hungary's just claims must be taken into consideration, which happened to be true. <sup>115</sup> In more private conversations, the visit gave Teleki an opportunity to air his quite intense anti-German feelings, expressing hope for a German defeat and joking about his ending up in the Dachau concentration camp. <sup>116</sup>

The picture of the general situation that Teleki took home with him from Rome showed that Welles had

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<sup>114</sup>D.I.M.K., IV, 761.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid., pp. 763-5, cf. F.R.U.S., 1940:I, 103.

<sup>116</sup>Ciano Diaries, pp. 226-8.

returned to America with the conviction that there was no hope for an immediate peace; that Italy could no longer be relied on in resisting Germany; that the German attack in the West was imminent. <sup>117</sup> These impressions together with reports from Berlin that Germany meant to send troops to occupy the oil fields if Russia attacked Romania, and that such troops would move through Hungary, prompted a Cabinet meeting on April 1, at which Csáky asked for a "show-down with the Germans on the Romanian question." <sup>118</sup> The more cautious Teleki proposed, however, to initiate talks with the Germans, offering them military cooperation within the Anti-Comintern pact provided Russia attacked the Romanians. With this scheme Teleki hoped to make clear to the Germans that Hungary would not be willing to cooperate if there were no Russian attack, such as in the case of a "preventive German move." <sup>119</sup> When the Presentation of the German request for troop transit through Hungary was felt to be imminent, Teleki decided to activate the plan for an exile government related above and also to send a messenger to Mussolini for advice. To the question whether Hungary could count on Italy in the case of military resistance to Germany, the

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<sup>117</sup>D.I.M.K., IV, 765-6, cf. F.R.U.S., 1940:I, 116.

<sup>118</sup>D.I.M.K., IV, 769-70.

<sup>119</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 767-8.

Duce replied: "How could this ever be, since I am Hitler's ally and intend to remain so?" <sup>120</sup> In view of these developments, Teleki found it necessary to write a letter to Hitler on April 17, in which the question was raised whether it was time to start discussions between Germany, Italy, and Hungary "in order to be prepared red for all eventualities." <sup>121</sup> This meant to serve as an introduction of the military talk offer which had been thought of earlier in April to fend off the German transit request. Hitler, satisfied that there was no need to move against Romania, gave only a delayed reply on May 18, in which he specified Germany's chief aim in Southeast Europe as peace and calm. <sup>122</sup> In his immediate reply Teleki expressed willingness to postpone his efforts to achieve his "legitimate claims," although he had had the impression that Hungary might satisfy her national demands "with sword in hand," As to the Hungarian idea of the future settlement, he did not have in mind a simple return to the pre-1919 conditions, but rather a reconciliation of vital Hungarian territorial and political interests with the conditions and recognized interests of others and with Hungary's potential

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<sup>120</sup>Ciano's *Diaries*, pp. 233-4.

<sup>121</sup>D.I.M.K., IV, 772.

<sup>122</sup>D.G.F.P., IX, Doc. 271.

strength. He further warned that there are limits to Hungary's readiness for sacrificial compromises, <sup>123</sup> Meanwhile the British inquired of the Hungarian Prime Minister as to Hungary's intention to resist a German invasion. On April 27, Teleki was evasive, finally angry, and asserted that it was not his obligation to make known the views of his government. Minister O'Malley offered the conclusion to Montgomery that, Hungary's position was serious in that inevitable German pressure would push her into a position where the Allies would have to retaliate. <sup>124</sup> Teleki's irritation with O'Malley could be explained by the fact that while the Prime Minister did his best in an impossible situation to ward off the German danger, his only British support consisted of threats should Hungary slacken in her game of risking suicide. This was further brought out when on the 22nd, O'Malley warned

Teleki not to permit a German transit against Romania, which was still enjoying a British guarantee. Teleki judged the message hostile, because "anyone can ask of us anything, save that we should defend against anyone that Romania which is still holding Transylvania stolen from us." 125

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123Ibid., Doe. 284. 124

124Minister Montgomery to Secretary Hull,  
Budapest, April 27, 1940. 850.811/189, MS, Department of  
State.

125Karsai, "Országgyarapítás" Országvesztés, II-11.

Besides the British information, the State Department also received evaluations from Yugoslavia to the effect that while Horthy and Teleki had good intentions the situation was beyond their control. <sup>126</sup>

These evaluations were a bit pessimistic. Hungary was able, in fact, to maintain her neutrality during the period from the German-Polish war to the French capitulation in June, 1940. While this neutrality did not bear, at the request of the Axis, this formal mark of a neutrality declaration, in fact Hungary was able to refuse help against her closest friend, Poland, and keep a relatively free hand in other matters. If her impartiality was not maintained in all situations, that was due to manifestations favoring the western cause, thereby irritating Hitler, who found the Hungarians unreliable because "they reported to the Allies everything." He even interpreted Hungary's desires in Romania as a service to British interests in creating trouble in the Balkans. <sup>127</sup> The conclusion then that Hungary was 100 percent cooperating with the Axis was quite impossible in view of the fact that the only active foreign policy aim of Hungary at that time was the recovery of Transylvanian territory, which was definitely contrary to Axis interests.

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<sup>126</sup>Minister Lane to Secretary Hull, Belgrade, May 19, 1940, 740.011/EW 1939/3149, MS, Department of State.

<sup>127</sup>D.G.F.P. „ IX, Docs 135, 168.

### 3. The Second Vienna Award

With the French Armistice in June, 1940, Hungary's international position deteriorated once more to a large extent. The Western Powers disappeared from the Continent as an effective influence. The scene in East-Central Europe was completely dominated by Germany and Russia, who were at peace with each other. Consequently Hungary's foreign policy was shaped by and had to be adjusted to the presence of the two giants.

In this respect the Hungarians knew that Germany wanted them to hold their peace in Southeast Europe and deliver supplies. They also knew that Russia was definitely interested in recovering Bessarabia from Romania. Already early January, the Russians asked the Hungarian Minister in Moscow what Hungary's attitude would be if Russia took action against Romania. <sup>128</sup> Later Soviet press statements only confirmed their interest in Bessarabia, which had been assigned to Russia under the Russo-German agreements of August, 1939. <sup>129</sup> On May 28, Montgomery reported that Horthy expected an immediate Russian attack on Bessarabia and that in Kánya's opinion Russia would be playing an important role in Southeast Europe, which would make

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<sup>128</sup>D.G.F.P., VIII, Doc. 545.

<sup>129</sup>Nazi-Soviet Relations, 1939-1941 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1948), p. 78.

Ribbentrop rue his having brought her into Poland. <sup>130</sup> The Hungarian attempts to adjust to the new situation were extensively reported on by Montgomery. While in his book he found them too optimistic about their chances of surviving the combined Russo-German presence <sup>131</sup> in his official reports at that time he judged them more severely. On June 5, Montgomery concluded:

For the moment Teleki appears able to maintain his leadership, but its continuance will depend largely upon the domestic effect of future German successes and upon the extent of German pressure, for Hungary now definitely is identified with the Axis, and the political play no longer is one of foreign inclinations, but of personalities. <sup>132</sup>

A fortnight later, Kánya explained this as a result of the unexpected weakness of the Allies: "Hungary could only ingratiate herself with Germany," he said, "since Hitler was the undisputed master of the Continent and revision could be expected only from him." At that time Montgomery saw Hungary's independence as a mere matter of form, a situation in which continued existence as a nation and revision depended on currying favor with the Axis, which in turn meant that "any relationships with Hungary inevitably constituted a relationship with the

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<sup>130</sup>Minister Montgomery to Secretary Hull, Budapest, May 28, 1940. 864.00P.R./184, MS, Department of State.

<sup>131</sup>Montgomery, *op. cit.*, pp. 141-142.

<sup>132</sup> Minister Montgomery to Secretary Hull, Budapest, June 5, 864.00/992, MS, Department of State.

Axis”<sup>133</sup> Just four days later, Montgomery's evaluation of Hungarian developments led him to write to the President:

The situation created by the unexpected ease of Germany's victories has caused Count Paul Teleki to completely change front. In his frantic endeavor to convince Germany that Hungary has always wanted a German victory, he has gone to every possible extreme. . . Hitler has written Teleki an 80 page letter of approval. The Regent being a man of character has taken a back seat and is letting Teleki do the dirty work. . . . I think he better represents the feelings . . . of the great mass of the Hungarian people than Teleki. . . Kánya, however, probably expressed the general opinion when he said that to convince Germany of Hungary's devotion is absolutely necessary, but he wishes it could be done without loss of dignity. . . .

The President's reply, drafted by Welles, came exactly one month later, and said: "The opinions . . . related in your letter help us to see just how the wind is blowing. . . " <sup>134</sup>

But the wind was not blowing that way. While Montgomery's reports on the changes affecting Hungary were as accurate as before, his conclusion regarding Teleki's change of heart was as erroneous as his reference to the Hitler letter. As we have seen, the letter contained exactly the opposite of an approval of what

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<sup>133</sup>Minister Montgomery to Secretary Hull, Budapest, June 5, 1940.864.00/992 MS, Department of State.

<sup>134</sup>Letter to the President from Minister Montgomery, Budapest, June 24, 1940. 792.64/275, MS, Department of State.



Teleki wanted. Montgomery's usually accurate reports had been based on his frank conversations with Hungarian personages. Now his source was O'Malley, who having been exposed to Teleki's irritated tones must have impressed his American colleague that Hungary also had changed, not just her international situation. Had this been true, Hungary would not have served during the entire summer as that thorn in Germany's side that she had, in fact, been with her demands on Romania.

The German victories in the West had only stimulated the Soviet's interest in their western frontier areas, which was manifested by the incorporation of the Baltic States and an ultimate demand to Romania on June 26, for the cession of Bessarabia. Bulgaria followed suit. Teleki had intended to leave the solution of the Transylvanian question 'till the end of the war, but the Soviet move rendered it impossible to evade the question. Interestingly enough, while Romania got immediate protection both from Britain and the Axis against any Hungarian move, nobody offered her any valid guarantees against Russia, although on May 29, Romania had turned also toward the Axis with a change in government and an agreement assuring Romanian oil in exchange for German weaponry. The Hungarians were well informed of the extent of German aid to Romania owing to the Romanians' boasting of it. To these changes, London's response was mild. On July 11, the Hungarian Minister

there was told that Romania's policy was considered "disloyal"; there was even some understanding shown toward the Hungarian claims on Romania. On July 2, following the Romanian renunciation of the British guarantee, the British, "painfully impressed," indicated that they would be glad to see a peaceful settlement of Hungary's claims. <sup>135</sup>

On July 4, Molotov told the Hungarian Minister in Moscow that he "considered the Hungarian territorial claims justified," and that "the Soviet Government would therefore support them at the peace conference." <sup>136</sup> They even went farther by offering military cooperation to Hungary against Romania, an offer to which the Hungarians did not respond. <sup>137</sup> Under the changed conditions, Romania relied on German Protection. Bárdossy, the Hungarian Minister in Bucharest, sent a constant stream of reports talking of German arms deliveries arriving there and of German appreciation expressed for the Romanian oil shipments, which were "so helpful at the western front." concurrently with these reports, the ones coming from Berlin only supported the former and indicated that Hitler wanted peace in the Balkans at

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<sup>135</sup>Lajos, pp. 31-32.

<sup>136</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>137</sup>András Hory, "Még egy barázdát sem" [Not even one furrow] (Vienna: n.p., 1967), pp. 35-36.

all costs and would disapprove of any move that might contribute to the uncertainties already existing there owing to the Russian move. 138

By July, then, Hungary's claims were directed against a Romania under German and not British protection. In this new situation the Italian Minister told Csáky that if Romania should collapse under the Hungarian blows, the Soviets would start for the Balkans, which might have a serious effect on the outcome of the war. This may be in British interest but not in that of the Axis. Further cables from Berlin warned that if Hungary started to effect revision by force Hitler would consider his promises concerning Hungary's western frontiers as void because such action would set the Balkans on fire and endanger a German victory. 139

Faced by the Axis opposition, Hungary softened her approach. Csáky denied intent to attack Romania but felt compelled to go to war if internal disorders jeopardized life and limb of the Hungarian minority, if the Russians approached the Carpathians, or if Romanians from Bessarabia were settled in Transylvania. He also suggested to the Germans that with her claims satisfied Hungary would deliver more supplies, which could not be done with the uncertainties in Romania. The German

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138Lajos, pp. 32-34.

139Ibid.

answers continued to be disapproving and left Hungary to act at her own risk and responsibility,<sup>140</sup> even after Csáky argued that a quick Hungarian action would only stabilize conditions in Transylvania, then facing a revolt.<sup>141</sup> When the Romanians accepted the Russian ultimatum, Hungary demanded "no discrimination" and was determined to give effect to her claims by force. In the face of a Romanian attitude, unyielding to Hungary while satisfying others, and a public excitement for action, Hitler's assurances of future consideration of the claims were found unsatisfactory. The tension was further heightened by Romanian troop concentrations on the Hungarian border, coupled with a Hungarian mobilization. The Hungarian military was sure of itself, facing Romania for reasons produced mostly by wishful thinking; namely, that the Romanian morale would collapse, internal disintegration would come about, and Yugoslavia would not intervene.<sup>142</sup> Hitler, suspecting a possible Hungarian-Russian cooperation in the pressing of the Hungarian claims and attributing them to Jewish and Free Mason excesses, invited the Hungarians to Berlin to discuss their claims on the 7th.<sup>143</sup> At the

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<sup>140</sup>D.O.F.P., X, Docs. 73, 75, 78, 81, 85.

<sup>141</sup>M.M.V., pp. 272-3.

<sup>142</sup>Macartney, *A History of Hungary*, I, 409.

<sup>143</sup>D.O.F.P., X, Docs. 129, 234;

meeting Teleki presented the Hungarian claims to the predominantly Hungarian populated areas, which would involve the poorer territories of Transylvania and leave the ones rich in mineral resources to Romania. He also mentioned that they felt able to recover the areas concerned by arms; still, they would postpone such action should the Axis give them convincing assurances that could calm Hungarian impatience. Hitler understood the claims but felt that the Axis had to refuse any responsibility for the failure of a Hungarian action. He was aware of the preparedness of the Romanian army and had some doubts as to a Hungarian victory. But the Hungarians felt confident. Then Hitler suggested direct negotiations and promised intercession to that effect with the King of Romania,<sup>144</sup> who suddenly made great efforts to collaborate with Germany. Hitler did write, and Ribbentrop also talked to the Romanians asking for the initiation of direct negotiations with the Hungarians. To the Germans, the Romanians expressed apprehension about new concessions right after the big one to Russia, but they did suggest a population exchange and a cession of some 6,000 square miles out of the 40,000 total.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>144</sup>*Ibid.*, Doc. 146, also M.M.V., pp. 282-9.

<sup>145</sup>D.G.F.P., X, Doc. 234.

The negotiations did start on August 16, in Turn Severin on the Danube, Romania, Valer Pop being the Romanian and András Hory the Hungarian chief delegate. According to Hory's documents his instructions from Teleki called for an ethnographic solution already outlined to Hitler, in which the Eastern Szekel area and the Magyar areas on the western border region would be joined by a strip on the north and return the bulk of the Magyars living on about two-fifths of Transylvania, still leaving the richest areas to Romania. Teleki warned Hory that during the negotiations Hungary could not expect too much because of the Romanian "nic' un brazda" (not even one furrow) attitude. Csáky suggested telling the Romanians that Hungary's desire to settle the matter amicably was demonstrated by her refusal of a Russian offer to resort to arms. As expected, the negotiations turned out to be a

complete stalemate. The Romanians talked only of population exchange first and perhaps some cession of territory thereafter, while the Hungarians insisted on the reverse order. Pop remarked that a territorial transfer to Bulgaria would be possible because of its lesser importance and that in Bessarabia it was done because Russia threatened military action. When Hory reported this and the unyielding Romanian attitude to a Cabinet meeting on August 21, the Hungarians interpreted it as an invitation to war. As the resumed negotiations also failed to change the

impasse, both parties mobilized, blaming each other for it.  
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Depressed by the impasse, Teleki wrote a letter to the Hungarian Minister at the Vatican, in which he blamed himself for the impossible situation; a favorable agreement could not be reached, an unfavorable one would lead to a revolt, and only the ultima ratio was left, which the Germans opposed. He accepted Hitler's offer to write to King Carol urging negotiations, assuming that this meant only pressure on Romania but not a prevention of resort to arms if the talks failed.<sup>147</sup> The stalemate and some Russian stirring exactly at that time<sup>148</sup> prompted Hitler to impose his settlement. This was precisely what Teleki wanted to prevent by telling the Germans that Hungary was impelled to consider a military solution without waiting until the situation has developed more favorably for Romania, and asking them what kind of neutrality they would adopt in such a conflict.<sup>149</sup> The answer was an invitation to Vienna for what Hungary assumed to be a mediation, but not

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<sup>146</sup>Notes from Hory documents shown to the writer on August 11, 1966, in Vienna, Austria. See also Hory, op. cit., passim.

<sup>147</sup>Richard V. Burks, "Two Teleki Letters," Journal of Central European Affairs, VII (April, 1947), pp. 69-70, cf Montgomery, A History of Hungary, I, 417-8.

<sup>148</sup>D.G.F.P., X, Doc. 396.

<sup>149</sup>Ibid., Doc. 400.

arbitration, Hitler's decision, no doubt colored by his new plan to attack Russia in 1941, <sup>150</sup> was explained six months later to Bárdossy in these terms:

. . . when the Romanians asked for immediate intervention on the ground that the Russian army had made every preparation to cross the Danube [sic], and when the situation between Romania and Hungary had also become acute, I could not evade providing a solution which would not entail the collapse of the whole Romanian State system. . . . If I had acted otherwise, Romania would have collapsed, the Soviets would have marched in, and . . . the oil would have been lost to Germany. <sup>151</sup>

Somewhat earlier Ribbentrop gave his interpretation of those events:

I can imagine what it would have meant for the striking power of the German army if I had to sit down with Molotov at the conference table in order to be allowed to get some of Romania's oil. <sup>152</sup>

Csáky told Montgomery after Vienna that the Germans were worried and "could not attack England for fear that Russia might take advantage of the opportunity" and occupy parts of Eastern Europe. <sup>153</sup>

Teleki accepted the arbitration, having been forced into it, only on the condition that the Szekel area with a northern connecting corridor would be returned to Hungary. <sup>154</sup> Thus, instead of requesting; as

<sup>150</sup>Ibid., Doc. 261.

<sup>151</sup>Lajos, p. 35.

<sup>152</sup>Ibid.

<sup>153</sup>Montgomery, op. cit., p. 138.

<sup>154</sup>Ciano Diaries, pp. 288-9.



is widely maintained, Hungary tried to avoid the arbitration, not wanting to get a present from Germany with concomitant obligations.

After Romania's and Hungary's prior acceptance the Award was rendered on August 30, by Ribbentrop and Ciano, returning to Hungary two-fifths of Transylvania, Quite obviously neither party was pleased with the decision, and it sowed the seed of continued enmity between the two of them. Besides. this, the Award, having been announced to the Russians only after it was known through the news media, had also strained Russo-German relations.

Hungary, of course, was concerned about the reactions of the West, and they were not altogether discouraging. Reports from London showed that Churchill did not disapprove of revision, although he could not recognize territorial changes during the war. From Washington, Pelényi reported that the Chief of the European Section in the State Department,

. . . showed great comprehension of the Hungarian policy regarding Transylvania and expressed his dissatisfaction that Romania had not tried to reach agreement in • time. 155

The reports of the American diplomatic missions in the countries concerned submitted only scant information. The Chargé in Germany restricted himself to transmitting official communiqués and news releases. 156

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155Lajos, pp 35-6.

156F.R.U.S., 1940:I, 500-503.

While in his book the Minister in Hungary describes the events fully as they were, <sup>157</sup> his official reports contained little detail on the same period. The Minister in Romania relayed information from a "high official" to the effect that Romania was forced to accept the Award by threats of Axis support to Hungary and subsequent partition into zones of influence between Germany and Russia, and that Germany and Russia had worked together in this matter, <sup>158</sup> none of which was true. This was later corrected by reports from Moscow which said that there had been no Soviet-German consultation or cooperation in the Romanian question, only information. <sup>159</sup>

Philip E. Mosely concluded prophetically at the time that the most important consequence of the partition lay in the sphere of continental, rather than local, strategy. He expected Hungary to present a serious threat from her new position to any Russian move to the south and inferred that an effective barrier to a Soviet advance to the west would have to rest on close Hungarian-Romanian cooperation, which was in doubt in view of the Transylvanian partition. <sup>160</sup>

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<sup>157</sup>Montgomery, *op. cit.*, pp. 129-140.

<sup>158</sup>F.R.U.S., 1940:I, 505.

<sup>159</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 517,

<sup>160</sup>Philip E. Mosely, "Transylvania Partitioned," *Foreign Affairs*, XIX (October, 1940), P. 242.

#### 4. Conclusion

At the beginning of World War II, Hungary's international position was dominated by an overwhelming and cooperating Russo-German presence. Her natural interest rested in a reduction of this oppressive combination, which she hoped would be a temporary expedient soon to be replaced by a war between the two giants, weakening both.

In this new situation, Hungary, assuming an eventual German defeat, based her foreign policy on the West. This involved an emergency plan for an exile government there, continued payments on her debt to the United States, no attempts by persuasion to obtain western support for revision. More immediately, national independence was thought to be preserved by a policy of neutrality, unannounced, but practiced, occasionally even at great risk. Beyond these general considerations Hungary's foreign policy tried to follow three guidelines: to obtain western approval for major moves contemplated; never to act in concert with Soviet Russia; and to make the best of relations with Germany.

Hungary's revisionist objective, which was contemplated within a post-war settlement to be effected by the victorious West, was reduced by that time to claims on Romanian-held Transylvania's one and a half million Hungarians. The Teleki Government planned to postpone those claims, keenly aware of the fact that, in

the midst of Germanic and Slavic oceans, Hungary and Romania, belonging racially to neither, were greatly interdependent. The early presentation of Soviet revisionist claims on Romania made it difficult, however, to stick to the plans, and, when in June, 1940, Russia successfully claimed Bessarabia, Hungary could hardly contain those internal pressures that demanded equal treatment concerning Transylvania. Direct negotiations between Hungary and Romania were destined to fail. Thereupon, for internal considerations, Hungary could no longer postpone her claims; for external ones, she could not press for them by war. Romania having changed sides by asking for German protection, the curious situation arose in which revisionist and anti-Communist Hungary was opposed by the revisionist Axis and offered help by communist Russia, while the West, flouted by Romania, continued to oppose the Hungarian move. Besides these actions, their views of Hungary's conduct were equally confused and wrong; Germany assumed cooperation with Russia and the West suspected complicity with the Axis.

When the only agreement developed between Romania and Hungary was on their readiness to go to war over Transylvania, Hitler, greatly annoyed by the Hungarian stirrings, decided to impose a peace, which neither of the contestants wanted. Unfortunately, in their efforts to avoid an Axis arbitration, each did exactly what led Hitler to intervene: Romania by calling attention to a

Russian threat and by asking him to calm the Hungarians; and Hungary by accepting his offer to interfere with the unyielding Romanians. The arbitration rendered by the Axis Powers, while producing a less one-sided frontier than that of 1919, had far-reaching consequences. Transylvania, which could have served as the link for Hungary-Romanian cooperation in their intermingled interdependence, became a bone of contention for them, setting them apart, dissipating most of their political energies, and rendering them even more exposed to other powers. This Second Vienna Award, belatedly announced to the Russians, also strained Russo-German relations, and the West could see in it only a further Axis expansion, blamed Hungary for it, and as Macartney said, "reversed the truth in every essential respect" on the Award.  
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The United States, absorbed by the search for means to counter the growing Axis threat, received from her missions reports on Hungary that continued to be correct on facts, but not on attitudes and intents, for they failed to detect the true purpose and meaning of Teleki's schemes for national survival; thus, Hungary was identified with the German cause. But the true test of Hungary's conduct was Hitler's view of it; had it been known in the West, erroneous conclusions could have

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161Macartney, A History of Hungary, I, 424.

been avoided. In fact, the presentation of the Hungarian claims was most unwelcome to Hitler, who with his distorting mind could see only Jewish excesses and English incitement in them. With him, the Hungarian list of crimes was long and included the denial of transit of his troops against Poland, lack of gratitude for Ruthenia, "oppression" of the German minority in Hungary, pro-Polish and pro-British attitudes, attempts to drive a wedge between Germany and Italy, and a "Jewish plutocratic" attitude coupled with a feudalistic system, which prevented a spiritual rapprochement with Germany.  
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By inclination, Hungary's leadership chose the West, which in turn expected the impossible by offering self-sacrifice as the only choice in the relationship. For Hungary, this could not produce an association of partners equally and mutually trusted and valued, but a condition of being used as a temporary means for British purposes without promise of any future good, not only because no promise of benefit was made, only warnings of the consequences of cooperation with Germany, but also because post-war conditions were destined to be shaped by the Soviet Union's presence, which Great Britain could not effectively counterbalance. The real chance for Hungary in relation to the West was a United States

involvement, but all soundings in that direction proved negative. What caused Hungary's disappointment in the American aloofness was not the absence of any active or effective aid, but American judgments that implied guilt by association, failed to appreciate the difficulties of Hungary's position, and wrote her off as a country willingly identifying herself with Germany, which at that time was not the case. The first year of World War II, then, pushed Hungary into positions that precluded her concert with Romania, demanded by the inescapable reality of their interdependence, and led the West, including the United States, to discount the promise of closer, supportive relations with her. Both developments carried ominous consequences for Hungary.

CHAPTER VII  
THE WARS IN THE BALKANS AND RUSSIA, 1940-41

I. Hungary's Adherence to the Tripartite Pact

For Hungary the Second Vienna Award introduced a year full of misunderstandings, misinterpretations, and misjudgments, both in and outside of that country, resulting in her gradual involvement in the expanding Second World War. The twin objectives of independence and revision merged into one; namely, preservation of the country, enlarged through revision. Internally, Teleki, blaming himself for not having prevented an Axis arbitration, not feeling strong enough to face the problems posed by the new situation, and thoroughly discouraged by the encroachment of the military on matters of politics, tendered his resignation to the Regent on September 1.<sup>1</sup> It was not accepted, and Teleki was retained with a promise that civilian-military relations would be improved; however, this problem remained an overwhelming phenomenon of Hungarian politics during the entire year, due to the fact that the military was directly under the Regent and not under the Prime Minister,

In external relations, Horthy wrote a letter on September 2, to Hitler expressing gratitude for the

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<sup>1</sup>Horthy Miklós *Titkos Iratai*, pp. 232-250.

Award.<sup>2</sup> It was delivered on September 10, by Sztójay in Berlin, giving Hitler an opportunity to drop some hints how best to prove Hungary's gratitude with deeds. They included, in Sztójay's interpretation, Hungary's steadfast stand by Germany, satisfaction with the Award, preservation of peace in Southeast Europe, and unreserved execution of the agreement signed on August 30, relating to the treatment of Hungary's German minority.<sup>3</sup> Formally these agreements with Hungary and Romania, assuring privileged positions to their respective German minorities, constituted the only price that Germany asked for the arbitration that she alone wanted.

The first chance to act on Hitler's hints came in connection with his new move regarding Romania. Obviously Romania was unwilling to accept lightly the territorial losses she had suffered in Bessarabia and Transylvania, and experienced an internal crisis. It was resolved by the King through the appointment of General Ion Antonescu as Marshal and Leader of the State. Antonescu assumed his office on September 4, and two days later promptly demoted his promoter, King Carol, replacing him with the Crown Prince Michael. Having consolidated his government, Antonescu, fearful of Russia and distrustful of Hungary, asked for an early

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<sup>2</sup>D.G.F.P., XI, Docs. 6, 41.

<sup>3</sup>M.M.V., p. 306.



arrival of German troops to stabilize his position internally and externally. <sup>4</sup> Hitler decided on September 20, to send one division of "training units" to Romania with the actual purpose of defending the oil fields. <sup>5</sup> This move, of course, raised the question of transit through Hungary, which was requested on the 28th, and granted by Hungary two days later, <sup>6</sup> on the conditions that the trains be sealed, be limited to six per day, and pass during the night. The Hungarians felt themselves to be in no position to refuse and to have no reason to do so. <sup>7</sup> On October 7, the Romanians made the arrival of the German "training" troops into Romania public, whereupon the British Minister in Budapest inquired on October 9, concerning the troops' transit through Hungary. Csáky simply denied it and said that it was possible that some German military Personnel crossed Hungary in civilian clothes in connection with the repatriation of the Germans living in Bessarabia. To O'Malley's insistent inquiry what Hungary would do if armed and uniformed German units should ask for transit, Csáky gave another evasive reply that nobody could expect Hungary to resist a transit

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<sup>4</sup>D.G.F.P., XI, Doc. 75.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, Doc. 80, 84.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, Doc. 131.

<sup>7</sup>Lajos, p. 37.

from a friendly country to a neutral one, particularly not if even Britain continued diplomatic relations with Romania, which was asking for the troops.<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile the American Minister, Montgomery, having already lost all confidence in Csáky, turned with the same question to the Regent, who not only confirmed the troop transit but sent a daily report to Montgomery on the number passing through.<sup>9</sup>

During the same period, Germany, Italy, and Japan concluded their Tripartite Pact on September 27, to coordinate their respective efforts in establishing their new order in Europe and Asia. Ribbentrop in his statement at the signing ceremony referred to it as a peace pact to restore peace and to prevent the spread of war. He also mentioned that "any state which approached this bloc with the intention of contributing to the restoration of peaceful relations among nations, will be welcomed to cooperate in the new order." News agency reports of this speech used a slightly different language, saying, "An<sub>y</sub> state which of its own accord wants to accede to this bloc . . . Is welcomed. . . ." <sup>10</sup> Having heard this latter version, Sztójay suggested to Budapest

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<sup>8</sup> Elek Karsai, A Budai Sándor Palotában Történt, 1919-41, (Budapest: Táncsics, -1964), pp. 450-1.

<sup>9</sup>Montgomery, op. cit., p. 177.

<sup>10</sup>D.G.F.P., XI, Doc. 130.

that in accordance with Hitler's hints to him of two weeks earlier an adherence was expected and would put Hungary ahead of Romania, an important consideration at that time. Without waiting for instructions on the matter, he ran to the German Foreign Office with questions implying an offer to join. The Hungarian Government's reply to Sztójay's urgings inquired what the adherence would involve and whether it was desired by the three great powers. This was presented by Sztójay with the words: "If Germany desired, Hungary could openly express willingness to adhere." Weizsäcker in his response stressed that Sztójay must have heard a wrong phrasing of Ribbentrop's speech, since it was a general appeal and not an invitation to an open pact. The offer, having been turned down, was duly filed for future use with the notation: "The Hungarian Government was obviously prepared to participate." 11

When later in mid-October Hitler felt safer regarding Romania with his troops there and decided to tie that country closer to the Axis in the form of an accession to the Tripartite Pact, for which arrangements had been made with Antonescu, then Hungary was also told that her original application for membership would be accepted. The Hungarians, however, did not consider their original inquiry at Sztójay's suggestion as an

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<sup>11</sup>Ibid., cf. Macartney, A History of Hungary, I, 439 f.

actual application and continued to inquire what the adherence would involve. Ribbentrop's reply rejected any conditions on Hungary's part and stated that Hungary would be protected by the three great powers,<sup>12</sup> and that if a state not at war with the signatories of the Tripartite Pact should enter into war with them, Hungary would also thereby enter into war with that state. As a personal favor to Sztójay, Ribbentrop hinted that Hungary might become the first new adherent. Csáky then replied that Hungary would join the "Peace Bloc."<sup>13</sup> By that time, Hitler wanted to use the new adherences as demonstrations of solidarity with the new order and wanted more and more of them, particularly that of Spain. Diplomatic preparation took some time; consequently, the matter rested there for a while.

The presence of German "instruction" troops in Romania carried other, more important, implications than those of the Hungarian transit. The move itself appeared to violate the spirit of the Russo-German agreements regarding prior consultations on Balkan affairs. Molotov was told on October 9, that the units were in Romania at her request against British attempts to disturb peace in the Balkans.<sup>14</sup> Four days later Ribbentrop wrote to

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<sup>12</sup>Macartney, *op. cit.*, I, 441.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 441-2

<sup>14</sup>D.G.F.P., XI, Doc. 166.

Stalin and invited Molotov to Berlin to formulate a common policy in view of the desirability of closer relations between the Tripartite Pact and the Soviet Union. <sup>15</sup> Molotov's visit was scheduled for November 12-13, and, awaiting its outcome, Hitler suspended any action on the adherence by smaller countries to the Tripartite Pact. The one, however, who did not rest in the Balkans was his associate Mussolini, who, miffed by being informed again belatedly about the Romanian move of the Germans, tried to prove himself, and in a fit of passion attacked Greece from Albania on October 28, a move which was a fiasco from the start.

The Italo-Greek war turned the active interest of Germany's enemies back to the Balkans: Britain to Greece, and Russia to Bulgaria. This was precisely what Hitler wanted to avoid at all costs, since his interest was to keep the Balkans calm, producing, delivering, and in no way interfering with the planned military solution against Russia. The necessity of this latter move became established for Hitler in consequence of his talks with Molotov in mid-November. While the Germans tried their best to convince their Russian guest that the Vienna arbitration was inevitable in order to avert a clash between Hungary and Romania that could have been exploited by Britain, Molotov remained unimpressed

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., Doc. 176.

and equally interested in Balkan affairs, particularly in the fate of the Turkish Straits. <sup>16</sup> This indicated to Hitler that Russia jeopardized his supplies and intended to attack Germany. <sup>17</sup>

Pressed by these new, to him adverse, developments, Hitler decided to push for adherences to the Tripartite Pact. Invitations were issued to the Hungarians to come to Vienna and sign as the first small adherent on November 20. Teleki and Csáky were still very cautious and wanted further assurances as to the implications of the joining. Hitler's customary survey of the situation indicated that German victory was already decided; that the United States could not intervene sufficiently and in time; that dealing with Russia one had to rely on military power and not on existing treaties. Csáky in his reply, stressed that the war would have to be ended soon, for the small countries could not stand it for long economically. <sup>18</sup> The Protocol of Adhesion by Hungary, besides stating that fact, in its Article 2, stipulated that the joint technical commissions, provided to implement the original Tripartite Pact, when dealing with matters affecting Hungary's

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<sup>16</sup> Nazi-Soviet Relations, 1939-1941, pp. 252-3.

<sup>17</sup> DeWitt C. Poole, "Light on Nazi Foreign Policy," Foreign Affairs, XXV (October, 1946), 148.

<sup>18</sup> D.G.F.P., X1, Doc. 365.

interests would call in Hungarian representatives for their conferences. <sup>19</sup> This assured the Hungarians that they would not be left out when matters of revision would be discussed by the three great powers in their efforts to establish their "new order." In addition, Ribbentrop interpreted to Teleki Hungary's responsibilities under the Pact as "to show solidarity" when a Power not then at war should attack Germany, Italy or Japan; the form of such demonstration was left to Hungary's judgment. <sup>20</sup>

The Hungarians' interpretation of their adherence was the following: it was requested by the Germans, and could not be refused without a greater risk in view of existing power relations; being against no one, the Pact was to prevent the spread of the war, which was also a primary interest of Hungary, unable to stand the strain of a war; Hungary was free to determine its obligations under the agreement. <sup>21</sup> Consequently, in telegrams to London Teleki said: "Hungary had not lost and would not lose her independence," and Csáky added: "There is no reason to break of diplomatic relations . . . as

19 Documents on

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<sup>19</sup>Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1940-41, III, 309.

<sup>20</sup>Antal Ullein-Reviczky , Guerre Allemande, Paix Russe., (Neuchatel, 1947), p.70.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

Hungary's adherence is not directed against Britain. " 22

Unfortunately, nobody but the Hungarians viewed the situation this way. Germany interpreted Hungary's \_ request to join as a change of heart and complete identification with the Axis. The United States, far from looking at the Tripartite Pact as a peace pact, let the world know that it was viewed as a formalization of already existing situations and relationships, which were aimed against America in her efforts to block the enslavement of the world by the members of the Pact. 23 This was also the view of the United Kingdom. 24 The Soviet Union, quite realistically, concluded that had the Pact been made on the heels of crushing German victories in the spring, its design to redraw the world might have had a real meaning; signed in the fall, it was "so many words," as any reorganization would rest with the eventual victors. 25

During the parliamentary debate on adhesion, Tibor Eckhardt, leader of the Smallholder Party, and Bethlen represented the opposition by arguing that the

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 22Lajos, pp, 41-42.

23Peace and War -- United States Foreign Policy  
 1931-1941 (Washington, 1943), p;600.

24Ibid., p. 575.

25F.R.U.S., 1940:I, 521.

new agreement tied Hungary to powers whose victory was uncertain, with whom the relationship could only be subordination, and through whom the country would be pulled into war. Csáky's defense referred to the fact that Germany was the master of Europe and one could easily see what it meant to be against her. 26 On November 23, Montgomery reported that according to Horthy, Csáky was scared to death of the Germans, and that in spite of Hungary's difficult position "the Regent is determined to refrain from actions in his relations with Germany which would involve a loss of sovereignty. " 27

In agreement with Teleki, Pelényi resigned his post as Hungarian Minister in Washington when the adherence took place. Characteristically, Csáky, on receipt of Pelényi's cable, gave this instruction: "Tell Pelényi that his request of resignation is late and superfluous, for I have already arranged



for his dismissal before the arrival of his communication." <sup>28</sup>  
A few days later in a private letter to Teleki, Pelényi explained  
his action this way:

When I reported the adherence to Mr. Welles, he  
said that while they understood the move, that did

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<sup>26</sup>Ullein-Reviczky, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-71.

<sup>27</sup>Minister Montgomery to Secretary Hull,  
Budapest, November 23, 1940. 740.0011/EW 1939/7284,  
MS, Department of State.

<sup>28</sup>Personal Andrés Hory to Paul Rupprecht. Hory  
was in Csáky's office when this statement was made.

not change the fact that we got into the enemy camp, since the United States' policy is to support Britain and to harm the Axis in every way possible. . . . Henceforth they will have to assume that I was acting in Axis services -- unless proven otherwise. . . . The anti-Axis ostracism has been extended to us, too . . . rendering my connections ineffective. . . . You and our chief could not leave for internal reasons; that is not the case with me. <sup>29</sup>

Teleki in his reply, written on February 6, 1941, but delivered only in April after he was dead, understood Pelényi's decision to resign and the American attitude toward Hungary, although "with a little information one would have to see how important it is to be prepared to the end." He also said that according to Salazar the small nations had to preserve their character, which Hungary was able to do. <sup>30</sup>

The only advantage imputed to the adherence by its supporters was the hope that through it Hungary would have a favorable position when the Axis should establish their new order. The error of this assumption was well demonstrated, however, when Antonescu visited Hitler to sign the same Pact two days after the Hungarians. In spite of warnings not to bring up the question of Transylvania, the Romanian Marshal dwelt on it almost exclusively and impressed Hitler so favorably that from then on Romania was considered to be the more

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<sup>29</sup>Pelényi to Teleki, Washington, November 28, 1940, MS, Pelényi Documents.

<sup>30</sup>Teleki to Pelényi, Budapest, February 6, 1941, MS, Pelényi Documents.

avored, reliable, and essential ally of Germany to the detriment of Hungary.<sup>31</sup>

Hungary's adherence to the Tripartite Pact, then, represents another of those misunderstood misunderstandings in her history which put her in a position that she tried to avoid. It demonstrated to what extent an envoy can compromise his country with his misinterpretation and zeal. It also showed that America and Hungary, while at peace and interested only in survival, assumed positions and viewed each other at opposite ends of the neutrality continuum, preventing recognition of the basic similarities in each other's objectives.

## 2. The Invasion of Yugoslavia.

The Hungarians soon realized that their adherence, inadvertent or not, to *the* Tripartite Pact further isolated Hungary internationally and increased her political dependence on Germany. Facing intense diplomatic activities and rivalries of the Axis, Great Britain, and Russia in Southeast Europe, Hungary could find only Yugoslavia as the one neighbor not under direct German influence or occupation. Both wanted to avoid an open breach with Germany and stay out of the war. This similarity of interests and their more friendly neighborly contacts in recent months prompted the Hungarians to

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<sup>31</sup>D.G.F.P., XI, Doc. 381.

counteract their association with the Tripartite Pact and to keep open their only window left to the world by negotiating a friendship pact with Yugoslavia. Since such a move could not be successful if opposed by Germany, her approval was obtained by a reference to Hitler's suggestion that Hungary relieve her southern flank and strengthen good relations with Yugoslavia. <sup>32</sup> Csáky even forwarded the treaty draft to Berlin for comments; it was approved. <sup>33</sup> This should not be surprising if one considers that during the same time Yugoslavia had already shown readiness to sign a non-aggression pact with Germany. <sup>34</sup>

To conclude a Hungarian-Yugoslav treaty, Csáky went to Belgrade on December 10, and stressed to his hosts the anti-German aspects of the pending association. During the negotiations he was unwilling to renounce, but willing to postpone, revisionist claims against Yugoslavia. Finally they agreed and signed on the 12th the Treaty of Eternal Friendship, a most unfortunate choice of words in view of later developments, modeled at Yugoslav request, on the 1937 Bulgarian-Yugoslav Pact. Beyond the lofty purpose implied in its title, it also stipulated that the parties agreed to consult on all

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., Doc. 431.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., Doc. 478.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., Doc. 467.

questions affecting their mutual relationship, which to the Hungarians meant to maintain their revisionist claims.<sup>35</sup>

While it was obvious that the two countries entered into this pact with good faith to strengthen each other in the face of the increasing storm around them, the unfortunate impression created by their own information given to the West was that they had joined to draw Hungary away from and to resist Germany more effectively, when in fact they could not have afforded such an open defiance. The whole concept of Yugoslav-Hungarian cooperation was based on the assumption that peace would be maintained or restored around them. Quite rightly they assumed that the extension of war in the Balkans would only bring Germany to the scene, which was in the interest of neither. This is why Hungary hoped that the Italo-Greek war could be brought to an end and agreed gladly to transmit the official German peace offer to Greece through the Hungarian Legation in Madrid, which implied that for return to neutrality, Greece could retain the occupied Albanian areas.<sup>36</sup> Greece rejected the offer, although she promised to keep no sizable British

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<sup>35</sup>Lajos, pp. 42-43.

<sup>36</sup>„Vor Zwanzig Jahren," Wehrwissen-schaftliche Rundschau, X (Dezember, 1960), 683

forces in Greece, if Germany remained north of the Danube.  
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Instead of peace, the prospects of war were growing during January of 1941. Hitler, pressed by his own timetable to prepare for the offensive against Russia, in which Hungary was not even mentioned,<sup>38</sup> sent more and more troops into Romania through Hungary to build up for his operation to remedy the results of Mussolini's cumulative blunders. These troop transfers had interesting implications. Hitler gave them an interpretation, attributing some importance and independence to Hungary, that the Hungarians were not even aware of. He told Marshal Antonescu, who was complaining on January 14 of strained relations with Hungary, that he (Hitler) was so greatly dependent on Hungary for her voluntary consent to the transfers that it was impossible to exert pressure on her in line with Antonescu's request, and that it was an achievement in itself to be able to make Hungary understand that facilitating the transits was also in her interest.  
39 In relations with Britain, O'Malley called Horthy's attention on January 26, to the grave consequences that

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37Ernst L. Presseisen, "Prelude to 'Barbarossa.' Germany and the Balkans, 1940-41," The Journal of Modern History .XXXII (December, 1960), p.-365.

38D.G.F.P., XI, Doc. 532.

39Ibid., Doe. 652.

the transits might carry. Horthy assured the British Minister that he would refuse any demand endangering Hungarian sovereignty, and that in case of such demands he would appoint an exile government and then resign. Eckhardt was mentioned as chief representative to the United States, Bethlen to Great Britain. On February 10, the British Foreign Office approved the plan in general, but no specific guarantees were received from London that the exile government would continue to be recognized regardless 'of what happened in Hungary in the future. <sup>40</sup> There the plans ended and never became reality. In general, relations with the new British Foreign Secretary, Eden, were still friendly, but the Hungarian Minister reported warnings that Britain reserved the right to bomb any state where German troops were found. <sup>41</sup>

By January the United States also became active in the Balkans in the form of the Donovan mission, letting Greece, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia know that America meant to be an arsenal of all countries willing to resist German expansion. Colonel Donovan, a Republican supporter of President Roosevelt's foreign policy, assumed that putting up a united Balkan front supported

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<sup>40</sup>Macartney, *op. cit.*, pp. 468-469.

<sup>41</sup>Lajos, p. 41.

by American aid could avert a German aggression.<sup>42</sup> In this situation Yugoslavia's position was extremely difficult inasmuch as both Britain and Germany needed her collaboration for their respective plans to thwart each other. The first wanted her active resistance against Germany; the second, that she remain at peace. To this, Secretary Hull added his warning: "A nation can have peace with the Nazis only at the price of total surrender."<sup>43</sup> The Government in power, inclined to become disinterested in the fate of Greece if her interest in obtaining Salonika were recognized by the Axis, continued negotiations with the Germans to bring about a nonaggression pact for which Germany would only ask that Yugoslavia stay out of the war.<sup>44</sup> The opposition group, mostly of the military, objected to any agreement with the Nazis and chose to rely on western support and promises. The tug of war between the two groups did not come to a head until a few weeks later, when it produced a fateful decision both for Yugoslavia and Hungary.

In January, Csáky died of natural causes. His replacement was Bárdossy, the former Hungarian Minister in Romania. The new Foreign Minister was chosen by

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<sup>42</sup>William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, The Undeclared War (New York: Harper, 1953), pp. 397-8.

<sup>43</sup>Peace and War, p. 619.

<sup>44</sup>D.G.F.P., XI, Docs. 334, 467.



Teleki because he was not committed for or against Germany, and because the two men agreed that Hungary's aim was to pull *through* the war without getting actively involved. The irony of later developments was, however, that Bárdossy's name became attached to each step of Hungary's war involvements within the next year.

The overwhelming German presence he considered an inescapable reality not counterbalanced by a weaker Britain committed to the Little Entente cause. His method of "weathering through" was to give the Germans the minimum willingly, lest, they demand the maximum. The success and failure of this policy marked Hungary's fate for 1941. Bárdossy, having served in Bucharest, was also particularly anxious to avoid Romania's becoming Hitler's favored ally to the detriment of Hungary. This fear weighed heavily in many of his steps taken that year.

On March 3, Teleki, still hopeful that the Yugoslav-Hungarian agreement would serve their peace and enable them to avoid joining either side at war, sent a guidance telegram to his missions in Washington and London. In it he said that Hungary's chief aim was to conserve her human and material resources until the end of the war, whether Germany lost or won, when chaotic conditions could be expected in that part of the world, and when dangers from communism, Romania, and Slovakia would confront Hungary. She must not risk her youth and military power for anything but self-defense. The second

aim was to preserve her national character and love of freedom against alien ideologies. He added that unfortunately none of the great powers was willing to consider the small ones in their particular circumstances and positions and recognize that if small countries did not want to become subservient to one great power that did not mean that they wanted that relationship with another. <sup>45</sup> In line with this policy, it was stressed at the ratification of the Hungarian-Yugoslav Pact on February 27, by both parties to it that its aim was to keep Southeast Europe out of the war. Consequently, Hungary fervently hoped that the Yugoslav-German negotiations would be successful and avoid a German move into Yugoslavia. It was also hoped that the talks would not be too successful, in that they would not result in a German guarantee of Yugoslavia's frontiers against Hungary. <sup>46</sup>

By mid-March the Yugoslavs, surprised by Bulgaria's joining the Tripartite Pact and rent internally by Serbian versus non-Serbian factions, were seriously considering adherence to the Pact. When Bárdossy visited Hitler on the 21st, the Führer regretted the Italo-Greek conflict and indicated that, in a German intervention to avoid a second Salonika,

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<sup>45</sup>M.M.V., pp. 321-3.

<sup>46</sup>Macartney, *op: cit.*, p. 471.

Yugoslavia would not be harmed as long as not anti Germ, <sup>47</sup> But by that time Hitler was quite concerned about the timetable for his "Barbarossa" operations and decided to press the Yugoslavs for a definite answer in the form of an ultimatum. The Yugoslav Ministers duly presented themselves in Vienna on the 25th to sign the adherence document and were in turn overthrown by the opposing General Simovic on the next day. This and an ensuing mobilization changed the trend of Yugoslav foreign policy entirely and made war with Germany inevitable, In view of the dissention between Serbs and Croats, who looked at the situation from different . angles, Yugoslavia had only two choices: openly to resist Germany and be destroyed, which no western promise of final victory could prevent; or, to go along with the German request to stay out of the war and suffer internal disintegration. <sup>48</sup> As it turned out, the Yugoslavs could not help but choose both of the two disastrous alternatives.

Hitler's reaction was fast and determined. On the day

of the Coup he sent Sztójay with a letter to Horthy, indicating that in a Yugoslav conflict it would be appropriate if Hungary took military action to realize this opportunity for revision. He most generously

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<sup>47</sup>D.G.F.P., XII, Doc. 191.

<sup>48</sup>Presseisen, op. cit., p. 368.

recognized Hungary's territorial claims on Yugoslavia, including even the seashore, presumably to impress the admiral in Horthy, who indeed was impressed and willing to go along body and soul. Teleki and Bárdossy could hardly tone down the exuberance of their chief in his response to Hitler. In its final form, Horthy's letter still said that the claims existed and he felt fully obliged to Germany, but that he also had to consider the Russian and Romanian danger, if he moved; nevertheless, he authorized military discussions between the German and Hungarian General Staffs.<sup>49</sup>

In his telegrams to London and Washington on March 29, Bárdossy explained that Hungary could not allow "territories inhabited by Hungarians, unjustly torn from us in 1918, to be occupied by a German or possibly even Romanian army, and for that army to install itself there." This consideration was prompted by news reaching Bárdossy that if Hungary remained inactive when Germany moved into Yugoslavia, Germany would establish a protectorate in the Bácska area under Hungary's nose. At a Cabinet meeting on the 28th, at the military's urgings to prepare for a German move against Yugoslavia, the policy was accepted to move with limited forces and only (a) if Yugoslavia disintegrated; (b) if the Magyar minority there was in danger; or (c) if a vacuum was

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<sup>49</sup>Lajos, pp. 43f, cf. D.G.F.P., XII, Docs. 215, 227.

created by German military action on former Hungarian territories.<sup>50</sup>

The German General Paulus arrived on March 30, to discuss Hungary's participation with the Hungarian General Staff, which under a blanket authorization of the Regent committed Hungary for full mobilization and an attack into Croatia.<sup>51</sup> On April 1, the Crown Council discussed a German request, relayed by the Chief of Staff, that the military talks be put into effect and mobilization be ordered. Teleki and Bárdossy opposed, but finally under pressure from the others present a limited mobilization was agreed to, with an insertion into the minutes that "Hungary must avoid getting into a conflict against the inexhaustible forces of Britain and America." It was also decided to ask the Germans not to use any Hungarian territory for operational purposes. This request was denied by the Germans the next day; instead they asked for joining in the action. Teleki still hoped that the West would understand his predicament.<sup>52</sup> He said that "had the Yugoslavs done it without a somersault -- after signing treaty - - as they did, one could have even resisted," but his position was difficult when the army, half of

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<sup>50</sup>Lajos, pp. 44-45.

<sup>51</sup>D.G.F.P., XII, Doc. 267.

<sup>52</sup>Lajos. pp. 45-46.

the government, and the parliamentary majority were against him. He still fought to save face. <sup>53</sup> His hopes were completely crushed when in the evening of April 2, the reply from London stated that no one would appreciate in Britain or America the special considerations put forth in Bárdossy's telegrams of four days back; instead, if Hungary allowed the transit of German troops attacking Yugoslavia, Britain would break off diplomatic relations with Hungary; if Hungary joined in the attack, Britain would declare war on her and treat her at the end of the war as a defeated enemy with special odium. What he wanted to avoid most, war with the West, was threatening. Seeing no other way out of this cruel dilemma, and blaming himself again in his last letter to the Regent for not having held him back, Teleki committed suicide in the early morning of the third. <sup>54</sup>

On the same day Bárdossy was designated as Prime Minister and, thus, had to fill another dead man's post. He told the American Chargé that evening that Germany would undoubtedly attack Yugoslavia and that two Hungarian divisions were being brought up to full strength for protective purposes at the Yugoslav frontier. <sup>55</sup> By that time Montgomery had already left

<sup>53</sup>Richard V. Burks, *off. cit.*, pp. 72-3.

<sup>54</sup>Lajos, *p.* 46.

<sup>55</sup>Chargé Travers to Secretary Hull, Budapest, April 3, 1941. 864.00/1011, MS, Department of State.

Hungary and his replacement, Herbert C. Pell, was not at his new post yet; in America, on the other hand, the new Hungarian Minister Ghika, had presented his letter of credence on that same day to the President, at which occasion the President made very- cordial references to Pelényi, "who has done so much to effect a real understanding between the peoples of Hungary and the United States." <sup>56</sup>

Also on the 3rd, Horthy informed Hitler of Teleki's death, and asked that the troops be used in a manner "reconcilable with our conscience." <sup>57</sup> The German attack followed on the 6th, and on the 9th, Bárdossy was still telling the German Minister that Hungary could not move even to recover former Hungarian territories as long as Yugoslavia existed as such. <sup>58</sup> All these details were known by the Americans through the exhaustive reports sent by Travers. On the 5th, he was asked by Washington to use his good offices so that the Hungarians may understand how any support given against Yugoslavia would be regarded in America, where the Government would exert every effort to support nations defending themselves against aggression. This was relayed to Bárdossy on the 6th, who, while pleased to hear

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<sup>56</sup>State Department Bulletin, N, 421.

<sup>57</sup>D.G.F.P., XII, Doc. 261.

<sup>58</sup>F.R.U.S., 1941:I, 299-303.

America's advice, felt sure that America would not expect Hungary not to defend herself and referred to aerial attacks on Hungarian villages, where there were no Germans, by planes bearing British markings. Bárdossy added that Hungary had no intention of aiding Germany unless Yugoslavia committed further acts against Hungary. Travers then concluded that Hungary would do all in her power to refrain from unprovoked military action against Yugoslavia. Apparently the Yugoslav military undertook this air attack under the assumption that Hungary had declared war on them, which was not true. <sup>59</sup>

Similarly, on the 9th -- three days before the actual Hungarian move -- Eden informed the Hungarian Minister in London of the rupture of diplomatic relations between Britain and Hungary and reproached him sharply:

If a country is no longer master of its will and voluntarily renounces its independence, at least it does not make pacts of friendship which it later breaks. Tell your people that Britain will remember this when peace is made. <sup>60</sup>

On the same day Travers averred: "Hungarian foreign policy now apparently is in the hands of Germany." <sup>61</sup> A few days later Churchill said that Hungary's move was humanly understandable, but politically he could not

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<sup>59</sup>Macartney, *op. cit.*, II, 7.

<sup>60</sup>Lajos, p. 50.

<sup>61</sup>F.R.U.S., 1941:I, 304.



avoid the diplomatic rupture; however, "until Hungarian troops meet British ones on the battlefield there was no reason for a declaration of war." <sup>62</sup>

In fact Hungary managed to refrain from moving into former Hungarian portions of Yugoslavia until the 12th, that is, two days after the Croatian independence declaration sounded the death knell of Yugoslavia, as such. The American reactions were somewhat milder. On the 7th, Secretary Hull told Ghika that, while he understood Hungary's difficult position, it was also important that she should not formally act as a belligerent. After the 12th, the President declared Hungary an aggressor under the Neutrality Act. Protesting this, Ghika had a talk with Assistant Secretary Berle and tried to explain that Hungary declined to occupy any part of Yugoslavia until after the German victory was so complete that the Hungarian move could be of no strategic value and that they restricted their occupation to areas chiefly inhabited by Magyars, reclaimed by Hungary for twenty-one years. Berle was not happy about this and called attention to the fact that there were others around Hungary with claims on her who could also present themselves under the cover of general disturbance.

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<sup>62</sup>Lajos, P. 50.

Ghika replied that any Hungarian Government not moving under the circumstances would have fallen. <sup>63</sup>

Shortly before the Yugoslav war, on March 7th, Eckhardt had also left Hungary for America on Montgomery's many urgings to become the protagonist of Hungarian interests there. Although he had talked with Horthy and Teleki before his departure, he received no financial help from the Government for and during his American stay. On April 24, one day after his talk with Ghika, Berle agreed that it was desirable to admit Eckhardt and to have him come to Washington for instructions as to the American Government's policy regarding provisional Governments on United States soil. <sup>64</sup>

In the Yugoslav crisis and conflict Hungary's considerations were these: externally, Hungary could not have resisted a German transit without being occupied, which she wanted to avoid; internally, no government could have ignored, without the risk of falling, an opportunity to recover another half million Hungarians lost by Trianon. In disagreement with Secretary Hull, Hungary felt that there was a way to preserve peace without total submission to Germany,

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 49 cf.. Memorandum by A. A. Berle, Jr. on conversation with Ghika, the Hungarian Minister, Washington, April 23, 1941. 854.00/1018 MS, Department of State.

<sup>64</sup>State Department Memorandum, Washington, April 24, 1941. 740.0011/EW 1939/9038, MS, Department of State.

particularly when peace in that area was also a German interest. The Hungarian-Yugoslav Pact was actually an accommodation to that fact. The Yugoslav coup, on the other hand, overthrew the Government which had concluded the pact, and by openly challenging Germany, changed the material conditions upon which it had been based. This was further complicated by the fact that the Hungarian military, conscious of its weaknesses, hoped to help the recovery of lost territories by full cooperation with Germany and by making corresponding commitments. owing to these realities, Hungary did not bring her policy of survival to a common denominator with the unconcealed western efforts to harm the Axis wherever possible, which under the circumstances meant nothing more in the Balkans than feeding those countries to Germany in the hope that she might suffer severe indigestion in the process.

Confronted by this situation, the Hungarians saw three courses open to them: to oppose Germany and thereby assure Hungary's destruction; to join Germany in the attack on Yugoslavia, regain all areas lost to Yugoslavia, and as the price lose all self-respect; and, to wait and move only to protect the Hungarians there. Because of the obvious implications of the first two, the third choice was taken. Not choosing it would not have helped Yugoslavia; it would only have left a larger area under German occupation. When taken, it

irked Germany, was abhorrent to Great Britain, and outraged Yugoslavia. In response to these reactions Teleki committed suicide to demonstrate the impossibility of Hungary's position; Bárdossy, however, continued with that very same policy to demonstrate that in his mind it was still the best course available under those impossible circumstances. The United States, greatly identified with the British cause in its determination to defeat Germany, did not appreciate these views and branded Hungary as an aggressor against Yugoslavia; thus, the already considerable gap between the two countries' positions grew a great deal wider.

### 3. Hungary and the German Attack on the Soviet Union

With the Yugoslav affair, the storm which swept from Austria through Czechoslovakia and Romania to Yugoslavia clockwise around Hungary completed her encirclement by German and Russian controlled areas. From then on even more than before, the relations with and between those two great powers were the almost sole determinants of Hungary's international position. She did not have to wait long for new developments in those relationships.

The Balkan wars postponed, but did not cancel, Hitler's Operation "Barbarossa" against the Soviet Union, The existence of his plans was no absolute secret to the world. Already in March the American Government

relayed its information to the Soviets concerning a German plan to attack Russia. <sup>65</sup> In the first stages Hungary was conspicuously left out of the preparations, particularly because of Hitler's concern that any plan shared with the Hungarians would be known to the British within twenty-four hours. <sup>66</sup> Therefore, the original "Barbarossa" Directive does not mention Hungary at all, <sup>67</sup> and only a directive of May 1, calls for discussions with Hungary to be undertaken by the end of May concerning the eventual commitment of Hungarian armed forces. There were some German-Hungarian military talks going on during the winter of 1940-41, but they were restricted to matters of equipment and reorganization. Since Hitler did not decide to strike against Yugoslavia until March 26, and forbade talking to the Hungarians about the move into Russia before the end of May, it appears that the Testimonies of General Paulus and the Hungarian General Ujszászy at Nürnberg, to the effect that they had had agreements on joint operations against Yugoslavia and Russia already during the winter, rather represent masterpieces of evidence induced by the Soviet prosecution, which presented them at Nürnberg. Neither

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<sup>65</sup>F.R.U.S., 1941:I, 714.

<sup>66</sup>Macartney, *op. cit.*, I, 461.

<sup>67</sup>D.G.F.P., XI, Doc. 532.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, XII, Doc. 431.

the Hungarian nor the German documents reveal any such prior agreements. Actually the testimonies by the two generals are the only "evidence" quoted by Hungarian publications compiling all available sources to prove that point. If there were such military agreements, neither Hitler nor the Hungarian Government approved or knew of them.

In fact, the Hungarian military was quite perturbed by the fact that they were not allowed to conduct talks with their German counterparts concerning Russia. The Chief of Staff sent a memorandum to Bárdossy on May 4, in which he reckoned with an impending Russo-German war that would also involve the participation of Finland and Romania, in view of which it was necessary to conclude a treaty of alliance with Germany. Bárdossy's reply on the 12th, indicated that he saw no reason for such a treaty of alliance, which would be absurd considering the disparity between the German and Hungarian power. This did not discourage the Chief of Staff, who on the 31st again requested permission to start military discussions with the Germans. Having received no reply to that request, on June 14th, he complained bitterly and referred to very reliable information received within twenty-four hours which indicated that the Russo-German war was only days away and would not last more than six weeks; therefore, he Proposed that Hungary offer her participation to the

Germany and undertake a partial mobilization. Significantly he added that Germany would inform Hungary only in the last minutes before the outbreak of the war and perhaps ask her to participate, just as she did during the Yugoslav crisis when "we were informed only ten days before the war." <sup>69</sup>

Meanwhile Sztójay and the Hungarian Military Attaché in Berlin had also reported rumors, but no official contact, concerning the German attack on Russia and insisted that Hungary "should now offer our concrete military participation." <sup>70</sup>

In response to these reports and the Chief of Staff's memorandum, Bárdossy called a Cabinet meeting on the 14th, at which it was decided not to offer Germany Hungary's participation in the war, while avoiding conflict with Germany's intentions. <sup>71</sup>

The first official German contact came from Ribbentrop on June 15, which mentioned that Hitler had decided to clarify Russo-German relations, and so for Hungary it became necessary to secure her frontiers. <sup>72</sup> on its receipt Bárdossy wrote to the Chief of Staff reminding him to

keep in mind in his ensuing talks with

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69M.M.V., pp. 357-361.

70Ibid., pp. 354-356: cf. Lajos, p. 54.

71Lajos, P. 56.'

72D.G.F.P., XII, Doc. 631.

the Germans the decisions of the Cabinet of the 14th. <sup>73</sup>

The German attack on Russia began at four in the morning of the 22nd. At 6:15 a.m., the German Minister informed Bárdossy of that fact and expressed the hope that Hungary would draw from it the appropriate consequences. Five minutes later Sztójay's cable arrived with the same news, which had been given him by Ribbentrop at 4 a.m., <sup>74</sup> and added that Hitler had also written Horthy a letter which was to be delivered that same day. <sup>75</sup> The Hitler letter arrived at 10:30 a.m., giving a host of reasons for his move against Russia, expressing hope that Hungary would appreciate it, and thanking Horthy for the strengthening of the Russo-Hungarian frontier. <sup>76</sup> Horthy's reply delivered on the same day expressed delight over the news and hope that it would lead to peace by demonstrating German invincibility, <sup>77</sup> In other words, in the exchange Hungarian participation was neither asked for nor offered.

The first reaction then was to take no action in connection with the Russo-German conflict, and, if

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<sup>73</sup>Lajos. p.57.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., P. 58.

<sup>76</sup>D.G.F.P . XII, Doc. 661.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., Doc. 667.



asked, to tell Germany that the Hungarian Legation is kept in Moscow to serve as a post of observation. Bárdossy's initial attitude was changed the next day when at a Cabinet meeting he asked for the rupture of diplomatic relations with Russia. He referred to competition by Right-wing elements on the Hungarian political scene who were already in Berlin, presumably contemplating a less reserved cooperative spirit than that of Bárdossy. There was also competition for Germany's favor in the foreign field with Romania and Slovakia, both having declared war on Russia and having sent troop contingents there. The announcement of the rupture of diplomatic relations did not surprise the Russian Minister, who seemed to "understand" it.<sup>78</sup> The day before this, Molotov had also inquired of the Hungarian Minister in Moscow as to Hungary's attitude in the conflict, and added that Russia had no claims on Hungary and had no objections to Hungary's claims on Romania. This report reached Bárdossy only on the 24<sup>th</sup>.<sup>79</sup> Still on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, while news poured in from neighboring countries as to their participation in the war and from Berlin that it would be very disadvantageous for Hungary to be the only one not participating, the Hungarian Army was told by the Germans that Hungarian participation was

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<sup>78</sup>Lajos, p. 58.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid. p. 59.

desired. <sup>80</sup> This indirect approach through the military annoyed Bárdossy, who told the German Minister the next day that Hungary's position of non-participation was determined by Romanian and Slovakian revisionist desires, by the manpower needs of the country at harvest time, and by serious economic conditions. Bárdossy continued that the primary duty of the Hungarian Government was to conserve the country's strength; therefore, it could not easily decide to take part in military operations against Russia. On the 25th, the Italian Minister hinted, "Hungary's inactivity might cause regrettable repercussions." <sup>81</sup>

Instead of a reply from Berlin as to what was expected of Hungary, an air attack came on a northern town, details of which are still unclear. First Bárdossy wanted to suppress the news of it, but then changed his mind when he went to the Regent and found the generals there already with the news of the attack, demanding retaliation, which the Regent granted. Bárdossy concluded that if the Hungarian military in agreement with the Germans claimed that this was a Russian attack and the Regent believed them then they could not be stopped from forcing Hungary into war. In his mind the only question was whether to stay with the

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<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., p, 60, cf. D.G.F.P., XIII, Doc. 10.

responsibility for the war or to resign and let the Germans put in a man who would serve them unreservedly.<sup>82</sup> It is still not known of what origin the attacking planes were. It is possible that some Slovak pilots had defected with their planes to Russia and returned with Russian bombs against the Hungarian targets. To Macartney, this appears to be the most plausible explanation.<sup>83</sup> Whatever the case, however, the result of the air attack was that Hungary considered herself to be in a state of war with Russia, after a hurried Cabinet meeting on the 26th.

The American mission in Budapest was well informed of these developments. Fell reported on the 23rd of June that he was told by the Hungarians that they would not participate in the war, they only hoped that Germany and Russia would become exhausted in their fight.<sup>84</sup> On June 27, Pell cabled that because of air raids on Hungary, she was in a state of war with Russia.<sup>85</sup> Still On June 12, Secretary Hull, in anticipation of the Russo-German war, outlined the American policy toward Russia as that based on the principle of reciprocity.<sup>86</sup> When

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<sup>82</sup>Macartney, op. cit., II, 25-27; cf. Ullein, op cit., p.109.

<sup>83</sup>Macartney, op. cit., II, 31-32.

<sup>84</sup>F.R.U.S., 1941:I, 317.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., p. 319.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., p. 758.

the war actually came, Prime Minister Churchill made a statement: "Any man or State who fights against Nazism will have our aid. Any man or State who marches with Hitler is our foe." <sup>87</sup> This was clear enough for anyone to understand. Similarly, Acting Secretary Welles announced:

To the people of the United States principles and doctrines of communistic dictatorship are as intolerable and as alien to their own beliefs as are the principles and doctrines of Nazi dictatorship. But the immediate issue . . . is whether the plan for universal conquest, . . . and for the ultimate destruction of the remaining free democracies, which Hitler is now desperately trying to carry out, is to be successfully halted and defeated. . . .<sup>88</sup>

The effect of these statements somewhat tempered by a report from the Hungarian Minister in Rome that the American Ambassador, Phillips, told him:

America was only helping the Russians by permitting them to purchase commodities; neither they nor Britain could give military support to the Soviets our most ardent wish is that "they (Germany and Russia) eat each other up" and both of them perish. <sup>89</sup>

Whatever misunderstandings paved the way for Hungary's entry into the war with Russia, its fact clearly established Hungary as an active member of the Axis camp. America, seeing in Russia an essential factor of Hitler's

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<sup>87</sup>Documents on American Foreign Relations, III,  
1940-41, p. 362.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., PP. 364-5.

<sup>89</sup>Hungarian-American Relations, 1918-1960  
(Budapest Pannonia, 1960), pp. 23-24.

defeat, could obviously have no sympathy for an enemy of Russia, and Hungary was just that.

CHAPTER VIII  
HUNGARY'S ENTRY INTO WAR  
WITH BRITAIN AND AMERICA

1. Hungarian Relations with the West, Summer-Fall, 1941

The end of June, 1941, saw Hungary become involved in the Second World War, which she had wanted to avoid. Axis pressures, internal and external competitive forces threatening Hungary's form of existence, as well as an assumed German-Hungarian military collusion to drag Hungary into war, led Bárdossy to the sudden decision for active participation in the Russo-German conflict without much regard for constitutional requirements. To him the major question was how to keep this involvement, rendered inevitable, more compatible with the interest to preserve as much as possible the country's integrity and resources. His answer was to take the responsibility for the state of war with Russia; thus he maintained his policy of "giving the Germans fast and spontaneously a little in order to ward off their- future demands for more," while absolving anyone else of the odium of this move -- the Regent, by joint ministerial responsibility; and Parliament, by delayed request for sanction. He also viewed the Russo-German struggle in its dual character; that is, he saw in each a counterweight to the other. Under such conditions independence for a small country was possible only if it was also in

the interest of the great powers at war, which was not the case for Hungary; or if it could be demonstrated to the great powers that an occupation of the small one would cost more to them than the benefits derived from it, which was Hungary's attempt.

In the new situation Hungary's international position was determined by two overriding facts. First, she was completely surrounded by territories under German control; second, irredentist claims, now in the reverse, were made against her by her neighbors and listened to by Germany. In view of these facts the Hungarian military, convinced of Germany's invincibility, hoped to obtain the best possible position for Hungary by outdoing her neighbors in supporting the German war effort. This position was elaborated by General Werth, the Chief of Staff, who had already often embarrassed his prime ministers with his independent actions of political nature, in a memorandum to Bárdossy in August in which he complained that Hungary's unenthusiastic and small participation against Russia would cause serious disadvantages for Hungary; that this "negligence" had caused serious losses to Germany, the consequences of which would only be felt after the war; that the only way to correct this fault was to offer Germany half of the Hungarian armed forces, in order to obtain at the end of the war appropriate rewards from the Axis; that in conjunction with the military offer a political

clarification should also be effected with the Germans on the restoration of Hungary's millennial frontiers from within which all the Slavic and Romanian nationalities and the Jews should be expelled. Bárdossy, outraged by this unwarranted interference with his political prerogatives, took the matter up with the Regent in a memorandum in which he found General Werth's reasoning incomprehensible. Bárdossy said that the Germans, particularly in view of Werth's earlier estimate of a very short war, would not need a larger military contribution from Hungary than already given, nor would Hungary need any rewards. A strong Hungary, able to perform the task assigned to her by her geographic position to stabilize her region, would more readily be recognized than any war efforts beyond her means. As to the political plans outlined by Werth, the Premier thought them to be so absurd that, even if feasible, they could never be in the country's interest. In view of these, Bárdossy concluded that he did not see assured the possibility of cooperation with the Chief of Staff. <sup>1</sup>

This memorandum was sent on August 19, two weeks after Werth had committed the use of further Hungarian troops without clearing his move with the Regent or the Government. About the same time General Szombathelyi, the commander of an army corps at the Russian front, also

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<sup>1</sup>Horthy Miklós *Titkos Iratai*, pp. 300-307.

submitted a memorandum to Horthy, in which it was observed that the era of the Blitzkriegs was over and that Hungary's policy should be to withdraw and look after her own interests. <sup>2</sup> Szombathelyi was called in for consultations and chosen to replace Werth. It was the new Chief of Staff who accompanied Horthy and Bárdossy on September 7 to Hitler's headquarters to ask for the return of the Hungarian troops from the Russian front, "since some 50 to 80 percent of their equipment is destroyed, and there is thus no point in leaving them there, nor do we have any replacements for them." <sup>3</sup> Ribbentrop found that a Hungarian withdrawal from the fight against Bolshevism would be "alarming from the moral standpoint." Finally it was agreed that the Hungarian light division would be reequipped and left at the front until mid-October, and that thereafter only four peace-time brigades would be serving to guard communication lines in Russia. <sup>4</sup> During the talks the German estimates reflected the view that upon reaching the Onega-Molaga-Volga line no more operations would be needed, and that the American two-ocean fleet would not

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<sup>2</sup>Macartney, op. cit., II, 54.

<sup>3</sup>Lajos, p. 64.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 65.



be ready for action before 1944.<sup>5</sup> They also considered Szombathelyi to represent a selfish view, by attempting to preserve the Hungarian army.<sup>6</sup>

By early September, it was understandable why Germany resisted the Hungarian wish to withdraw; first, the German victories were not as fast and decisive as almost everyone had expected, including the American General Staff;<sup>7</sup> secondly, massive aid to Russia in resistance to German aggression was unfolding in the Anglo-Russian Mutual Aid Treaty of July 17, and in the American announcements regarding "all economic assistance practicable" to the Soviet Union.

Besides commitments to aid Russia and Britain, the United States was also determined to do her best in defeating Germany. This position gave considerable weight to American ideas about the future shape of the world. Their first major exposition was the Atlantic Charter, in which two of the joint British-American views were of special interest to Hungary. One desired no territorial changes that did not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned, the

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<sup>5</sup>Gyula Juhász, "Magyarország Hadbalépése Nagybritannia és az U.S.A. ellen," (Hungary's Entry into the War Against Great Britain and the U.S.A.), Történelmi Szemle, VIII (Január, 1965). 67.

<sup>6</sup>D.G.F.P., XIII, 467.

<sup>7</sup>Robert E. Sherwood, Roosevelt and Hopkins (New York: Harper, 1948), p. 304.

other respected the rights of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they would live.<sup>8</sup> About the same time, a group in the State Department had also recommended to the Secretary that the United States take part in the reestablishment of the nations of Europe and propose to the British Government that no arrangement be entered into which would result in commitments as to boundaries, forms of government or territorial questions in order to avoid secret arrangements which would confront them at the end of the war. It was also urged that serious discussions start in the Department relative to these questions to arrive at some program.<sup>9</sup>

A disconcerting development for Hungary was the formal American recognition of the Provisional Czechoslovak Government under the presidency of Benes on July 30.<sup>10</sup> The simultaneous revival of former anti-Hungarian Little Entente interests both in the West and also fostered by Germany in Romania and Slovakia was most disturbing to Hungary.

Considering all these factors, an excellent summary of Hungary's position was sent by Minister Pell on

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<sup>8</sup>Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1941-42, IV, p.-11.

<sup>9</sup>Memorandum by J. C. Dunn, Advisor on Political Relations, to Secretary Hull, Washington, August 2, 1941 740.0011/EW 1939/15846, MS, Department of State.

<sup>10</sup>Documents on Am. For. Rel., IV, 654.

August 22, from Budapest. He observed that Horthy did not think well of the Germans, still these facts remained: (1) as a result of Horthy's policy, Hungary recovered territories without risks or losses; (2) Hungary had been able to abstain from giving any major help to the Germans in the Russian war; (3) the Hungarian Army was still more or less intact, while the Yugoslavs were broken and the Romanians decimated; (4) if the war was to continue until Hitler's defeat, Hungary would suffer, but if a negotiated peace could be arranged, she would have obtained maximum benefits at minimum cost, and still have her army to hold the spoils. <sup>11</sup> This was a very accurate description of the motivations, intentions, and attitudes, as well as accomplishments of Hungarian policies.

Meanwhile Tibor Eckhardt also arrived in the United States after a five-month journey through Africa, prolonged by British refusals to grant him transit visas, When he left Hungary just before the Yugoslav conflict, an oppressive Hitler-Stalin alliance dominated Southeast Europe against which he sought to obtain understanding western help for Hungary's difficult position. When he arrived in New York City, Stalin had become Roosevelt's, and not Hitler's, ally. This Anglo-American-Soviet

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<sup>11</sup>Minister Pell to Secretary Hull, Budapest, August 22, 1941. 864,00/1025, MS, Department of State.

friendship, which -- according to Eckhardt -- resulted in the acceptance of Soviet Russia as a true democracy and opened her the way to East-Central Europe, had a paralyzing effect on Eckhardt's American activities which aimed at protecting Hungary's interests in maintaining, rather than giving up, either to Germany, or to Russia, her independence.<sup>12</sup> The State Department saw some dangers in Eckhardt's plan to use the Hungarian-American Federation as the "official Hungarian agency,"

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1. When internal unity is paramount, Eckhardt will act as a powerful stimulant to the natural interest on the part of U.S. citizens of Hungarian origin, thus lessening such unity;
2. Experience shows difficulty of agreement among European racial groups on problems affecting their native country;
3. Other nationality groups might be encouraged; 4. This invites these groups to serve as pressure groups on the Department;
5. These political leaders should be warned against using U.S. citizens as "colonials" who can be counted on for full support, as if they were still citizens of their country of origin.<sup>13</sup>

On October 16, Assistant Secretary Berle advised along these very same lines Archduke Otto of Austria, who inquired about the American Government's attitude on committees representing national aspirations in the United States. Otto commented at that time that the Hungarian

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<sup>12</sup>Notes of conversation of Tibor Eckhardt with the writer in New York, September 11, 1964

<sup>13</sup>State Department Memorandum, Washington September 3, 1941. 862.20211/Eckhardt 33\_, MS Department of State.

movement led by Eckhardt was solidly backed by 90 percent of the Hungarian colonies in America. <sup>14</sup> Eckhardt himself was informed of these American views at his first visit to the State Department on the 27th. <sup>15</sup> Eckhardt did not come to establish a counter-government in exile, but to launch his World Movement for the Restoration of Hungarian Independence, endorsed by the American-Hungarian Federation. The movement excluded from its ranks adherents of all totalitarian philosophies, Nazis and Communists alike. Later he dissolved this organization rather than collaborate with the Communists, which appeared to be the prerequisite of a successful movement. Upon his arrival Eckhardt was cautioned by some State Department officers about the fact that in the common American-Russian opposition to Hitler a pro-Russian and pro-Communist mood was created in many agencies, which he should avoid since their commitment to a Russian victory could only harm Eckhardt's plans, which were neither for Hitler's nor Stalin's triumph. <sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Memorandum by Assistant Secretary Berle, Washington, October 16, 1941. 863.01/656, MS, Department of State.

<sup>15</sup>State Department Memorandum, Washington, October 27, 1941. 864.00/1030 MS, Department of State

<sup>16</sup>Statement of Eckhardt to the writer, New York, September 11, 1964.

Also on the 27th, the new German Minister in Hungary, Jagow, told Bárdossy that "in response to the Hungarian military's previous inquiry," as to what would be expected of Hungary in the military field for the following year, "Germany would accept further occupation troops." <sup>17</sup> Bárdossy was surprised at the new request and referred to the September agreements which called for no new Hungarian troop contingents, but he was willing to consider the German requests, if properly presented. Already on the 30th, reports from Berlin talked of some noticeable "cooling" toward Hungary. On November 11, Jagow presented the "proper requests," which Bárdossy promised to take under advisement. Further German demands of economic nature were presented to Bárdossy at his Berlin visit on November 25, in connection with the signing of the extension of the Anti-Comintern Pact for five years. The Hungarian Premier replied that Hungary's deliveries were already at their maximum, and he turned to complain about Romania's anti-Hungarian attitude and agitation against the Vienna Award. Ribbentrop advised suspension of such "family quarrels" during the war and took up the American question. He wanted to know whether the American Minister in Budapest, if there still was one, was under proper surveillance in his obvious pro-British service,

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<sup>17</sup>Juhász, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

and whether Hungary was doing anything to counteract the Anglo-Saxon propaganda. Bárdossy merely replied that there was an "old American gentleman" in Budapest, whom he rarely saw. The next day Hitler, too, brought up the American Legation's functioning in Budapest. This German interest was not new. Ever since June 23, the Germans had repeatedly asked Hungary to close the American Legation and Consulate on her soil. Each time Bárdossy refused with the explanation that such a move would hurt Hungary more than the United States. <sup>18</sup>

At the November meeting with Hitler, once again Bárdossy stressed that Hungary's neighbors did their best to disturb her. These strained relations between Hungary and her neighbors were abundantly reported on by the respective American missions. Actually Romania did not let any opportunity pass by to detract from Hungary's reputation with the Axis <sup>19</sup> or the West. They told the Americans that their war against Russia was only to recover areas lost to Russia whereas Hungary entered the war against German wishes.

Secretary Hull reflected the prevailing official attitude when he did not accept that war explanation as satisfactory and said;

The spread of communism . . . is a problem in itself, but at this time the American Government considers Hitlerism the world enemy; . . . the United

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., pp. 70-72. Also D.G.F.P., XIII, Doc, 503.

<sup>19</sup>D.G.F.P., XII, Doc. 457.

States was bending its full energies . . . for the defeat of Hitlerism, and this situation determined our attitude toward those countries which aid the Hitler cause or prolong the conflict for its defeat.

This unreserved support for Russia was decided upon and rendered without obtaining Stalin's pledges to respect the August, 1939, frontiers, to raise no objections to a European confederation, and to make no demands on China, because -- according to Bullitt -- the President did not think the pledges of Stalin worth having, <sup>21</sup> and because -- according to Averell Harriman -- Roosevelt had hoped that the Russians, if sufficiently supported, would be able to overcome the Germans without the need for an American commitment of land troops. <sup>22</sup>

The June, 1941, air raid of still unknown origin on Hungarian soil was interpreted by Bárdossy to have represented a German ruse designed to force Hungary into war, which, if resisted, would lead to a German occupation and to a total commitment of Hungary's resources to the war. To avoid this, Bárdossy rushed through the war declaration and thereby hoped to be able to limit and retard Hungary's exploitation by Germany. Such subtleties, however, while clearly recognized by the

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<sup>20</sup>F.R.U.S., 1941: 1, 323, 327.

<sup>21</sup>William C. Bullitt, "How We Won the War and Lost the Peace," *Life*, 25 (August 30, 1948), 92.

<sup>22</sup>Averell Harriman in a TV interview on NBC on May 29, 1967.



American diplomats, could not be and were not appreciated within the larger frame of a western policy committed to the unconditional support of a Russian victory.

## 2. British Declaration of War on Hungary

The Hungarian hope that Russia would be used by the west as a counterbalance, rather than replacement, to Hitler's power was completely shattered when on November 29, a mere three days after his visit to Berlin, Bárdossy was visited by the "old American gentleman," who was representing British interests after the rupture of diplomatic relations between Hungary and Britain, and who at that time delivered a British ultimatum. In it Britain called on Hungary to withdraw all troops from Russian Bolland by December 5, otherwise Britain would "have no choice but to declare the existence of a state of war between the two countries." <sup>23</sup> This British note was a result of a persistent Soviet pressure ever since September for a British declaration of war on Finland, Romania, and Hungary. The first British reaction was that the move would be to drive the three countries with their armies to the German side.<sup>24</sup> Churchill's judgment

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<sup>23</sup>Stephen D. Kertész, Diplomacy in a Whirlpool (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, -1953), p.209.

<sup>24</sup>Sir Llewellyn Woodward, British Foreign Policy In the Second World War (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1962), p. 159.

was against it, too, and he asked Stalin whether it was good policy for Britain to declare war on Finland, Romania, and Hungary. He also told Stalin:

Romania and Hungary are full of our friends; they have been overpowered by Hitler and used as cat's-paw. But if fortune turns against that ruffian they might easily come back to our side. A British declaration of war would only freeze them all and make it look as if Hitler were the head of a Grand European Alliance solidly against us. Do not, pray, suppose that it is any want of zeal or comradeship that makes us doubt the advantage of this step. . . .<sup>25</sup>

Stalin's reply delivered on the 11th, found the situation regarding a British declaration of war on the three small countries intolerable, since the Russian request had already been made public, so he repeated his demand.<sup>26</sup> In another letter of the 23rd, however, Stalin said, "We could wait with Romania and Hungary."<sup>27</sup> Still the British response was the ultimatum sent to all three countries. When Pell delivered it, Bárdossy was surprised and expressed disbelief that England could help the Soviets only by declaring war on Hungary, particularly when Hungary was withdrawing all her fighting troops from Russia.<sup>28</sup> With an understanding attitude

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<sup>25</sup>Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the U.S.S.R., Stalin's Correspondence with Churchill, Attlee, Roosevelt, and Truman, 1941-1945 (New York: E.P.Dutton, 1958), I, Doc. 19.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., Doc. 20.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., Doc. 22.

<sup>28</sup>Lajos, p. 65.

Pell tried to stop the British declaration of war, which he found unwise; however, his efforts failed, and thus his next job was to deliver the declaration itself to Bárdossy. <sup>29</sup>

There was also another attempt to prevent the British declaration by an appeal to the Pope through the Hungarian Prince Primate, Cardinal Serédi. The message was sent through the Papal Nuncio in Budapest, and Cardinal Maglione at the Vatican contacted the British Minister, who readily agreed to intervene, saying that there was much sympathy for Hungary in his country; however, his telegram arrived in London after the British declaration had already been sent to Budapest. When the declaration came on the 6th, Bárdossy ordered at his Foreign Ministry's suggestion that to avoid unnecessary severity toward British subjects in Hungary, they should only be required to report periodically to the police. <sup>30</sup>

In connection with the British declaration of war on Hungary, it is interesting to recall the note that Britain had delivered to Hungary on April 7, 1941, which announced the severance of diplomatic relations between the two countries. In it, the British reasoning was this:

. . . The public attitude of the Royal Hungarian Government has lent enthusiastic support to the foreign policies of the [Axis]. If this public

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<sup>29</sup>Macartney, *op. cit.*, II, 60-61.

<sup>30</sup>Lajos, p. 65.

support represents the real spirit of Hungary it follows that Hungary [has] intentions inimical to His Majesty's Government. If it does not, it follows that [the situation] corresponds to the loss by Hungary . . . of her independence. . . .<sup>31</sup>

If in the above text one substitutes the word Russia for Axis and the word Britain for Hungary, the new text so obtained will reflect the Hungarian feelings regarding the British position in undertaking the declaration of war at Stalin's request. The major difference between the two positions was, apart from the power aspects, that Britain could much better have afforded to stick to her own political judgment and refuse the Russian request, than Hungary could have afforded to reject a German demand. In addition Stalin's request allowed a delay in the case of Romania and Hungary.

In his circular telegram of December 3, to all Hungarian missions Bárdossy said that the British ultimatum was accepted without any comment since Hungary did not want to make her policy "dependent on British decisions, which meant that Britain was trying to help the Soviets by terrorizing and, if it depended on her, by sacrificing Hungary." <sup>32</sup> In his earlier hopes that a British declaration of war on Hungary would not come, Bárdossy relied on three factors: first, that no war

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<sup>31</sup>Juhász, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 74-75.

declaration had come during the Yugoslav war; second, that Churchill had indicated that a war declaration would come only if British and Hungarian troops met in the field of battle; and third, that it was assumed that Germany's war with Russia could lead to a compromise peace with the West, which would not resent Hungary's active military participation if restricted to Russia. On December 6, the fallacy of all these assumptions became clear in the words of the new British note delivered by Pell, which read in part:

. . . Since the Hungarian Government have returned no reply to [the last British] communication and since information at the disposal of His Majesty's Government affords no indication that they intend to comply with [its] conditions a state of war will exist between the two countries as from twelve zero one a.m. Greenwich mean time on December seventh. <sup>33</sup>

Within hours after this development, the news of Pearl Harbor arrived, foreboding a further serious deterioration in Hungary's international position.

### 3. Hungarian Declaration of War on America

The attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese took place with their usual time-lag in judgment. They Joined the Tripartite Pact shortly after Germany failed in the Battle of Britain; they concluded a non-aggression Pact With Russia soon after Hitler's decision to attack Russia; they attacked the United States a few days after

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 75.

the German march was halted outside Moscow. <sup>34</sup> Equally lacking in forethought were the coordinative efforts, if any, of the members of the Tripartite Pact concerning the Japanese move. Not until November 23, did Japan ask whether Germany would consider herself at war with the United States if Japan opened hostilities against that country. <sup>35</sup> Ribbentrop's affirmative reply was expanded by his view that Japan could not avoid a showdown with America at such a favorable time. <sup>36</sup> Only on December 5, was a Japanese-German-Italian treaty drawn up "to wage the war forced upon [them] by the United States and England until victorious conclusion," <sup>37</sup> and it was signed only on the 11th.

Hungary, of course, had no prior information as to the Japanese or subsequent tripartite moves against the United States. On December 8, in a conversation with Undersecretary Welles, Ghika inquired about the American Government's attitude regarding the continuation of relations between Hungary and the United States. He also referred to a letter received by him from Teleki in which Teleki had prophesied clearly and accurately the events that took place. He further referred to the

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<sup>34</sup>Woodward, *op. cit.*, pp. 169-170.

<sup>35</sup>D.G.F.P., XIII, Doc. 492.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, Doc. 512

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, Doc. 546.

extremely difficult position of Hungary and her Government. Welles in his reply stated that for the time the American Government had no intention of changing its existing relations with Hungary. He also warned that whether willingly or unwillingly Hungary was intimately associated with the German Government. He trusted that Hungary would find it still possible to refrain from acting as an agent of Germany against Russia or any other country in whose self-defense America was vitally interested. <sup>38</sup>

Three days later, Hitler announced in a Reichstag speech his declaration of war jointly with Japan and Italy against the United States, whereupon President Roosevelt asked Congress to recognize a state of war between the United States and the Axis Powers. The Joint Congressional Resolution declaring the existence of the state of war was passed on the same day, December 11, 1941, at 3:05 p.m., E.S.T. <sup>39</sup>

Immediately after the Hitler speech, Bárdossy, following his usual "the sooner, the better" formula, called a special Cabinet meeting, at which he informed his colleagues of the move of the Tripartite Pact members and surmised that deriving from Hungary's adherence

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<sup>38</sup>Memorandum by Undersecretary Welles, Washington, December 8, 1941. 711.64/25, MS, Department of State.

<sup>39</sup>F.R.U.S., 1941:I, 590.

to the pact she, too, had some obligations in this connection. He saw two possibilities: declaration of war or severance of diplomatic relations with the United States. After some discussion, which reflected concern with the final closing of the "last backdoor," Bárdossy suggested that they accept a compromise formula capable of being interpreted to meet any contingencies, that is, they make a solidarity declaration with the Axis, which, on Axis demand, could also be given an interpretation of implying a declaration of the existence of a state of war, without actually making such a declaration. This was accepted by the Cabinet and a corresponding announcement was issued. It said that, in consequence of the war between the Axis and the United States, the Hungarian Government was again declaring its solidarity with the Axis Powers in the spirit of the Tripartite Pact, and accordingly it was breaking off diplomatic relations with the United States.<sup>40</sup> Shortly thereafter, exactly at the hour when Congress passed the Resolution declaring war with the Axis, Bárdossy informed Pell of the announcement and added that because of Central European solidarity, "which he compared with solidarity of all American Republics, Hungary was obliged to sever relations with

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<sup>40</sup>Juhász, *op. cit.*, pp. 76-77.

the United States but not with intention of declaring war." <sup>41</sup>  
 Simultaneously Bárdossy sent these instructions to his ministers in Berlin and Rome:

A few hours after a state of war was declared between Germany [Italy] and the United States, we at once showed our solidarity in an ostentatious manner and broke off diplomatic relations. By doing this the Hungarian Government is convinced that it has done the maximum that could be expected of us. . .

If there should be any conversation as to how the decision of the Hungarian Government is to be interpreted, the following is for your guidance:

By an immediate declaration of solidarity and the breaking off of diplomatic relations, we have done the maximum that can be expected of us. The Tripartite Pact does not oblige us to do more than this.

In the Pact there is only a question of political, economic and military support. We have given political support in the highest degree by showing our solidarity. Economically we are constantly supporting the Axis Powers to the limit of



our capacity. In practice there can be no question of military support against the United States.

I would also refer to the fact that the Hungarian Government could not undertake to do more because this might seriously endanger nearly one million Hungarians living in the United States.

I would urgently request you without fail to maintain this standpoint and line of argument for the present as your private opinion.

Your duty in this respect will be in case of need to make this point of view prevail.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>F.R.U.S., 1941:I, 591.

<sup>42</sup>Lajos, pp. 68-69.

Cables arriving from Berlin and Rome, however, showed the next morning that the Axis Powers would not allow Hungary to evade the final step. Sztójay reported his impression that,

...for reason of high policy the German Government lays particularly great stress on Hungary documenting her solidarity by stating that she is at war with the United States in the same way as the Axis.<sup>43</sup>

Ciano also indicated to the Hungarian Minister in Rome that at German initiative Germany and Italy desired that a state of war be declared by Hungary.<sup>44</sup> And indeed, in the afternoon of the 12th, the German and Italian ministers descended upon Bárdossy and expressly called his attention to the fact that higher political interests made a unanimous attitude by the European countries necessary. They also hinted that should Hungary maintain her opinion, she might easily turn out to be the only adherent to the Tripartite Pact which declared only her solidarity. Bárdossy continued to argue along the lines of his original position, but the German Minister suggested not to do so since an argumentation against the will of the German Government might lead to catastrophic consequences; it was already enough of an irritant that Bárdossy had made his "weak solidarity declaration" without prior approval by the

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., pp. 69-70.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 69.

Axis. <sup>45</sup> After his visitors left, Bárdossy's first reaction was to raise with his closest associates the question: "Has the Hungarian Government the right to sacrifice the country to Hitler for avoiding a declaration of war?" He further asked, since the country was already at war with Russia and Britain, whether one should risk the country because of another great power with which a declaration could only be of a formal nature since Hungary would hardly fight with America. Answering his own questions, he concluded that the primary purpose was to save the land from German occupation. <sup>46</sup> Then he sent his instructions to Berlin and Rome to the effect that,

...if all signatory powers to the Pact would declare war and if the Axis would consider a Hungarian declaration of war indispensable, the Hungarian Ministers may give the required interpretation to the declaration of solidarity. <sup>47</sup>

On the same evening, Bárdossy called Pell on the 'phone and informed him that the solidarity declaration of the day before did after all mean the existence of a state of war. Pell, in an apparent attempt to take the edge off the statement, said that he supposed the step was taken under heavy German pressure and that it did not reflect any hostility on the part of the Hungarian

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>46</sup>Ullein-Reviczky, op. cit., pp. 117-119.

<sup>47</sup>Lajos, pp. 70-71, cf. Kertész, op. cit., p. 236.

people toward the American people. Bárdossy was too proud to acknowledge that interpretation of his move and replied that Hungary undertook that step as an independent and sovereign country.<sup>48</sup> Actually it could hardly have been expected of a prime minister to make a statement over the 'phone that he was not acting out of his free decision. Bárdossy thought that he had already intimated the precarious position of his country by the tortuous formula of the solidarity declaration with expandable interpretation. Pell, of course, could not accept such an important declaration given only orally over the 'phone and asked Bárdossy for a written note. The note was dated December 12, and sent to Pell, apparently only on the 13th. It said that on the basis of Hungary's adherence to the Tripartite Pact as well as in agreement with the principles of solidarity declared on the 11th of December, the Hungarian Government considered the state of war already existing between the United States and the Axis also in existence with respect to itself.<sup>49</sup> On the 13th, Pell reported that the Prime Minister informed him at 5:30 that afternoon that Hungary considered war to exist between their two countries.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup>Ullein-Reviczky, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-120.

<sup>49</sup>M.M.V., p. 384.

<sup>50</sup>F.R.U.S., 1941:I, 592.

At his trial, Bárdossy still maintained that his registration of the existence of a state of war did not amount to a declaration of war on the United States. He actually caused a memorandum to be drawn up for Pell by a professor of international law to argue the merits of this distinction, which the professor himself failed to detect. Therefore Bárdossy also felt excused from having to follow the constitutional avenue to a declaration of war, which required the Parliament's and the Regent's joint approval. <sup>51</sup> Since both of these requirements were lacking Horthy told Travers at the latter's farewell visit that this so-called war declaration was not legal. <sup>52</sup> Bárdossy's concern not to appear as having acted under duress was also reflected in his cable to the Hungarian Minister in Washington on the 13th in which he complained that according to a Reuters Agency news item from New York, he was supposed to have mentioned to Pell that Hungary was "compelled" to sever her diplomatic relations with America while in fact he had restricted himself to registering the Hungarian identification with the Axis. <sup>53</sup>

Bárdossy's views must also have been influenced by reports received from the Legation in Washington. on

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<sup>51</sup>Ferenc Ábrám, ed.; A Bárdossy Per (The Bardossy Trial) (Budapest: Híradó Könyvtár, 1945), pp. 56, 37.

<sup>52</sup>Montgomery, op. cit., p. 153.

<sup>53</sup>M.M.V. p 382.

several occasions, far the last time on December 10, Ghika cabled that American leaders considered Hungary's participation in the war against the Soviet Union as "inevitable" and "understandable" under the given circumstances. Ghika was also told that at a meeting attended by the President, Hull, Welles, and Berle, it was decided that it would be very important for Hungary to be able to show factual proof that the rupture of her diplomatic relations with America, when it came, was done under external pressure. The Hungarian Minister was further informed at that time through Cavendish ". Cannon of the State Department's European Division that the Department saw clearly the dangers inherent in the unconditional support of Russia and stressed that Welles was not at all happy about the extreme pro-Soviet attitude of British foreign policy. 54

#### 4. American Reaction to the Hungarian Declaration

Actually the Hungarian declaration of war, of whatever form and meaning, was ignored. Neither the President, nor the State Department, nor Congressional leaders had any desire to declare war on the small European countries who had made war declarations. On

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 54A. I. Puskás, "Adatok Horthy-Magyarország külpolitikájához a második világháború éveiben," (Documents on Horthy-Hungary's Foreign Policy During the Years of the Second World War), *Századok*, 95, No. 1 (1961), 105-6.

January 31, 1942, the President asked the Secretary of State to send a letter to the appropriate Congressional Committees informing them that there was no action necessary by the United States in response to the declaration by Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Siam. He also reflected his disparagingly frank opinion on the subject in a postscript, saying that his son's reaction to the matter would be: "So What!" 55

In the newly developed situation American interests in Hungary were represented by Switzerland and Hungarian interests in the United States were represented by Sweden. The exchange of the diplomats took place in Portugal later in 1942. In this connection there was some hope that Ghika would stay in America, as the Danish Minister to Washington had done, to serve as an independent representative of his country's true interests. Ghika, however, was too much of a loyal civil servant to undertake such independent action against the instructions of his Government to return home. He did have good rapport with the Americans and was considered

to be of some value to them in view of the fact that before his transfer to Washington he had been serving in Tokyo where he had established very good personal relations with the Japanese Emperor owing to their intense mutual interest in lepidopterology. When Ghika arrived

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55F.R.U.S., 1942:II, 833-834.

on his way back to Hungary in Portugal he was greeted by the Hungarian Foreign Ministry official waiting for him there with: "Why on earth did you have to come back.?"<sup>56</sup>

Meanwhile, during January, first Ribbentrop and then General Keitel visited Budapest and presented the German demand for total Hungarian participation in the war. In his response Bárdossy argued that owing to economic and political conditions, uncertainties in the Balkans, etc., Hungary was not in a position to render the assistance requested. Ribbentrop made Hungary's territorial claims dependent on the degree of her military cooperation and hinted that the Hungarian refusal to make the entire army available might cause unforeseen reactions with Hitler whose "just, but passionate" nature was not known to the Hungarians. "It could happen," he added, "that the Führer will dispense with Hungarian help altogether." In the event, on repeated threats and urgings, instead of the total, one-third of the Hungarian army was promised for the front.<sup>57</sup>

Another complicating factor in Hungarian political life was that many differences of view and resultant animosity had developed between the Regent and Bárdossy, both on personal and political grounds. The Regent,

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<sup>56</sup>Eckhardt to the writer.

<sup>57</sup>Lajos, pp. 71-72.



concerned about his need for an associate, in view of his advanced age, asked for the establishment of the position of Vice-Regent, meant to be filled by his younger son. Bárdossy did help the Vice-Regency bill through Parliament, but without assuring for the Vice-Regent the right of succession to the Regency. This displeased Horthy intensely. Bárdossy on the other hand worked for this law only in the hope that in exchange he would receive support for his social and land-reform bills, which again Horthy did not want at all. Furthermore, Horthy thought it was time to start getting Hungary out of the unwanted war; this, however, Bárdossy was not prepared to do, because he found it risky and in conflict with his policies of salvaging independence. This internal conflict was resolved by Bárdossy's resignation, conveniently excused with a nonexistent illness on March 7, 1942. His replacement was Nicholas Kállay, whose minister-presidency of two years represented an entirely different era.

While these internal developments took place in Hungary, America viewed with increasing concern the aid given by Hungary to the enemies of the United States. First Welles wanted to warn Hungary through the Turkish Government that if her aid to Germany did not stop, the United States would declare a state of war with her. The Turks felt that in view of the Hungarian solidarity with the Axis the fear of an American declaration of war

would not lead Hungary to retract her position, and, therefore, the Turks could not intervene in that matter? <sup>58</sup> Then by March 17, the Acting Chief of the Division of European Affairs expressed the view that America should wait until the results of intensive psychological warfare measures could be exploited before a declaration would range Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria as active enemies. He also noted that "the new Hungarian Premier was so notoriously anti-German that his appointment indicated that Hungary no longer felt Germany able to exact complete subservience." A message was finally sent to the Swiss to bring to the Hungarians' attention that unless Hungary gave prompt evidence that she would not engage in military aid or operations of assistance to the Axis Powers, the President would recommend to Congress a declaration of war on her. <sup>59</sup> This communication was actually delivered through the Swiss Legation in Budapest on April 7, to the Kállay Government, which replied on the 17th that the Soviet air raid of June 26, 1941, had caused "enormous losses in lives and property"; accordingly, "Hungary considered that she was carrying on a defensive war against the Soviet Union." <sup>60</sup> All during April and May, the Americans made it clear in

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<sup>58</sup>F.R.U.S., 1942:II, 835-836.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., pp. 837-838.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 840.

public statements, too, that they had considered the Hungarian participation in the war to be under duress and indicated that an American declaration of war would be made only if material and effective aid should be given by her to the Axis. They were even able to explain the large Romanian war contribution as not yet satisfying this condition. <sup>61</sup>

At the end of May, however, when Molotov visited Washington, the President mentioned to his Russian guest that America never got around to declare war on Romania because it seemed a waste of effort. Molotov saw it differently and said that Romania caused some trouble by aiding Germany. Then the President asked Congressional leaders concerning their attitude toward a formal declaration of war on Romania. They saw no objections and told Molotov that the enemies of the Soviet Union were also enemies of the United States. <sup>62</sup> The Presidents corresponding action came on June 2, requesting Congress to declare war on Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania, three countries that were engaged in military activities against the United Nations. The Joint Congressional Resolution was approved on the 5th, and it used a text identical mutatis mutandis with the declaration of war on Germany of the previous December. Here

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<sup>61</sup>F.R.U.S., 1942:II, 841-2.

<sup>62</sup>Roosevelt and Hopkins, pp. 567-568.

again the Russian request was the determining factor in the American decision, which indicated the shape of things to come. Hungary's expectations for a compromise peace and power balance thus became vitiated by a looming, unchecked Russian Preponderance. Against this background, Hungary and her neighbors further barred all efforts concerted for their joint survival by their mutually hateful relations.

CHAPTER IX  
HUNGARIAN DIPLOMACY DURING THE KÁLLAY  
BIENNIUM

1. Kállay's Concept of Hungary's Foreign Policy

The coming of a state of war between the Western Powers and Hungary marked the point from which diplomatically there was but one direction to go: to start establishing the contacts severed. It was an interesting feature of American-Hungarian relations that they became the most intensive and important during the years when they did not exist in form, but when war-time decisions shaped Hungary's destiny in substance. With Bárdossy's resignation in March, 1942, a year ended that saw Hungary's entry into belligerence three times. Formally, they were the results of the adherence to the Tripartite Pact by Csáky that Bárdossy had actually opposed, foreseeing the very situations which in fact took place. The argument that all these belligerent involvements could have been warded off and that Bárdossy's moves were precipitate, particularly in the war declaration against Russia, is weakened by the persistent German demands and threats that came in all three cases for increased Hungarian Participation. After all it was Hitler who made the demands for economic and military aid as well as for political moves, which Bárdossy managed to whittle down, and not the other way around.

In each case the Hungarian move was made inevitable because its alternative was a German occupation. The choice was made for the purely selfish reason of wanting to preserve at least a relatively independent existence, which in turn amounted to a practical and relative reduction in aiding Germany. Any direct resistance would have resulted not in Hungary's relief from taking part on the wrong side, but in her total participation. Such a course would have meant the complete exploitation of the country's economic and man-power resources, and in addition, it would have delivered into German hands all the Polish refugees, British and French subjects, as well as a million Hungarian and foreign Jews who resided and remained free in Hungary for three more years.

The consideration that, in view of a likely total Russian victory and total German defeat, the fate of the small states that took their place in the war against Russia might conceivably be mitigated at the peace conferences by a western presence brought about by the state of war regarding these states, did not play any part in Bárdossy's decisions in the Hungarian war declaration with the West. In the event, however, it produced that beneficial consequence. Bárdossy's foreign policy was based on the assumption that the Western Powers were committed to the victory of Hungary's enemies - - Russia and the Little Entente -- in view of which regardless what Hungary did during the war her fate would be the

Same; furthermore, the establishment of the Soviet preponderance in Eastern Europe would not be effectively balanced by any western presence. The only problem with this view was that it was right. Horthy, on the other hand, was optimistic. Not only did he see a certain guarantee for Hungary's continued existence by Western policies disallowing the destruction of the European balance, but he even assumed that Russia, whose interest was in the direction of the Turkish Straits, would be willing to give up plans to bolshevize Hungary in exchange for an alliance with her. <sup>1</sup> The Regent resolved this difference of views by replacing Bárdossy with Kállay.

Kállay inherited from Bárdossy a country officially at war with Russia and the Western Powers. This was one of the realities of Hungary's situation. Another continued to be the German presence near and far on the Continent, and again another the fact that her small neighbors continued to represent the anti-Hungarian policy of the former Little Entente. In this situation, the Allies looked at Hungary as a satellite in support of the Axis war effort; the Germans regarded Kállay as hostile to them; <sup>2</sup> the neighbors' governments in residence

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<sup>1</sup>Nicholas Kállay, Hungarian Premier (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954), p. 11.

<sup>2</sup>Louis P. Lochner, ed., The Göbbels Diaries, 1942-43 (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1948), p. 157.

for Slovakia, Croatia, and Romania did their best to denigrate Hungary with the Germans, while their representatives in exile also exerted all efforts to discredit her in the West. One could hardly have taken over a post under more difficult times and more unfavorable circumstances.

As always, however, Hungary's foreign policy was dictated by her geographic position and economic dependence which demanded cooperation with Germany. This inevitable consideration was equally recognized both by Bárdossy and Kállay. The difference in their respective conducts was caused by their difference in views on how to implement this policy of survival and gauge the degree of cooperation to keep it in balance with potential threats to independence. According to Bárdossy, there was no sense in trying to contact the West, and the only hope of independence was to be found in spontaneous small offers to satisfy anticipated German demands. According to Kállay, it meant to give when asked as little as possible and also try to take up meaningful exchanges with the West. Confronted by the Russian and German pressure his choices were submission or resistance. Judging the first dishonorable and the second uselessly detrimental, he chose the in-between: turn to the West for aid against both. These, then, constituted the two principles of his foreign policy: reassertion of independence of that little island in the Nazi and

Bolshevist oceans and establishment of direct contact with the West. <sup>3</sup>

The world in which Kállay took over the premiership saw a still expanding Axis and Japanese combination. . The spring of 1942 was before Stalingrad and El Alamein. He came with a program to preserve Hungary through the difficult war times until a new balance could be restored between the great powers that would remove the oppressive weight of a single power's exclusive dominance. He thought that the West just could not see it otherwise either.

The assumptions of Horthy and Kállay were not lacking in hope, and indeed that was all that they did not lack, for the realities of the situation certainly offered no substantial promise to realize their ambitions. They thought that remaining independent during the war would assure a better position at its end regardless who won. If Germany won, she could subject an independent Hungary only with much more difficulty than an already occupied land. If the West won, its appreciation of Hungary's conduct and fairly independent foreign policy would be assured, and respect by her neighbors could be enforced with an intact army. If a compromise peace came, his policy would particularly be successful. <sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Kállay, op. cit., pp. 350f.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 12-13.



The views of the great powers regarding Hungary's position were entirely different from those assumed by the Hungarians. The Germans still felt that they had a great deal to ask of the Hungarians and had to keep them in good humor, although there could no longer be any talk of a comradeship in arms.<sup>5</sup> The Russians made it quite clear at the outset that their aims went beyond self-defense. It had come to American attention already late in November, 1941, that Russia would at the end of the war consider her economic frontiers extended beyond the Danube to the Adriatic; she gave the impression that her counteroffensive in the fall had already stimulated her post-war aspirations on the Continent.<sup>6</sup> Further details on Russian plans regarding Hungary were received in American reports to the effect that Soviet demands also included a strip of Hungarian territory in the Carpathian districts,<sup>7</sup> and that Stalin told Eden that Romania should give special facilities on her ground to the Soviet Union, receiving compensation for them from Hungarian territories.<sup>8</sup> Against Bullitt's warning, President Roosevelt, however, insisted to play his "hunch" that Stalin, if given every assistance possible,

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<sup>5</sup>The Göbbels Diaries, pp. 120, 157.

<sup>6</sup>F.R.U.S., 1941:I, 337-8.

<sup>7</sup>F.R.U.S., 1942:III, 438.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 500.

would not annex territories and would join the work for a world of democracy and peace.<sup>9</sup> Facing the difficulties of obtaining the authority for lend-lease to the Soviet Union on account of prejudice or hostility to Russia among large groups in this country, the President suggested to the Soviet Ambassador that some publicity be given regarding freedom of religion in the Soviet Union.<sup>10</sup> Consequently, the overriding aim continued to be all possible aid to Russia with the conviction that her final victory would constitute no danger to democracy and world peace after the war.

Great Britain displayed a rather pragmatic approach to the Russian question during 1941. In February, they pressed for an embargo on American exports to Russia because of Russian aid to Germany, and no British recognition was given to the annexation of the Baltic States by the Soviet Union.<sup>11</sup> By mid-June, however, in anticipation of a Russo-German war the British were willing to recognize the Baltic annexations to placate Russia, causing wonderment by Welles, who asked whether such policy would not weaken the innate moral strength then upholding the British cause.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Bullitt, *op. cit.*, P. 95.

<sup>10</sup>F.R.U.S., 1941:I, 832.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 602.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 760.

Already at Eden's December, 1941, visit to Moscow, Stalin raised the question of territorial settlements involving the restoration of the 1941 Russian frontiers and the partition of Germany into her Rhineland, Bavarian and Prussian components. Until they were recognized, the Soviets refused to consider any further Russo-British agreements. The British, anticipating the need for Russian collaboration as a counterweight to Germany, were willing to go along with the Russian requests, but that would have collided with the American position of no territorial settlements and arrangements to be made before the final peace conferences. Alarmed by Russian indications that they were only interested in the reoccupation of formerly Russian-held territories and not in the overthrow of the Nazi regime, Britain implied the acceptance of the Russian demands, because the post-war collaboration of Russia was considered most essential.<sup>13</sup>

When Kállay took over, plans involving Hungary also appeared in the United States and came from Benes and Otto of Austria in the January, 1942, issue of Foreign Affairs. Ottó's article suggested that instead of repeating the errors leading to anarchy and national states, within which minorities meant inferiority status and where economic equality was not coupled with political

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<sup>13</sup>Woodward, op. cit., pp. 191-193.

and cultural equality, a Danubian federation on the Swiss model should be established with other federations in Europe, and a League above them also including other parts of the world. He observed that complaints in the past about oppression were occasioned by not having been allowed to oppress others. <sup>14</sup> Benes, too, proposed a federal organization of the entire Continent, with an organic growth from smaller to larger units starting with the Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation. The basic units in his plan, however, would be national states. Since they were not as homogeneous as claimed during the Peace Conference after the First World War, Benes thought that they should be made so 'by population transfers, which meant expulsion in view of the unbalanced numerical relationship between the minorities in Czechoslovakia and her neighbors. He also foretold events to come when he said that Hungary could not, of course, "keep the territories which Germany gave her as a reward for participating in this criminal war." In addition, Czechoslovakia's minorities were to be punished because guilty of treachery, presumably by preferring to return to countries from which they had been detached against their will. The reorganization was also to secure the

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<sup>14</sup>Otto of Austria, "Danubian Reconstruction,"  
Foreign Affairs, XX (January, 1942), 243-252.

enduring friendship of the Soviet Union. <sup>15</sup> From among the anti-Horthy Hungarian émigrés, Vámbéry also joined Benes in a later Foreign Affairs issue, identifying revisionism and Nazism as Hungary's tragedy. He concluded that the Hungarian ruling class (Kállay Government) was determined to keep its power at any cost, and that the revisionists, knowing that the Allies would not allow them to keep their booty acquired by the grace of Hitler, were bound to meet with Nazism. He put the blame on Hungary for Hitler's successes and claimed that the test of validity of any Hungarian movement against Nazi Germany was a statement that Hungary refused to accept revision accorded by the Nazis and would instead come to terms with her neighbors on the basis of free negotiations. and mutual understanding. <sup>16</sup>

This view may have been a prerequisite to ingratiate the writer with Benes, but it would have been hard to expect that any Hungarian Government could have considered as its primary task to have the neighboring countries expel the Hungarians into the smaller Trianon Hungary, since this was what the "mutual understanding" allowed according to the Benes plans.

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<sup>15</sup>Eduard Benes, "The Organization of Post-war Europe," Foreign Affairs, XX (January, 1942), 226-242.

<sup>16</sup>Rustem Vámbéry, "The Tragedy of the Magyars," Foreign Affairs, XX (April, 1942), 477-488.

The American reports on the post-war plans of the Czechs and Poles revealed that Benes, "astute and devious," wanted to obtain the guarantee of her old frontiers by the great anti-Axis powers, for which he had Russian support in return for his support of Russian foreign policies. <sup>17</sup> The Poles, on the other hand, wanted to build up the future of the smaller states in Eastern Europe with western support and found that the British concessions to Russia would destroy resistance on the part of the submerged nations and increase the possibility that the neutrals would go over to the Axis. <sup>18</sup>

The American attitude on the plans of a Czechoslovak-Polish confederation stressed the consideration that it should be made certain that the Russians did not see in these new organizations plans for a new buffer zone against them lest the possibility of their abandoning hostility to non-Soviet nations and disposal to cooperate in plans for an orderly Europe be eliminated; it added that planned federations should also Provide for adherence of new members, including the then

enemy states, on tolerable terms. 19

The reasoning that in fear of a Soviet separate Peace with Germany, Russia had to be courted by the West,

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17F.R.U.S., 1942:III, 110,121.

18Ibid., pp. 110, 115.

19Ibid., pp. 205f.

was incomprehensible to the Hungarians. If it had been true that Russia wanted to conclude a separate peace because she considered it in her best national interest, no western cooperation or promise could have dissuaded her from doing so; if it was not in Soviet interest or -intention to get out of the war, no direct assertion of western ideas as to post-war reorganization of the world would have discouraged her from staying in the war. Furthermore, if the alliance with Russia was considered unreliable because it came about not by Russia's choice but by a German attack on her, then it would have been particularly important to assure through Russia's dependence on the West the kind of peace for which the war was fought by the West. It seemed to defeat the purpose of the war if in order to retain an ally concessions had to be made that forfeited the very peace objectives the West fought for.

Hungary's international position at the time Kállay took over the premiership was determined by a still victoriously expanding Axis power position, and by uncertainties as to what the eventual peace would bring, since there were considerable differences of view among the Allies, who became such, not by fighting for the same kind of world but by having been attacked by the same enemy. In this situation, with the eventual turn of the war, anticipated in view of the Allied preponderance, Kállay saw Hungary's value to others on the rise: for

the West, as an independent, unoccupied country; for Germany, as an increasingly important supply and transit area. With these assumed bargaining assets and under German protection against Russia, he set out to arrange for western contacts.

## 2. Kállay's Diplomacy<sup>20</sup>

The task that faced Kállay to save his country, if possible with western aid, from German or Russian occupation was monumental under the given circumstances. The decision to extricate Hungary from the war and lead her back to a position of non-belligerency was not new. Kállay's appointment by the Regent in March of 1942, was for that very purpose. Kállay himself had expressed the view in December, when the war declarations were made with the Western Powers, to the Hungarian Upper House, of which he was a member then, that if an official breaking off of relations was inevitable, then at least the nonofficial contacts should be maintained with the West. Nor was his decision and objective prompted by military developments. One should not forget that in the summer of 1942, German defeat was far from being assured. At the end of May, Molotov told President Roosevelt that

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<sup>20</sup>The rest of this chapter, where not otherwise specified is based on information received from Nicholas Kállay during conversations with the writer in New York, on September 10, 1964.



the Red Army might not be able to hold out and pleaded for immediate western offensive action to draw off forty German divisions. <sup>21</sup> By the end of June, both the president and Hopkins had anxieties regarding the possibility of the collapse of the Russian front and discussed methods to relieve the Russians. <sup>22</sup> Conversely, the more likely the German defeat became, with the correspondingly increasing Soviet threat, the more it discouraged work against German protection.

Since Kállay, however, deemed an Allied victory only to be a matter of time, the evasion of a German or Russian occupation was only a question of dragging out time. His main concern was that, in view of the certain victory of the Allies, western influence should prevail in Hungary, or at least no Russian occupation should come about. The realization of these plans depended on western agreement; however, while Hungary believed that the West would not allow, as dangerous to its own interest, the establishment of a single, expansive superpower, the West had come to believe that Russia would not represent such a danger to western interests and would actually be indispensable to world peace. While there was no question about Russian cooperation being needed for world peace, this assumption in itself, without

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<sup>21</sup>F.R.U.S., 1942:III, 576.

<sup>22</sup>Roosevelt and Hopkins, p. 588.

evidence that Russia would actually cooperate, did not create such a condition.

Kállay's first step to implement connections with the West was to replace all Hungarian diplomats of pro-German coloring with individuals of reliable views. There were two exceptions: the Minister in Berlin had to be left there, for his recall would have aroused undue German suspicions, and he did serve a useful purpose by obtaining the true German views; the other was the Minister in Turkey, who had very good and useful contacts with the German Ambassador, von Papen, and who could easily be by-passed through the reliable Consul General at Istanbul.

The extremely cautious attitude, which was taken to keep the Germans in the dark to avoid reprisals or even an occupation, in combination with the delays of the emissaries' moves, who had to wait long for German transit visas for almost any trip within Europe, made progress very slow. Kállay, however, thought that he had time and considered a substantive connection more important than a hasty contact. Also, the pre-condition for any Hungarian move to dissociate from the war, for which he was waiting, was the arrival of the Anglo-American troops on Hungary's frontiers, a contingency which indeed imposed an endless wait.

The first attempts to establish western contacts were through the Poles in Lisbon. The Polish Exile

Government in London, which maintained contacts with its home underground through Hungary, was willing to serve as intermediary and let the Hungarians know in June, 1942, that the fate of East-Central Europe had not yet been decided by the Allies, that the Poles most concerned about the Russian conduct planned for a Central European confederation that could be joined through Hungarian opposition organizations to demonstrate to the world that Hungary was fighting against Russia only out of necessity, and that the only way out for Hungary was to have Horthy resign and go to the West or send an acceptable representative there.<sup>23</sup>

Also in the summer of 1942, Ullein-Reviczky, the chief of the Press Section of the Hungarian Foreign Ministry, established contacts authorized by Kállay with the British while on his vacation in Istanbul, Turkey, with his in-laws (a retired British Consul General). With British acquiescence, the first Hungarian emissary was sent in the person of Andor Frey, a journalist, who after unavoidable protracted arrivals arrived in Istanbul only in January, 1943. He presented these Hungarian offers: Hungary would not oppose Anglo-American or Polish troops on arrival at the Hungarian frontiers; Hungary was

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<sup>23</sup>Personal from András Tamás, the Hungarian contact with the Poles in Lisbon; also his book: András Tamás: Délkelet-európa a diplomáciai törekvések sodrában 1939-1944 között (Montreal: n. p., 1961) pp. 96-100.

prepared for action against the Germans in cooperation with such troops whenever feasible; Hungary's purpose in doing this, without asking for anything in return, was to save not the existing regime, but the interests of the Hungarian people. The British emissary, a former Hungarian subject, asked for military contacts to clear further details. Kállay became suspicious at once; first, the emissary was reputed to be in Russian pay; second, the British instead of accepting the general political agreement asked for military talks; and, third, some British leads became manifest about the talks. <sup>24</sup>

Another contact was attempted through Otto of Austria in Washington. Characteristically the message that empowered him to discuss with the American Government methods whereby at the appropriate moment Hungary could join the Allies took five months to reach its destination in March, 1943. Otto asked for more precise proposals and authorization to act in the name of the Hungarian Government. There again no substantial exchange was effected until later that fall. <sup>25</sup>

Nor was there any American-Hungarian contact established through the Eckhardt activities in America. Eckhardt was in no connection with the Hungarian Government until the fall of 1943, and then at American request.

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<sup>24</sup>Kállay, *op. cit.*, pp. 369-371.

<sup>25</sup>Macartney, *op. cit.*, II, 128, 143, 160.

Before that he could not even maintain touch with the opposition Smallholder Party, of which he had been the former head. In addition, the Government deprived him of his Hungarian citizenship in view of his "pro-Allied activities abroad." This opinion, however, was not shared by many circles in America, particularly not by the Czechoslovak emigration and the Hungarian-born leftists, who did their best to discredit Eckhardt. They were helped by Eckhardt himself, who while anti-Hitler also remained strongly anti-Stalin to the end, and who when attacked by his opponents easily lost his temper and responded in a manner that provided further ground for the attacks on him. At any rate, he was branded "Horthy's propaganda paratrooper,"<sup>26</sup> "Budapest's fake mission,"<sup>27</sup> "Traveling salesman of feudalism,"<sup>28</sup> "Hungarian propagandist trying to bring Hungary to the United Nations,"<sup>29</sup> and "The least known of the reactionaries."<sup>30</sup> There was concern in circles

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<sup>26</sup>Joseph S. Roucek, "The 'Free Movements' of Horthy's Eckhardt and Austria's Otto," Public Opinion Quarterly, VII (Fall, 1943), 466.

<sup>27</sup>Ignac Schultz, "Budapest's Fake Mission," The Nation, 153 (September 27, 1941), 276.

<sup>28</sup>"Eckhardt and the State Department," The Nation, 153 (October 4, 1941), 295.

<sup>29</sup>"Hungary," Current History, IV (March, 1943), 59.

<sup>30</sup>Daniel Bell and Leon Bennen, "The System of Governments in Exile," Annals, 232 (March, 1944), 144.

calling themselves "liberal and progressive Americans" that Eckhardt's "free Hungary" movement might some day sabotage American peace aims in Europe and, what was worse, might have had the blessing of the State Department.

<sup>31</sup> This led even the theologian Reinhold Niebuhr to ask for Eckhardt's investigation by the State Department, "lest we willingly . . . give aid to a political fifth column. . . ." In his reply on April 1, 1942, Welles denied that Eckhardt had any support in Washington and explained that the Hungarian movement's propaganda, which aimed at securing a favorable position for Hungary in case of an Allied victory, had reaped initial successes only because of ignorance of specific Hungarian conditions and deadly western fear of Bolshevism.

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In a letter to his opposition friends in Hungary, dated July 1, 1943, transmitted through the Lisbon Poles and thus read by Kállay before its addressees, Eckhardt also described his situation in America as almost entirely inactive owing to British pressure to stop his anti-Soviet line, to having run out of the money he had brought with him to America, and to Washington's suspension of contacts with him at the insistence of Eden. He

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., also Blair Bolles, "The Stew in the Melting pot" *Harpers*, 186 (January, 1943), 186.

<sup>32</sup>Roucek, *op. cit.*, p. 467.

further explained that it was high time for Hungary to become non-belligerent and let the Allies know that Hungary was willing to bring her army to the Allied side if such willingness would be properly appreciated.<sup>33</sup> The official State Department position regarding the free movements' activities was made clear by Assistant Secretary Berle, who in January, 1943, told an American-Hungarian Federation gathering:

You are American citizens. You know that national unity is essential. . . Foreign politicians may seek to distract you from . . . this unity. Your best answer: . . . you do not choose to be led back into . . . the petty quarrels of the old Europe. You need no instructions as to where your loyalties lie.<sup>34</sup>

Later in that year he also stated in another public speech that it would be "playing Hitler's game" to maintain the pretension that the only true defenders of liberty were found in extreme left-wing groups and that all conservatives, moderates and other non-revolutionaries must be Nazis or Fascists.<sup>35</sup>

Back in Hungary, three separate developments influenced Kállay's actions with respect to Western

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<sup>33</sup>Tibor Eckhardt's letter to the leaders of the Hungarian Smallholder Party, Washington, July 1, 1943; copy was made available by András Tamás, who had transmitted the original in Lisbon.

<sup>34</sup>Department of State, Bulletin, VIII (February 6, 1943) 132.

<sup>35</sup>Documents on American Foreign Relations, VI (1943-44), 693f.

contacts. The first was the fate of the Hungarian 2nd Army, which was sent out to the front during the summer of 1942, according to the German-Hungarian discussions of January in that year. Having been deployed on the Don section with inferior gear, in the face of a Red Army with a superiority in the ratio of 3:1 in soldiers and 10:1 in artillery, the Hungarians were caught up on January 12, 1943, when the frozen river constituted no obstacle to the attackers, in the Russian offensive which had started on other sections of the front on November 19, 1942. By January 24, the Second Army's front, following the Romanian and Italian sections south of it, collapsed completely. Of its 200,000 men, 40,000 were killed, 7,000 froze to death, 70,000 ended in captivity. Three-fourths of its equipment was also lost. Although this Hungarian disaster affected the Stalingrad events very little, it afforded the Germans a chance to blame their allied troops, including the Hungarians, for the defeat at Stalingrad.<sup>36</sup> To Kállay this first development meant that the army he wanted to save for more crucial times in the country itself was no more, and that the Soviet threat became real and acute.

The second event was the western landing in Africa, which indicated at least the possibility of an

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<sup>36</sup>Mario Fenyo, "The Allied Axis Armies and Stalingrad," Military Affairs, XXIX (Summer, 1965), 69-70.



Anglo-American approach to Hungary from the south. This made Kállay's concept of a surrender to them, and to them alone, more likely, dampened only by the Casablanca "unconditional surrender" formula. All of these developments hastened Kállay to put some teeth into his western plans.

The third determinant of his conduct early in 1943, was, of course, the German attitude toward Hungary. Its presentation did not have to be asked for. The Germans knew of the Romanian and Hungarian peace-feelers toward the West<sup>37</sup> and themselves were engaged in similar contacts with the East.<sup>38</sup> To clarify these conflicting and disturbing developments, Hitler summoned Mussolini, Antonescu and Horthy, one after the other. After an inconclusive meeting with the Duce, the Führer assailed Antonescu with the accusation that some Romanian diplomats had aggravated their treacherous contacts with the West by ascribing them to Hitler's initiative. Antonescu did not deny this, but suggested that a peace with the West was necessary in order to win in the East. Hitler attributed the problems in the East to the Romanian collapse at Stalingrad, which the Romanian countered by blaming that defeat on German strategic

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<sup>37</sup>Documents Secrets du Ministers des Affaires Étrangères de l'Allemagne, 1937-1943 Hongrie (Paris: Dupont, 1946) Docs. 38, 41, 42, 47.

<sup>38</sup>Robert M. W. Kempner, "Stalin's 'Separate Peace' in 1943," UN World, IV (March, 1950), 7-9.

errors <sup>39</sup> on April 16 and 17, came Horthy's turn. He was presented with a charge-sheet: the Hungarians fought badly, and Kállay was a defeatist who restricted Hungary's participation in the war, established contacts with the enemy designed to lead Hungary out of the war, evaded Hungary's economic obligations, and protected the Jews. Replying that he would not allow external dictation in the choice of his prime ministers, Horthy refused to dismiss Kállay, to discuss matters of politics, to deploy Hungarian forces in the Balkans at Hitler's request, to remove the Jews since it would risk the country's economic life, or even to sign a joint communiqué because it made references to a common war against the Anglo-American Powers. Then he turned to military questions which amounted to his request for the return of all Hungarian troops from Russia and explained that their use beyond the frontiers was not compatible with the need for them back home and with Hungary's Policy of having no territorial interests beyond her millennial borders. Finally Hitler consented to the request that the Hungarian army was to come home and stay there. To Ribbentrop's remark that the conflict

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<sup>39</sup>Andreas Hillgruber, *Hitler, König Carol und Marschall Antonescu* (Wiesbaden. Steiner Verlag, 1954), p.170

could not be solved with diplomatic tricks, Horthy rejoined that he was not so certain of that <sup>40</sup>

By the spring of 1943, then, Kállay was caught between two opposing influences. The German knowledge of his attempts impressed more caution on him, while the speeding developments pressed him to faster action. The final decision was to expand vigorously the western contacts on all three lines available: in Turkey, Switzerland, and Portugal. Of the three, when reactivated, the one in Istanbul proved to be the most fruitful. There in August two Hungarian Foreign Service officers presented their authorization by Kállay to Sterndale-Bennett, Councillor of -the British Embassy, to conduct negotiations on the grounds mentioned before; that is, Hungary would surrender to the Anglo-American forces and would help them by placing at their disposal the Hungarian transportation system. After they had exchanged their credentials and the British had informed " the Americans and Russians about the Hungarian move,

authorization was received by Sir Hugh Knatchbull-Hugesson, the British Ambassador in Turkey, from Eden to take note of the Hungarian communication and to inform the Hungarian representatives of the Allied conditions. On September 9, aboard the British Ambassador's yacht somewhere in the Sea of Marmara, Sir Hugh read off from

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<sup>40</sup>Lajos pp. 73-75; also Elek Karsai, A Budai vártól a gyepuőig (Budapest: Táncsics, 1965), pp 287-293.

the British note, which could not be handed over since the two countries were at war,, these preliminary conditions: (1) Hungary's capitulation was to be confirmed and the Allied conditions were to be accepted; (2) The agreement was to be kept secret until the Allies reached Hungary; (3) Hungary was to withdraw her troops from Russia and assist allied aircraft flying across Hungary; (4) Hungary was to reduce her economic cooperation with Germany; (5) Hungary was to resist German occupation attempts and reorganize her army command for that end; (6) At the proper moment Hungary was to place all her resources and facilities at the disposal of the Allies; (7) Hungary was to receive an air mission to advise her regarding preparations for her surrender; (8) Regular radio contact was to be established between the Allies and Hungary, and the Allies were to be informed about the German and Hungarian situation. <sup>41</sup> The agreement was then actually ratified on October 10, in Lisbon through an exchange between Sir Ronald Campbell, British Ambassador, and Wodianer, Hungarian Minister, in Portugal.

The Istambul agreement was the only substantial exchange with the allies and success for Kállay's diplomacy predicated on his assumption that an Anglo-American arrival into Hungary would precede either a

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<sup>41</sup>Kállay, *op. cit.*, PP. 372-374.

German or a Russian occupation. On his part he considered the agreement to be a, political gesture with advantageous political consequences. The Allies on the other hand, again according to Kállay, regarded it as an unconditional surrender to derive military advantages from it. <sup>42</sup> Kállay managed to keep his part of the bargain by ratifying and keeping secret the agreement, by reducing military and economic aid to Germany, by maintaining the radio communications, and by assisting the Allied airforces in their flights through Hungary. Quite obviously he could not keep those points which related to situations that did not come into existence before the German occupation, discussed later, which again was not his choice, but his fate.

### 3. The Frustration of Kállay's Diplomacy.

In the background of the negotiations leading to the Istanbul agreement, disturbing information reached Budapest regarding the Western Powers' outlook on Russia's conduct and future role. In February of 1943, Wodianer, the Hungarian Minister in Lisbon, reported a conversation with a British acquaintance of his in which the view was expressed that the British saw no reason to fear the bolshevization of Europe. <sup>43</sup> Also in February,

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., pp. 374-375.

<sup>43</sup> M.M.V., p. 413 .

the Hungarian Minister in Switzerland heard from the papal Nuncio, Msgr. Bernardini, that Archbishop Spellman's visit to the Vatican during those days was commissioned by Roosevelt to ask the Pope to persuade Italy and Germany's smaller allies to conclude separate peace with the Allies. The Nuncio added that it would be best if the interested countries approached the Pope for his mediation in this matter. <sup>44</sup> Following up this suggestion, Kállay instructed the Hungarian Minister at the Vatican to tell the Holy Father about the dangers inherent in the unfolding Soviet victory which ought to be called to the world's attention. Pope Pius XII refused the request with the explanation that he could not join a crusade against one dictatorship while remaining silent on the brutalities of the other, particularly the German atrocities in Poland. But he was taking every opportunity to signal the danger mentioned to everybody privately. Following his audience with the Pope, the Hungarian Minister also talked with Cardinal Montini, the future Pope Paul VI, who said that at his visit Archbishop Spellman had maintained the view, against all attempts to persuade him to the contrary, that Russia had spent her power and did not represent the same danger as before. It was hard to determine, however, whether

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<sup>44</sup>Karsai, *op. cit.*, p. 267.

these were the Archbishop's own views or those given him by President Roosevelt. <sup>45</sup>

Concurrently with the building of the Istanbul contact, in January, 1943, a French journalist offered to arrange a meeting of the Hungarian press attaché in Bern "with a Mr. Dulles, Legation Counselor, who is actually independently operating at the American Legation." <sup>46</sup> Royall Tyler was also there. Eventually both met with Kállay's emissary, the Vice Chairman of the Hungarian Upper House, and suggested that an American detachment with radios should be parachuted into Hungary to assure better communication facilities. This Kállay did not dare to accept and the contacts were kept up through the Hungarian Legation in Bern, but without substantial exchanges until August. <sup>47</sup>

At the time of the final Istanbul negotiations, the contacts in Switzerland and Portugal served only to elaborate the details of the agreements in Turkey. In Bern, the meetings with Dulles and Tyler centered around the Hungarian withdrawal from the Russian front. One Hungarian suggestion to facilitate this without arousal of German suspicions and opposition was to move the Hungarian troops from Russia for occupation duty to the

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid., pp. 268, 480a-b.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 266.

<sup>47</sup>Macartney, op. cit., II, 163.

Balkans with the idea that there they could also serve as the first link with the Allied invasion forces expected from the south. This was immediately turned down by the Americans in Bern since it could only have aggravated the already very strained Hungarian-Yugoslav relations. The American objection was heeded, and no troop transfer was made. By September 27, the Americans were informed that the Hungarian Chief of Staff visited the German Headquarters and asked for the release of all Hungarian troops from any duty at the eastern front, but the Germans were unwilling to comply for political reasons.<sup>48</sup>

Meanwhile the Lisbon contacts were mainly through Polish intermediaries and consisted mostly of urgings to change sides and democratize the country, to which Kállay replied on August 22:

The Hungarian Government has the best understanding of the situation in Southeast Europe and desires to decide upon the specific type of action. In present day Hungary it is impossible to imagine a more liberal type of government than the present.<sup>49</sup>

In support of this position a letter addressed to many leading American personalities by the President of the National Office of Hungarian Jews, representing 800,000

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<sup>48</sup>Miklós Kállay, "Come Over," The Hungarian Quarterly, III (April-July, 1962), 7-15.

<sup>49</sup>Reports by Wodianer to Kállay, Lisbon, March 12 and 31, 1943, and August 5, 1943; Kállay's replies to Wodianer, Budapest, August 3 and 22, 1943. MS, Kállay Documents.



individuals, was transmitted through Lisbon asking that Hungary's position be preserved and that there be no precipitous acts by Anglo-American forces that might bring about a German occupation and the end of Jewry in Hungary.  
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On September 18, Wodianer reported that Colonel Solberg, the American Military Attaché in Lisbon had indicated that Central Europe belonged to Eisenhower's section, that there were plans to arrive there before the Russians, and that "the Hungarians should take no steps which would upset Eisenhower's plans." The same day the British recommended that more intensive sabotage would have to be performed by Hungary, such as burning her oil wells. Two days later "Eisenhower's representative" suggested that the Hungarians contact the Russians, presumably to avoid communization, added Wodianer.<sup>51</sup> During the last week of September Wodianer had a conversation with George Kennan, the then American Chargé in Lisbon. Kennan explained that America had learned total warfare from the Germans, and thus everything was subordinated to the demands of war. He urged that Hungary accept the principle of unconditional surrender and that her agreements would have to be made

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid., Letter by Stern, Budapest, August 14, 1943.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., Wodianer to Kállay, Lisbon, September 18 and 20, 1943.

acceptable also with the Russians. <sup>52</sup> On October 10, a message from Eckhardt reported that on the first of that month Otto was received by Roosevelt and told that if Hungary would nerve herself to settle the relationship with the Allies," they would accept her as a co-belligerent, provided this was undertaken by Hungary on her own. The President also said that such acceptance would not mean admission to the United Nations. <sup>53</sup> To all these Kállay replied: "The Hungarian Government is willing to accept every solution that will defend her from Russian occupation and Russian interests."  
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In the second half of September, at a meeting between Kállay and a small group of trusted friends, Bethlen suggested a contact with the Russians, whereupon Kállay gave these three reasons for his opposition to such a step: (1) Should the Germans find out about a Hungarian peace-feeler toward the Soviets, nothing could prevent a German occupation, which might also be a Russian interest; (2) His policy was to weather through 'till the end of the war without occupation and with the least amount of sacrifices. A German occupation in

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<sup>52</sup>Ibid., Wodianer to Kállay, Lisbon, October 1, 1943.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid. Eckhardt to Wodianer, Washington, October 10, 1943.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., Kállay to Wodianer, Budapest, December 24, 1943.

response to such a step would only ensure that the country would become a German-Russian battlefield. While unoccupied, Hungary had hope that the Russians would not reach her before the German collapse; (3) One could never know what the Russian demands would be during the negotiations; should they be exorbitant, they would lead to grave consequences. <sup>55</sup> In line with this decision, the only contact with the Russians, effected between the Hungarian Consul at Geneva and a "former Soviet diplomat" through a British intermediary with the explanation that "it was in Russia that Hungary's fate would be decided," was also discouraged and died of neglect. <sup>56</sup>

Kállay's concern about the Soviet threat not only to Hungary but also to Europe could, of course, not be shared by the American leaders, whose view was reflected in a memorandum by General Burns in the words: "We need the Soviet Union to defeat Germany." This called for doing everything possible in a generous way to help Russia, and it

was decided that she must be considered as a real friend. It was further felt that America should assist in the formulation of a peace that would meet Russia's legitimate aspirations,<sup>57</sup> leaving

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<sup>55</sup>Kállay's letter to the Editor, Új Látóhatár, V (November-December, 1962), 583.

<sup>56</sup>Macartney, op. cit., II, 176-178.

<sup>57</sup>Roosevelt and Hopkins, pp. 642f.

“legitimate” undefined. At the first Quebec Conference in August of 1943, where the Istanbul agreement with Kállay was also approved by Roosevelt and Churchill, a War Department document was submitted which said that since Russia was a decisive factor in the war, she must be given every assistance and every effort be made to obtain her friendship, this even more so since she would dominate post-war Europe with Germany crushed and nobody to oppose the Soviet forces there.<sup>58</sup> Here, of course, lay the crux of the difference of opinion between the American and Hungarian evaluation of the future Russian role. While the Hungarians were right that Soviet expansion after the war could not have served western interests, they were very much wrong in assuming, indeed taking it for granted, that the West was prepared to see this situation their way.

There was considerably more agreement between western and Hungarian views regarding Hungary's position in the war. Already in the spring of 1942, Kállay's appointment by the Regent was viewed as a manifestation of growing Hungarian antagonism to Axis domination.<sup>59</sup> This was also evident in the reports on the Hungarian peace-feelers by the American missions approached. As early as December 2, 1942, the American Chargé in Ankara,

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<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 748.

<sup>59</sup>Newsweek, March 23, 1942, p. 31.

Kelly, cabled of an approach by a member of the Hungarian Legation there who suggested that there were many influential Hungarians willing and anxious to collaborate with the American Government. If such collaboration would be of interest to the Americans, the visit to Turkey of a responsible Hungarian Government official could be arranged to discuss details. Kelly believed the proposal to be serious.<sup>60</sup> On March 13, 1943, Secretary Hull observed that the many attempted contacts by the German satellites were all common in the desire to maintain their territories at the end of the war, and he instructed his missions in neutral countries that these peace-feelers were to be directed to the intelligence services, to whom their informations might be of value, and who should also keep in mind that no action or utterance should occur on their part which might be misconstrued as contrary to the spirit of the common effort of Russia, Britain and America.<sup>61</sup>

In April, the British summarized the peace-feelers reaching them by telling the Americans that they were undertaken as a reinsurance against the German defeat. The British wondered whether it would not be advisable further to weaken these faltering loyalties by modifying

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<sup>60</sup>Chargé Kelly to Secretary Hull, Ankara, December 1942. FW 740.0019/EW 1939/1195, MS, Department of State.

<sup>61</sup>F.R.U.S., 1943:I, 484.

the entirely negative attitude adopted toward them up to then. As to Hungary, they observed that she had kept a greater degree of independence than the other satellite states; that there was a relatively strong democratic opposition allowed to function; that the Hungarian leaders had been outspoken in their criticism of the Nazis. Consequently, the British Government proposed that the Hungarians be told that certain developments within Hungary which were in the right direction would be appreciated, but that Britain could obviously have nothing to do with a regime that allied itself with the Axis. To dispose of Hungarian fears of a new Trianon settlement, it was suggested that it be mentioned that the British did not desire to see Hungary torn to pieces and that the final western attitude would be governed by the practical steps taken by Hungary from Axis domination and toward a United Nations victory. Then distinction was made between the approaches emanating from the Hungarian Government, "clearly instigated . . . to reinsure their own position," which were not to be entertained, and the ones coming from independent individuals, like the Nobel prize winner Professor Szentgyörgyi, toward whom a forthright attitude would have to be adopted. <sup>62</sup>

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid., pp. 486-489.

Since Hungary did not fear a German defeat, but only a Russian victory, since the opposition in Hungary depended on and was actually encouraged by Kállay's Government, since Szentgyörgyi's trip was also with its blessing, and since for the Hungarian Government the Axis meant not something chosen but rather something it must be detached from, the above British evaluation was not quite accurate either in its premises or in its conclusion. The American evaluation, on the other hand, given in reply to the British, got closer to the realities of the situation by saying that the United States Government saw no reason to question the genuineness of the various Hungarian approaches, but that it believed that the Hungarians would simply be unable to accomplish the fundamental changes of Hungarian policy which would be necessary to promise a definite advantage to the United Nations. The Americans actually feared that premature efforts to that end would result only in the liquidation of those persons needed for a far-reaching Hungarian action at a time when it promised most success. They added, however, that individuals of high authority in the Hungarian Government were primarily interested in the tenure of their regime; consequently, their approaches should be regarded with extreme reserve,<sup>63</sup> It was precisely this consideration that prompted Kállay

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 492.

who as prime minister was alone able to effect the moves toward the Allies, to tell the West that his offer of cooperation when it became feasible was for the purpose of preserving Hungary and not his personal regime, which he knew it would be necessary to change. He did not take his post to save a system but to save the country from becoming a battlefield or an exploited colony, regardless by whom. He still wondered after the war why only the Russians were trusted by the West as to statements regarding future conduct.

The value of the Kállay offer to Allied military plans was detected by Colonel Solborg who, after a conversation with a Hungarian diplomat in September of 1943, concluded:

From the military point of view it would seem that [this] contact . . . should be of value. . . I visualize that when and if our onward march in Europe takes us into Yugoslavia, military help from Hungary will become a burning question, and yet it must be so timed as to reap the full benefit of this impact and preclude German preventive measures. It is known to me that there is a great bond of sympathy between the Poles and Hungarians, based on a goodly fund of mutual trust. I therefore believe that there are distinct possibilities of military nature by a carefully prepared plan of Hungarian cooperation with the ultimate aim of using their forces in conjunction with Polish units , to strike a flanking and a mortal blow at Germany. <sup>64</sup>

Assistant Secretary Berle's reply to this said in October:

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid., pp. 500-501.



An offer of unconditional surrender addressed to the three principal Allies through a fully authorized representative of the Hungarian Government is the only form of proposal which may be expected to receive serious consideration. . . . The Allies, meanwhile, are taking careful note of the continued participation of Hungary in the prosecution of the war against Russia, as well as all phases of Hungarian collaboration with Germany. . . .<sup>65</sup>

Kállay also took note of the West's collaboration with Russia to the extent that it precluded the realization of the contingency upon which the Istanbul agreement was based, and which was indispensable for any effective cooperation: the arrival of the Western Allies in Hungary. The news that there would be no Balkan landing came from Dulles. He also said that the Western Allies wanted blocs whereas the Russians wanted spheres of influence in post-war Europe.<sup>66</sup> To Kállay it appeared evident that in the absence of the Western Powers in East-Central Europe the Russian wish would prevail. These intimations were confirmed later in 1943, at the Moscow and Tehran Conferences. There Eden and Hull agreed that Russia should decide questions regarding Hungarian surrender negotiations since Hungary was engaged in active warfare against the Soviet Union alone.<sup>67</sup> There it was also decided that no Anglo-American invasion

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 501.

<sup>66</sup>Barcza to Kállay, Lugano, October 13, 1943. MS, Kállay documents.

<sup>67</sup>F.R.U.S., 1943:I, 633-634.

would be coming in Southeast Europe. Such a move was contemplated by the President, but only as an accommodation of possible Soviet requests; however, on military advice he easily refrained from it when it became evident that only Churchill preferred it, and Stalin was definitely against it. <sup>68</sup> In addition to these basic strategic decisions, the practical American attitude was expressed in Secretary Hull's telegrams of November 16, to his missions in neutral capitals:

Our military authorities have now made it clear L conditional it is their considered view that immediate unconditional surrender by Romania [Bulgaria, Hungary] would be desirable even if such surrender were to entail immediate German occupation of the country. In as much as it is recognized that military considerations constitute the ruling factor in any determination of policy in this regard, the Department had now taken the foregoing view as its own. . . .<sup>69</sup>

This decision was based on the conclusion of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on November 2:

Allied strategy would be best served if Germany continued to hold the Balkans, provided it were forced to garrison them heavily and pay a high price in troops and materiel. <sup>70</sup>

Their estimate of the enemy situation which was discussed with the President on their way to Tehran forecast that Germany's allies would surrender whenever forced to bear

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<sup>68</sup>F.R.U.S. 1943: The Conferences at Cairo and Tehran, pp, 478, 480, 490, 494, 680, and 697.

<sup>69</sup>F.R.U.S., 1943:I, 505.

<sup>70</sup>Maurice Matloff, Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare 1943-1944 (Washington: U.S.G.P.O.,1959), pp 259f.

the brunt of direct and sustained attack or whenever relieved of fear of Germany or of Russia.<sup>71</sup> The problem with this evaluation was that neither of its contingencies were likely precisely because of the military decisions. The direct attack was precluded by not moving in their direction, and the fears were not relieved by holding out the prospect, indeed the guarantee, of a German occupation which was to be followed by a Russian domination.

Kállay knew of these developments and prospects, first, through the Eckhardt line which obtained information to that effect in Washington, and, second, through the Turks whose diplomatic code was easy to break so that the Hungarians could read the Turkish reports concerning their talks with Eden after the Cairo Conference.<sup>72</sup> On this basis, Kállay could not share the spirit of confidence and optimism that characterized the American participants of the Moscow and Tehran Conferences, who had obtained the Soviet endorsement of an international organization for peace and security and a promise to assist in the war against Japan after the German surrender. Still, he continued to keep his part of the Istanbul agreement. He provided the Allied air forces with an undisturbed air space to assemble for their

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<sup>71</sup>F.R.U.S., 1943: Cairo and Tehran, p. 215.

<sup>72</sup>Kállay, Hungarian Premier, p. 277.

attacks on Germany and poured information concerning Germany and Hungary to the Americans through Lisbon and Stockholm. At the latter, photocopies of reports by Hungarian diplomats and military attaches from German-held countries and areas were "loaned" to the American Legation, the last batch comprising sixty-six documents and bearing the date of March 7, 1944. <sup>73</sup> The Regent and Kállay also made a frantic effort to bring the remnants of the Hungarian occupation army back from the East. This effort not only failed, it brought about the occupation of the country and the end of Kállay.

Under these circumstances, it appeared from Budapest that it would be easy to keep Secretary Hull's promise in his statement of December 11, 1943, to the effect that owing to "the reckless continuation of Hungary's participation in the war" against Russia her government would have to share the responsibility for and the consequences of the terrible defeat brought to Nazi Germany. <sup>74</sup> It also appeared that it would be immensely more difficult to keep the assurance of the Tehran declaration that "our concord will win an enduring peace." <sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup>Minister Johnson to Secretary Hull, Stockholm, April 27, and May 30, 1944. 840.00/522 and 840.00/521, respectively, MS, Department of State.

<sup>74</sup> Department of State, Bulletin, IX (December 11, 1943), 409.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 413.

What Kállay refused to do was to carry out large-scale sabotage, which was not part of the Istanbul agreement but was urged in subsequent messages. He considered as one of his major achievements to have prevented the Americans' "mania for sabotage," and this, he said, "they wanted in a country where the majority of the people and the leading circles were working for them. Sabotage actions could only have provoked a German occupation." <sup>76</sup>

In conclusion, it appears that during the Kállay biennium Hungary offered the Allies, by her position, a potential foothold when reached, and, by her policy, actual cooperation by denying the full use of her resources to Germany and by providing a steady flow of accurate information on Southeast Europe. The American view of the inescapably German-dominated Hungarian situation was governed by considerations under which western dependence, apparent or real, on Russian help shared the decision that attempted to obtain Russia's cooperation by assuring her victory, expansion, and preponderance in Europe. Against this background, the Hungarian manifestations of cooperation were accepted and used, but never reciprocated with any commitment for Hungary's independent future. It was only unfortunate that Hungary's inability to share the boundless

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<sup>76</sup>Kállay's letter to the writer, New York, May 20, 1963.

American trust in Russia's post-war cooperation was justified. In view of the final decisions, however, while she was used, Hungary was never misled by the West. A future without Russian dominance was never promised her. She alone misled herself by inferring this promise through her own interpretations of what western "interests" were.

## CHAPTER X

### GERMAN OCCUPATION AND HUNGARIAN ARMISTICE

#### 1. German Occupation, March, 1944

Hungary's international position at the beginning of 1944 was materially altered by the decisions at the end of 1943, that the Western Allies would not undertake an invasionary operation in Southeast Europe, either from the Balkans with Turkish cooperation or from Italy with a northeasterly push into the Danube Basin. Since the prerequisite of the original Istanbul agreement was that there would be Allied armies at the borders of Hungary, in the new situation, the whole problem of surrender boiled down to one practical question: to whom? In Hungary this was openly asked not only in government councils but also in the newspapers. <sup>1</sup> The Western Powers did not come, and to the Russians, who were still far away, the Hungarians could not surrender even if they wanted to, which they definitely did not. While Germany's overriding presence remained unaltered, the real danger to Central Europe from the Soviet Union also became more apparent; thus, the western advice that they capitulate to the Soviets unconditionally -- the only condition they could not take -- and the

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<sup>1</sup>Macartney, op. cit., II, 199.

refection of their peace feelers, forced the satellite countries back to the German side.<sup>2</sup>

This difference of views between Hungary and the West remained to affect their relations for the rest of Kállay's few weeks in power. The direct contacts between them were kept up at a three-step distance through intelligence channels and were exhausted in western requests that Hungary stop fighting the Russians and in Hungarian replies that the only thing they could do was to continue with steps that kept both the Russians and Germans away. Failing in the first, the second was sure to come. Hungary's plight in this respect was further aggravated by the western view that her German occupation would actually serve Allied military interests by tying down German troops precisely when the invasion in the West was about to take place. Consequently, Hungary's unoccupied independence was not in the interest of either of the great powers fighting around her. Despite the hopelessness of this desperate situation, Kállay refused to give up his efforts to maintain independence.

Kállay's stubborn view that the decision against a Balkan front was not serving the best western interests and that it amounted to missing an excellent western opportunity was not unique. It was also held by

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<sup>2</sup>A. Hillgruber, "Der Einbau der verbündeten Armeen in die deutsche Ostfront," Wehrwissenschaftliche Rundschau, X (December, 1960), 680f.

some British and German circles. Had Churchill's plans been carried through, as envisioned in his discussions with the President in Cairo on December 4, 1943, that with Turkish entry into the war Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary would all fall into Allied hands getting a grip on the Balkans,<sup>3</sup> then according to the calculations of Schellenberg, the Chief of SS Counterintelligence, the war would have been over in the spring of 1944, for the Balkans were like an overripe plum ready to fall at the slightest touch, which would have torn open the German southeastern flank.<sup>4</sup>

Besides American resistance, however, it appears that two more reasons would have severely handicapped the success of a Balkan move. First the Turks were reluctant to enter into a situation where their chief concern -- Russian expansion -- was left uncalmed. The Turkish Foreign Minister complained to Cretzianu, the Romanian Minister at Ankara, that following the Tehran Conference Roosevelt and Churchill could only talk about their wholehearted solidarity with the Soviets, that they refused to admit that there was any danger of Soviet expansion, that they were ready to make any concession to keep Russia in the war; consequently, if one wanted

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<sup>3</sup>F.R.U.S., 1943: Cairo and Tehran, p. 680.

<sup>4</sup> Louis Hagen, ed., The Schellenberg Memoirs (London: Deutsch, 1956), pp. 374-6, cf John Ehrman, Grand Strategy (London: HM Stationery Office, 1956), v, 60-3.



to know what the Western Allies would do in a given situation then it should be asked what did the Soviet Union want and not what was the western interest. <sup>5</sup> Kállay knew of this mentality but hoped that in view of information concerning Russian conduct the West would change.

The second factor that would have weakened a western move into Southeast Europe was the dissension between the Romanians and Hungarians. Owing to their national psychologies and traditional animosities, although they were fully aware of their interdependence and of the need to cooperate in order to create the conditions necessary and conducive to the success of such a move, when it came to practical steps their mutual distrust not only prevented cooperation but actually helped the Germans to exploit it. In his first speech in March, 1942, Kállay had called for friendly understanding with all neighbors. In the same hour the Romanians, in anticipation of a hostile Kállay speech intimated to them by the Germans, made a statement, as if in response, which was very anti-Hungarian. Kállay continued his attempts and suggested to Antonescu that to restore tolerable relations the Transylvanian border question should be suspended for the war and left to a

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<sup>5</sup>Alexandre Cretzianu, The Lost Opportunity (London: Jonathan Cape, 1957), p-116

post-war settlement; therefore, both the Trianon and the Vienna decisions should be disregarded for the time. Mihai Antonescu, Marshal Ion Antonescu's Vice Premier and Foreign Minister, rejected these Kállay proposals on borders and offered general cooperation in foreign affairs. This again made Kállay suspicious whether, if she accepted, Hungary would not be betrayed since foreign affairs in Bucharest were dictated by the German Minister. Kállay also decoded a telegram to Berlin in which Antonescu explained that the proposed Hungarian-Romanian cooperation was to be a guarantee to Germany that nothing anti-German would happen. Later Antonescu told the Hungarian Minister in Bucharest that this was done to allay German suspicions. But it did not allay Kállay's suspicions, who suggested to send an emissary to clarify the details. The indirect Romanian answer came from a public meeting in the form of a speech that the Romanian army before demobilizing would yet have to fight against the chief enemy in the north (Hungary) and also in a resolution that Romania's frontiers must extend to the Tisza

river, that is, beyond the old Trianon frontiers.<sup>6</sup> In spite of these differences, their minds worked the same way. Both Kállay and Mihai Antonescu thought at the same time, late in 1942, of persuading Mussolini to take the initiative whereby Italy,

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<sup>6</sup>Kállay, Hungarian Premier, pp. 84-6.

Romania, Hungary and Bulgaria would simultaneously cease hostilities in agreement with the Allies. However, both failed at separate occasions to convince Mussolini of the move's feasibility.<sup>7</sup>

The oppositions in the two countries had been equally unsuccessful to effect a meaningful cooperation toward ending their respective country's war participation in the summer of 1943, Bánffy, a member of the Hungarian Upper House, who was sent to Romania by the allay Government to settle outstanding administrative problems in Transylvania, unknown to Kállay and Antonescu also contacted Maniu, the Romanian opposition leader, at Bethlen's request to prepare the detachment of Romania and Hungary from the Axis. The Maniu-Bánffy meeting failed, for the latter insisted on the Transylvanian status quo, whereas the former refused to accept this condition and insisted that Hungary's relations with Slovakia and Yugoslavia also be renegotiated regarding territorial questions.<sup>8</sup> The agreement of the . Romanian and Hungarian views -- government and opposition -- regarding their respective positions in the war was further demonstrated by Maniu's communications with the West in which he, too, agreed that Nazis must not be

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 147-9, also Creutzianu, op. cit., pp. 90-1.

<sup>8</sup>Lajos Kerekes, "Bánffy Miklós politikai küldetése 1943-ban," Történelmi Szemle, VI/2 (1963); 259-61.

given through sabotage provocation to start terror, that it was necessary to defend Bessarabia against Russia, that they would not negotiate with Russia without well-founded guarantees from Britain and America. But he also maintained opposition to any change of the Trianon boundaries and advocated a resettlement of Romanians from Trans-Istria and the Balkans to the Transylvanian districts then inhabited by Hungarians. He proposed that the latter be moved to sub-Carpathian Ruthenia, whose Ruthenian population in turn should transfer to the Ukraine proper.<sup>9</sup>

This inability to suspend the outstanding frontier questions between the two neighbors continued to poison the atmosphere with mistrust, hate and hostility. In this situation they thought to advance their causes by denigrating each other both with the Germans and Anglo-Saxons, which in the final analysis helped only Germany and Russia, not the West or the two countries involved. This had also prevented any joint action when the Italian surrender came and when both were urged by the West to move, since even the legal implications of their alliance with the Axis were vitiated by Italy's defection. Unfortunately, however, only the legal aspect was invalidated, since the material conditions of their leaving the Axis continued to be absent when the

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<sup>9</sup>F.R.U.S., 1943:I, 493-5.

Allies failed to appear at their borders after Italy's invasion.<sup>10</sup> And if the Germans were strong enough to stop the Allies and the Italians in Italy then it would not have been quite logical to expect success in any Romanian-Hungarian attempt to change sides.

In the winter of 1943-44, the Hungarian contacts with the West continued through the Lisbon and Bern lines. Through Lisbon Kállay, still sticking to his old and by then impossible conditions upon which Hungary would be willing to surrender to the West, authorized Otto late in November to act as Hungarian Head of State in the event that the Germans invaded Hungary and Horthy abdicated or was deposed.<sup>11</sup> Otto received this news on January 12, and presented it to President Roosevelt on the 15th. It would have been a miracle if anything became of these communications since they referred to conditions which never came and could not come into existence. Yet Kállay believed in those miracles and continued his contacts. His unrealistic optimism was still reflected when twenty years later he referred to his documents as indications of the excellent relations he had had with the Allies. Actually they were reduced to contacts with intelligence agencies whose aim was not

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<sup>10</sup>Puskás, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

<sup>11</sup>Macartney, *op. cit.*, II, 191f; cf. Lukács, *op. cit.*, pp. 775, 803.

to prepare for future peace but to do everything possible to promote a state of chaos and disruption in the satellite countries, which was diametrically opposed to Kállay's plans and hopes. Unfortunately the messages that resulted from these contacts were far from hopeful. Early in January Francis Deák arrived in Lisbon as an American Legation Counselor. He, a former Hungarian subject, claimed to have been commissioned both by the State Department and the High Command. Deák's messages talked of American interest in preventing Hungary's occupation by Russia, of no need for sabotage, only information, of Hungary serving as a central point of consolidation in the Danube Basin; yet, they also added that it was impossible to tell whether Hungary would get any better treatment than Germany after the war and that it was inconceivable for America to meet conditions by or give guarantees to Hungary, which had gone to war against her.<sup>12</sup> Similar reports came from other sources, where Hungarian inquiries with the Americans were handled according to State Department instructions: "We don't deal with any of these overtures except on the basis of unconditional surrender."<sup>13</sup> Otto's reports on Hungary were also received in Washington where the final

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<sup>12</sup>Wodianer to Kállay, Lisbon, January 10, 11, and 20, 1944. MS, Kállay documents.

<sup>13</sup>F.R.U.S., 1944:III, 847.

reaction to them remained that Otto and Eckhardt exaggerated the strength of the opposition and whatever the Hungarian Government was doing was part of Kállay's efforts to pave the way for the post-war period.<sup>14</sup>

Meanwhile in February the Russian advance at the front brought Russian forces into contact with Hungarian occupation troops. Of this inadvertent development a great propaganda issue was made by the Russians, who detected in it a deliberate Hungarian attempt to reintroduce Hungarian fighting troops. This was not the case; on the contrary, the Hungarians wanted their troops, which were not equipped or trained for frontline-service, to be withdrawn behind the country's Carpathian borders where the natural barriers would have made it possible for them even with inferior gear to resist the Russians. So at least Kállay hoped to solve the situation. His concept was to mobilize the entire Hungarian army and put them in charge of the Carpathian defenses, an effort that was intended to be acceptable both to the Russians and Germans. The Russians, it was hoped, would see no good reason, strategic or political, to force this line manned by Hungarians alone when they could get around it in pursuit of their original objectives toward Germany and the Balkans. It was expected that the Germans would also accept it since it would

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., pp. 848-50.

relieve them of some burden at a small section where resistance to the Russians would be continued. <sup>15</sup>

For his plan Kállay asked western and German approval. The British contact opposed the plan outright and advised Hungary to sue for peace as soon as the Russians arrived at her borders. Dulles in Bern first reacted unfavorably to any plan that involved a Hungarian-German cooperative agreement even if against the Bolshevik Peril. But then he offered to ask Washington whether it would request the Russians to stop at the Carpathian frontiers of Hungary provided the defense of those frontiers would not be in cooperation with the Germans. This meant a choice between Russia and Germany in which Kállay could not choose the Russians. To a later approach on the matter Dulles replied: "The Russians play ball with us. Perhaps they will deceive us, but we shall certainly not deceive them." <sup>16</sup> At the same time, however, reports reached the State Department which indicated that Russia was not exactly playing ball with the West according to the fairest sportsmanship, portending an outcome of the cooperation other than the one hoped for by America. <sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>Kállay, *op. cit.*, p. 316.

<sup>16</sup>Macartney, *op. cit.*, pp.213f.

<sup>17</sup>F.R.U.S., 1944:IV, 812-189.

Kállay had similarly little success with his plan when it was presented to the Germans. In January the Chief of Staff visited German Headquarters and asked for the withdrawal of all Hungarian troops from outside the country to the Carpathian border defense which was to be entrusted solely to the Hungarian forces. The Germans did not want to hear of any "falling back" to the Carpathians when the Russians were still far from that line and when the Hungarian troops were needed where they were. Later Kállay wrote a letter to Keitel announcing that the Hungarian troops would be taken back and that no German troops would be allowed in Hungary. <sup>18</sup> This was supported by a letter from Horthy to Hitler with the same plan and request. <sup>19</sup> These letters in conjunction with information received through the German intelligence services that Kállay was conspiring to make separate peace with the Western Powers brought to fruition Hitler's plans to prevent



Romania's and Hungary's defection. "Margarethe I" was the plan for Hungary's German occupation with Romania and Slovak help, Romania taking the area east of the Tisza river. "Margarethe II" was drawn up on January 26, for Romania's occupation with Hungarian and Bulgarian aid. After Marshall Antonescu managed to convince Hitler that there

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<sup>18</sup>Macartney, *op. cit.*, pp. 218f.

<sup>19</sup>Horthy . . . Iratai, pp. 409f.

was no reason to doubt Romania's loyalty at a meeting on February 26-28, "Margarethe II" was dropped and "Margarethe I" was modified to the extent that Germany alone would carry it out because Antonescu refused to defer his territorial claims against Hungary if he was to help Hitler, who in turn could not satisfy such claims because his aim was to keep Hungary in the war and not to destroy her.<sup>20</sup> The intelligence services were able to induce Hitler to accept a further change whereby instead of forcing all Hungarians into resistance by a total German occupation, and "evolutionary" solution would be applied in which the German troops would not move "into but through" Hungary and with inviting Horthy to Germany there would be no resistance possible back in Hungary.<sup>21</sup>

Horthy was then invited to discuss the matter raised in his letter. Meanwhile the Hungarians also learned of large troop concentrations on Hungary's western border. The question was whether to accept the invitation or to send the Chief of Staff Instead. Both Horthy and Kállay thought that it would be dangerous to leave the country, but the Chief of Staff appealed to Horthy's sense of duty to accept the invitation and thus save the Hungarian troops whose fate was to be discussed.

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<sup>20</sup>Hillgruber, Hitler . . ., pp. 178-181.

<sup>21</sup>Puskás, op. cit., pp. 113f.

In view of the appeal Horthy could not but decide to go. His departure, however, was not preceded by any preparations as to what to do in his absence back home in any specific contingency. Since nothing was decided or prepared, nothing was done either.

The Hungarian view regarding the international situation was expounded in a directive on February 3 to all Hungarian officials in contact with the Allies by Szegedy-Maszák, Chief of the Political Section in the Foreign Ministry, and in a letter on March 1, by Kállay to his ministers in neutral countries. With reference to the western propaganda line that Germany's small allies would have to work their way home, Szegedy-Maszák recalled, without wanting to enlarge on it, the western pre-war contribution to the situation in which the small countries could not oppose Germany without a definite risk to their existence, and stated that, nevertheless, those minor states still hoped for western victory because they believed that the Western Powers were fighting for principles. This hope was jeopardized, however, by the new western requests for services to earn future existence. He detected an eerie identity between the western and German demands for proof to deserve one's independence. To the Hungarians this service-to-earn-rewards policy appeared impossible to carry out for three reasons. First, no nation had the right to invite self-destruction; second, in actuality the small nations were

not treated in proportion to the merits they had earned, as witnessed the examples of Poland and Yugoslavia, which deserved the most consideration for their resistance and sacrifices yet received little effective support from the West in face of a Stalin whose only merit regarding them had been that he helped Hitler in destroying Poland and aided Tito in opposing the West; third, the partisan resistance asked for was most unfeasible in Hungary's lowlands and as elsewhere would immediately get into Communist hands. Then he asked: What was the real peace aim of the Western Allies? What determined one's future? Merits which in practice were disregarded, or efforts to achieve a fair peace? The conduct asked for would be in favor of Russia but not of their own independence. The war between Germans and Russians would not be shortened by additional destruction. It appeared rather that this whole policy of meriting rewards smacked of an attempt to establish in advance a system of responsibility for the future peace treaties. He concluded with the academic question: "Is the Atlantic Charter to suffer the fate of Wilson's Fourteen points?" <sup>22</sup>

The second survey, Kállay's letter, defined his aim as recovery of freedom of action. Its original assumption that Anglo-American policy would determine

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<sup>22</sup>Tamás, *op. cit.*, pp. 106-118.

Central-Eastern Europe's future did not hold true owing to inactivity of their front in Italy. The shift of balance had turned in favor of the Soviets. In this situation the Hungarian Government's escape to the West would only amount to a fiction of resistance by the exile government while total support would be given by the country to Germany, as in the case of Czechoslovakia. The existing alternatives were reduced to German or Russian occupation. No resistance to the Soviets would bring German occupation, but Hungarian resistance to the Soviets alone on the Carpathians without German troops was still a possibility. Only an overwhelming western victory, compromise peace, or the success of the Carpathian plan left any hope for the future.<sup>23</sup>

Under such conditions and considerations did Horthy take off for his fateful journey to Hitler. The only preparation by Kállay, if it could be called that, was to inform the West about the trip and the German troop concentrations endangering Hungary. The sole reply that came through Lisbon promised only that if the Germans moved into Hungary, she would be bombed.<sup>24</sup> Hungary's position, then, was outlined by three prospects: German occupation, Anglo-Saxon bombing, and Russian attack, and all of them in combination.

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<sup>23</sup>Kállay, *op. cit.*, pp. 397-406.

<sup>24</sup>Wodianer to Kállay, Lisbon, March 16, 1944. MS, Kállay documents.

While Horthy was at Kleisheim with Hitler two more American-Hungarian moves fell victim to the German occupation. The long planned American air mission composed of only three or four men under the command of a colonel to advise the Hungarians on their preparations, for surrender was finally parachuted into Hungary the day before the Germans occupied her. Their coming was not only known to the Germans, it was also a prime reason for Hitler's move to prevent Kállay's defection. The German air attaché asked Szegedy-Maszák the day before the American arrival: "Haven't your Americans come yet?" A further complicating factor was the German uncertainty about what the air mission meant when a large-scale parachute invasion of Hungary was expected and talked about by the country's population.<sup>25</sup> The other American step which was a casualty of the mid-March days in Hungary was a message sent through Lisbon and destroyed by the courier on meeting German troops in Budapest. In it Otto reported that during a conversation early in March the President expressed willingness to support Hungary's claims on the principle of self-determination if Hungary would give her assurance to support the Allies at the decisive moment.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Statement by Szegedy-Maszák to the writer in Washington, September 20, 1956.

<sup>26</sup>Macartney, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

on March 18th, the Horthy-Hitler meeting took place. Hitler charged out with accusations against Kállay, of whose contacts with the West he had proofs. Horthy claimed ignorance about it, and rightly so, because precisely for that reason Kállay had not involved him in any details of the matter, but he refused to admit treachery. Should Hungary see the need to sue for an armistice, he would announce it to the Germans in advance. Hitler still felt compelled to take measures, which amounted to occupation, to assure the situation in Hungary, Horthy saw no reason to stay after that and asked for his train, which was made unavailable with some transparent excuses. The Hungarian delegation decided then to continue talks at least to mitigate the things to come. Their request to cancel the occupation order was refused by Hitler with the explanation that the troops were already on their way, which was true. They argued that occupation would only expose Hungary to Allied bombing and sabotage and Germany to political defeat. Hitler made it a political victory, however, when he agreed to remove his troops from Hungary upon appointment of a government which would enjoy his confidence. Horthy could do little else than accept the condition, for separated from his country he was neither practically nor constitutionally able to issue orders to resist. This was the only way to avoid bloodshed and the army's total incorporation into the Wehrmacht.

While the occupation was being carried out by nine German divisions, on returning from Hitler Horthy held a Crown Council on March 19, at which it was decided that the Kállay Government should resign and Horthy stay on to mitigate with his presence the excesses of an occupation. Horthy then appointed the new government under Sztójay, the former envoy in Berlin. Kállay found refuge at the Turkish Legation, and still on the 19th the country's occupation was completed.  
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The German take-over ended an era under which Hungary had provided a relative haven for refugees from other areas, and had been able to offer resistance both to Germany and Russia simultaneously. Of the Hungarian army numbering 450,000 men, only 20,% were on occupation duty back of the eastern front; of Hungary's total Petroleum production only 40% was given to Germany. Kállay's efforts to keep things that way were appreciated by neither of the warring great powers. Hitler wanted to put an end to Hungary's unreliability, which was aggravated by his knowledge of Kállay's contacts with the West. 28

The Allies viewed Hungary's situation equally unfavorably. They thought Kállay's peace feelers to be

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27M.M.V., pp. 434, 452-9, also Horthy . . . Iratai, pp. 422-38, also Kállay, op. cit., pp.-428-38.

28A. Hillgruber, "Das deutsch-ungarische Verhältnis im letzten Kriegsjahr," Wehrwissenschaftliche Rundschau, X (February, 1960), 78-80.



to be insincere, although he had always made clear to them that he could not equate Russia with them nor opt for Russia against Germany; they judged his moves belated, in response to German defeats, although the German defeats made his policy possible but did not cause it; they charged that he attempted to save only himself, although what he attempted was to preserve his country for a peace that appeared to him increasingly forfeited by the strictly military considerations in the West. They encouraged him to resist and sabotage Germany even at the risk of occupation, although his indirect resistance deprived the German war effort of much more than an occupied Hungary could have. As a final blow they accused him of aiding Hitler too much, although Hitler decided to remove him because of cooperation with the Allies, topped by the fact that Hitler's move was hastened by the misassumption that the West would help Hungary. In sum, the West saw Kállay's conduct as "reckless continuation of participation in the war against us, for which he would have to share the responsibility." These obvious discrepancies between the Hungarian and western positions on Hungary's conduct -- the intended and actual against the expected and recognized -- had been too great to be reconciled and remained manifest in the fact that while Hungary wanted to join the West alone, the West offered her a surrender to Russia alone.

## 2. Hungary's Armistice Negotiations

Hungary's international situation at the time of her occupation was the subject of some American evaluations. In a State Department memorandum drawn up on the day of the occupation, it is observed very astutely:

The particular problems with Hungary are, first, to find a means of getting that country out of the war, and, second, to determine how much we (and the British) shall have to say in Hungarian affairs. Our instrumentalities for resolving the first are dependent upon the answer found for the second. We believe that the British and ourselves should accept definite responsibilities for ensuring to these countries an application of the principles for which we profess to be waging this war against Nazism. . . .<sup>29</sup>

Further American views on Hungary's situation are to be found in position papers by the Research and Analysis sections of the State Department and the Office of Strategic Services. One of them concluded that Hungary's ruling class followed an opportunistic policy without entering irrevocable commitments to Germany or provoking German reprisals. After a few remarkably invalid comparisons between Hungary and the other small German allies, it aptly observes that the faults of Hungary's situation were that she was too vital for Germany and that Russia would get there first. "Threatened by the choice," the paper continues, "they took Germany, and this was the background of March 1944."<sup>30</sup> Actually, of

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<sup>29</sup>F.R.U.S., 1944:III, 850f.

<sup>30</sup>U. S. Office of Strategic Services, R. and A., NO, 2543S September 22, 1944.

course, the background was that in spite, and not because, of this choice the Germans thought she chose the West and thus became unreliable in the fight against the East. A different document, intending to give background information, described Hungary's collaboration with Germany in these stages: Until Teleki's suicide there was a pacific collaboration with internal Nazification and revision without active belligerency; then until the defeat at the Don came total belligerent collaboration with the purpose to obtain post-war Hungarian sovereignty over the entire Carpathian basin as a reward for services to Germany; it was followed until March, 1944, by partial belligerent collaboration with the troops recalled and the purpose to safeguard territorial gains by demonstration of good will toward the United Nations and eventual defection; its failure ended in the German occupation.

The country's occupation brought about changes that bore out Kállay's predictions, but did not correspond to the

West's expectations. The Hungarian economy became completely geared to the service of the German war machine, 300,000 men were thrown to the Russian front, and the German occupation troops were also withdrawn during the summer and deployed against the United

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<sup>31</sup>Department of State, Office of International Research, R. and A., No. 2628. October 16, 1944.

Nations elsewhere. Thus the advantages to the West seen by the American military and accepted by the State Department turned out to be aids to Germany. In addition the refugees and Jews were rounded up and taken to German-run concentration camps from the countryside and put into ghettos in Budapest. Of course the new Sztójay Government was put there to aid the German occupation forces in their efforts to "cleanse Hungary from Jewish-defeatist-plutocratic infections." The political parties were suspended, newspapers closed, opposition leaders and members arrested, others went into hiding. This was precisely the situation that Kállay feared. Now those in power were not only unwilling to keep in contact with and aid the West but they were there to obstruct it. Any appeal to them fell on deaf ears. Now it became more apparent what Kállay's Hungary had represented in the German ocean. So Kállay's "reckless war against us" turned out to be in comparison quite harmless or even advantageous to the West.

The American reaction to the occupation appeared in three areas: military, political, and humanitarian. Militarily, a systematic bombing of Hungarian targets was started. Unfortunately they were indiscriminate and inaccurate enough to provide the Germans with an excellent propaganda item which was little neutralized by the Western propaganda leaflets that presented the air raids as proofs of how foolish Kállay's policy had been.

Politically, now that the Hungarian missions in neutral countries had no government to represent that was willing to resist Germany, the resigned ministers formed a Committee for Resistance, in which Otto was also involved. First the West expected some advantage of their work, particularly in promoting resistance to Germany, but it never sponsored or encouraged them as a free movement. Secretary Hull concluded that the future of Hungary was in the hands of the Hungarians within Hungary and their resistance should be encouraged. For this purpose communications facilities were offered to the dissident diplomats to contact each other, but their "resistance" activities never amounted to much, and by mid-summer Acting Secretary Stettinius decided that they did not warrant a more positive attitude, although they could be used for propaganda, consultative and special services.<sup>32</sup> A request to the Secretary of State by a group "in the name of all liberal Americans of Hungarian descent" for the formation of a Hungarian Committee of Liberation was also discouraged by evasion.<sup>33</sup>

Of humanitarian nature were the announcements and messages related to the treatment of the Jews in Hungary.

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<sup>32</sup>F.R.U.S., 1944:111, 851-881, passim.

<sup>33</sup>Telegram by Louis Tóth to Secretary Hull, New York, March 21, 1944, and reply by Fullerton, Chief, Division Southern European Affairs, Washington, March 29, 1944. 864.01/489. MS, Department of State.

Actually already on March 7, 1944, Acting Secretary Stettinius asked his mission in Switzerland to let the Hungarian Government know that the American Government was aware of the Hungarians engaging in the persecution of their Jewish minority and refugees who had escaped from other lands to Hungary by sending them into Poland, where they underwent cruelty and even death dictated by the Nazis; another form of such persecution consisted of preventing the escape of these refugees to neutral countries. Therefore, the United States Government warned that all individuals engaged in such atrocities would be fully responsible for their actions.

<sup>34</sup> This must have been issued in anticipation of events to come rather than in response to actualities, because early in March the Kállay Government was still in power and Pursuing exactly the opposite policy of that charged; namely, it gave a haven of refuge to Jews from other countries and sheltered its own Jewish population from the hands of the Germans. Ironically on the very day when the Germans occupied Hungary, the last report reaching Kállay from Lisbon quoted the American Minister, who was favorably impressed by Hungary's treatment of her POW's and refugees: "Any nation that treated its POW's that way deserved every consideration." <sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>F.R.U.S., 1944:I, 1002.

<sup>35</sup>Wodianer to Kállay, Lisbon, March 18, 1944. MS, Kállay documents.

March 19, of course, changed the situation completely. On the 24th, the War Refugee Board brought to all Axis satellite governments' attention that the Allies viewed in the most serious light the assistance given to Hitler's program to exterminate the Jews. It was repeated on April 12, that the American Government looked at the persecutions, the Nazi pressure notwithstanding, with the greatest of disfavor.<sup>36</sup> On June 10, members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee also issued a statement urging the Hungarian people to obstruct the Nazi atrocities by whatever means they can. They called it unthinkable that Hungary, once the haven of tens of thousands who had fled Nazi terror in other lands, should countenance the cold-blooded murder of innocent people.<sup>37</sup>

At the same time, Horthy, who had completely withdrawn from public activities and blamed the Germans for having "betrayed him" by refusing to end the country's occupation after a government enjoying their confidence had been appointed, recovered from his torpor to issue a report of May 25, 38 which gave account of the deportation of Jews from the country outside of Budapest, and by many appeals reaching Hungary in the name of humanity from Vatican, neutral and Allied sources. Very early in

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid., pp. 1064f.

<sup>38</sup>Horthy . . . Iratai, pp. 445-9.

June, in a letter to Sztójay, Horthy said that he had expected that the new government would have to perform objectionable tasks under duress but the treatment of the Jews was clearly intolerable and in opposition to any decent Hungarian mentality and therefore he asked his prime minister to stop the excesses against the Jews and to suspend the responsible administrative officials. This did not seem to have had much effect because the anti-Jewish activities continued, while the protests and appeals also kept on coming to Budapest. Among them, on June 27, the Swiss Minister at Budapest delivered an American note which reminded the Hungarian Government of the grave view that the Americans took of the treatment of the Jews and of the determination to punish those sharing responsibility for the persecution.<sup>40</sup> On the same day Horthy called a Crown Council repeating his demand that the two chief administrative officers in charge of Jewish affairs be removed, referring to them as "those dirty sadists." The success of such demands, however, depended on the essential contingency of German approval, and that was not forthcoming. The two officials could be removed from Jewish affairs, but Jewish affairs could not be detached from German interests. Still on the same day the Germans and their

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<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 450-3.

<sup>40</sup>F.R.U.S., 1944:I, 1088 f.



Hungarian accomplices -- the dirty sadists included --made an attempt on the life of a state secretary from whom they wanted to obtain the keys that led to Horthy's apartments in order to enable them physically to force the Regent into collaboration. The attempt failed, but it aroused Horthy, who had also received news of a move afoot to deport the Jews of Budapest and remove him from his post. He nerved himself and ordered to Budapest his still available reliable troops and thus prevented the Nazi coup and the deportation. <sup>41</sup>

The Regent also wrote a letter to Hitler on June 6 and reminded him of the agreement whereby Hungary was to be evacuated by German troops on the establishment of a new government. Instead, the occupation went on and the SS as well as the police services continued to treat the country as a hostile land and kept in custody innocent People on trumped-up charges. He added that since march, 300,000 Hungarian men were serving at the front, while 250,000 Germans enjoyed the easy life a of occupation in Hungary, and asked that they with the secret police be removed from Hungary. <sup>42</sup>

With the first success, Horthy's confidence grew. On July 12, the Germans asked him to keep the agreement according to which Hungary was to be "cleansed."

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<sup>41</sup>Horthy . . . Iratai, p. 469.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., pp. 454-6.

Horthy's reply was an order to stop the trains carrying Jews and political prisoners from leaving Budapest and vicinity. He also told Sztójay that he (Sztójay) had lost his confidence and wanted to replace him with a government of reliable generals. The news of these plans reached the German Minister who tried to persuade Horthy not to do anything without contacting Hitler first, whereupon Horthy wrote a letter on the 17th of July explaining that since the country's sovereignty had not been restored as promised, on the contrary the Gestapo's actions continue to terrorize the land, it was time indeed for the withdrawal of the German units from Hungary and added that to avoid a catastrophe the Sztójay Government also had to go. Veesenmayer, the German plenipotentiary, declined to transmit the letter with the excuse that he did not know where the Führer was. <sup>43</sup> The Führer happened to be at his headquarters, where the time of an attempt on his life drew near. The next day a reply came to the unsent letter and said that the slightest deviation or change in the Sztójay Government would yield serious reprisals; this was supported by the remark that two more divisions were ready at the Hungarian border to move into Hungary. <sup>44</sup> On the 21st, the day after the attempt on Hitler's life, Horthy sent

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 466-8.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 469.

one of his generals to Hitler to announce that if the promised German help at the Hungarian front line did not materialize, Hungary felt herself compelled to get out of the war. <sup>45</sup> Under the circumstances this new indication of a Hungarian separate peace attempt was presented at a singularly ill-chosen moment. The failure of this move was self-evident, but it is worth observing that Veesenmayer, as he tells in retrospect, was instructed by Hitler to impress on the Hungarians that the war would be ended victoriously within months by means of the new Wonder Weapons. Veesenmayer also says that he did not want to fight Horthy, who was indispensable to maintain a "Royal Hungary," and that while he could have understood that pro-British Horthy wanted western troops in Hungary it was inconceivable to him that Horthy would sue for peace from the Reds. Veesenmayer also admits that at that time the supreme ruler in Hungary was exclusively the SS. <sup>46</sup> This may explain some of the German actions and lenient attitudes toward Horthy.

The American views on Hungary's position became evident in those days in the consideration of the application of "unconditional surrender" terms to the Axis

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<sup>45</sup>Horthy, *Ein Leben . . .*, p. 275.

<sup>46</sup>Péter Gosztonyi, "A pannóniai helytartó," *Magyar Élet*, Toronto, April 29, 1967, pp. 1-3.

satellites. The British and the Soviets raised the question about the advisability of the unconditional surrender formula for the satellites in fear of its negative effect. The President insisted, however, that no exception be made in principle and referred to Lee's unconditional surrender, after which his men had been permitted to take their horses home for spring plowing.

<sup>47</sup> The difficulty with this was that the satellites were not familiar with that precedent in American history, nor did they know that conditions were implied in the unconditional formula. The State Department realized this. Charles Bohlen of the Eastern European Division concluded that the United States might stiffen the resistance with this attitude. Secretary Hull also became concerned, not so much as to what disadvantages the formula might carry in retarding surrender, but rather that the Soviets might misunderstand America's motives for the unyielding attitude. Finally a State Department memorandum to the Soviet Union on April 11 summarized that the general principle would be retained but America would be prepared to give favorable consideration to a modification in specific cases. <sup>48</sup>

Hull also wanted to facilitate the satellite surrenders with a declaration by the three Allied

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<sup>47</sup>F.R.U.S., 1944:1, 588f.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., pp. 590, 593.

Governments. On March 28, he suggested a statement prefaced with the observation that "through the fateful policy of recent leaders, the people of Hungary are suffering the humiliation of German occupation." <sup>49</sup> Somebody in London discovered, however, that Kállay had drawn down on Hungary a German occupation precisely because he was trying to get away from the Axis; thus, there was no reason to single him out for odium. <sup>50</sup> The final outcome of these negotiations on how best to detach the satellites by an appeal was the May 12 declaration by the American, British, and Soviet Governments. <sup>51</sup> It warned these peoples that they were by their policies and attitudes materially contributing to the German war machine; that these nations still had it within their power by resisting Nazism by every Possible means to shorten the war; that the longer they continued the collaboration the more disastrous would be the consequences and the more rigorous would be the terms imposed upon them; and that they must decide whether they wanted to oppose Allied victory, while there was still time for them to aid that victory.

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid., P. 585.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid., PP. 591f.

<sup>51</sup>Department of State, Bulletin, X (May 13, 1944), 425.

The Hungarian decision, however, on leaving the war was not influenced by such statements. Horthy and his supporters who wanted to get out of the war told Hitler that they would do so as soon as it became impossible to save the country from Russian occupation. . The ones who supported the Germans in their actions in Hungary, on the other hand, could not care less about Allied threats. As seen above, Horthy's efforts to counteract the Germans had only minor successes. For more success he needed changes in the general military situation. Of course, Horthy had not given up his hope that somehow the West would manage to get to Hungary before the Russians did and would not allow that such a strategic area should fall under Russian domination. In the West, it was decided on June 28 that to facilitate Hungary's detachment from the Axis did constitute a prime allied objective, and that any group that would be ready to resist the enemy would receive Western support.<sup>52</sup> Also shortly after the Normandy invasion the Allied commander in Italy, British General Wilson, proposed to General Marshall that the Allies exploit the successes in Italy and move toward Southern Hungary through the Ljubljana gap. General Eisenhower, however, preferred the original plans which called for troop withdrawal from Italy to be deployed in an attack against

<sup>52</sup>F.R.U.S., 1944:IV, 1384.

Southern France. The Americans feared unnecessary diversion of forces from the main thrust in France and wanted to avoid political involvements in the Balkans. Churchill, on the other hand, argued that political considerations such as surrenders of satellites were valid factors which should not be left unexploited. This position was also supported by the American commander in Italy, General Mark Clark, who felt that the available forces would allow the operations both in France and Italy. At the end Churchill gave up reluctantly his argument in favor of Italy,<sup>53</sup> which Eisenhower called a dead alley. On their part the Joint Chiefs of Staff, supported by the President, maintained on June 28 that Italy was not the decisive front. Roosevelt could not agree to employ American troops against Istria and then against the Balkans either, nor could he politically endure a possible setback in "Overlord" resulting from diversion of forces to the Balkans.<sup>54</sup> By then, however, the British feared Russian intentions and were concerned about the growing Russian hostility and the activities of Communist agents. The American military evaluations, on the other hand, seemed to be resigned to the fact that "the defeat of Germany will leave Russia in a

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<sup>53</sup>Forrest C. Pogue, The Supreme Command (Washington: Department of The Army, 1954), pp. 220-5.

<sup>54</sup>Matloff, op. cit., pp. 471f.

position of assured military dominance,” able to impose whatever settlement it wanted in that part of Europe.<sup>55</sup>

The fact that plans for Allied efforts in the northeasterly direction from Italy were cancelled remained unknown to Horthy, who continued to hope that a surrender, at least partly, to western forces was still possible. An opportunity for his move came when on August 23 Romania defected and tore out a large portion of the German eastern front. Now Horthy could replace the Sztójay Government with his men. Contact was established through a dissident Hungarian Minister in Bern with the Americans. He was told that unconditional surrender to all three Allies was the only way out for Hungary. Owing to the further deteriorated military situation Horthy told Hitler that if no effective help came against the Russians Hungary would sue for surrender. On September 9, the New Hungarian Foreign Minister, General Hennyey, cabled to Bern that the surrender plans had to be postponed because the increased German forces in Hungary could easily frustrate them, therefore he asked for two or three Anglo-Saxon parachute divisions to be dropped into West-Hungary. The replies were clear about the impossibility of this concept and indicated

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid., pp. 523f.



that Hungary would be occupied by Russian forces only.<sup>56</sup> At the same time Otto also followed Roosevelt and Churchill to the Second Quebec Conference, where he found them worried about the Russians' high-handed conduct in Bulgaria. Roosevelt could not suggest much of a remedy but promised that America would keep herself informed about the Russian-Hungarian armistice negotiations and would insist that an American military mission be sent to Hungary the moment the armistice was concluded. A message to this effect to Hungary through the Lisbon channel, however, never left the White House<sup>57</sup>

From then on only direct armistice negotiations were possible. On September 22, General Náday went to Italy, duly authorized by Horthy, to ask for an armistice. There was some American doubt about the seriousness of the Hungarian intentions, who still wanted to go on fighting against the Russians since German occupation was complete.<sup>58</sup> The Russians, notified of this contact immediately, took their time until October 6, to say that they did not believe that Náday possessed the proper credentials to negotiate.<sup>59</sup> This

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<sup>56</sup>Gusztáv Henney, "Hogyan akart Magyarország kiválni a második világháborúból?" Új Látóhatár, VII (Szeptember-Október, 1964), pp. 428f, cf. F.R.U.S., 1944:III, 887.

<sup>57</sup>Macartney, op. cit., II, 352f.

<sup>58</sup>F.R.U.S., 1944:III, 889f.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 895.

was obvious because concurrently the Russians had also started their negotiations with the Hungarians. Hennyey says that the slow or no response from Náday's mission disappointed the Hungarians since, "it was inconceivable that the Anglo-Americans would give up the politically and geographically so important Danube Basin." <sup>60</sup>

The Soviet contact was easily arranged. The Russian commander of a partisan brigade in Slovakia, Colonel Makarov, sent a letter to Horthy in which it was indicated that in case of a surrender to them Hungary could expect favorable terms. Thereupon Horthy wrote a letter to Stalin which was sent by a delegation empowered to negotiate. The Hungarian conditions included immediate cessation of hostilities, free departure of the German troops from Hungary, and direct radio contact to be maintained with the Regent during negotiations. The delegation started on September 28 and arrived in Moscow on October 1. It was received by General Antonov of the Soviet General Staff on the 5th and by Molotov on the 8th. Both refused to recognize the Makarov letter's conditions and put up their own: immediate evacuation of territories occupied by Hungary after 1938 and declaration of war against Germany. On their acceptance, the Allies were willing to talk about the armistice with

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<sup>60</sup>Hennyey to the writer in a letter, Wayne, W.V.,  
May 24, 1963.

Hungary. The Hungarians found strange the demand to attack Germany as a precondition of the armistice negotiations, and some delay ensued owing to Horthy's resistance. By the 9th, Molotov became insistent with the Hungarians; he wanted to present Churchill and Eden, who were visiting in Moscow, with a final Hungarian surrender.<sup>61</sup> It was at that visit that Churchill and Stalin agreed informally upon sharing their influence in Hungary half-and-half. Finally by the 11th Horthy's authorization arrived in Moscow to accept the conditions as presented by Molotov.<sup>62</sup> After the usual misunderstandings, confusions, and difficulties Horthy finally decided to issue his surrender proclamation over the radio at 1:00 p.m., on the 15th. To verify the move Hennyey also informed the Swedish and Turkish ministers, asking them to transmit the Hungarian armistice requests to the Allies.<sup>63</sup> Horthy also asked the Germans at noon to leave the country; this way they could continue their resistance at their own frontiers, whereas Hungary would be saved of destruction by war. This was not acceptable to the Germans, who took over completely, canceled the armistice announcement, forced the Regent to abdicate, and replaced him with a National Socialist regime.

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<sup>61</sup>Hennyey, *op. cit.*, pp. 430f.

<sup>62</sup>F.R.U.S., 1944:III, 900.

<sup>63</sup>Hennyey, *op. cit.*, 433-5, cf. F.R.U.S., 1944:III,921.

The events of October 15 invalidated Horthy's armistice agreement, and Hungary suffered a Russian military invasion. Under Russian sponsorship a Provisional National Government based on the Hungarian delegation stranded at Moscow was established in East-Hungary. Although the Russians had been negotiating this with the Hungarians ever since October 23, not until December 21, were the results announced to the Western Powers. This disappointed Stettinius, who could not give recognition without further information to the new Provisional Government. <sup>64</sup> Elected by the National Assembly upon having been presented for that purpose by Moscow, the new Government was composed of a great variety of individuals from Horthy's generals to the Communists. The National Assembly itself was the outgrowth of a fairly spontaneous process whereby the local communities delegated their leftist representatives. <sup>65</sup>

While these developments took place in Hungary, the Soviet-Western negotiations continued concerning the Hungarian armistice terms and proved to be discouraging to the West at two points. First, the Russians seemed to be willing to allow a Control Commission of tripartite nature, but only under Soviet dominance; second, the American view opposed any specific reparation

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<sup>64</sup>F.R.U.S., 1944:III, 937.

<sup>65</sup>Macartney, *op. cit.*, II, 485f.

amounts and found the Russian demands for \$400,000,000 excessive. When the final armistice agreement was signed on January 20, these points were still not in accord with American desires. This was explained by Molotov's statement on January 8, that since the Red Army was the master of Hungary it could do what it wished. <sup>66</sup>

German occupation, Hungarian armistice negotiations, more German occupation, and final armistice followed each other while a ravaging war inched its way through Hungary from east to west during 1944. At their armistice negotiations the Hungarians displayed a stubborn unreality in the expectation that the West would not allow Soviet domination in Hungary. Unfortunately, their hopes were matched in unreality only by those of the West regarding Russia's future cooperation.

Russia's conduct in these developments is of great interest. It appears that the Soviets geared their moves to their political needs. They did not advance to Budapest in October when Horthy sealed his doom with his proclamation in their absence; thus they gained with Horthy's removal a constitutional vacuum that could be filled according to their liking. There was a similar halt in November when another resistance group was left

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<sup>66</sup>Herbert Feis, Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin  
(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 548.

helpless in Budapest. <sup>67</sup> Conversely, they could afford to wait with their political moves regarding a new government until the military situation favored them. <sup>68</sup> The Russians themselves say that Churchill's plan to precede them in Hungary coming through the Ljubljana gap was thwarted accidentally when the Soviets pushed into Hungary only to exploit the advantage offered by the vacillation of the Hungarian ruling classes in suing for an armistice. <sup>69</sup> In all these developments Russia turned out to be the sole winner.

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<sup>67</sup>John A. Lukács, "Political Expediency and Soviet Russian Military Operations," Journal of Central European Affairs, VIII (January, 1949), 406.

<sup>68</sup>Macartney, op. cit., II, 467.

<sup>69</sup>Free Europe, News From Hungary, February 17, 1967 p. 6.

## CHAPTER XI

RUSSIAN OCCUPATION, PEACE NEGOTIATIONS,  
AND PEACE1. Yalta and the End of the War for Hungary.

At the time of the armistice Hungary's international position was the worst possible. The Russian dislike for her was obvious because she continued to offer resistance to the last, while all the other countries in the area had either some favorable affiliation with, or provided more substantial advantages to, Russia. Thus, in point of time, Hungary's armistice was the last (on January 20, 1945, Romania's having been concluded on September 10, and Bulgaria's on October 28, 1944,) and not even then did it mean an end of hostilities on Hungarian soil, which continued to be a difficult battle front. The West also had little sympathy for Hungary, nor was this attitude changed in the absence of Hungarian action desired by the West. But the decisive factor in the shaping of Hungary's situation and future was, even more than the attitudes of the great powers, the overriding reality of a Russian military occupation, which at first was an obvious concomitant of the war but then turned into a permanent situation.

The development of the Soviet preponderance was foreseen by American evaluations early in 1944. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had expressed the view on May 16,

1944, that due to the fundamental changes in relative military strengths brought about by the war Russia's position would be such after the war that in a conflict with Russia the United States might be able "to successfully defend Britain, but . . . could not, under existing circumstances, defeat Russia." <sup>1</sup> This was reiterated at the end of July with the conclusion that the relative strength and geographic position of Russia and America "preclude the military defeat of one of these powers by the other, even if that power were allied with the British Empire." <sup>2</sup> In view of this, to prevent the dominance of Eastern Europe by Russia, two alternatives were possible: to get there first or to assure that Russia would live up to her international obligations. The second of these could again be enforced or hopefully induced. From among these avenues which represented decreasing degrees of effectiveness, by the end of the war only the very last was open to the West. The chances of getting there first were poor even if it had been attempted. There are many obstacles to assured success of the Churchillian Ljubljana gap plan. First, the actual course of the Allied campaign in Italy would suggest that the type of push needed for such offensive operations would not have been assured. Second,

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<sup>1</sup>F.R.U.S., 1945: The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, pp. 107-8.

<sup>2</sup>Matloff, op. cit., pp. 523f.



Tito in agreement with Stalin was definitely against the success of any operation that would have brought Anglo-American forces into or near his area,<sup>3</sup> which was evident to the Hungarians, who happened to intercept a message to this effect. Actually Tito also offered cooperation to the Germans against western invasion.<sup>4</sup> A further obstacle to the success of such an invasion would have been the lack of Romanian-Hungarian cooperation. Considerable benefits could have been obtained by that move had the two countries coordinated their political maneuvers and the application of their not inconsiderable strategic value and military resources. The strategic importance and value of Hungary grew in direct proportion with the approach of the front to her. To the Germans, after the Romanian defection, West-Hungary became of first-rate importance because it produced oil and protected the oil wells in the Vienna Basin, which in combination provided 80 percent of Germany's total petroleum production; consequently, there was every attempt to defend it.<sup>5</sup> To the Russians it constituted their southern flank which had to be secured

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<sup>3</sup>Feis, *op. cit.*, p. 422.

<sup>4</sup>Wilhelm Hoettl, The Secret Front (London: Weldenfeld and Nicolson, 1954), p. 166.

<sup>5</sup>"Führer Conferences on Naval Affairs", in Brassey's Naval Annual, 1948, ed. by H. G. Thursfield (London:Macmillan, 1948),-p. 431.

before their operations against Germany at the center of their front could be carried out. As early as mid-October, 1944, Stalin told the Americans and the British that his drive into Hungary represented a major immediate offensive to take Vienna, opening a new route into Germany.<sup>6</sup> This explains why it was so urgent for the Russians at the time to bring about the Hungarian surrender hoping thereby to push through Austria into Germany, while the western troops still had difficulties at their front. At that time Stalin was even welcoming Churchill's renewed suggestion of a drive through the Ljubljana gap,<sup>7</sup> because it could no longer have interfered with his occupation of Hungary and Eastern Austria, only aided its completion on the left flank.

The American position regarding these moves was governed by the continued assumption that "we must have the support of the Soviet Union to defeat Germany. We sorely need the Soviet Union in the war against Japan when the war in Europe is over,"<sup>8</sup> as expressed in a State Department memorandum on January 8, 1945. However, what could actually be expected of Russia in post-war cooperation was also becoming evident in the reports reaching Washington to the effect that Russia's self-defense

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<sup>6</sup>F.R.U.S., 1945: Malta and Yalta, pp. 365-8.

<sup>7</sup>Feis, op. cit., pp. 444f.

<sup>8</sup>F.R.U.S., 1945: Malta and Yalta, p. 95 .

needs would depend on her relations with her neighbors like Poland, which would be quite different from complete independence.<sup>9</sup> On the subject of Russo-American relations Kennan gave his usually excellent summary on returning to Russia after seven years. Russian efforts in East-Central Europe, he observed, were directed to only one goal: power. This meant that that area should be amenable to Moscow's influence, preferable authority. Methods of achieving that aim were not important to Moscow, and their variety was great. Then he succinctly concluded:

. . . in the autumn of 1944, the Kremlin finds itself committed by its own inclination to the concrete task of becoming the dominant power of eastern and central Europe. At the same time, it also finds itself committed by past promises and by world opinion to a vague program which western statesmen . . . call collaboration.

The first of these programs implies taking. The second implies giving. No one can stop Russia from doing the taking, if she is determined to go through with it. No one can force Russia to do the giving, if she is determined not to go through with it.

To resolve the problems emanating from this situation, the Allied Great Powers convened at Yalta in Russia for another summit meeting after Tehran. Of vital interest to Hungary were the general issues discussed on the future of East-Central Europe and the creation of a new world peace organization. The Americans hoped that in their absence from that area western aims would be

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<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, P. 80.

20*F.R.U.S.*, 1944: IV, 908-9.

assured through a commitment obtained from Russia regarding East-Central Europe's self-government and her cooperation for peace in the United Nations. The western leaders attempted to persuade Stalin that the common interest required cooperation on the basis of self-restraint by the Great Powers. <sup>11</sup>

According to the pre-conference documents, the American position expressed interest in the economic reconstruction of the area to achieve European economic stability and prosperity. Politically, it appeared that the Soviet Union would exert a predominant influence there. While the United States probably would not oppose that, neither would she wish her influence to be completely nullified. <sup>12</sup> More specifically in relation to Hungary the long-range American interests included a desire to solve the Hungarian boundary disputes to promote peaceful relationships with neighboring states. It was believed that a rectification of the frontier with Romania in favor of Hungary on ethnic grounds would serve this interest. Economically, America wanted to see Equal treatment maintained in Hungary for all nations, particularly in view of the promising American oil interests. Politically, Hungary was viewed as an enemy

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<sup>11</sup>McGeorge Bundy, "The Test of Yalta," Foreign Affairs, XXVII July, 1949), 621.

<sup>12</sup>F.R.U.S., 1945: Malta and Yalta, pp. 234f.

state associated with German aggression since 1938, and the last to desert the Axis, which had no valid claim to leniency. Still, America did not want to see Hungary deprived of her independence or of any of her pre-1938 territories or saddled with economic obligations which would cripple her economy and delay European recovery. As to the American participation in the control of Hungary during the armistice period, it was desired that after the termination of hostilities the three principal Allies would have equal participation in the operation of the Control Commission. <sup>13</sup>

In these papers, it was also foreseen that if Russia would exploit the advantage granted her by the military operations and the armistice agreement the Russian and American interests would not be in harmony. In that case America could not support Hungary against the Soviet Union, nor would America recognize that the Russians had a privileged position in Hungary. An early conclusion of peace with Hungary would only serve the best interests of the United States by putting an end to Soviet domination, and would give a better opportunity for the United States to protect her interests in Hungary. This could also be served if free elections were held and Hungary left to manage her own internal affairs as soon as possible. <sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., pp. 243f.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 245.

On more general lines the United States also opposed a spheres-of-influence system by revitalizing a self-determination policy. Churchill, who was still thinking along the lines of the former, mentioned to the President at Malta on their way to Yalta on February 2, 1945, that it was essential to occupy as much of Austria as possible as it was undesirable that more of Western Europe should be occupied by the Russians. <sup>15</sup>

Military developments in Hungary also contributed to the background of the Yalta meeting. Early in February, 1945, the effects of the German counteroffensive in the West were still felt, while a Russian offensive was successfully breaching the German lines in West-Hungary endangering the last German oil supplies and taking the encircled Budapest. The transfer of the 6th German Armored Army to the eastern front was unable to change the deteriorated situation. This transfer was anticipated by the Russians on information by their western colleagues at Yalta on the 6th. <sup>16</sup>

The Yalta Declaration on Liberated Europe pledged that the Three Great Powers would assist jointly the liberated and the former Axis satellite peoples -- with ` this distinction - - to solve by democratic means their

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 543.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 648.

political and economic problems, and to establish as soon as possible through free elections governments responsive to the will of the people. <sup>17</sup> This then was the key to the East European post-war solution: a declaration whereby the Soviets were obligated by their word and by the West to assure the free development of the western neighbor nations of Russia. The agreement has been termed with some imagination the sell-out of the future captive nations. This was impossible, simply because the future of those nations depended on the physical course of the military situation which was shaped by pre-Yalta conferences. Yalta could not change that fact, it only tried to accommodate to it along western desires by grabbing that last straw, the written commitment by Russia. One could say with Kenneth Thompson that "the only crime of Yalta was the failure to recognize soon enough the intimate connection between power and peace." <sup>18</sup> Whether recognized or not, however, it was too late than to make any adjustments in favor of a power position that might have enforced the agreements. Russian predominance was accepted; the declaration wanted only to mitigate it.

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<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 972.

<sup>18</sup>Kenneth W. Thompson, Political Realism and the Crisis of World Politics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), p. 209.

Hungary's international position and thus her future existence depended on the chances of success of such guarantees and mitigations, which were determined by one factor alone -- Stalin's cooperation. There was no doubt about the desire for independence of those countries by the West or in the countries themselves. To the question what may have led Stalin to accede to the declaration and its pledges, Schlesinger suggests three probable answers: that Stalin was still in need of western aid against the Germans; that he felt the declaration implied and assured his veto in the affairs of the small nations; that it was interpreted by him along the lines of the sphere-of-influence agreement with Churchill in the previous October. <sup>19</sup> Of these, the second appears the most plausible, for it assured that latitude and flexibility both to Stalin's mind and actions which was in accordance with general Russian policies. The first answer is not supported by the actual military situation in the wake of two successful Russian offensives which could not be stopped even by troops transferred from and thus relieving the West. As to the third, the sphere-of-interest agreement was openly opposed by the Americans and even if sustained, it would not have allowed the extent of domination aspired for by

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<sup>19</sup>Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "Origins of the Cold War," Foreign Affairs, XLVI (October, 1967), p. 42.



Stalin. Harriman, on his part, feels that Stalin agreed regarding free governments in Eastern Europe in the hope that those peoples would accept the Red Army as liberators and therefore out of gratitude vote the Communist Party into power. When this did not materialize, Stalin broke his agreements.<sup>20</sup>

Regardless of which of these possible motivations determined Stalin's conduct at Yalta, all implied his plan to keep East-Central Europe under Soviet domination; thus, Hungary's future was shaped by the then unalterable Russian presence. The question was to what extent could the West and Hungary make it more tolerable. The last two-year period covered by this study was a demonstration of their failure and of a Soviet conduct that determined for many years the history of the world. Hereafter this presentation restricts itself to giving an outline of the major events of that period, which did not change the established fact of Soviet domination, only attested to it.

## 2. Hungarian Attempts to Survive, Western Attempts to Help, and Russian Successes at Making Their Peace

Hostilities for Hungary had ended on April 4, a 1945. when in the entire country the German occupation

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<sup>20</sup>Averell Harriman in a TV interview on NBC on May 29, 1967.

was replaced by a Russian one. Budapest was captured only on February 12, and its resistance had in a large measure contributed to the retardation of Russia's advance into Austria. The country's new occupation was marked by large-scale looting, raping, and deportation, attested to in the Swiss Legation's reports. <sup>21</sup> Originally Hungary signed the armistice to realize the exercise of equal authority by the West through the tripartite Allied Control Commission (ACC) and thus prevent Soviet abuses. Unfortunately the West's participation instead of sharing the work was restricted to sharing the responsibility for Russian excesses.

Internationally, Hungary lived in complete isolation during the early months of occupation. There was no diplomatic representation with any foreign country. Internally, the Russians worked slowly but with determination in establishing communist power. The exterior appearance of the new Provisional National Government was to appeal to the outside world with its broad representation. In reality, the distribution of power within it assured formal authority to its non-communist, and effective control to its communist, members.

This Soviet expansion was, then, the direct result of the strategic conditions under which the fight against Germany had ended. For a final arrangement of

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<sup>21</sup>Montgomery, *op. cit.*, Appendix III.

the postwar conditions after the armistice with Germany in May, the Potsdam Conference of the Big Three leaders was convened between July 17 and August 2. The American proposal for the ex-enemy satellites included the establishment of their political independence, economic recovery, and the choosing of their own form of government through free elections. <sup>22</sup> H. F. Schoenfeld, the American representative with the rank of minister went to Hungary in May to protect American interests and to maintain informal contacts with the Provisional Hungarian Government, gave an account of the events in Hungary during the early months of Russian occupation which manifested the ignoring of the Western members on the Allied (Soviet) Control Commission, to which the political representatives served only as advisers. The gist of his recommendations was that under no conditions should America show disinterest in Hungary. <sup>23</sup> In its final outcome the Potsdam Conference declared that the "anomalous position of the ex-enemy satellites" should be terminated by the conclusion of peace treaties, and it charged the Council of Foreign Ministers with the task to prepare such drafts. Some changes were contemplated in the functioning of the ACC, and it was

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<sup>22</sup>F.R.U.S., 1945: The Conference of Berlin, II, Doc, 805.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., I, 299-313.

recognized that the transfer of German populations remaining in Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary would have to be undertaken in an orderly and humane manner.<sup>24</sup>

The nature of the Russian attitudes toward the West on East European matters was most uncooperative, downright suspicious and accusing. While the American representative did his best to avoid even the suggestion of American interference with Hungarian internal matters, Hungarian communist publications kept charging him with undue interference. Shortly after the Potsdam Conference, Szakasits, a Social Democratic leader visited Schoenfeld and asked of him to exert American influence in behalf of democratic political organizations. He further asked whether the United States proposed to intervene in the Hungarian elections and whether the Soviet garrison would be withdrawn. Schoenfeld very correctly and cautiously referred the questions within the context of general Allied responsibility.<sup>25</sup> It appears that this inquiry was sheer provocation to get a compromising American answer because Szakasits then already had an agreement to fuse his party with the communists which he later did. To make the West appear in the most unfavorable light publications remarked that quite interestingly Hungary was

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., P. 1384.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., II, Doc. 821.

not bombed while she had supported Germany with her industrial potential, but as soon as it became known that Hungary would come under Soviet occupation the Americans began bombing her industrial plants to prevent a fast reconstruction under communist efforts;<sup>26</sup> whereas in fact the Russians requested those bombings to benefit their ground forces and operations.<sup>27</sup> Similarly recent publications on Hungarian-American contacts during and after the war concluded that America wanted to make an anti-Communist vanguard of the West out of Hungary.<sup>28</sup>

Following the Potsdam Conference Hungary's position was marked by Russian political encroachment accompanied by economic obstruction.<sup>29</sup> Stipulations concerning German assets in Hungary, which were to be transferred to Russia as reparations, were very liberally interpreted by the Russians, who called everything that ever had anything to do with Germany a German asset. In addition in August a leading communist member of the government returned from Moscow with the suggestion, carrying the weight of an order, that for permanent economic cooperation joint companies should be established

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<sup>26</sup>Hungarian-American Relations, p. 29.

<sup>27</sup>The Army Air Forces in World War II, W. F. Craven and J. L. Cate, eds. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951), III, 742.

<sup>28</sup>Hungarian-American Relations, p. 27.

<sup>29</sup>H. F. Arthur Schoenfeld, "Soviet Imperialism in Hungary, Foreign Affairs, XXVI (April, 1948), 554-66.

which in effect amounted to a direct Soviet control of the major industries. Smallholder members of the Hungarian Government suggested to the Western Powers that they, too, propose similar cooperative joint companies whereby the number so to be established with the Russians would be reduced. The West, however, did not see its way through to such moves and declared itself satisfied with the standing trade agreements.<sup>30</sup>

Politically the success of the coalition government to sustain itself in the face of the one-sided Russian rule in the country prompted the American Government to indicate readiness to establish diplomatic relations and to negotiate a treaty with the Hungarian Government, if it would provide conditions essential to free elections. Three days later, on September 25, 1945, the Hungarians responded with a guarantee concerning the conditions set.<sup>31</sup> General elections were then called for November. The Budapest municipal elections, at communist insistence, were held one month before that in the hope that the big city's industrial workers would assure a communist majority, but even the combined Social Democrat-Communist ticket could only get forty-two percent of the total votes. Disillusioned, the Communists tried to

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<sup>30</sup>Ferenc Nagy, The Struggle Behind the Iron Curtain (New York: Macmillan, 1948), pp. 137f.

<sup>31</sup>Department of State, Bulletin, XIII (1945), 478.

arrange for the general elections to be on a single electoral ticket, which was successfully resisted by the Smallholders, and for a coalition government after the elections, which was accepted by the non-communists. The general election of November verified Stalin's suspicions at Potsdam where he regretted his Yalta pledges and asked the West not to press for their fulfillment because "any freely elected government in these countries will be an anti-Soviet government and we cannot allow that." <sup>32</sup> These November election results convinced Stalin that that was the road to anti-Soviet governments. In them the Communists got only seventeen percent of the votes.

The intentions to exchange diplomatic relations between Hungary and the United States were materialized in November when agreements were exchanged concerning the diplomatic personnel. America was represented by Schoenfeld as minister and Hungary's envoy to Washington became Szegedy-Maszák, who had survived internment by the Germans at the Dachau concentration camp for his activities in the Kállay Foreign Ministry. The objectives of Szegedy-Maszák's mission <sup>33</sup> was to realize three hopes related to America:

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<sup>32</sup>Philip E. Mosely, "Across the Green Table from Stalin," *Current History*, XV (September, 1948), p. 311.

<sup>33</sup>Statements by Aladár Szegedy-Maszák to the writer in Washington, September 20, 1961.

1. A peace treaty which would not be worse than that of Trianon; that is, a reduction in the amount of reparation, borders reflecting more closely the ethnic conditions, with some symbolic rectifications, particularly toward Romania which was made possible by the armistice agreement, and finally a truly international Danube.

2. The realization of the Yalta formula; that is, a certain support in the face of the exclusive Soviet influence, and internal autonomy.

3. Economic aid.

He admits having suffered a failure of mission in all three respects, although some moral support could be detected in the establishment of diplomatic relations; the reception of a Hungarian delegation in Washington before the peace treaty was signed, and in the fact that at least in principle Hungary was not written off until 1947. Promises were made that everything short of war would be done in support of Hungary, but they remained ineffectual. Economically all efforts to help Hungary were mitigated by the thought that they would be an indirect reparation to the Soviets which America did not want to provide. More practical Hungarian proposals that, for example, an American loan to finance the land reform could be repaid by food shipments to the American zone in Germany fell on deaf ears.



The final major events that occupied Hungary's foreign policy, determined her international position, and established her complete absorption into the Soviet orbit were the peace negotiations and the resultant treaty. The general background of these negotiations did not betray any sign of cooperation between the wartime Allies. The Russians directed the Hungarians that the German minority in Hungary was to be deported to Germany, whereas the Americans told them that they were only empowered to do so and there was no space for the expellees in Germany's western zones of occupation anyway. Ferenc Nagy, who became prime minister after Tildy, the first minister following the elections, had become President of the new Hungarian Republic in February, 1946, detected that this maneuver was only to discredit his government with the Germans. As to Hungarian conduct in connection with the peace negotiations, the Russians suggested that Hungary should not press for a favorable position for herself because that meant revisionism, which was bad. The news that there would be no frontier rectification, not even with Romania, was explained to Nagy by the Russians as an American proposal which did not matter, since the Russians would help Hungary after the peace treaty if she only remained "good" in the interim period. It was also suggested that much better treatment could be expected later if Hungary

admitted guilt for every wrong done in Danubian Europe.<sup>34</sup>

To obtain support for the policy outlined by Szegedy, Nagy visited the Three Great Powers. First, of course, in the itinerary had to be Moscow. Stalin was very congenial and thought that Hungary would be justified in bringing up the Transylvanian question at the peace conference. He also admitted that his soldiers did remove "quite a bit" from Hungary and then assured Nagy that small countries needlessly feared the Soviet Union, which would only betray Lenin if she oppressed small nations.<sup>35</sup> The fact that Stalin had already promised the entire Transylvania to the Romanians and his plans were ready to remove the last vestiges of independence in the small countries did not seem to have bothered him when he made these statements.

The visit to Washington reaped if not aid or effective support at least honest statements. Secretary Byrnes told Nagy that the Transylvanian question had slipped entirely into Soviet hands, and that if the Russians reintroduced the question then the United States would support the Hungarian position. Some economic aid and the release of Hungary's gold removed at the end of

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<sup>34</sup>Nagy, *op. cit.*, pp. 185-7, 218f.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 207-13.

the war to Germany's American zone was also promised and carried out.<sup>36</sup>

The London visit was remarkably fruitless and insulting. It consisted of questions like: "Don't you find it slightly unusual that you desire support for a defeated nation at the expense of a victorious one?" and of lectures that no government is truly democratic until it has an active opposition, presumably referring to Russian interference as a true opposition. At Paris the meetings were equally discouraging. The French said that they had no influence in major issues. Molotov, who was there attending the Foreign Ministers' Conference again prevaricated that the decision to return Transylvania entirely to Romania was made at America's suggestion.<sup>37</sup>

In the summer before the peace conference, Hungary's economic situation deteriorated alarmingly. The United States, seriously concerned about that, addressed a note to the Soviet Union which said that since December of 1945, America proposed to consider means of rebuilding the Hungarian economy to which response came from Russia beyond the continued overburdening of that economy with reparations, requisitions, and large occupation forces. The Russians rejected the contention

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<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 225-9

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 235.

that the occupation would have serious influence on the economy, whereupon the subsequent American notes brought out the factual evidence in this respect; half of Hungary's industrial output was absorbed by it, half of Hungary's food production was consumed by the Red Army, of the 345 million dollars total war damage to industry 124 million dollars were due to Soviet removals, this in a country where one-third of the total national wealth was destroyed in the war. The Soviet reply termed these data unfounded and said that reparations amounted only to 10 million dollars, which was compensated by Soviet aid. The sanctimonious Russian note continued that the American proposals for point actions for economic restoration would all the more be impossible since they would interfere with a matter within the competence of the Hungarian Government. <sup>38</sup>

Under such conditions the Hungarian Government desired to obtain peace as soon as possible in order to terminate the occupation with its economic and political Oppression. During the Paris Peace Conference in the summer of 1946, the Americans also urged the Hungarians to work to that end even at the cost of giving up any claims or considerations for Transylvania. The Russians on their part delayed the Hungarian delegation's

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<sup>38</sup>Department of State, Bulletin, XV (1946), 229-231, 263-5.

departure to the conference and prevented it from being shown any material which could have been in Hungary's favor. Ivan Lajos and Ferenc Wagner of the Hungarian Foreign Ministry, who had compiled in 1945 the documents of the Hungarian Archives -- which were used in this study -- were not allowed to present any of that material which would exonerate Hungary of the charges leveled against her by the Communists. <sup>39</sup> The only success that the Hungarians could call their own was the frustration of a Czech proposal to expel 200,000, exchange 100,000, and Slovakize another 200,000 Hungarians living in Czechoslovakia, to make Czechoslovakia the kind of national state that she decided to become. This meager success was possible only with American support. The American delegate, General Bedell Smith, explained that while the United States sympathized with Czech motives behind their proposal, she could not favor incorporating into peace treaties the principle of forced population transfer, instead voluntary transfers were to be stressed and all efforts including territorial adjustments were to be made to the end that the minimum number of people be uprooted. <sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Statement by Ferenc Wagner to the writer in Washington, September 20, 1956.

<sup>40</sup>Department of State, Paris Peace Conference, 1946 (Washington: U.S.G.P.O., 1947), p. 1192.

In the end the Peace Treaty for Hungary corresponded in all of its major aspects to Russian desires. In its effects it demonstrated that Russia had successfully excluded the Western Powers from settling East Europe's affairs. Internally, everything was done to "discredit the Smallholder Prime Minister, who was blamed for the failures from the Hungarian national point of view, and whose presence in office was given as the reason for the absence of Russia's support. The conclusion of the Treaty only sealed the doom of the country through the provision for prolonged occupation excused by security needs for the Russian supply lines to Austria. With trumped-up charges the Smallholder Party's leaders were compromised, which led to the fall of Nagy's government. The related American protests were ignored, and after the Peace Treaty the discontinuance of the ACC removed even that little western influence that had been there. President Truman expressed regret over the resort to oppression and hoped for eventually truly representative governments. <sup>41</sup> When on June 1, 1947, the forced resignation of Nagy rolled the Iron Curtain finally and tightly down on Hungary, the manifestation of Soviet domination was not considered to be such a threat to American security that it was necessary to use force or

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<sup>41</sup>Department of State, Bulletin,\_XVI (1947), P. 1214.

to accept the risk of war in the effort to remove it, nor was America able, having no concession to offer in which the Soviets might be sufficiently interested, to eliminate it by diplomacy. It was simply not in American interest to challenge the Soviets to a showdown on this issue.<sup>42</sup> Or, as President Truman explained to Nagy in 1963 why America could not help Hungary in 1947: "The American public was not prepared for a stronger policy at the risk of a possible clash between the two giants of the new world arena."<sup>43</sup>

Thus the fateful decade of Hungary ended. It started with the emergence of a powerful and internationally-threatening Nazi Germany and the appearance of a Communist Russia, between whom small Hungary played her game for survival and lost, which she was bound to do with Russia's uncontested final victory. The game was dangerous, not because it courted risk but because risk was implied in the situation. Hungary's fateful decade was of interest to the United States, not because Hungary could be of importance in her smallness, defenselessness, and poverty, but because her fate reflected those influences and power relationships that

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<sup>42</sup>John C. Campbell, "East Europe, Germany, and the West," *Annals*, 317 (May, 1958), p. 155.

<sup>43</sup>Statement by Ferenc Nagy to the writer in Minneapolis on September 17, 1966.

had on a larger scale also influenced and indeed determined America's policy and fate during the same period. This situation and fact of international life was only reconfirmed when nine years later the Hungarians protested their foreign rule in a spontaneous national uprising. Russia's global position having remained uncontested, the Hungarians were again bound to fail, but not for any lack of love of freedom.



## CHAPTER XII

CONCLUSION <sup>1</sup>

This study has addressed itself to the question to what extent and how Hungary's international position and conduct influenced the formation of American foreign policy during the decade between 1937 and 1947. This involved the tracing of Hungary's situation and conduct, which became possible through the availability of multilateral documentation bearing on that subject, as well as the presentation of actually and potentially relevant factors contributing to the image that the Hungarian situation created in American foreign policy-making and the actions this image influenced. It was felt that the examination of Hungary as a subject would serve two purposes. First, it would trace the interactions of the major powers as they were reflected in the fate of Hungary, and second, it would show what role a small country can play as long as it is still independent in its relations with the great powers. Hungary's

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<sup>1</sup>The methodology used in this chapter is based on these works: David Easton, A Systems Analysis of Political Life (New York: Wiley and Sons, 1965); K. J. Holsti, International Politics (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1967); Morton A. Kaplan, System and Process in International Politics (New York : Wiley and Sons 1957); Richard N. Rosecrance, Action and Reaction in World Politics (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1963);and Richard Snyder, H.W. Bruck, and, Burton Sapin, eds., .Foreign Policy Decision-Making: An Approach to the study of international politics (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1962)

suitability as such a subject was further increased by the fact that she was the small country in Eastern Europe with the longest periods of independence and freedom both from German and Russian occupation.

Located in an access area between Central Europe and the Balkans as well as among neighbors made hostile by the post-World-War-One settlements that placed every fourth Hungarian under foreign domination, Hungary was part of an international system in 1937 which had a "diffuse-bloc" structure. It was not in balance, for most of the major rules of a balance system had been violated ever since World War I. It did not oppose the predominance of any grouping of powers but replaced one type of predominance with another; supranational organizations were not constrained; on the contrary they were fostered in the form of the League of Nations, which did not serve the purpose of peaceful change but the maintenance of a peace, which amounted to rigid support of the status quo established by the victors of the war. National actors outgrew the optimal size of a just and lawful national community, expanding in a manner inconsistent with nationality principles.

The absence of a balance was small wonder, for all the great powers who would have been able to influence the system effectively, while they expected the balance to help them did nothing to establish or maintain a balance and actually worked for its replacement

by systems more in line with their particular objectives. The United States, presuming her external security supported by geography and democratic superiority, withdrew in isolation and failed even to join the League, for the creation of which she was primarily responsible. The Soviet Union, expecting the rest of the world, particularly Europe, to keep itself in balance and thus harmless to her, also withdrew into isolation, but when the occasion arose to establish a balance, she chose the stronger side of the period and was able to benefit from friendship with both sides. This culminated in the establishment of a sphere of influence system during the war, followed by the postwar polar system. Germany, having set out with a program of expansion, considered the balance of the powers a hindrance to the execution of the "constructive" plans of the great powers, but when she failed to maintain an expanded sphere of influence she expected that she would be rescued by the balance of power interests of the West that would disallow the expansion of Russia on the destruction of Germany, Great Britain similarly failed to support the balance first with her appeasement, then with her sphere of interest plans with Russia, and finally by her lack of power to influence the form of the system to be established.

The Hungarian view of the pre-war international system was that a balance of power asked for a

mechanical process to establish a mechanical position which was already obsolete at the moment of its establishment in the face of dynamic life needs of the system. Whereas such a balance of power system could assure at least temporarily the absence of war, it was not capable of providing the type of organic adjustments to the demands of life that would satisfy needs through a peaceful cooperation. This called for regional units that corresponded to the cultural, political, and economic needs of the national subsystems comprising a more tightly interdependent region, thus assured of permanent loyalty and support. Out of such regions the higher, universal organization could then be established to accommodate the interests of the regional, intermediary units, but not to impose the will of one preponderant group over the rest of the world. A balance so obtained would be worthy of the name, but not the kind that prevailed or was sought in the pre-war period.

The establishment of such regional supranational systems, corresponding to the needs of their members and not to the wishes and one-sided demands of a block-leader was impossible to achieve under the pre-war conditions. Central-Eastern Europe's conditions were the best examples of the reasons why, and Hungary represented all. The basic rules of sovereignty and territorial integrity related in the minds of the

Central European countries to the largest historical expansion each had attained and not to the nationality divisions as the overwhelming reality of political life there. Unfortunately, the only course which could have resolved instead of posed problems -- i.e., a true and honest application of the Wilsonian ethnic principles with self-determination -- was not applied in any of the related settlements and solutions. In this situation the participants thought to realize rights against force while in reality they fought with claims against facts. Actually these territoriocentric policies provided the major obstacles to consolidation and reflected political irresponsibility on the part of all. The morality of their arguments was vitiated when they were used for power needs. In the techniques applied, the one in possession referred to peace, the one out of possession appealed to justice, while in fact each meant retention or recovery of areas beyond ethnic justification. This was the misery of Central Europe that was preserved before, during, and after the war and remains a reality of today's world.

In this pre-war system, Hungary's basic foreign-policy objectives included besides the "core" interest of self-preservation the restoration of ethnic unity. Both of these items involved the entire country with existential intensity. Her truncation, the threat to her independence, her dependence economically, the large

segments of her population directly involved in the disadvantages coming from the peace treaties, coupled with an internal regime that was conservative and directive, resulted in a very heavy external orientation of all political life. This basic orientation, manifested itself in varying ways and attempted to adjust to the systemic changes during the period under consideration. While Hungary's goal of revision of the peace treaties was constantly frustrated both through the League of Nations and also in direct negotiations with the neighboring countries concerned, the primary orientation was that of seeking alliances that could aid such an objective. To the extent that the German expansive moves became evident, the Hungarians lost enthusiasm for alliances with anyone who preached revision and tried to maintain and increase their efforts to appeal to the West, regardless how hopeless and unpromising this was. As the diffuse system turned into a diffuse-bloc system with more nearly permanent blocs, Hungary oriented herself in the direction of non alignment or at least non-belligerency in an attempt to ride out the coming storm. Her conduct indicated that small countries also have their own ideals of freedom and independence, that their core-value is self-preservation, and that they do not consider themselves to exist for the purpose of serving a great power under whose influence they might come.

The existence of the small-country rivalries which have constituted the misery of Central Europe also provided grounds for the great powers for intervention and exploitation of such intrabloc tensions. In this situation the small countries assigned an instrumental value to the international system, whether diffuse or diffuse-bloc; however, in doing so they also undermined the system by allowing the bloc leader's grip to tighten over the individual national subsystems within the bloc. This contribution of the small-state rivalries to bloc rule within the system is overestimated, however, since the small countries were never strong enough to prevent even in the absence of any rivalries or in the presence of the most complete cooperation the emergence of the bloc leaders in East Central Europe. The claim that a close cooperation between the Danubian countries would have been able to thwart Nazi successes, and that the prospect of such cooperation was nullified by Hungarian revisionist intransigence appears to be sheer nonsense in view of the realities of Nazi Germany's power, and in face of each participant's equal contribution to the failure of consolidation. To assume that Danubian Europe, dependent on Germany economically and extremely weak militarily, could have performed a task that the Powerful Western Powers failed to achieve takes more than naiveté.

With the coming and expansion of the war, Hungary's association with the Axis was the result of a choice of that bloc which provided a materially enduring, independent existence. As the Western Powers were strategically remote, this choice was reduced to Germany or Russia. In this situation the Hungarians, and the Romanians also, could not see eye to eye with the West. To the small countries the threat from Russia far overshadowed any thought of danger from Germany. Choosing a side meant not preference for the side chosen but reliance on it against the one assumed to be more dangerous. The choice actually amounted to one between "polonization," that is, suffering the fate of Poland with total occupation and exploitation of both human and material resources by the occupying power, or staying unoccupied at the cost of limited cooperation. The overwhelming, all-inclusive nature of this consideration pushed into the background all other, less important ones, not because of lack of concern for them but because of the directional intensity and absorbing nature of the inescapable, indispensable issue of existence. The expectation was not to be able to prevent German expansion by such policies and maneuvers, but to ride out the storm until a new system restored conditions of real independence and removed the threats to it. This, of course, could not imply replacement of one threat by another, but elimination of all threats.



This is why the Russian alternative to the German was not found acceptable. The choice taken by Hungary was not identification with the great power bloc leader, only reliance on it to maintain independent existence. Identification with bloc leaders took place only by governments that had no affiliation with the people and whose concern was not preservation of the nation but preservation of their own regimes. Actually the desire for independence will grow in intensity with the potential success of any threat to it, which again depends on the ability to resist.

The basic techniques in the absence of appreciable power to maintain independence or neutrality included buying consent with goods and services, gaining strength through alliances, and bargaining for the exchange of advantages. By managing to stay unoccupied during most of the war, Hungary offered a potential foothold for the West both politically and militarily. The political one was the continuation of a refuge within the German ocean and a source of information, the military was provision of an area unoccupied by Germany which had an army that could assure stability in the region as long as it was not overrun by either Germany or Russia.

The nature of the bloc system during the war years of 1941-1944 allowed little freedom of action for Hungary; decision-making was outside her control.

Stratification within the Axis bloc assured decision-making power to Germany alone. Italy proved to be no help or counterweight to Germany in matters related to the continuing rivalries between the small countries within the bloc, this time Romania and Hungary. Decisions were made by direct and separate negotiations, with the bloc leaders using the territorial quarrels of the small members as means to keep the latter in line. Allocations of values took place in awards by the bloc leaders, and the alliances with the satellites were nonspecific, non-formal. The general agreements, like the adherence to the Tripartite Pact were only subsequently and retroactively used as excuses for forcing the satellites into taking positions that they did not intend to take. On the small countries' part these general associations served only the purpose to obtain support within the system for individual objectives but not to obligate themselves to aid the side with which solidarity was declared. This imposed heavy strains on the alliance. It was brought about for different purposes, and the participants, divided into bloc-leaders and small country adherents, showed the incompatibility of the value systems they followed.

Hungary's international position during the years when the nature of the units, stratification, structure, and rules of the international system underwent profound changes was reported to Washington in great detail and

with accuracy. During the pre-war years this was possible owing to the high professional standards of the American diplomatic personnel, which did its best to maintain objectivity, and to the easy accessibility of information due to the cooperative attitude of the governments involved. The connections between the Americans and Hungarians were not only cordial but frank and reliable. As to their content, on the side of the United States this meant a position in support of the Wilsonian principles; on Hungary's side it meant contacts with a great power that was expected to become inevitably and victoriously involved in the world conflict against the Axis.

As the Nazi threat grew, the reporting on Hungary assumed the Hungarian attitudes to be strictly in favor of Germany and failed to detect the real motivations behind the failure to show open resistance to the Axis. This became worse during the war when contacts were resumed at arm's length through the intelligence services that did not serve the purpose of accurate reporting but much more the disruption of any regime that did not openly resist Hitler. Here it became evident that precisely those agencies that had with Hungarian cooperation obtained the most accurate reports concerning Hungary's actual conduct, motives and plans were the ones that drew up memoranda and evaluations concerning Hungary's position diametrically opposed to the facts of the case.

The March 9, 1944, report given to Assistant Secretary Stettinius is a case in point: it charged Hungary with exactly those actions which she prevented from taking place regarding the refugees and Jews. By that time it was clear that Hungary's position was viewed in Washington as a variable of the German expansion. Any Hungarian move to oppose it was appreciated, any move that appeared to promote it was deplored. Hungarian capabilities in this were not quite taken into account, and thus resistance which by necessity meant complete occupation was preferred by the American military in hopes of causing thereby more disadvantage on balance to the German military posture. Similar considerations were not present with respect to Russian expansion, although that was the only time when Hungary's position could have played an important role in American evaluations. If it is assumed that Russian expansion into Central Europe could have been checked effectively only by preceding the Russians in any given area, then Hungary provided such a terrain while still unoccupied by either Germany or Russia. Hungary could not offer large forces to contribute to that end, but she could and did offer her territory, and she could offer a joint supporting action with Romania and Yugoslavia, which neither of them did.

In spite of the great complexity of the situation during the period of war-time decisions related to the

military plans in Central Eastern Europe, it is possible to isolate the chief variables in the development of the American plans and the role played by the Hungarian situation in them. The enormity of the executive power concentrated in the President, and restricted only by his judgment concerning congressional approval and popular support, is demonstrated quite clearly in the fact that when both military and civilian advisers suggested and both the British and the Soviet allies asked for the modification of the unconditional surrender formula for the satellite countries, President Roosevelt's view to the contrary prevailed. The President's decision-making power was even more manifest in the decisive issues related to Allied penetration into South-East Europe. -Since Hungary's position offered a possibility of cooperation in such a military move it was of great importance that Hungary's primary consideration was to prevent the coming of the Soviet troops into her area. The failure of the realization of such plans depended entirely on the American decision not to go there. Since that would have been the only way to prevent Soviet penetration of Central Europe, with the negative decision the fate of that part of the world was also settled. It is interesting that the President would have decided in favor of such a move had the Russians asked for it, even though his military advisers were against it on the way to the Tehran Conference.

Since Stalin was not asking for such a western commitment, the plan was not only dropped but also opposed on all subsequent occasions when Churchill wanted to exploit the military possibilities. Regardless of the feasibility of the Balkan or Ljubljana-gap plans, the motivations behind the President's decision indicate that Hungary's position and potential offer was meaningless in the face of the Rooseveltian view. He overestimated his ability to influence Stalin and had a contradictory fear that Russia might make a separate peace with Germany if not treated gently. Additional concern occasioned by the need for Russia's help in the war also weighed heavily. The impact of public opinion demanding a fast and victorious ending of the war uncompromised by side-tracks in the Balkans could also not be ignored. The President must have honestly believed that Russia would not present a threat to future collaboration and peace; at least this is what his correspondence on the subject with the Pope reveals. With these convictions and impressions it would have been a miracle to expect a different decision from him.

After the establishment of the Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe in 1945-1947, the American position asked for fair terms for Hungary at the peace negotiations without championing Hungary against Allied nations. Hungary's association with the Axis, however, was viewed as a voluntary and eager support, which in

spite of the validity of many of the Hungarian claims prevented Hungary from finding many sympathizers. America was unable to see that all the countries were equally Hitler's victims. Military considerations prevailed to the last. Since Transylvania was to the American military mind an effective bait to get Romania out of the war, previous indications that Hungary could expect an ethnic solution of her frontiers at least in the direction of Romania, another ally of Germany, were also nullified. But If the American aim was to achieve stability then in territorial disputes the idea of rewarding allies and penalizing enemies would have to be replaced by solutions through self-determination.

There was no chance for that with the establishment of Soviet rule. Russia committed herself with territorial promises to Hungary's neighbors of whatever past affiliation at the detriment of Hungary. The United States could be of no help in that situation to Hungary without openly challenging Russia, which was out of the question. America's inability to enforce the Yalta agreements was well known to the Russians also who did not forget to mention it as an argument in breaking down Hungarian resistance to Sovietization.

From the American-Hungarian relations between 1937 and 1947, these final conclusions can be drawn:

In the international system, in the absence of an organic structuring with intermediate regional

supranational units, the small states will primarily be concerned about self-preservation.

Regardless of regime affinity, alliance preferences of the small states will be dependent on the type of association that assures independence, and will not necessarily be related to ideological belief.

The level of interaction between the small countries and their great power neighbors will reflect the existential intensity of the issues involving both parties. The degree of dependence on the small country will govern the degree of solidarity and cooperation demanded by the great power.

A nation's interest in independence and ethnic integrity will determine its conduct within the limits of political and systemic possibilities.

Conversely a small country cannot expect a great power's assistance if it is not in that power's presumed interest.

By allowing independent existence to the small countries lying between the great ones to serve as systemic lubricants in tensions, the cause of peace will be advanced. To view the small countries as mere pawns, not capable of having a policy of their own and committed to one great power if not for another, is inaccurate and misleading. If within the limits of military and strategic factors constraining their conduct the powers respect the independence of the small



ones, they may come to appreciate the minor powers' true value within the international system.

In summary, it appears that during the era considered, the international system was challenged by totalitarian regimes ideologically and internally. The Western Powers, the defenders of the system, could neither prevent the emergence of such challenges, nor could they defeat one without the help of another. The only power capable of showing effective resistance to totalitarian challenges, the United States, was retarded in exerting her full influence by her isolationist public sentiment up to 1941, and by strictly military considerations during the war. Only a direct and timely confrontation could have brought the American influence to bear upon the situation. Instead, a policy of evasions and delayed reactions was applied. By 1947, when Soviet expansionist goals were restrained by nuclear deterrence, Russia had already engulfed Central Eastern Europe. With the absence of fluidity, the position of the small states became fixed in the new system, and the available western influences were unable to effect a change in the direction of small power independence. The opportunities to establish an enduring and just peace were missed by all the national actors related to the situation which provided Hungary's international environment. The Danubian neighbors shared the responsibility equally for preventing the

ethnic solution by insistence on territoriocentric solutions which could be maintained in their one-sidedness only at the expense of the area's undue dependence on a system or bloc which happened to support the status quo in favor of a claimant. The totalitarian great powers were unconcerned about just peace or a prosperous world; therefore their goal to sustain their imperialistic aspirations was always inconsistent with the peace of the Danubian peoples. The democratic great powers, on the other hand, could only proclaim and announce their salutary principles but did not enforce them, either because this called for efforts the cost of which would not have been approved by their publics, or because when opportunity was given by the fluidity of war-time operations to realize those principles, then they were again from internal considerations restricted to conduct a war without providing for the peace. This is not to blame any one, but to blame all. In full realization of equal faults and responsibilities the countries may more readily turn to constructive policies instead of persisting in finding excuses for their errors in commission as well as in omission.

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