

On the Trianon Peace Treaty

Trianon Peace Treaty, International reaction on: The Peace Treaty of Trianon, France, in 1920, created a widespread response in Europe. There were those looking for huge war indemnities and territorial gains, and enthusiastically praised and advocated the execution of the Trianon Peace Dictate. To achieve this goal, these groups employed tactics, which ranged from the falsification of history and maps to political intrigues and even briberies. There were, however, many moderate voices.

Andrew Hlinka, the Slovak leader declared in 1920 in the paper *Narodne Novoti*: *"In spite of blackening propaganda the old Hungarian government gave us more than the Czech Republic, which is so alien to our hearts. You cannot forget a thousand years, and the memory of the old Hungarian homeland continues to live in our hearts"*.

Herbert Henry Asquith, Prime Minister of Great Britain for 8 years, said in 1925: *"This peace treaty is not the work of statesmen and is the result of serious and fatal errors"*.

Stanley Baldwin, Prime Minister of Great Britain, stated: *"The peace of Europe came to an end on the day of the conclusion of the Peace Treaty of Trianon"*.

Viscount James Bryce, a member of the British Parliament stated in 1921 that: *"It was actually the Conference at Trianon which violated the rights of the minorities the most, because it passed judgment over their fate without any regard of their desires, having not even bothered to solicit their opinion. This peace treaty is no more than a shameful blemish on the sheets of history, brought about by some invisible evil hands. You really believe that this treaty will mean peace? On the contrary! It will sow the seeds of the next war in our age when peace is the chief desire of the world"*.

Neville Chamberlain, Prime Minister of Great Britain, declared in 1938 that: *"The result of the Treaty of Trianon in Europe is not peace, but fear of a new war"*.

Winston Churchill later called the treaty ending World War I: *"a tragedy of universal consequences"*.

Lloyd George, the English Prime Minister of Great Britain, one of the creators of the Peace of Trianon wrote on 25 March 1919 as follows: *"There will never be peace in South-Eastern Europe, because inside the borders of Serbia, Czechoslovakia and Romania there will be large Hungarian irredentists desiring a return of their territories to Hungary. I wish that in making peace we should adhere to the principle that the nationalities should be joined to their mother countries. This humanitarian consideration should precede all economic, strategic and financial considerations"*.

He stated in his address on 7 October 1929 that: *"The entire documentation furnished to us by our Allies at the peace conference was deceitful and lying"*.

He condemned again the spirit of the Treaty, when on 27 July 1936, he declared in the Lower House of the British Parliament that: *"Every proof of a claim presented to us by certain of our allies was based on lies and was falsified and thus we came to our decisions by accepting their false information. We made our judgment on the basis of those statistics that were placed before us by these allies. And we accepted their tainted statements rather than consider the data that the defeated nations presented to us"*.

Andrei (Andrew) Hlinka, Catholic priest, leader of the largest Slovakian party, the so-called Slovakian People's Party, stated the following on 4 June 1925: *"The memory of the Hungarian fatherland should be flapping in the souls of all of us, because we have not suffered so much under the thousand-year Hungarian rule, as under the six-year Czech rule"*.

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin,: *“The peace treaty was forced onto them, but this peace is an extortionist peace, the peace of murderers and butchers...a monstrous peace, a marauding peace...this is not a peace treaty; these are conditions dictated by highwaymen with knives in their hands to the defenseless victims”*.

Lord Newton, a member of the British House of Lords expressed his opinion in the following words in March 1920 that: *“What is the crime of the Hungarians? The fact that they fought against us? But there were times when the Czechs, the Poles and others, whom we now welcome as friends, were not our allies, just like the Hungarians in this war...”*. A year later the same politician declared: *“Again, without shame or apologies, I can say that Hungary deserves a more humane and just treatment. Much calumny has been said about this country. It was accused of war criminality when – in fact – Hungary was least responsible for this war”*.

Elmer C. A. MacCartney, in his *Short History of Hungary* wrote the following: *“One of the most glaring examples of the unjustified territorial re-adjustments is the case of Kárpátalja (Carpatho-Ukraine) in North-eastern Hungary, which was awarded to Czechoslovakia, though neither Czechs nor Slovaks are living in the region”*.

Thomas G. Masaryk, first President of Czechoslovakia stated: *“We had to choose between the creation of Czechoslovakia and the plebiscite”*.

Harold Nicholson, the secretary of the English Peace Delegation, wrote in his book entitled *The Creation of Peace* that: *“We came with the intention that the purpose of our negotiations will be a just and wise peace and we left with feeling that the peace treaties forced on our opponents were neither just nor wise”*.

Francesco S. Nitti, Italian Prime Minister, in 1922 in his book entitled *The Wreck of Europe*, wrote that: *“Hungary was the victim of the cruelest form of occupation and the greediest exploitation of her wealth. This nation, with that great historical past, the defender of Christianity and civilized Europe, was treated with such immeasurable cruelty that it could not be explained with anything but the insane hatred and greed of her neighbors. At the end of the war, most of the Allied Powers demanded great sacrifices from this state and none of them had a sympathetic word in support of this much-endured nation. I raised my voice in her defense, but, alas, it was too late”*.

He stated the following in September 1924: *“With the Treaty of Trianon, no country was devastated more savagely than Hungary. However, this country is inhabited by strong-minded people, who would not put up with the destruction of their fatherland. The mutilation of historic Hungary is so disgraceful, that nobody wants to take responsibility for it. Everybody acts as if he would not know about it, everybody remains bashfully quiet. Allusion to the right of peoples to self-determination is an untrue fabrication...the western powers misused their victory in the most wicked manner. There is not a single Frenchman, Englishman or Italian, who would accept for his country those conditions that were forced on Hungary.”*

Henri Pozzi, a French reporter, who traveled in all areas covered by the Treaty of Trianon, wrote in 1934 in his book entitled *The War Returns* that: *“What does Hungary demand today on the eve of a new war and with full justification? She simply demands the return of those unquestionably Magyar (Hungarian) territories, which the three neighboring states annexed disregarding the principle of self-determination of the nationalities. They only ask the return of those territories, whose inhabitants would express – under an internationally supervised plebiscite – their desire to belong to Hungary again. I am neither a friend of Hungarians or Serbs, but I am convinced that a new war is approaching which would require the French nation to make huge sacrifices again. For such borders? For nothing?”*

Viscount Lord Rothermere, publisher and editor-in-chief of the paper Daily Mail, wrote the following in an article entitled "*Hungary's Place in the Sun*" in the 21 June 1927 issue: "*Two of my sons were killed in the war. They sacrificed their lives for noble ideas and not for so ignoble a maltreatment of this illustrious nation. There will not be quiet in Europe, until the infamous and inane Treaty of Trianon undergoes revision*".

André Tardieu, three-times Prime Minister of France, wrote in his book *La Paix* that: "*Plebiscite could not be held in the Upland or Northern Hungary (Felvidék of Historic Hungary), uprooted from Hungary, because then Czechoslovakia would not have become a reality as a result of the counter-voting of the population*". – B: 2070, T: 7456.

Voevode, ex-Prime Minister of Romania, compared the past to his times in 1931, stated that: "*Under Hungarian rule the Transylvanian Romanians were exposed to half as much injustice as today under Romanian rule. The Romanian civil servants were not fired for their political conviction and the Hungarians did not steal the ballot boxes on the day of the election. True, the Romanian members of parliament were not considered to be important but they were equally protected by laws. Then, we sent more representatives to the parliament at Budapest than today to Bucharest! In Hungary, eight Transylvanian Romanians held high financial positions as opposed to two in Bucharest today. There were no slaves in Hungary. We could freely express our opinions, because we were protected by Hungarian laws...*". (The Hungarian question at the British Parliament).

Yves de Daruvar in connection with the decisions of the Peace of Trianon, in his book entitled *The Tragic Fate of Hungary* (1970) wrote that: "*With the Peace of Trianon, territories, that for over a thousand years without interruption had been an organic part of Hungary, were now awarded to one or the other of the successor states. One stroke of the pen destroyed not only Hungary's national and historical unity, but that physical and economic entity, which had taken ten centuries to develop in the Carpathian Basin*".

The peacemakers of Trianon annihilated the geographic unity of Historic Hungary, which for a thousand years had provided political and economic security to its multi-ethnic population, who had been able to live in peace with each other. Due to ignorance and motivated by revenge the victors committed a blunder that removed a power from the center of Europe that had been a bulwark not only against conquering designs from the East but also had resisted German expansion.

The consequences of the Peace Treaty of Trianon: Hungary signed the Trianon peace-dictate under duress and the Hungarian people never accepted the crippling and unjustified population and territorial losses. In June of 1920 the Alliance of Defense Leagues sponsored a literary contest for the composition of a prayer and a slogan to support the national movement aimed at the restoration of the borders; Mrs. Elemér Papp-Váry was the winner. This was the text of her prayer: "*I believe in one God - I believe in one homeland - I believe in the eternal justice of God - I believe in the resurrection of Hungary - Amen*". (*Hiszek egy Istenben, hiszek egy hazában, hiszek Magyarország feltámadásábn! Amen*). This became the "*Hungarian Confession of Faith*". There is a popular slogan in Hungarian, which ran thus: "*Csonka Magyarország nem ország - Egész Magyarország mennyország*" (The verbatim translation of this rather hyperbolic slogan is: *Dismembered Hungary is not a country, restored or complete Hungary is Heaven*.)

On 23 April 1920, Czechoslovakia and Romania signed an agreement, aimed at the harmonization of their foreign policy against Hungary, whereby they created the "Little Entente" with Yugoslavia joining in, on 7 June 1921.

On 28 August 1921, the Western Hungarian Uprising broke out in the territories awarded to Austria. To settle the fate of the disputed area, the Venetian Agreement authorized the holding of

a plebiscite for the city of Sopron and its surroundings. In the plebiscite, held on 14-16 December 1921, the areas in question decided with a huge majority to remain with Hungary. The result of this plebiscite proved the mistakes made by the Paris peace treaties, indicating also that if the Wilsonian principle regarding the self-determination of nations had been allowed to apply, the map of Europe today would look very different; the plebiscite broke the first link in the fetters of Trianon.

On 21 February 1924, the Reparation Commission accepted the plan for the total settlement of Hungary's financial obligation. The total amount came to 179 million golden crowns and three years of coal supply for the Serbo-Croatian-Slovenian Monarchy.

Few nations would have survived dismemberment similar to that caused by the Peace of Trianon. The loss of products from the detached territories and the severe reparations payments gravely impacted on the economic life of the country and had a serious effect on the socio-economic conditions of her people.

In the period between the two world wars, the irredentism and revisionist movement rose to the level of government policy. Besides the will to live, these revisionist ideas, promoted and nurtured by social organizations, education and the arts, helped the people of the country to recover and start over again. Revisionism was not taken seriously abroad, since the great powers were always indifferent toward the injustices suffered by small nations. In Hungary, however, many people in the 1920's and 1930s, believed that to gain redress, it would be enough to win over or convince the leaders of the Western nations, and the friendly statements by polite foreign politicians were received with great enthusiasm. In the truncated country, this hopeless belief restored self-respect and helped in the recovery. The people did not lose hope in the future but began to rebuild the country amid the existing dire circumstances. Between the two world wars, surrounded by enemies, the dismembered and consequently disjointed country reorganized itself into a well-functioning economic and political society.

As a result of the destruction of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, in their diminished size both Austria and Hungary were incapable of self-defense. The words of Anthony Eden, ex Foreign Minister of Britain, underline this well: "*The disappearance of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy had a catastrophic effect on the peace of Europe*". The Peace of Trianon was a huge blunder, not only because it was unjust and biased toward one nation, but because it destroyed the balance of power in Europe, resulting first in German domination, then later in the Soviet control of Central and Eastern Europe.

This incorrect decision made by the Paris treaties led directly to World War II. The treaties ending World War II not only repeated the well-known mistakes made by the peace-dictates ending World War I, but added new ones. They allowed Soviet rule to extend into the heartland of Europe, which resulted in dividing Europe into two hostile armed camps. For half a century this decision represented a grave danger for the whole Western world, including England and the United States. Instead of recognizing the right of self-determination for the national minorities, the victorious powers emphasized the need for the recognition of the rights of the minorities but took no practical steps for the actual international enforcement of these rights. Instead of solving the question of the minorities, as it was claimed, the Peace of Trianon created new and larger minorities. The successor states had even more serious difficulties with their minorities than the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy had experienced. The so called minority agreements, signed after the peace treaty were worthless in reality, since their observation was never verified and the complaints raised were never remedied. In fact, the successor states tried the very best to expel or assimilate their Hungarian minorities.

Czechoslovakia, one of the successor states created by the Versailles-Trianon treaties, proved that it was not viable, when it fell apart after the first shocks of World War II and, though the victorious powers insisted on its restoration, later – in peacetime – it broke into two states on 1 January 1993. A large section of the Slovaks themselves look upon Beneš and Masaryk as liars, who disingenuously enticed them into the formation of the new common artificial state with the Pittsburg Declaration. However, the Slovaks do not want to recognize that, by being part of Czechoslovakia, they became the beneficiaries of the common ill-gotten gains. When the Czechs did not fulfill their obligations regarding minority rights as laid down in the post-Trianon minority agreements, the Slovaks raised no objections and, since they have become independent, they continue the Czech policy of assimilation.

In the territory awarded to Czechoslovakia, no Czechs lived and the number of Slovaks did not reach 50% of the population. The population of Kárpátalja (Carpatho-Ukraine) was Hungarian and Ruthenian, without any Czech or Slovak residents. In the territory of Transylvania given to Romania, which was a reward for attacking the Central Powers in 1916, and the Romanian promise to channel 20 years revenue of the “Gold mine triangle” of Transylvania to France, as it had been agreed on in the secret Bucharest Agreement, the proportion of the Romanians was 55%. In the territory awarded to the Serbo-Croatian-Slovenian Monarchy (later to be called Yugoslavia) from Hungary proper, the south Slavs made up only 33% of the population. Yugoslavia, another successor state, similarly proved unviable as a political entity. It became the tinderbox of the Balkans and fell apart into its many components. However, there the Hungarians remain under Serbian control and there their dwindling numbers continue to suffer discrimination.

The fate of the Hungarian and Szekler minorities in Transylvania, Romania, one of the successor states, is also lamentable and, although the Romanians also undertook to ensure full equality for the minorities, from the beginning their assimilation has been part of the governments’ program in the past for more than 90 years. Their obligation undertaken in a formal agreement remained on paper, since there was no international body set up to verify their fulfillment. Thus, many Hungarians and other minorities have left Transylvania seeking a better and freer life elsewhere.

The lot of the Hungarian minority in Serbia/Yugoslavia was equally heavy. Between November 8 and 12 1918, the Serbs occupied Southern Hungary and never moved out. The Trianon Peace Treaty awarded Croatia-Slovenia and Southern Hungary to Serbia with a three times larger non-Serbian population. This started the systematic elimination of everything Hungarian.

According to conservative estimates, the number of Hungarians living in the severed territories in 1995 was as follows: Austria 25,000, Czech Republic 52,000, Croatia 40,000, Slovenia 15,000, Romania 2,400,000 and Slovakia 800,000. In total 3,912,000 Hungarians live in minority status, representing about 30% of the population of Hungary today.

During the nine decades that have passed since the Peace Treaty of Trianon, the decisions made about the minority problem have not led to a satisfactory solution. The decisions that created the large Hungarian minorities in the neighboring states were not only unjust but lacked foresight: they provided no practical vehicles for securing their cultural and civil rights.

That the Peace of Trianon (and it was repeated by the Paris Peace Treaty in 1947) caused a deep wound in the Hungarian national consciousness is illustrated by the efforts of various Hungarian associations around the world to call the attention of the world’s leaders to Hungary’s plight. One of these is the 24 July 1992 Memorandum of the American Hungarian Association to the senators of the United States and the European Border Revision Conference. The memorandum contained the following requests: (1) the reinstatement of the prewar 1938 Vienna

Agreement and the return of the area in question to Hungary. (2) The return of Carpatho-Ukraine (*Kárpátalja*), since this territory was never part of the Soviet Union or Ukraine and Czechoslovakia, which no longer exists, had relinquished it. (3) The return of those areas of Transylvania, which on the basis of mutual agreement with Romania came under Hungarian control in 1940, well before Hungary entered World War II. (4) The return of the Baranya Triangle and the Mura region, since they had never been part of Croatia. (5) The return of the Backa (*Bácska*) and the Banate (*Bánság*), because these areas were never part of Serbia or the new Yugoslavia or the old one which ceased to exist. Real peace and political balance in Central and Eastern Europe hinge on the fair treatment of the minorities.

To solve this question there are some options. Since the introduction of the “mild Status Law” (2001) for the protection of Hungarian ethnic minorities in the successor states, that Slovakia met with stiff resistance. The next solution came with the new Hungarian Government in 2010, which legislated Hungarian Citizenship to all Hungarians wherever they live, including the detached territories, if they wish to assume Hungarian citizenship. This would provide guarantees against discrimination and for the unfettered cultural autonomy for the Hungarian minorities. This would also help to win territorial autonomy. If this is also sabotaged, the final solution would have to be the restoration by peaceful means some of the pre-World War I frontiers of Hungary.

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