

## CHAPTER IV

### THE TREATY OF TRIANON-ITS LEGAL, MORAL AND TERRITORIAL FOUNDATIONS

*"Lloyd George, in discussing the world economic crisis (on July 21, 1930), stated that the Treaty of Versailles was at the time of its framing regarded as little more than a temporary measure of a nature to satisfy public opinion in the belligerent countries. 'Even Clemenceau', he added, 'thought that'."*

**(Sir Harold Nicolson's Diaries;** Collins, London, 1966)

The only hope that Hungary had to fall back on was the Peace Conference. It assembled in Paris, at the beginning of 1920, alas, in an atmosphere so charged with passion, rancour and rivalries as to hold out little promise for a just and lasting peace. As hinted at before, the Allied and Associated Powers were hagridden by a military inferiority complex, as well as bitterness and hatred toward the vanquished, in consequence of a long war, terminated by a doubtful victory descended from an American heaven practically at the very last moment. Let it be added also that by the time the Peace Conference opened the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy had already become a thing of the past - if not in law, in fact it had ceased to exist. Hungary, in particular, had seen most of its territory, including the capital, occupied by its enemies in the course of 1919, owing, at first, to the nativity of its leaders, and subsequently to Béla Kun's Bolshevik revolution. The latter certainly contributed to the weakness of Hungary's cause, at the very time when the terms of the peace to be enforced in relation to the vanquished were being hammered out. Hence no sooner had Hungary succeeded in shaking off the Bolshevik stranglehold than it found that its fate had been consummated. Finally, as we shall see presently, the information which the Allies used for their enlightenment while taking their decisions - information concerning the history, economics and ethnic conditions of Central Europe - was either provided faked by their little protégés or notoriously insufficient. The combination of all those factors had an obviously disastrous effect on the peace arrangements arrived at in the Paris-Versailles region, and more specifically on the Treaty of Trianon which was thus to "bear the imprint of hate, on the one hand, and that of negligence, on the other hand" (54).

As for the so-called "peace talks", let us quote verbatim what Robert Vallery-Radot had to say on the subject (55): "It was as late as December 1, 1919, that the Supreme Council of the Allied and Associated Powers invited the Hungarian Government to send to Neuilly (yet another Paris suburb) its delegates duly empowered to conclude a Peace Treaty. The members of the delegation, with Count Albert Apponyi at their head, arrived in Neuilly, on January 7, 1920. There they were practically imprisoned in a building called the Chateau de Madrid, guarded by policemen, who would not allow anyone to leave, except for Count Apponyi who in consideration of his advanced age was granted the privilege of a short daily walk in the company of an inspector of the French police . . . Thus on January 15 the Hungarians were at last told what treatment they were going to

receive. However, Edouard Benes had already taken care to declare in the Paris daily 'Les Temps' of December 2, 1919, that the decision of the Peace Conference in respect of the frontiers of the future Hungarian State was final and that there could be no question of amendments in favour of that State. When the Hungarian delegates were at last told about the fate that had been prepared for their country so great was their sorrow that they almost felt paralyzed. They set to work immediately, nevertheless, and for 4 months running they applied themselves to showing up the historic errors, the geographical monstrosities and the economic absurdities which Edouard Benes had termed the decisions of the Peace Conference. And as if those decisions amounting to arbitrary confiscation had anything to do with law or justice, the Hungarian delegation continued with scrupulous industry turning out submission upon submission, note upon note."

Unfortunately, all their efforts proved to be a total waste. While confined to the Chateau de Madrid like a colony of lepers, the victors never communicated with them orally, only in writing. The considerable mass of documents, maps and statistics which they had brought with them were never consulted, the same as nobody ever read the notes they produced on the spot. Never at any moment did the Hungarian delegates have a chance of discussing matters bilaterally with the victors. Even the final declaration they were able to make remained a solitary monologue. Consequently there was no one to take into consideration the arguments marshaled by Hungary in defense of her cause, nor was she ever confronted with her detractors. "Even Bismarck", wrote Henri Pozzi, "had allowed our plenipotentiaries to plead our cause, in 1871, thus enabling us to win certain points - that was how Jules Favre, for instance, succeeded in saving Belfort from German annexation" (56). When on the last day Count Apponyi was, after all, admitted to the presence of that august conference "he defended his country", continues Pozzi, "in such a deeply moving manner and with such gripping outcries of sorrowful truth that certain plenipotentiaries were incapable of hiding their troubled feelings . . . The Supreme Council, however, remained inflexible." The reason for that inexorable attitude lay undoubtedly in the fact that the text of the Peace Treaty to be signed by Hungary had been drafted, down to its most minute details, long before the opening of the Peace Conference, and of course with the full complicity of its future beneficiaries.

In fact, the victim eventually slaughtered at Trianon, had been selected for that role well in advance. As we have seen, Panslavism had conspired, even before the 1914-1918 war, to pluck Hungary to pieces and share out the spoils. Innumerable documents published since World War I bear this out. Also, certain maps of "Daco-Roumania", more than a hundred years ago placed the imaginary frontiers of that country along the river Tisza in the Hungarian heartland. But it is especially striking to find how closely the frontiers fixed at Trianon coincide with those figuring in certain pamphlets published in wartime Paris by Ernest Denis and his friends and accomplices of the "National Council of the Czech Countries".

However that may be, the Treaty of Trianon remains above all a sentence pronounced by judges ill-informed and shamefully ill-used the fruit of the combined action of greedy neighbours and criminally ignorant great powers. "By now it has become quite clear that the statesmen of the Entente, who were the authors, if perhaps not the inventors, of those

treaties, mostly had only very vague notions (which is their only excuse) of the ethnic, economic and cultural conditions prevailing in the Danubian countries whose fate they were called upon to decide. Obviously, only few of them had the time, or the will, to study the political, economic or historical questions involved before reaching their decisions. How many millions of people would have been spared untold misery if they had proceeded a little more seriously and conscientiously" (57). "The great empires of peace did not have a first notion of the geography, ethnography or history of the peoples and countries whose fate they had to decide. Wilson, for example, kept muddling up 'Slovaks' and 'Slovenes'. Nor was Lloyd George any better informed. As for Clemenceau, all has long ago been stated about his stupendous ignorance concerning- all things not pertaining to a certain romantic view of French history or French domestic politics" (58).

"Taking advantage of the geographical ignorance of Clemenceau, Lloyd George and Wilson, the man to whom the task of studying the status of the states newly to be created had been entrusted - the Frenchman Philippe Berthelot - made his own views prevail. They had been dictated to him by Edouard Benes. . . Thomas Masaryk in London played the same kind of game with the Wickham Steed, the journalist, and Mr. Seton Watson. On April 4, 1919, Czechoslovakia was thus created in a matter of minutes, replete with alien nationalities of all sorts . . ." (59). "Czech, Roumanian and Serb diplomats doled out around the green baize table of Trianon heaps of the most superficial, erroneous and tendentious information, distorting facts, engineering statistics and faking the will of the populations concerned in remarkably bad faith. Their task, in the performance of which no one excelled more than Edouard Benes, was facilitated by the shameful mediocrity of the Western negotiators . . . They simply conceded everything they had been asked for . . . And all the while Mr. Benes continued dishing up the grossest historic, geographical and ethnological absurdities in his quiet, smiling manner, often contradicting himself, without anyone at the Conference daring to object for fear that his crass ignorance might be found out . . . A marvelous game of grab, indeed . . ." (60). "The Peace Treaty of Trianon was born in an environment particularly ill-suited to the creation of wise and enduring constructions. The great allied statesmen called upon to play the role of arbitrators knew little of those far-away regions of Eastern Europe with which they had to deal. So they left the job to the young claimants themselves, placing their confidence in those gallant Serbs, in the Roumanians, the spoilt adoptive children of France, and chiefly in two Czechs whose influence was considerable at the time the peace treaties were being drafted - Messrs. Benes and Masaryk . . . Friendly connections at the highest level in the allied camp enabled them to help themselves, and their associates, handsomely to the good things they craved" (61). "Out of a hotch-potch of fakes and forgeries, out of a chaos of falsehoods was woven the Treaty of Trianon, lined with a map of absurdities, and the Hungarian plenipotentiaries, unable to make their protests heard, cooped up at the Chateau de Madrid under police surveillance, with all their communications with the outside world heavily censored, were forced to sign it without any discussion, the swords of our worn- out diplomats pointed at them." (62)

One could go on proliferating quotations of that kind indefinitely. David Lloyd George himself pronounced the verdict in a speech at the Guildhall in London, on October 7, 1928, when he admitted that the entire documentation they had been provided with by

"some of their allies" during the peace negotiations was a bundle of falsehoods and fabrications. They had made their decisions on the basis of fakes. "That terrible accusation which has never been answered", wrote Henri Pozzi, "also spells out the responsibility of the allied negotiators. How could it be that they should not have noticed soon the procedures employed by the representatives of Prague, Bucharest and Belgrade, in order to subvert their good faith with those fancy statistics, fake petitions, tricks and lies which made Trianon one of the worst iniquities in diplomatic history." (63)

So many crushing testimonials of levity, thoughtlessness, ignorance and indeed scandalous bias on the part of the Western delegates to the Peace Conference leave one speechless. At least they ought to have mistrusted that morbid hunger for territorial gain so openly displayed by the small successor states, instead of encouraging the brazen greed with which, over and above the recuperation of their own racial brethren, they went all out to capture great numbers of Magyar hostages, too. In that they mutually cooperated for it was obvious that the greater the number of accomplices in hostility surrounding her, the easier could Hungary be gagged. The success of their joint action was so stupendous that it has been said - however incredible it may sound - that even Benes felt rather frightened when confronted with its sum total. It explains at any rate why the frontiers drawn at Trianon did hardly ever coincide with ethnographic boundaries and did in fact deliberately cut into massive Hungarian populations. If one is to believe the rapporteur of the Trianon Treaty, the French politician Charles Daniélou, in the ultimate resort the victors did not so much want to "punish" Hungary than rather to satisfy the demands of the successor states, "with the result that there were allowed to subsist among the peoples of Danubian Europe frictions of discontent hard to smooth over". In other words, instead of restoring and consolidating good understanding between those countries, in the higher interest of Europe as a whole, their quarrels had been further embittered by arbitrary dissections, rendering impossible for a long time that kind of collaboration between the Hungarians and their neighbours which had always prevailed to the XIXth century. Territories wrenched from Hungary had been turned into ready coinage with which to pay the price of alliances contracted during the war. To quote Henri Pozzi once more: "The question at Trianon was not who was right, the question was who should be declared right in the interest of the victors . . ." (64).

This was confirmed by a Member of the British House of Commons, **Sir** Robert Gower, who recalled that "the Czechoslovak Republic was recognized by the Entente Powers in advance during the summer of 1918. On the other hand secret treaties had been concluded prior to the armistice. The one signed on August 18, 1916, had promised the Roumanians, in addition to Transylvania, a considerable portion of the great Hungarian plain. In the course of one of its meetings, held in June 1918, the Supreme Council of the Entente, decided to set up a state for the Southern Slavs as one of the war aims to be achieved. However, that decision could only be put into practice by dismembering Hungary. A country had thus been condemned without ever being heard." (65) In that way secret treaties had decided about the partition of Hungary long before the Peace Conference. Yet it should have been possible to draw ethnic frontiers which would have been much more equitable than those established by the Treaty of Trianon that cut into the very flesh of the country, arbitrarily separating large contiguous blocs of Hungarian

populations. It makes you think of the terrifying words allegedly pronounced by Frederick II of Prussia: "I grab, I loot and I steel; thereafter it's up to my lawyers to find the appropriate justification." And Clemenceau declared not less cynically: "the peace treaties are yet another means to continue the war."

So it happened that the Hungarian people, whose responsibility for touching off World War I had been categorically refuted point by point, found themselves most cruelly punished, mutilated and humiliated. As a matter of fact "of all Peace Treaties the one signed at Trianon was by far the harshest, depriving Hungary of 63% of its inhabitants and 71% of its territory. That in itself was punishment the like of which has rarely been meted out to a nation in the course of history. What's worse, the remaining stump was subjected to conditions of fiscal, military and political bondage which amounted to the actual curtailment of its sovereignty . . . It had been deprived, in addition to its national minorities, of large areas inhabited by pure Hungarian populations . . . A mistake was thus made which may be compared with the partitions of Poland effected in the XVIIIth century . . . It is obviously impossible for the Hungarians to accept those brutal amputations committed by encroaching on all their rights as a people and without ever granting a hearing to those concerned... In the end one plebiscite was conceded, to the town of Sopron, and the outcome of that was favourable to Hungary. But of course the claimant there had been Austria, another defeated country, whereas no plebiscite had ever been granted at the risk of the nations patronized by the victors" (66).

The plebiscite would indeed have been the only effective means of ascertaining the genuine will of the populations concerned, carrying with it the immense advantage of putting an end, once and for all, to territorial disputes, as was shown in the case of Schleswig-Holstein where it had been meticulously applied, or as it happened subsequently at Sopron. The Treaty of Trianon was the only one where plebiscites were totally rejected, regardless of Count Apponyi's profoundly moving appeal to the Peace Conference (\*). The attitude of the Hungarian delegation was indeed an impeccable and even noble one. Only moral force could prevail against historic right and they were prepared to bow to the verdict of the former. That moral force was the will of the peoples inhabiting the disputed areas. "Between Hungary which, basing itself on its historic rights wishes to keep those areas, and its neighbours who want to acquire them under a variety of pretexts, let them be adjudicated to those to whom their inhabitants would prefer to belong." Such was Count Apponyi's plea, but it went unheard. As one may see, at Trianon the Hungarian delegation had been fully prepared, in view of the circumstances, to comply with frontiers to be determined by plebiscites organized under impartial international supervision and thereafter to establish new relationships with Hungary's neighbours on such an equitable basis. But Hungary's plea was sternly rejected. "It is difficult to understand", wrote **Sir** Robert Gower, "why Hungary's claim, based as it was on President Wilson's own principle, was rejected. The thesis that popular consultations properly speaking had been rendered superfluous by the clearly expressed will of the various nationalities just does not stand up to scrutiny, and it certainly does not justify the severing of three and a half million Hungarians from the mother country." (67)

The only exception, as already mentioned, was the modest plebiscite granted in December 1921, eighteen months after Trianon, at Italy's initiative for the district of Sopron in the Burgenland region adjudicated to Austria, where there lived a considerable Germanic population. As 65% of them voted for Hungary, nevertheless, as opposed to 35% for Austria, that dangerous experiment was not allowed to become a precedent. Let us add, in order to unmask the duplicity which had presided over the drawing of Hungary's new frontiers, that the Allies had given that western strip of Hungary to Austria solely as an apple of discord between the two vanquished countries. They therefore felt able in that case to afford complying with ethnographic niceties which they had so signally flouted elsewhere. Moreover, if Italy had not intervened, the Allies would have been prepared to split up that western frontier zone of Hungary between the Czechs and Yugoslavs so as to grant them a common frontier whilst thus completing the total encirclement of Hungary which by the same token would have been deprived of its only window turned on the Western world.

Even before the Germanic inhabitants of the Burgenland expressed their will to remain within Hungary other non-Magyar populations of the historic kingdom had energetically demanded the same without, however, being granted a hearing. Such had been the case notably of the Wends and Slovenes in the south-western corner of the country, called the Muraköz, which was ex officio annexed by Yugoslavia. The Ruthenians of Eastern Slovakia and the Suabians of the Bánát also protested as vehemently and equally unsuccessfully to the Peace Conference against their separation from Hungary. Consequently Marius Moutet was justified in stating, during the debate of the Treaty of Trianon in the French National Assembly's Chamber of Deputies: "without being consulted, the ethnic minorities of Hungary have been assigned to nations which they had not chosen themselves" (68).

Taking account of all these facts and, in particular, the one exceptional plebiscite of Sopron, one may gauge the flabbergasting duplicity of President Millerand's covering letter with which he conveyed the text of the Treaty to the head of the Hungarian delegation, on May 6, 1920: "The Hungarian Delegation admittedly argues that in no instance did the terms of peace provide for plebiscites. However, the Allied and Associated Powers felt that there was no need to have recourse to such popular consultations once they had made sure that such consultations - even if surrounded by the safest guarantees of sincerity - would not yield results that might be appreciably different from those to which they have arrived after a meticulous study of the ethnographic conditions and national aspirations of Central Europe."

It was that refusal to admit the remedy of plebiscites - while at the same time severing 3½ million Hungarians from their mother country - which constituted the basic flaw of the Treaty of Trianon and the disgrace of its authors.

To emphasize even more the deceitfulness of those authors let us add that while another passage of Millerand's covering letter allowed the hope to transpire that Hungary might obtain certain rectification of the new frontiers provided the delimitation commissions saw fit to do so, that promise was cancelled out by an underhand injunction addressed to

the same commissions instructing them to adhere as closely as possible to the frontiers traced by the Treaty "regardless of linguistic, national or religious considerations" (69).

Another thing one may read in Millerand's covering letter, which was nothing more nor less than a disgraceful hoax, is the following sentence: "A state of affairs, be it millenary, has no right to subsist if it is not founded on justice." That strange doctrine has since gone a long way toward asserting itself, including the fact that the Bretons, for example, have come to discover their national individuality.

Unfortunately France has lent a hand, not to speak of its pen, to such hateful proceedings at the risk of being one day stigmatized by history herself. And that notwithstanding the unequivocal words pronounced by no less a person than the President of the French Republic, Raymond Poincaré, at the opening of the Peace Conference. "The times have passed", said he, "when diplomats gathered round the corner of a table could authoritatively re-draw the frontiers of empires. In re-making the map of the world you are asked to do so in the name of the peoples concerned and on condition that you translate their ideas faithfully and respect the right of all nations, big or small, to determine their fate themselves." However, as we have already seen, the Peace Conference preferred not to consult the peoples concerned and certainly not by way of plebiscites which it considered to be "useless". And yet the legal adviser to the French Foreign Ministry of that period, Professor de Lapradelle went on affirming that "the annexor country shall acquire true sovereignty over its new subjects only if and when the latter have acquiesced in the new state of affairs."

As to why, really, the populations concerned were not granted the right of speaking up for themselves, André Tardieu - who was to become twice Prime Minister of the Third Republic between the wars - reveals the truth bluntly in his book entitled "Peace" (La Paix) in the following terms: "We had to choose between organizing plebiscites or creating Czechoslovakia". This also proves indirectly that despite Millerand's assertions to the contrary the populations concerned were not, at the time, passionately clamouring for a change of sovereignty. The plain truth is that the leaders of the victorious powers just did not care a tinker's cuss about their real wishes. And that, after the slaughter of many millions of human beings, for the sake of the peoples' right to determine their fate themselves.

It is all the more important to acknowledge the lone attitude adopted by General (subsequently Field Marshal) Ian Smuts Chief Delegate and for many years Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa who demanded - in vain - plebiscites for Transylvania, Slovakia, Ruthenia and Croatia-Slavonia, on the strength of the argument that Germany had been accorded that right in the cases of Schleswig-Holstein, Silesia, East Prussia and the Saarland. Solitary in taking the initiative, Smuts did not remain alone for long. He was to be supported soon by the other British Dominions, as well as by Japan, Poland and Italy. The fear of the plebiscite, however, prevailed against them, leaving out of sight the truth so brilliantly formulated in latter years by the Swiss historian Aldo Dami who said "a plebiscite refused is a plebiscite taken in fact." By the same token the Reverend Father Weterlé, for many years the protesting voice of Alsace

in the German Imperial Parliament, declared in the French National Assembly on June 7, 1921: "I am profoundly convinced that had plebiscites been held neither the Serbs nor the Roumanians would have received more than one-third of the votes cast . . . People have been pushed about against their will. There can be no doubt about that."

Going even further, Aldo Dami rightly explains that the Peace Conference mixed up, moreover, the peoples' right to self-determination with the principle of defining nationality on a linguistic basis. The two are by no means identical, for an ethnic group may well decide to prefer belonging to a national sovereignty linguistically different from its own. The Peace Conference did in fact cynically flout both by cutting off a compact Magyar block big chunks of purely Hungarian-inhabited territories and awarding them to Hungary's neighbours for economic or strategic considerations. Two errors, or rather two injustices, have thus been compounded. "The frontiers drawn at Trianon", affirms Aldo Dami, excluded from Hungary a first zone of Hungarian territories, plus a second zone inhabited by non-Magyars whose interests were, however, so closely entwined with those of Hungary that there could have been no doubting their decision had they been consulted. Hence the Peace of Trianon is based neither on ethnography nor on popular sentiment nor even on the interests of the populations concerned - which the latter are sure to know best." (70) As an example Aldo Dami quotes the case of the Alsatians who - though of Germanic race and language - desired to be French, the same as the Wends and Slovenes of the Muraköz, who despite of being Slavs by race and language requested, without success, to be allowed to remain within Hungary, in 1919. The later course of events also showed that it would have been in the best interests of the Croats and Slovaks, too, to be consulted before they were made to coalesce with the Serbs and the Czechs. As regards the latter, let it be recorded that when a delegation of Slovak autonomists, led by Reverends Hlinka and Jehlicka, turned up in Paris to apply to the Peace Conference for a popular referendum to be organized in Slovakia, Dr. Benes had them expelled by the French police.

The peoples' right to self-determination cannot be made dependent uniquely on such factors as race, language or religion: it is their consciousness and their will to belong to this or that community that counts. It was on that understanding that self-determination had been made one of the Allies' war aims and incorporated among President Wilson's 14 points. Those who proclaimed that principle elaborated on it further by pointing out that no ethnic group must be forced to live within the framework of any one particular state if for reasons of race, language, affinity or interest they wish to join another country. Alas, in the case of Hungary the right to self-determination was totally disregarded for neither of its inhabitants, be they Hungarians or non-Magyars, were ever asked if they wished to be incorporated in any one of the neighbouring countries. They were not asked because it had been pretty clear that had they been consulted at all a great majority would have opted for the continuance of their traditional ties, on condition of course of obtaining regional autonomy and full equality of rights for all national minorities. A grand old country whose unity had been cemented by history, geography and economy, was thus chopped up without reference to its inhabitants while all those who became minorities in the areas annexed by the successor states were made the victims of the crudest oppression.



Trianon has indeed become the living symbol of the denial of the Wilsonian principles and of the peoples' right to self-determination - the very ideals for which the Allies had pretended to wage war but which were immediately repudiated once victory had been won. Without being forced to do so the Allied and Associated Powers ignored the very principles which they, themselves, had solemnly declared the ones that would govern all peace settlements. By so doing they also betrayed a sacred trust for it was on the strength of those famous 14 points that the Central Empires finally decided to lay down arms, hoping that thus they would be assured of acceptable conditions of peace. "The publication of the 14 points, the way in which the news about them spread all over Germany, Austria and Hungary, the immense feelings of relief and confidence to which they had given rise", wrote Henri Pozzi, "were the causes of the crumbling of civilian morale which alone entailed the collapse of the battle fronts." (71) It has long since become clear, as stated also the Hungarian diplomat Antal Ullein-Reviczky, that "all those attractive words were destined only to influence the world's public opinion in favour of the Entente powers and to demoralize the armed forces of the Central Empires. In fact the Wilsonian principles had penetrated more surely than allied rifle bullets the hearts of Austria-Hungary's soldiers. .. Why should we go on fighting, they said, when from the other side we are promised solemnly freedom, equal treatment and the right to self-determination? . . . In Hungary, in particular, Count Károlyi's Peace Party made itself eagerly the mouth-piece of President Wilson's promises so as to convince the country that all further resistance was useless. It was to those Wilsonian principles, moreover, that not only Austria-Hungary but even Germany referred in October and November, 1918, when suing for an armistice. .. Yet when peace finally came to Hungary it certainly did not rest on those principles that had been publicly proffered and accepted when the armistice agreements were concluded in October-November 1918. Arguments of a more practical nature had persuaded the Peace Conference to grant Hungary's neighbours their territorial claims without having recourse to plebiscites. Both the Wilsonian principles and the secret agreements had played their useful, if separate, part in Allied victory." (72) To which Italy's wartime Prime Minister, Francesco Nitti added: "The peoples' right to self-determination proclaimed by the Allies during the war turned out to be merely a deceitful formula used as a rallying call during times of acute danger. The peace, such as had been promised, was never made and the ideals for which so many men had laid down their lives, were betrayed by the negotiators of the treaties. The conditions imposed by the victors on the vanquished were dishonest and indeed guilty - guilty of an improper use of victory. Like the Atridae of antique Greek tragedy, the initial crime entailed a continuous succession of others; but it was always the first crime which bore the principal responsibility." (73) Let us note that after the second world war the Western powers abandoned similarly and for similar reasons the same principle of self-determination, renouncing moreover the re-establishment of democracy in those unfortunate countries for whose liberties the late war had at least in part been fought, to begin with Poland which, along with a number of adjacent countries, was left to the tender mercies of the Soviet Union.

Yet it would seem certain that the honest application of Wilson's 14 points would, as from 1919 on, have ensured Europe an equitable peace and spared it all its subsequent trials and tribulations. But President Wilson knew next to nothing about Europe, and by

making concession after concession he ended up with the signing of peace treaties which were in signal contradiction to his ideas and constituted the negation of his most solemn commitments. Thus the 14 points found their lasting place in the annals as one of the biggest pieces of trickery in the world's history. "At the end of World War I", wrote Aldo Dami, "President Wilson appeared much more of an arbitrator than a belligerent, longing only for an equitable peace and plebiscites. In the end, however, it became a peace of defensive strategy, such as Clemenceau and the Maréchal Foch had conceived of. And once again the scales of history's balance were prevented from staying in equilibrium. For not content with satisfying existing irredentisms the Allies created new ones. By distorting the facts they made history spell out things that history was never meant to say. They called into question territorial arrangements to which the passage of time had long before added its patina or justification" (74).

If only the redistribution of peoples and frontiers had been superior to the old order, but the opposite turned out to be true. The treaties of 1919-1920, and particularly the one signed at Trianon, eventually created situations which proved much less tolerable than had been the conditions those treaties were supposed to remedy. "Having decreed that a motley state such as Austria- Hungary was not worthy of having a life of its own, the Supreme Allied Council hastened to set up states such as Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia or even Greater Roumania, which were as many replicas of the old Empire, embracing as many mixed nationalities." (75) Thus, in order to "liberate" 2 million Slovaks, nearly 2 million other ethnic minorities were subjected to Czech rule. In order to "liberate" 2½ million Roumanians, the same number of non-Roumanians were subordinated to Bucharest. in order to "liberate" 1 million Serbs, 1.7 million Croats and 1.3 million other non-Serb nationals were transferred to supreme authority in Belgrade. Totting it all up, the successor states found themselves riddled with 16 million ethnic aliens out of a total population of 42 million.

Another aspect of the 1919-1920 peace treaties rightly underlined and criticized by Georges Roux (76) was that they drew part of their inspiration from the more than doubtful moral tenet of the Central Empires' guilt in bringing about World War I. In the victorious countries, of course, public opinion had become totally convinced by propaganda of that war guilt, "not being in the least aware that the search for responsibilities must always be a delicate affair." And at any rate, says Georges Roux, it is idle and dangerous to try to punish people too hard too long - they cannot stand it. "Supposing the vanquished had been guilty: the treatment meted out to them ought to have been harsh, may be, but short of duration". The upsetting of frontiers in a spirit of punishment was a monstrous error of judgment for "mistakes may pass but the land remains". In the prevailing circumstances no- body vouchsafed to listen to the grievances of the vanquished; the treaties were simply "dictated" without any semblance of negotiation. Their terms were imposed unilaterally, a circumstance which left them with the combined imprint of brute force and frailty. That, in turn, made it easier for the vanquished to challenge many of the commitments thus forced upon them. Moreover, excess in conception tends to breed slackness in execution. For as time goes by that source of strength which resides in military victory slips away. Victory, as one may see

today, is never more than a fleeting moment. Time restores, little by little, a just balance between victors and vanquished, calling in question the achievements of the former.

It was said that Hungary had to atone for mistakes she had never made; for errors which she had indeed attempted, in the person of her Prime Minister Count István Tisza, to avoid when opposing herself to an adventure by which she stood nothing to gain. As we have seen, Hungary in 1914 did not covet one square inch of anyone else's soil: she entered the war solely in fulfillment of her alliance obligations and for her own defense and survival, knowing all the time that her neighbours were planning her dismemberment, keen to share the spoils. However, regardless of the facts, in Article 161 of the Treaty of Trianon, Hungary, already humiliated and mutilated, had to admit her guilt in bringing about the war. By the way, as Georges Desbons so rightly noted, many former adversaries of the Entente, originally of Hungarian or Austrian nationality up to 1919 or 1920, suddenly became, by a weave of the magic wand at St. Germain or Trianon, Czechoslovaks, Yugoslavs or Roumanians, regarded overnight as friends, allies, nay maybe even "brethren-in-arms" although in truth they had fought against the Allies. So why not grant the same indulgence to those who remained Hungarians? Total absolution on one hand, ferocious retribution on the other hand: the one was as lacking in logic as the other. After all, Hungary, too, recovered her complete independence only after the end of the war, while before she had been riveted to Austria like a Siamese twin. Except that after Trianon all that had been left to independence was a "stump", an insignificant residue of Hungary's millenary territory.

To be more precise, the Treaty of Trianon deprived Hungary of 71.5% of its surface area and 63.6% of its population, which was thus reduced from 18 million (not counting Croatia-Slavonia) to less than 8 million inhabitants. By comparison, the Versailles Treaty took away from Germany no more than 13% of its territory and 9.5% of its population. The corresponding figures of the Neuilly Treaty for Bulgaria amounted to 9.9% and 8.9%, respectively. The peace of Frankfurt ending the Franco-Prussian war, in 1871, had cost France a mere 2.6% of her territory and 4.1% of her population. Comparable to the losses of Hungary were those suffered by Austria - 72.6% and 77.6% - and Turkey - 61.6% and 39.6%, respectively - except that in the case of these two countries the territories concerned lay far distant from the centre and were geographically, ethnically and historically ill-assorted. The frontiers imposed upon Hungary, however, were and remain to this day geographically absurd and loathsome from a human point of view. In all their details as well as in their entirety they represent a challenge to common sense. "The most abominable of all enforced Peace Treaties, and the most idiotic one" as Henri Pozzi called it (77).

First of all and above all, Hungary's incomparable geographical and economic unity was smashed to pieces. The harmonious and mutually complementary symbiosis of the great central plain and its surrounding mountain ramparts was brutally interrupted. Everywhere the new frontiers cut across valleys, waterways, roads and railway lines that had previously converged from the Carpathian perimeter toward the central basin irrigated by the Danube and Tisza rivers. One of Europe's most dense and ancient networks of communications became thus totally dislocated. At Trianon Hungary lost 62.2% of its

railways, 73.8% of its roads and 64.6% of its navigable waterways. But it was not the economy of residual Hungary alone which suffered: the peripheral populations too - be they Slovaks, Ruthenians or Transylvanians - had a heavy price to pay. Being cut away from their natural outlet, which had always been the great Hungarian plain, they had to endure, in addition, the consequences of the frighteningly stupid economic protectionism pursued by the successor states throughout the inter-war period. Many an area which had been transferred to new state structures more than half a century ago still finds it easier, faster and more natural to communicate with Budapest than with the new capital cities of Prague, Bucharest or Belgrade.

The Treaty of Trianon also deprived Hungary of most of its timber, coal, iron ore and water power. Its salt and silver mines, which had been sources of prosperity ever since the middle ages, were totally confiscated. Finally, Hungary was also cut off from the sea. The port of Fiume, directly attached to Hungary in 1822, to serve it as an outlet as Trieste served Austria, berthed 134 Hungarian merchant vessels, in 1914, representing a turnover of 140,000 tons in goods and commodities. That port has by now shrunk beyond recognition - it never had much significance for Italy, which first possessed it, nor has it any for Yugoslavia today. And once more two different measures were applied: while Austria and Hungary were deprived of their outlets to the sea, Poland on the contrary had to be provided with one. Talking about Poland reminds one of the efforts spent by the successor states and their protectors on keeping Hungary and Poland separated by denying them that common frontier which the two had always cherished along the north-eastern stretch of the Carpathians throughout the centuries.

Trying to enumerate all the items of riches of which Trianon had deprived Hungary would lead us too far. Suffice it to state that with the exception of its agricultural industry the country had lost almost all of its natural resources, thus in particular 88% of its forests and 83% of its iron ore mines to the successor states. The property lost by the Hungarian state owing to the transfer of frontiers alone represented at least 3,430 million gold crowns, according to the valuation - generally believed to have been undervalued - of the Reparations Commission. The economic provisions of the Treaty also imposed upon Hungary the payment of 210 million gold francs as well as other reparations in kind (78).

To that one has to add the revolting arbitrariness with which the new frontier lines were locally determined. As mentioned before, they cut one by one all economic arteries, rivers, roads, and railway lines, and also canals, dikes, dams, administrative and private property boundaries. Towns were separated from their suburbs, villages split in two, farmsteads severed from the arable land to which they belonged, mines cut off from their pitheads and many local communities deprived of their parish churches or cemeteries. Everywhere there transpired the sadistic desire to see Hungary humiliated, martyred and thrown upon the mercy of its enemies. Almost every frontier post, it was said, represented a tombstone on which the words could have been engraved: buried here lies justice. "Yesterday's frontiers followed the course of nature", wrote Georges Desbons, "those of today chop up fields and houses, roads and railway stations, with maniacal arbitrariness." After having enumerated a certain number of those hardly credible extravagances and incoherences, Georges Desbons quotes the following figures: 52

villages cut in two along the Roumanian frontier; 22 along the frontier with Austria; 76 on the Czechoslovak and 70 on the Yugoslav border. In addition more than one hundred townships were cut off from either their railway station or their water supply. But the worst of all remains the fact that all along the residual stump's new frontiers many a compact bloc of Hungarians, having always lived in close communion with the central mass of its brethren, was transferred to the sovereignty of the successor states. For purely strategic considerations or rail communications convenience, large portions of the great Hungarian plain, populated exclusively by Hungarians had to share that fate, in stark contradiction to the most obvious, visible and palpable ethnic facts. Those amputated border zones alone represented 2 million out of a total of 3½ million Hungarians passed under alien rule. Another category of sufferers were the great urban population centres, of the historic kingdom, whose core was mostly Hungarian. such as Pozsony, Kassa, Nagyvárad, Arad, Temesvár or Szabadka. Pozsony in particular (Pressburg in German and Bratislava in Slovak) had been Hungary's capital city throughout the Turkish occupation and a long while afterwards, for the best part of 3 centuries. "Just try to imagine", wrote Charles Tisseyre, "what gaping wounds those severed townships must have represented to the Hungarian people, so proud of its mother country and of those cities impregnated with historic memories." (80)

Charles Daniélou himself, the rapporteur in the French Chamber of Deputies of the Treaty of Trianon, wrote as follows: "The greatest mistake made by those who wished to apply the nationality principle all along the line, was to have excluded from their country, while left in its vicinity on the other side of the border, 3 million Hungarians out of 8 million which is the country's total population at the present time. I must say that proportion has been laid on a bit thick. Who could believe it that those Magyars, whose profound national instinct is well known all over the world, would accept to remain forever separated from their brethren." (81) Daniélou also notes ironically that the Czech border has been pushed forward to a distance of not more than 40 km (a mere 25 miles) from Budapest so as to expose the Hungarian capital, in case of war, to easy artillery bombardment from Czechoslovak territory. In the South, on the other hand, the Hungarian-inhabited part of the Bácska province had been awarded to Yugoslavia for exactly the opposite reason - to remove Belgrade from the potential range of Hungarian guns. All the successor states were keen on establishing bridgeheads jutting deep into Hungarian territory. In this way a compact mass of 800,000 Hungarians were annexed by Czechoslovakia in the North, 400,000 by the Yugoslavs in the South and another 600,000 Hungarians subjected to Greater Roumania in the East, the latter chiefly in order to ensure transversal north-south rail communications with the first mentioned two countries, along but outside the new Hungarian border. In that respect André Tardieu himself felt compelled to admit at the Peace Conference that the frontier with Roumania did not coincide with the ethnographic line of demarcation of the Hungarians which was well and truly situated 20 km farther eastward.

Aldo Dami observed quite rightly that a comparison between the ethnic and geographic maps showed that, save for the Székelys embedded in the south-eastern corner of the Carpathians, the Hungarian ethnographic border line coincided almost exactly with the confines of the plain. Cutting things fine one could have gone as far as stating that the

Hungarians' "natural" frontier ran along the foothills of the mountains rather than the mountains themselves. In the south-west only the Drave river coincides, for the best part of its course, with the ethnic divide between Hungarians and Croats. "The maximum of losses inflicted upon Hungary", wrote Aldo Dami, "ought therefore never to have gone beyond the massive ethnic limit of the Magyars living on the great plain, provided also in that case that the isolated yet equally massive settlement of 700,000 Székelys in Transylvania should have been granted strictly autonomous status within Roumania. The best solution", adds Aldo Dami, "would be to go even further, by establishing as nearly as possible an equilibrium between autochthonous and minoritarian populations in all the countries concerned, including Hungary, thereby imposing equal ethnic sacrifices all round. Even by rejecting the expedient of plebiscites and considering only the simple ethnic limits of the compact Magyar population of the great Hungarian plain, Hungary ought to have been allowed to preserve at Trianon, around and beyond its actual borders, with the one exception of the frontier along the Drave, a belt of territories 15 to 70 km wide (including the townships having a Hungarian majority and quoted above) and representing a total surface area of some 23,000 square km inhabited by approximately 2 million people. At any rate, if one renounced the plebiscite as a solution a choice had to be made between geographic and economic realities, on the one hand, and ethnic realities, on the other hand, for the two rarely tally. Those who defend the ethnographic principle must be bold enough to drop the other two claims, and the other way round. In that sense the Slovaks belong geographically and historically to Hungary, as do the Sudeten Germans to Bohemia, but not ethnographically. (It is interesting to note that while the Hungarians were not allowed at Trianon to refer to their historic rights, in the Treaty of St. Germain the Czechs successfully availed themselves of those rights to Austria's detriment in respect of the frontiers of Bohemia.) Suffice it to consider the case of Southern Slovakia which is inhabited exclusively by Hungarians (or rather **was** so inhabited before the mass expulsions following World War II - Translator's Note) and which, more closely than the northern, mountainous region depends on the Hungarian lowland basin of which it forms part. The same applies to the belt of territories annexed by Roumania which is equally a part of the Hungarian plain. And finally the Bácska and partly the Bánát in the South find themselves in a similar situation, for geographically, ethnically and economically they belong to Hungary. To every impartial observer", concludes Aldo Dami, "the terms of the Treaty of Trianon must needs appear as profoundly unjust, if only on a purely ethnic and linguistic basis, leaving geographical and historic considerations on the side. The simple requirements of fairness and equity condemn the actual course of Hungary's frontiers" (82).

In round figures the Trianon Treaty incorporated 2 million Hungarians in Roumania, 1 million in Czechoslovakia and ½ million in Yugoslavia, thus evicting 35% of the Hungarians from their mother country and placing 1 of every 3 Hungarians under alien rule. Of the traditional kingdom's 72 counties only 14 were graciously left to postwar Hungary. The surface area of the latter amounts to roughly 93,000 square km as compared with a prewar 325,000 square km, while at the same time the Czechs and the Roumanians doubled their respective national territories and the Serbs increased their own fivefold, having emerged from World War I with 248,000 square km as opposed to 48,000 square km in 1914 and with 13 million inhabitants instead of 4 million. The

Hungarian lands transferred to Roumania alone represent 103,000 square km, which is more than all that was left for Hungary at Trianon. What's worse, those amazing territorial aggrandizements, the likes of which have never before been seen in history, and which no plebiscite would ever have confirmed, resulted in the creation of truly absurd political monsters which threatened to explode at any moment.

Under the pretext of liquidating the ethnic mosaic of the peoples of the former Austria-Hungary, states were created whose ethnic composition turned out to be just as heterogeneous and checkered, except that they were completely arbitrary and enjoyed no unity of any sort, neither geographic, nor ethnic, let alone historic. Thus by dismembering Hungary which counted after all (without autonomous Croatia-Slavonia) very nearly 55% of Magyars, 10% of Germans considering themselves Hungarians, and only 35% of authentically alien minorities, Trianon created a Czechoslovakia with, originally, only 43% of Czechs and 17% of Slovaks, a Yugoslavia ruled by a minority of only 39% of Serbs, and a Roumania with 69% of Roumanians, of whom however only 53% lived in Transylvania. An equitable compromise peace, concludes Aldo Dami from those figures, should not have taken from the historic kingdom of Hungary more than 35% of its inhabitants, instead of which it was made to lose 63%. The loss of one-third of its population would have been more than enough: instead of which she was reduced by two-thirds.

Roumania's case is a particularly illustrative one. So as to enable that country to recuperate 2,900,000 racial brethren who in Hungary had constituted 15% of the total population, Trianon compelled it to annex 2 million Hungarians which at the time represented a little over 12% of the new Greater Roumania's total population figure. Was it really worth while asks Aldo Dami, to create a new situation that was merely the converse of the old one? For our part, we are convinced that it would have been much better to seek the solution in granting the ethnic groups the widest possible autonomy within their time-honoured political and administrative structures, for those had at least the advantage of boasting remarkably solid geographical foundations and, in addition, centuries of a common history. Something was demolished that - according to the varying terms employed at the time - could have been "modified" or "improved", "transformed" or "regenerated", but ought not to have been destroyed, in any event, as recklessly as had been done by the victors of the first world war. The only solace left for the unfortunate Hungarians is to recall Victor Cousin's dictum: "In international disputes to have history and geography on one's side means that, whatever the actual situation may be, the future is yours."

Aldo Dami does not tire of comparing the Frankfurt Peace Treaty (83) of 1871, which had kept alive an atmosphere of profound concern in Europe for 50 years, with the Treaty of Trianon which, on the contrary, does not seem to have troubled any one's sleep. "In 1920 the Allies repeated, on a much larger scale, the error committed by Germany in 1871" writes Aldo Dami in substance. "For in 1871 Germany could marshal more justification in favour of annexing Alsace-Lorraine than had the Allied and Associated Powers, in 1920, when they dismembered Hungary. After all the Alsatians were racially [and linguistically a Germanic people and the Vosges Mountains a better natural frontier

than the Rhine; also, historically speaking, the two provinces of Alsace and Lorraine had been part of France for only two centuries, while previously they had lived, since times immemorial, within the framework of the Holy German-Roman Empire. And there was the moral justification of France having declared war on Prussia. But the latter had committed the same sin of omission, in 1871, of which the Allies made themselves guilty vis-à-vis Hungary, in 1920: they forgot to consult the populations concerned. But at least Prussia, in the 1870-1871 war, had never pretended to fight for the peoples' right to self-determination, whereas the Allies had inscribed that principle on their banners since the outbreak of World War I. They are all the more guilty of having betrayed that principle, particularly after having made the whole of Europe expect of them a peace based on justice and fair frontier lines, a peace giving rise to no recriminations or grudges. At Trianon 3½ million Hungarians of pure Magyar race had been wrenched from their mother country as opposed to only 1½ million Germans separated from France by the Frankfurt Treaty. The geographical entity so brutally destroyed at Trianon was much more marked than the one which Frankfurt had only inflicted a wound, no matter how painful. Also Hungary's historic frontiers were at least 5 times more ancient than those that bound Alsace to France. And lastly, in 1914 Hungary's guilt in bringing about the war was incomparably smaller than had been France's responsibility for declaring war on Prussia, in 1870. The Hungary of today, compared with the historic kingdom, represents perhaps less than would France if it had been reduced to the Ile de France and the Massif Central." But in his book entitled "The Century of Joan of Arc and Hungary's Last Century" A. Póka-Pivny draws an even more gripping parallel between, on the one hand, the consequences to France of the Hundred Years' War and the Treaty of Troyes which ended it in 1420 and, on the other hand, the effect which the Treaty of Trianon had in respect of Hungary, in 1920 and thereafter.

Many historians and political scientists believe that the Treaty of Trianon "comes terribly close to what were in 1772 and 1795 the dismemberments or, as some prefer to call them, the first two partitions of Poland" - animated by a spirit of depredation and carried out with the tacit consent of the rest of Europe - "and which our history professors taught us to regard with abhorrence" (85) It was on the strength of that simile that Georges Roux felt induced to write, not without good reason, that "it is alarming to find that in the XXth century France has created 'a new Poland' " (86).

Conveniently forgotten were all the services rendered by Hungary to Europe and the West throughout her history - sacrifices which induced the Holy See to call Hungary "the living rampart and the shield of Christianity" against the onslaughts of Tartars and Turks(\*\*). The best of Hungary's sons had given their lives over the centuries in the defense of Europe's eastern frontier - gallant fighters of whom Eugene Prince of Savoy had coined the sadly cynical words: "if they win it will be our victory: if they lose it will be their funeral. "Hungary, together with Poland" wrote René Grousset, "had for long been the West's outpost facing Asiatic barbarism. Ever since the conversion of Árpád's realm to Latin civilization its role was to stop at the Carpathians and along the Danube all pressures coming from the steppes of the East or from Asia Minor. It was due to Hungary's resistance in the XIIIth century that the Mongol invasion could be deflected towards the Black Sea. It was Hungary's heroism which bade a halt to the expansion of



the Ottoman Empire on the Danube and ultimately compelled it to withdraw ever farther in the Balkans" (87). And quite recently, this was what Victor Tapié had to add: "Europe failed to recognize in time its profound solidarity with Hungary . . . On whose shoulders had fallen nearly all the weight of the wars against the Turks . . . Hungary's nobility had assumed the role of the knights errants of Christianity sustaining for a long time a considerable and efficacious military effort. . . The Hungarian

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\*\* : How many Europeans know - one wonders - that the midday Angelus was instituted by the Papacy in commemoration of János Hunyadi's victory over the Turks at Belgrade, in 1456?

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nation, having captured the affection of other peoples owing to her irreducible resistance, has accumulated a treasure of prestige which remains one of the major facts of political history . . . Between the XIIth and XVth centuries it had proved its fitness to be the equal of the great realms of Europe . . . But the Hungarians also had to learn that they must rely on no one except themselves . . ." (88). "For the West", wrote Edouard Sayous less than a hundred years ago, "the most important thing is to be aware of the services which Hungary has rendered to civilization, first, by holding up with its own body the onward march of barbarism, and, subsequently, thanks to its indomitable attachment to liberty." (89) And the great Michelet himself, the sage of French historiography, could hardly have had something like the Treaty of Trianon in mind when he coined his memorable question: "When shall we at last pay our debt to that blessed people, the saviour of the Occident? . . ."

It must have been indignation felt at the fate reserved for Hungary which induced Robert Vallery-Radot to write as follows: "When a people has thus endured for more than a thousand years, faithful to its shortcomings as well as to its virtues, and resisted during those thousand years all invasions, is it entitled to the highest respect, particularly as it can no longer defend itself. And when moreover his victors, claiming for themselves a monopoly of justice, declare solemnly before the entire world that the peace they are going to dictate will not be inspired by brute force, as all the others were, but by the law of nations, that people is entitled to expect fair treatment of its judges" (90).

Yet the Treaty of Trianon is probably one of the most terribly cruel treaties of history. It has turned one of Europe's most meritorious and vigorous ancient nations into an invalid. "Its mutilation was so monstrous and dishonest that no one wants to accept responsibility for it any longer, nor to know anything about it", wrote the former Italian Premier, Francesco Nitti. And he added the question: "In the face of such universal shame one may justifiably ask oneself, who ever wanted that horribly iniquitous mutilation of Hungary? . . . Suppose that France were reduced in an analogous situation to one-third of its national territory and population (Nitti was writing between the two world wars), what would the reactions of the French be? There is no Englishman, no Frenchman, no Italian who would accept, for the duration, such conditions as were imposed upon Hungary, the same as there is no Hungarian worthy of that name, from Prince Primate down to the humblest peasant, to acquiesce in such a state of affairs" (91).

"Trianon is, on an international plane, strangely similar to those evil acts of which, by tacit agreement and owing to a sense of shame, nobody will speak... That conspiracy of silence is how- ever more eloquent than any indictment or accusation could ever be" (92).

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