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A historical map of Central Europe from 1918 to 1938. The map uses color-coding to indicate different political entities and minority territories. Orange areas represent Czech lands, including Bohemia, Moravia, and parts of Silesia. Red areas represent Hungarian lands, including Transylvania, Banat, and parts of Slovakia and Croatia. Green areas represent other territories like Prussia, Poland, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Major cities are labeled, including Berlin, Prague (PRAHA), Vienna (WIEN), Budapest, and Kraków. Rivers like the Danube (Donau) and Vistula (Wisla) are shown. The title 'CZECH AND HUNGARIAN MINORITY POLICY IN CENTRAL EUROPE 1918-1938' is overlaid in large white letters. Below the title, the authors 'Ferenc Eiler, Dagmar Hájková et al.' are listed in red text.

CZECH AND HUNGARIAN MINORITY POLICY IN CENTRAL EUROPE 1918-1938

Ferenc Eiler, Dagmar Hájková et al.



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**Czech and Hungarian Minority
Policy in Central Europe
1918–1938**

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Introduction

In contrast to the situation in Western Europe, national populations and territorial administrative units (i.e. states) have never come close to coinciding in Central and South-Eastern Europe. The long-term discrepancy between national and state borders has been one of the main causes of conflict in modern times among the nations living here – conflict that has led to national animosities and even wars, whose unfortunate influence is still felt to this day. In Central Europe, antagonisms still prevail from the final years of the Habsburg Empire and the time its successor states were emerging. These primarily involved the issue of national minorities, national self-determination and the inviolability of borders, and they determine actual relations between the nations and states of this area. Of particular importance here is the phenomenon of the Hungarian minority, which is not just an issue of local significance, restricted to bilateral Hungarian-Slovak relations alone, but has broad international ramifications going beyond the Central European context.

The problems of a majority population living alongside significant national minorities are often explained in terms of a lack of democracy, political culture and civil society. This explanation is based on the assumption that a mature democracy and a way of thinking that holds liberal values in greater respect considerably help to resolve national issues peacefully, or at least prevent escalation into conflict. Democracy understood as a political system in the traditional mould means a political structure in which the people act as a real safeguard to power. The principle of the sovereignty of the people legalizes political activity: power may only be used in the name and the interests of the people. However, democracy is also important in another way, i.e. it provides a system of guarantees that protect the

individual and civil society from any miscarriages of justice or the tyrannical use of power. The democratic principle requires power to be exercised exclusively within the framework of the rule of law. Democracy is thus the only political system that can ensure human rights are respected.

But what place do national minorities have in the classic model of democracy? A modern democracy bases itself *inter alia* on a community of citizens who feel themselves to be a uniform, single people acting as a nation, this sentiment being the principle behind social consensus, which is the precondition for a democracy and a democratic society. Consensus alone is able to ensure that a minority – in the political sense, i.e. an opposition – accepts the power of the majority. However, a national minority complicates this concept of a community of citizens, as their historical memories and sentiments separate them from the national majority, which is deemed to be the guarantor of state sovereignty. How can one deal with a national minority demanding special status and not espousing the majority language and cultural tradition, whose identity has often been formed in opposition to the people who make up the majority? While members of the majority population consider themselves to be citizens with full rights, the status of those belonging to the minorities is not at all clear. Legally, they are also citizens of the common state and nothing separates them in principle from the society of the other citizens. But for members of the minority the protection and defence of the symbols which enshrine their special status and differentiation is of much greater importance. Hence paradoxically, a fundamental principle of democratic rights and freedoms prohibits all discrimination between citizens, whether on ethnic or religious grounds or based on origin or nationality, and yet minorities struggle to ensure that their special status in relation to the majority is secured by positive measures on those very ethnic or religious grounds.¹

This requirement of minorities has an effect on the activities of institutions. National minorities live in constant uncertainty, because they have every reason to fear domination by the majority. They have no guarantees that the majority will not support those institutions that are prone to promote irreversible assimilation. Such basic insecurity is

¹ Compare Béla Faragó, *A demokrácia és a nemzeti kisebbségek, Világosság*, 1, (1995), pp. 51–54.

of a structural nature – the majority can never take on the specific interests of the minority as its own. The distrust felt by the minority can easily transform into a form of everyday behaviour whereby even rational measures taken with regard to the minority are considered to be part of a plot. In a “homogeneous” democracy, national identity is clearly a universal, unassailable “given”, which does not need to be constantly invoked or reformulated as a demand. Confronted by such minority demands, the majority sees them as questioning its own national identity. Hence hatred towards the minority and sometimes even denial of its very existence can become creative factors in the majority’s national awareness.

The status of minorities is also complicated by the internal contradiction between two principles behind the operation and organization of international relations. While the first principle acknowledges the right of nations to self-determination, the second recognizes the inviolability of existing states and the need to maintain the status quo. International public opinion certainly recognizes the legitimacy of independence aspirations, but at the same time it sees the borders between states as definitive and unchangeable. This contradiction makes the clear definition of minority status and rights considerably more fraught. There is no objective criterion that can be used to differentiate the justified demand of a linguistic, religious or ethnic group to self-determination or independence.

Politicians in a classic liberal democracy who uphold the principle of the right of the individual alone, have long been convinced that heterogeneous groups within the national community may be a source not only of problems, but also of danger.

The Central and South-Eastern European environment has always been an intersection of controversial forces, manifesting themselves both in the promotion of great-power interests and individual national movements. Attempts to establish a particular order in this area have thus inevitably given rise to conflicts between particular philosophies that were in essence mutually incompatible. Every effort to “justly” deal with the problems associated with these issues was only felt to be “just” for one side. After the breakup of the multinational Austrian-Hungarian Empire and during the radical constitutional transformation of Central Europe from 1918 to 1920, an area of new national states emerged, both victorious and defeated. In the political view of the French, as well as the Czechoslovaks,

Polish, Romanians and Yugoslavs, this new Central Europe formed a protective zone against Bolshevism, i.e. a “cordon sanitaire”. In this view the new states were to create a basis for cooperation among Danubian democratic nations and their states. On the other hand, the German view of the time centred around the concepts of “Zwischeneuropa” and a “Pufferzone” between Soviet Russia and Germany, in which France as the new dominant great power superseded the great powers defeated in the First World War. France’s temporary diplomatic and military superiority was not harnessed in this region to create the kind of complementary model in which the old, the new and the old-new states might find an equal place and in which the new Central European identity which was so frequently discussed in the interwar period might emerge on the basis of balanced neighbourly and regional relations. Instead during the 1920s, the Eastern and Central European area was divided into three spheres: the Polish-Baltic, the Little Entente and the Italian-German, which was joined from among Czechoslovakia’s neighbours by Hungary and Austria.²

Following Adolf Hitler’s rise to power, Central Europe turned from a cordon sanitaire into a real “Zwischeneuropa”, i.e. a region in which diametrically opposed power interests were in operation and where the principle of “divide and rule” held sway without great difficulties. In international historiography, interwar Central Europe is often considered to be a classic region of minority conflicts both within and between individual states. In his frequently quoted publication on Central European nation-state nationalisms, Roger Brubaker stressed the special nature of the threefold linkage (“triadix nexus”) between national minorities and their mother states (“kin states”), or “external national homelands” and multiethnic nation states (“nationalizing states”), on whose territories these minorities lived.³ The situation of the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia and

² More recently on the issue of Czechoslovakia’s and Hungary’s interwar foreign policy options e.g. Jindřich Dejmek, *Československo, jeho sousedé a velmoci ve XX. století (1918 až 1992): vybrané kapitoly z dějin československé zahraniční politiky* [Czechoslovakia, its neighbours and the great powers in the 20th century: selected chapters from the history of Czechoslovak foreign policy], Prague 2002. Pál Pritz, Hungarian Foreign Policy in the Interwar Period. *Hungarian Studies* 17, <http://epa.oszk.hu/01400/01462/00029/pdf/013-032.pdf>

³ Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed. Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*, Cambridge 1996, s. 55–78.

the Slovak minority in Hungary may be conceived in terms of this theoretical model as an asymmetrical relationship for three reasons.

The Hungarian minority was created against its will upon the disintegration of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire during the great constitutional changes at the end of the First World War. Slovak minority communities settled in the Kingdom of Hungary and later on the territory of what was to become post-Trianon Hungary from the end of the 17th century as part-voluntary, part-organized colonization, aided by the mass flight of Slovak serfs to Hungarian territory liberated after the end of the Turkish wars. Another sign of the asymmetrical model was the strong connection between ethnic, national identity and the national, linguistic, cultural and political awareness of the minority Hungarians and the actual inhabitants of Hungary. This was clearly much stronger than the connection between the Slovak minorities in Hungary and Slovakia in the interwar period. The third reason was the avowed revisionist foreign policy of interwar Hungary, which made great efforts to maintain the sentiment and awareness of commonality between the minority Hungarians and Hungary, while Slovakia was more just a case of initial portents and attempts to create an institutional framework for a positive expatriate policy. These structural and typological differences had their effect on the nature and orientation of both states' minorities policy. In interwar Central Europe these approaches could only harmonize at a theoretical level.

In the early 1980s, when a Czechoslovak-Hungarian committee of historians was established, joint research began into bilateral diplomatic and political Czechoslovak-Hungarian relations in the interwar period. Previous studies by Czech, Slovak and Hungarian authors⁴ were followed up by two collections published in Czech and Hungarian language versions.⁵ The Institute for Research into Ethnic

⁴ E.g. works by Eva Irmanová, Marta Rompoltlová, Ladislav Deák and Magda Ádám.

⁵ The latest collections to have been published on Czechoslovak-Hungarian relations: Eva Irmanová (ed.), *Nepokojná desetiletí: 1918–1945. Studie a dokumenty z dějin československo-maďarských vztahů mezi dvěma světovými válkami* [Decades of restlessness: 1918–1938: Studies and documents on the history of Hungarian-Czechoslovak relations between the two world wars], Prague 1988; László Szarka (ed.), *Békétlen évtizedek: 1918–1938. Tanulmányok és dokumentumok a magyar-csehszlovák kapcsolatok történetéből a két világháború között* [Decades of restlessness: 1918–1938. Studies and documents on the history of Hungarian-Czechoslovak relations between the two world wars], Budapest 1988.

and National Minorities at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest (MTAKI) and the Masaryk Institute and Archive of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic (MUA) agreed in 2005 on a joint project entitled the Nationalities Question in Interstate Relations between Czechoslovakia and Hungary 1918–1938. MTAKI then organized a conference on Minorities Issues, Ethnopolitical Policies in Czechoslovakia and Hungary between the Two World Wars, which took place with the support of the Czech Centre in Budapest on 4th March 2005. On the basis of this conference a team of authors and editors was established to compile a publication on minorities issues in interwar Czechoslovakia and Hungary. This work carries on from similar publications brought out by both institutes on nationality issues.⁶

The project was based on a comparison of both states' ethnopolitical options, an analysis of conflicts of interest and the possibility of concluding bilateral agreements on minority policy. Another important issue was that of the operation of an international minorities protection system at the League of Nations. Attention was also paid to the policies of individual governments, as well as to the specific factors arising from the positions of the most prominent figures in interwar Czechoslovakia and Hungary.

Eva Irmanová – László Szarka

⁶ Petr Kaleta (ed.), *Národnostní otázka v Polsku a Československu v meziválečném období. Sborník z mezinárodní vědecké konference* [The nationalities question in Poland and Czechoslovakia in the interwar period. Collection of papers from an international conference (26.–27. 10. 2004)], Prague 2005; Bárdi Nándor, Fedinecz Csilla, Szarka László (eds.), *Kisebbségi magyar közösségek a 20. Században* [Minority Hungarian communities in the 20th century] Budapest 2008. This book also comes out in English in 2010.

Eva Irmanová

Negotiations with Slovaks and the Struggle of the Czechoslovak and Hungarian Governments for Slovakia

Slovakia had a very specific position in both Czech and Hungarian political visions. On the one hand it played a non-substitutable role in the foundation and subsequent existence of the independent Czechoslovak state and in its recognition by the powers of the Entente Cordiale. On the other hand (in view of international as well as internal policy), the integration of Slovakia into the newly founded state was accompanied by significant problems during the last two months of the year 1918, in spite of recognition of Masaryk's Washington Declaration of 18 October 1918 and the formal declaration of "the independent Czechoslovak state" by the National Committee on 28 October 1918. As for the issue concerning Slovakia and its detachment from the territory of historical Hungary, the Hungarian government hoped that the attitude of the states of the Entente Cordiale might change, and in this sense it pinned its hope on a peace conference and a possible plebiscite.¹ The so-called Belgrade Convention concluded on 13 November 1918 between Károly's government and

¹ Compare Milan Krajčovič, Károlyiho vláda v Maďarsku a jej vzťah k Slovensku [The Károlyi Government in Hungary and its Attitude to Slovakia], in: *Slovensko a Maďarsko v rokoch 1918–1920* [Slovakia and Hungary in 1918–1920], Martin 1995, p. 32.

representatives of the Entente Cordiale, namely its article 17 preserving Hungarian internal administration over the whole present Hungarian territory provided certain chances in this sense for a short period of time. It appeared that through the Belgrade Convention Károly achieved the initial aim of his foreign policy. The Hungarian government made the first diplomatic step that it also considered as international recognition of independent Hungarian state *de facto*.² The Hungarian government's expectations that the peace conference – to which Hungary would be invited – would decide on future borders, appeared to be an illusion.

For a short period of time, a third party involved in the detachment of Slovakia from the former Hungarian state was the Slovak National Council. Leaders of the Slovak National Party decided upon the foundation of the Council at their meeting in Budapest on 12 September 1918; however, the formal foundation facilitated by the manifest of the emperor Charles, legitimising the foundation of national councils, occurred in Turčianský Svätý Martin only on 30 October 1918. The Slovak National Council, as a representative of Slovaks, adopted the Declaration of the Slovak Nation, through which the attending representatives declared the right of the Hungarian side of the Czechoslovak nation to self-determination. They called for foundation of a joint state (together with the Czechs) and presented the so long required public proof of the political representation of Slovaks in the meaning of Czechoslovak statehood. The wording was based on the draft of Emanuel Zoch, referring to Wilson's recognition of the right of Czechoslovaks to self-determination. When adopting the declaration, the Slovak National Council was not aware that an independent Czechoslovak state had been declared in Prague – the import of newspapers from Bohemia had been prohibited since spring 1918 and German or Hungarian newspapers did not publish information about the coup in Prague.³ News was brought by Ivan Dérer from Vienna, together with the Czech politicians' message "*do not act rashly*." There was no such danger of acting rashly, as documented by a letter of Matúš Dula, Chairman of the Slovak National

² Mihály Fülöp, Péter Sipos, *Magyarország külpolitikája a XX. században* [Hungary's Foreign Policy in the Twentieth Century], Budapest 1998, p. 42.

³ Compare Jan Rychlík, *Češi a Slované ve 20. století* [Czechs and Slovaks in the Twentieth Century], Bratislava 1997, p. 57.

Party, addressed to Rudolf Markovič, his party colleague, on 24 October 1918, containing Dula's statement that the preferable situation would not change (even if no public declaration was adopted at the planned meeting on 30 October) as the decision on the future of the Slovak nation was in the hands of the Entente Cordiale.⁴ Milan Hodža arrived in Turčianský Sv. Martin from Budapest only in the evening of 30 October when the majority of declarants left, bringing the latest news, namely about the Czechoslovak government abroad. At his instigation, fundamental changes, taking into account that the revolution started in Hungary and that minister Andrassy accepted Wilson's conditions, were made in the wording. Thus, Hodža included a sentence into the Declaration expressing approval with the newly created international legal position formulated by President Wilson and recognized by minister Andrassy. As for the fourth point, a part concerning the resolution of the Slovak issue at the peace conference, as well as a requirement that Slovaks should be represented by their own delegation at the peace conference, was withdrawn at Hodža's recommendation. Withdrawal of this part was justified by the fact that representation at the conference was the responsibility of the joint Czechoslovak government already existing in Paris and recognized by the world powers.⁵

The final version of the declaration including the mentioned adjustments was published in a special issue of *Národné noviny* on 31 October 1918. The declaration was a clear expression of the local pro-Slovak population to part with Hungarians, and the right of the nation to self-determination was declared. However, there was no coup. Mihály Károlyi sent the following congratulatory telegram to the Slovak National Council on 31 October 1918: *"We feel that we speak from the bottom of the heart of the whole Hungarian nation when we address the Slovak National Council with open-hearted words of brotherly love. The Slovak and Hungarian nations were not separated by hatred or conflict of interest; they were separated by the sinful policy of our die-hard class, prejudicial to both Slovak and Hungarian people in the same manner. The Hungarian people, who have done everything to destroy this sinful class,*

⁴ Compare Marián Hronský, *Slovensko pri zrode Československa* [Slovakia at the time of Czechoslovakia's birth], Bratislava 1987, p. 279.

⁵ Compare František Bokes, *Dejiny Slovenska a Slovákov* [A History of Slovakia and the Slovaks], Bratislava 1946, pp. 364-365.

are not responsible for the detriment caused to the Slovak nation's national feeling. It is our opinion that on the basis of each nation's inviolate right to self-determination, the Slovak National Council will decide what is best for the Slovak people; however, we would like to say that according to our belief and faith the Slovak and Hungarian peoples are dependent on each other and that we have to seek a better future, conditions and a guarantee of a better existence by means of peaceful harmony and friendly cooperation. We wish responsible and successful work to the Slovak National Council and a wonderful, happy and independent future to the Slovak nation. Friendly greetings on behalf of the Hungarian National Council, Count Mihály Károlyi, Chairman.⁶ The response of the Slovak National Council (written by Milan Hodža and signed by Matúš Dula, Chairman) referred to the existence of new facts to be taken into account. *"The executive committee of the Slovak National Council was pleased to receive the greetings expressed by the Chairman of the Hungarian National Council and returns them sincerely. During these days, a representative of the Hungarian nation addressed a representative of the Slovak nation as a brother. Our National Council also recognized the new international legal situation. Should Hungarians recognize the opinion of the Hungarian National Council on the freedom of nations, the psychological condition for internationally-based mutual understanding will be created. We wish the Hungarian nation to take the position among free nations to which it is entitled on the basis of its cultural values and results of its democracy. The free Czechoslovak nation wishes to be a good neighbour and brother of the Hungarian nation."*⁷

The offer hidden in Károlyi's congratulatory telegram offering Slovaks the chance to remain within the Hungarian state came even after a change of the situation was refused in the telegram from the Slovak National Council; however, the actual situation in Slovakia was not so straightforward. There was no doubt that the Slovaks would not regain their freedom in spite of recognition of their right to self-determination.⁸ Some of the Slovak National Council representatives were still considering the acceptance of offices from the Hungarians. Zoch, the author of the declaration wrote to his friend

⁶ *Dokumenty československé zahraniční politiky. Vznik Československa 1918* [Documents on Czechoslovak Foreign Policy. Origin of Czechoslovakia 1918], Praha 1994, pp. 347–348.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 347–348.

⁸ Compare Krajčovič, *Károlyiho vláda v Maďarsku*, p. 32.

Dr. Ivanka, that *"the Károlyi government slightly complicated our situation"* and suggested the possibility that Slovaks should accept a *"few leading posts"* from his government.⁹ The complexity of the situation was also indicated by the fact that the Slovak National Council failed to govern the whole Slovak ethnic territory; in practice, its power was unquestionable in Liptov only. The majority of national councils were subordinated to Budapest – the national awareness of a large number of inhabitants, namely in mixed areas, was very low, while Hungarian national awareness was still very strong, reflecting the one-thousand-year-old existence of Hungarian state.¹⁰ The Slovak authorities were unable to maintain order on the territory abandoned by the old administration, anarchy broke out, and people were in a revolutionary mood, rather social than national. The Slovak National Council was thus unable to control in Slovakia in decisive moments. Moreover, the aspirations of the Slovak National Council in respect of the power takeover were not supported by the Prague National Committee or the centrist group of Slovak politicians led by Vavro Šrobár, which had left for Prague and formed the second power centre for Slovakia there. The group was afraid that the Hungarians could start to influence the Slovak National Council, and it was aware of a big danger for the further development of the Czechoslovak Republic if Slovakia were to remain under Hungarian influence. Thus, it was in favour of its immediate military occupation. As Vavro Šrobár expressed succinctly: *"It will belong to those who will land the hand on it first."*¹¹

The Czechoslovak government abroad was of the same opinion. Masaryk sent a telegraph from America to Beneš staying in Paris, stating that it would be necessary to occupy Slovakia. As he expected that the Hungarians would fight back, he asked to conclude an agreement with the Romanians and South Slavs and to transport Czechoslovak legions from Italy and France. The first unit of the Czechoslovak army occupied the border town Malacky on 2 November 1918. Thus, the actual incorporation of Slovakia into the Czechoslovak Republic started from above by means of military occupation. By occupying Slovakia and gradual appointing Slovakian provincial

⁹ Compare Ferdinand Peroutka, *Budování státu* [The Building of the State] I., Praha 1990, p. 115.

¹⁰ Compare Lubomír Lipták, *Slovensko v 20. storočí* [Slovakia in the 20th Century], Bratislava 2000; Rychlík, *Češi a Slováci ve 20. století*, p. 65.

¹¹ Hronský, *Slovensko pri zraze Československa*, p. 315.

chiefs and senior officers, the Czechoslovak government established a more advantageous position vis-à-vis Budapest for future negotiations at a peace conference.¹²

On 16 November 1918, the club of Slovak deputies in Prague issued a fundamental declaration stating that the Slovak National Council was not in power anymore, as such power had been assumed by the National Assembly and the government when established. At the same time, Slovak deputies in Prague warned the Slovak politicians in Slovakia about the Károlyi government: *"We always doubted the sincerity of Hungarian governments, even those arising from the revolutionary comedy created by the traditional political skills of Hungarian politicians. We do not trust Hungarians, not even the most democratic of them; we do not require anything from them and we do not want to have anything common with them."*¹³ In Paris, Beneš was also against any negotiations with Hungarians. In his letter of 27 November 1918, addressed to Karel Kramář, he wrote: *"Would you please limit connections with Hungarians and Germans as much as possible. You should not negotiate with them formally and officially at all. According to my opinion, it is a mistake that representatives in Vienna and Budapest were accredited. The world recognized us; however, it did not recognize them. And, what is more important, they shall not be recognized. Please note that peace will not be negotiated and discussed with them. They will be simply notified of peace. Each negotiation with Károlyi would strengthen his position... I know that it is easy for us when we are here and not in the centre of action, however, calmness and self-control do us good. As for Slovakia, proceed calmly and with dignity and we will win."*¹⁴ Beneš had no doubt about the incorporation of Slovakia into the Czechoslovak state at all: *"Slovakia belongs to us and what happened in the signed armistice represents in no way prejudice."*¹⁵

From Prague's perspective, the situation in Slovakia was significantly different. Based on the 17th paragraph of the Belgrade Convention stipulating that the Hungarian state administration would remain fully justified also on territories of the former Hungarian state occupied by allied armies, Hungarian military units were advancing

¹² Compare Lipták, *Slovensko v 20. storočí*, p. 87; Peroutka, *Budování státu I.*, p. 137.

¹³ Ibid., p. 220.

¹⁴ Edvard Beneš, *Světová válka a naše revoluce* [World War and our Revolution] III., Praha 1928, pp. 518–519.

¹⁵ Ibid.

towards Slovakia and occupying it. In his report of 15 November 1918, Kramář wrote to Beneš about the local situation: *"Our position in Slovakia is very bad. Our leaders got carried away by the first enthusiasm and when the Hungarians started to run away from Slovakia, they occupied vacant areas, leaving just a few soldiers and policemen there. However, the Hungarians have pulled themselves together now and they are striking back, as they have army and ammunition; five of our policemen were killed and the Hungarians have driven us out of Trnava. Slovaks interpellated and I was happy to satisfy them with information that our army would come."*¹⁶ A day later Kramář appealed to Beneš: *"We are angry. The Hungarians plunder Slovakia and torment our people in an awful manner. Arrange for the immediate arrival of our Italian Czechoslovak division... This is the most important moment for us and we are having to occupy the whole of Slovakia and the Košice-Bohumín railway. Our prestige is suffering in Slovakia; Hungarians are driving us out and, unfortunately, we are not strong enough to prevent it."*¹⁷

The armed intervention of the Hungarian government in Slovakia destroyed ideas about Czech assistance, trust in its ability and impaired the faith in the favourable attitudes of the states of the Entente Cordiale when solving the Slovak issue. The Hungarian army occupied Martin and imprisoned Dula, the Chairman of the Slovak National Council (he was set free after Károlyi's intervention) and de facto it began liquidating the power of the Czechoslovak government in Slovakia. At that moment, the government was unable to guarantee or promise a change of this specific situation for the foreseeable future. For Czech and Slovak political representation the whole situation was even more unpleasant, as Károlyi was proceeding within the framework of the Belgrade Convention. Ferdinand Peroutka commented on this situation impartially: *"General Franchet d'Esperey, Commander-in-Chief of the Balkan force of the states of the Entente Cordiale dictated the conditions of armistice to Hungary in Belgrade on November 13. He received instruction from Prime Minister Clemenceau not to intervene in political issues. It was difficult to satisfy this requirement. The French general could only choose between active or negative intervention in the policy. Active intervention would be for the benefit of Slovaks, while refraining from intervention would look like being for the*

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 502.

¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 506–507.

benefit of Hungarians. He was trying to preserve the status quo in Hungary; however, in fact he could not come with armistice conditions that would be without political meaning.

*Franchet set the southern demarcation line between his force and the Hungarian army at the place most suitable for him... He did not interfere with internal Hungarian matters. He did not take into account that the Slovak issue exists in Hungary; he did not separate Hungarians from the Slovaks and Romanians by a demarcation line. Under the terms of the armistice, the Hungarian authorities were managing the whole present Hungarian territory. Thus, Károlyi was not breaching the armistice conditions when preventing Czechoslovaks from taking power in Slovakia. The Hungarians considered this armistice as their success, while the Czechs and Slovaks were unsatisfied and complained that the armistice might be political prejudice for the benefit of integrity of Hungary. Trying to imagine General Franchet's possible train of thought, we have to admit that it would seem to be prejudicial to his position to separate Slovakian and Romanian territory from the Hungarians. Undoubtedly, the French policy was to settle this matter immediately."*¹⁸

In this complicated situation, negotiations took place between Milan Hodža and the Minister for Ethnic Groups Oszkár Jászi. As for Jászi and Károlyi, negotiations with Hodža represented their conception of saving, at least partially, the integrity of Hungarian territory by making an agreement with the ethnic groups; as Hodža pointed out, his main interest was *"to do everything so that the Hungarians leave Slovakia. I felt I was responsible to the government and even more to my own conscience."*¹⁹ On November 23, Hodža went to Budapest where he replaced the first Slovak representative Emil Stodola; he was authorized by the government in Prague *"to negotiate the withdrawal of the Hungarian army from Slovakia and prepare the liquidation of Hungary and Czechoslovakia [sic!]"*²⁰ At the same time, he acquired proposals from the Hungarian Ministry for Ethnic Groups concerning a consolidation of the situation in Slovakia. The document determines that *"the government of the Hungarian People's Republic accepts the following provisions agreed with the Slovak National Council for the purpose of arranging for public security, legal certainty and uninter-*

¹⁸ Peroutka, *Budování státu I.*, pp. 237-238.

¹⁹ Milan Hodža, *Rozchod s Madarmi* [Separation from the Magyars], Bratislava 1929, p. 87.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

rupted economic life until peace is made final."²¹ The draft agreement further provided for the asserting powers by the Slovak National Council on the territory determined according to the then requirements of the Slovak "Okolie" and according to the Jászi map (based on the ethnic criterion) delivered on the basis of the consensus of 1910. On that territory, the Slovak National Council was to acquire complete "imperial" administration; on the other hand, the Slovak National Council was to guarantee enclaves and minorities the right to territorial autonomy in the meaning of free assembly and free unincorporated organization according to their own will. According to the Hungarian draft of the Slovak jurisdiction, the Slovak National Council was to manage only educational issues, other fields of administration were to be left in the old form, with one exception only, whereby instead of the Hungarian language, the Slovak language was to be introduced as the official language. Officials working in Slovak territory were to stay at their positions. Disputable issues were to be solved by a joint commission comprising five Slovak and five Hungarian representatives and a chairman. A Hungarian government commissioner was to operate in Slovak territory in order to protect the Hungarian and other minorities. This government commissioner was to become a liaison officer between the government and the Slovak National Council, authorized to appoint a commissioner empowered with similar powers in the Hungarian government, as the Hungarian commissioner in Slovakia.²²

Milan Hodža, together with the Slovak National Council's representatives who arrived in Budapest on November 28, rejected the plan for a joint parliament during negotiations with Jászi and the participation of Slovak representatives therein, as the Slovak National Council was exclusively based on the constitutional law of Czechoslovakia. This fact unanimously arose from the first point of Hodža's counterproposal: *"Under the leadership of Matúš Dula, the current Slovak National Council, as the political representation body of Slovaks in Hungary, declares, as it has already done in the proclamation published on 30 October 1918, that it is based on the constitutional law of the Czechoslovak Republic. The Hungarian Republic takes this fact into*

²¹ Ibid., p. 40.

²² Ibid., pp. 41–42.

consideration."²³ Point 3 of the draft further specified territory on which the Hungarian government handed over full competences to the Slovak National Council (Trenčinská, Nitranská, Tekovská, Turčianská, Oravská, Liptovská, Spišská, Šarišská and Zvolenská provinces, the city of Bratislava and the whole Bratislavská province, except for Žitný ostrov, the city of Štiavnica and the city of Košice, as well as parts of Hontianská, Novohradská, Gemerská, Abaujská Zemplínská and Užhorodská provinces). At the same time, the fourth point of Hodža's counterproposal pointed to the fact that, as far as the Slovak territory specified in point 3 was concerned, the Slovak National Council was taking over full government and military powers at its own responsibility and that it was liable for public safety using the means it considered suitable. Hungarian military units and the national and people's guards were to leave Slovak territory without their weapons. The Slovak National Council was to have a supplementary headquarters located on the territory of Slovakia at its disposal. The seventh point of the proposal stipulated that the final drawing up of state borders would be carried out at a general peace conference.²⁴

In Prague, Hodža's negotiations with the Hungarian government, or Oszkár Jászi respectively, caused shock, intensified by the triumphalist tone of the Hungarian press. Prime Minister Kramář convened the government meeting and sent a telegram to Hodža: "I beg you and ask you to refrain from acting this way". On December 1, the government issued the public proclamation: *"In view of various pieces of information published in Hungarian magazines, according to which the Hungarian government and the Slovak National Council are negotiating the handing over of military and political powers in Slovakia to the said Slovak National Council, the government of the Czechoslovak Republic declares the following: Nobody was authorized by the government of the Czechoslovak Republic to negotiate any issues, political, economic or military with the Hungarian government. The Deputy Hodža was sent to Budapest to discuss, if necessary, the issue of the settlement of former joint Hungarian-Slovak matters with the former Hungarian state."*²⁵ The club of

²³ Ibid., p. 43.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 43–44.

²⁵ Edvard Beneš, *Světová válka a naše revoluce II* [World War and our Revolution II], Praha 1928, pp. 495–496.

Slovak deputies also objected: *"As for news appeared in Hungarian newspapers on the negotiations of the Hungarian government with the Slovak National Council, the club of Slovak Deputies of the National Assembly declares that it unanimously objects to any negotiations in Slovakia held without the authorization of the Czechoslovak Republic."*²⁶ Members of the Slovak National Council also dissociated themselves from the negotiations and the Council's chairman Dula sent a telegraphic disclaimer to *Národní noviny* on 1 December 1918, stating that these negotiations were noncommittal discussions between Minister Jászi and Deputy Hodža.

However, the Hungarian government was taking the negotiations between Jászi and Hodža very seriously. Contrary to the order from Prague (about which the Hungarian government was aware), instructing Hodža not to negotiate international and political issues, the Hungarian government adopted a resolution during its session on 1 December 1918 stating that it was necessary to conclude the agreement with the Slovak National Council. Jászi was referring to the fact that the idea of autonomy offered to the Slovaks was probably unpleasant to the Czechs and that they would consider negotiations on possible autonomy as a wedge driven between them and the Slovaks. He stated that if the Czechs frustrated this proposal in the international fora, then *"we would gain an enormous tactical advantage."*²⁷

However, Jászi's ideas did not correspond with reality. At the request of the government, Beneš objected in Paris to the Belgrade truce and took all possible steps to obtain a favourable decision concerning the territorial issue of Slovakia and demanded the resolution of this issue even prior to the peace conference. *"Since the second half of November I have daily discussed, intervened, explained and negotiated with soldiers and politicians. I negotiated again namely with Berthelot, who recognized our position from a legal and political point of view immediately. I continued with Pichon, Clemenceau and Marshal Foch. On this occasion I discussed with him and his colleagues a number of issues concerning Slovak-Hungarian borders. In this matter, I also addressed the*

²⁶ Ibid., p. 496.

²⁷ Compare Natalia Krajčovičová, *Koncepcia autonómie Slovenska v maďarskej politike v rokoch 1918–1920* [Conception of Autonomy of Slovakia in Hungarian policy in 1918–1920], in: Ladislav Deák (ed.), *Slovensko a Maďarsko v rokoch 1918–1920* [Slovakia and Hungary in 1918–1920], Martin 1995, p. 49.

*English and the Americans, pointing to the inevitable consequences of Hungarian actions, i.e. to the new conflict that would necessarily commence sooner or later... Politicians considered Franchet d'Esperey's truce as a mistake... and they recognized that it was necessary to remedy defects or misunderstanding. I also struggled for the determination of borders between ourselves and Hungarians, that would constitute the evidence that Slovakia actually belongs to us already... I discussed this issue in detail with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and with staff at Marshal Foch's headquarters."*²⁸

Following this intervention, instructions were sent to Lieutenant-Colonel Vyx, the Chief Commander of the Entente Cordiale's military mission to Budapest, who handed them over in the form of a note to the Hungarian government on 3 December 1918. Through this note, the Hungarian government was informed that *"the Alliance recognized the Czechoslovak state and they recognized the Czechoslovak army as an allied army. The Czechoslovak state is authorized to occupy Slovak territory on the grounds that the Czechoslovak state, as the allied party, is participating in the implementation of the truce relating to the occupation of the former Austro-Hungarian monarchy. On these grounds I was authorized to request the Hungarian government to withdraw its army from Slovak territory without delay..."*²⁹ In his response to this note and in a proclamation addressed to the Hungarian nation, Károlyi informed that he was forced to submit, as *"any violence could worsen the situation before the coming peace conference"* and at the same time he objected to the interpretation of the note, since it implied that the detachment of Slovakia was a completed matter: *"Recognition of the Czechoslovak state by the Alliance and the Hungarian state does not guarantee the right to assume that the thousand-year-old state, known as 'Hungary' with its undisputed borders should be almost automatically changed, prejudicing thereby the decision of the peace conference, which is the only competent body to resolve the issue of borders definitively."*³⁰ At the same time, Károlyi referred to the fact that the Belgrade convention did not include the condition to vacate Slovakia. Lieutenant-Colonel Vyx supported his position as well. He stated in his report: *"It is beyond all doubts that the Czechoslovak occupation of*

²⁸ Beneš, *Světová válka a naše revoluce II.*, pp. 484–485.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 488.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 490.

*Slovak territory... represents a formal violation of the truce of November 13. As of now, my situation is very difficult. All our small former East European allies (Serbs, Romanians, Czechoslovaks) incline to misusing the large advantages granted to them, and the Entente Cordiale itself shows small willingness to comply with the agreements it signed."*³¹

Foch's instructions presented in Vyx's note did not stipulate any line behind which the Hungarian army should withdraw; they merely imposed an obligation to withdraw from Slovak territory, which, however, did not exist from a political and geographical point of view. Milan Hodža, still staying in Budapest, decided to resolve the problem. He concluded an agreement on a temporary demarcation line to be valid until the receipt of new instructions with the Hungarian Minister of War Béla Barth on 6 December 1918. The demarcation line suggested by Hodža tended to adhere to undisputed ethnic borders and included solely Slovak-inhabited provinces. It ran to the north of Malý Dunaj and Ipel' to Rožňava, and then to the north of Košice via Humenné up to Dukelský průsmyk. Bratislava and Žitný ostrov, Komárenská and Ostrihomská provinces and Košice remained under Hungarian administration. In spite of the fact that Hodža pointed out that this was a temporary agreement only, Prague was very unsatisfied with the demarcation line he proposed and did not accept it. Kramář requested Beneš to take immediate steps. In mid-December Beneš received an assurance in Paris "*after hard and exasperating negotiations at the Quai d'Orsay*" that the demarcation line approved under his proposal by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and by the headquarters of Marshal Foch at the end of November would be respected. Lieutenant-Colonel Vyx also received instructions in this vein. Vyx, referring to the Belgrade convention, objected to the said demarcation line, however; he handed over another note to the Hungarian government on 23 December 1918, informing the government that he was supplementing his information of 3 December 1918 according to the instructions received from the Chief Commander of the Eastern army, and determining the borders of the Czechoslovak state according to the historical borders of the Slovak country. The line followed the rivers Morava, Dunaj and Ipel', the

³¹ Compare Mária Ormos, *Padovától Trianonig* [From Padua to Trianon], Budapest 1983, p. 105.

aerial line from Rimavská Sobota to Čop and the river Uh.³² The Hungarian government objected to this note, referring to the agreement on a demarcation line concluded between Hodža and Barth on December 6. Nevertheless, it took the note into account and started to withdraw its military units from the territory of Slovakia. They were replaced by Czechoslovak army units. The occupation of Slovakia by the Czechoslovak army was completed on 20 January 1919.

³² Ibid., p. 92.

Jan Rychlík

The Situation of the Hungarian Minority in Czechoslovakia 1918–1938

Before 1918, there were two different concepts of the solution of the nationality question in the Austrian and Hungarian parts of the monarchy. Austria recognised the multinational and compound character of the state. The country was decentralised. The administration was based on historically developed lands (in German: *Land*), most of which were originally independent countries. Both facts were reflected in the Austrian constitutional system.¹ Article 19 of the Basic Rights Act of 21 December 1867 declared the equality of all nations and their languages. The members of the particular Austrian nations obtained the right to be educated in their language. The specific language or languages was/were to be the official one in every *Land*, e.g. the historical administrative and law-making unit. There was no official state language for all Austria despite the fact that German was used as *lingua franca*. Generally speaking, there were no obstacles for the national and cultural development of the Czechs before 1918.

The situation in Hungary was different. The main aim of the Hungarian policy was to transform the multi-ethnic country into the modern Hungarian state where all citizens despite their language and ethnic origin would be Hungarians, or rather more precisely: where all citizens would be Magyars. In 1868, only the political and national

¹ Imperial decree of 26 February 1861, *Reichsgesetzblatt* 20 (1861), Law of 21 December 1867, *Reichsgesetzblatt* 141 (1867).

individuality of Croatia was recognised due to the historical reasons.² In other parts of the Hungarian Kingdom Hungarian was proclaimed the exclusive state and official language. Politically, only one and indivisible Hungarian nation (*Magyar nemzet*) existed in Hungary. The other non-Magyar nations (or rather: nationalities – in Hungarian *nemzetiségek*) were granted only limited language and cultural rights by Law XLIV/1868.³ Even these rights were not fulfilled and remained mostly only on paper. The real policy of Hungarian governments was to assimilate gradually all non-Magyars. Thus, the cultural development of the Slovaks was much more difficult than that of the Czechs before 1918.⁴

On 28 October 1918, the Czechoslovak state was proclaimed in Prague by the representatives of the main Czech political parties who formed the National Committee (*Národní výbor*). In the proclamation addressed to the “Czechoslovak nation” the Czech politicians claimed that the “hundreds years old dream of the nation has been realised.”⁵ Two days later, on 30 October, the representatives of the Slovak political parties formed at the assembly in Turčianský Svätý Martin, which created the Slovak National Council (*Slovenská národná rada* – SNC) declared the separation of the Slovaks from Hungary. The Slovak politicians did not know about the events in Prague that had happened two days earlier and manifested their will to join the common state with the Czechs. They issued the Declaration of the Slovak Nation (known as *Martinská deklarácia*). The Slovak nation was proclaimed an “indivisible part of the culturally and linguistically single Czecho-Slovak nation” for which the SNC requested the “right of self-determination on the basis of full independence.”⁶ Thus, at least on paper, the new state came into being.

² Relations between Croatia and Hungary were regulated by the Hungarian law No XXX/1868. Croatia had been connected with Hungary since 1102 in the form of a personal union. This fact was recognised by Hungarian politicians.

³ The law No XLIV was published in the Hungarian Collection of Laws of the Country on 9 December 1868.

⁴ See László Szarka, *Szlovák nemzeti fejlődés – Magyar nemzetiségi politika. Slovenský národný vývin – Národnostná politika v Uhorsku 1867–1918* [Slovak National Development – Hungarian Policy Toward Nationalities 1867–1918], Bratislava 1999.

⁵ Karol A. Medvecký, *Slovenský prevrat. III. Dokumenty* [The Slovak Coup d'état. Documents], Bratislava 1931, pp. 362–363.

⁶ Dušan Kováč et al., *Muži deklarácie* [The Men of Declaration], Martin 1991, p. 16. *Dokumenty slovenskej národnej identity a štátnosti* [Documents on Slovak National Identity and Statehood] (DSNIŠ) I., Bratislava 1998, doc. 161, pp. 512–513.

In fact, on 28 October the new state had been already internationally recognised by the Entente Powers and so both events – the proclamation of the National Committee in Prague and the Declaration of the Slovak Nation – were rather symbolical.⁷ In autumn 1918 Czechoslovakia would come into being anyway. Externally, on an international basis, the new state was based on the idea presented to the Entente states by T. G. Masaryk already in 1914 and 1915: old Austria-Hungary was not and could not be stable because the multinational state could not meet the demands of particular nations.⁸ The new “Independent Bohemia” extended to the East (the name Czechoslovakia did not exist yet) was considered to be the nation-state of the “Czechoslovak nation” and thus it was expected to be more stable. Technically, the “Czechoslovak nation” formed numerically the absolute majority (e.g. over 50%), which meant proclaiming the Germans, Hungarians, Poles and Ruthenian-Ukrainians as minorities. In fact, even in 1918, most of the Slovaks did not consider themselves to be a part of the “state Czechoslovak nation”. Consequently, the Czechs formed only a relative majority in Czechoslovakia. In reality, the new state was just a smaller copy of the deceased Austria-Hungary. For this reason it inherited all the problems of the old empire – plus some more.

The Germans, Hungarians and Poles had no reason to be satisfied in Czechoslovakia because they already had their own nation-states behind the new political border. The situation of the Hungarian minority differed from that of the German and Polish minorities in one aspect, however. The Germans of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia had always been subjects of the King of Bohemia and had never lived in Germany. The Poles in Silesia also had never lived in Poland. On the other hand, the Hungarian minority had lived, up to 1918, in Hungary, of which Slovakia and Ruthenia were indivisible parts. In such a situation, no one expected that the Hungarians will welcome the new Czechoslovak state. In fact, the government in Prague did not require “love” from the side of their minorities. The only required thing was an acceptance of the *status quo*. T. G. Masaryk, the first

⁷ Hugh Seton-Watson, Christopher Seton-Watson, *The Making of a New Europe, R. W. Seton-Watson and the Last Years of Austria-Hungary*, London 1989, pp. 294–295.

⁸ Jan Rychlík, Thomas Marzik, Miroslav Bielik, *R. W. Seton-Watson and His Relations with the Czechs and Slovaks. Documents (1906–1951)* [RWSW-D] I, Praha – Martin 1995, doc. 61, pp. 209–215; doc. 68, pp. 223–235.

president of the republic, hoped that in the longer perspective, even the minorities might accept Czechoslovakia as their country, e.g. that despite their cultural and linguistic relations to their nation-states behind the political border, they might one day become Czechoslovaks in the political sense. As far as the policy toward the minorities, the Czechs in fact applied the Austrian concept. This was natural, because the Austrian variant was the only one they knew. The “Czechoslovak nation” was to be the “state nation” and the “Czechoslovak language”⁹, the official language of the state, but the minorities were not to be forced to change their national consciousness and were to be allowed to use their languages in the schooling and educational system, cultural institutions, self-government and local administration.

International guarantees of the status of nationalities were included in the Treaty of Saint Germain of 10 September 1919 between Czechoslovakia and the Entente Powers. According to the treaty, Czechoslovakia was obliged to grant Czechoslovak citizenship automatically and without any further conditions to all former Austrian, Hungarian and German¹⁰ citizens having the right of domicile (*domovské právo*, *Heimatsrecht*) in any borrow (commune) on the territory of the Czechoslovak Republic (article 3). The citizens of these states had the right of option, e. g. the right to reject Czechoslovak citizenship and to retain Austrian, Hungarian or German citizenship. The minorities were to have the right to use their language in private and public life and to have their schools and other educational institutions. Czechoslovakia was obliged to allow the use of their languages, at least before the courts.

⁹ Such a language in fact did not really exist. The Czechoslovak language meant in practice either Czech or Slovak or both. According to article 4 of the Law No 122/1920 Sb. [Sb. = *Sbírka zákonů a nařízení státu československého* – Collection of Laws and Decrees of the Czechoslovak state, the official Law Gazette] in principle Czech was to be used in the Czech Lands and Slovak in Slovakia. This meant, however, that Czech could be used also in Slovakia and Slovak in the Czech Lands. Because the Czechoslovak language was the state and official language in the whole territory of the republic, both Czech and Slovak could also be used in Ruthenia. In practice, due to the minimum number of Slovak officials there, Czech was used in Ruthenia simultaneously with Russian or Ukrainian. In Slovakia, Czech was also frequently used due to the high number of Czech officials there, mainly in the 1920s. The common use of Czech and Slovak in the whole territory of Czechoslovakia was maintained until the end of this state in 1992. For more see: Jan Rychlík, *Češi a Slováci ve 20. století. Česko-slovenské vztahy 1914–1945* [The Czechs and Slovaks in the 20th Century. Czech-Slovak Relations 1914–1945], Bratislava 1997, pp. 79–84.

¹⁰ This applied to the inhabitants of the District of Hlučín in Silesia, which before the war did not belong to Austria, but to Germany.

Ruthenia was to be given autonomy. All citizens of Czechoslovakia were to have equal rights and duties.¹¹

Czechoslovakia formally integrated the obligations stemming from the Treaty of Saint Germain into the legal system. The legal equality of all citizens was included in the Czechoslovak Constitution of 29 February 1920 (article 106). The language rights of the minorities were granted by the Language Act, which was passed by the Revolutionary National Assembly simultaneously with the February Constitution. The “Czechoslovak” (e.g. Czech or Slovak) language was proclaimed the official language for the entire republic (article 1). If in a court district (*soudní okres*¹²), according to the last census of population, there were living at least 20% Czechoslovak citizens of the same language which was different from Czech or Slovak, the state administration, courts, offices of public prosecutors and the organs of local self-government were obliged to use this language as the second official one (article 2).¹³ We can say that in this aspect (from the legal point of view), Czechoslovakia fulfilled its obligations. In practice, however, some provisions of the Language Act were not clear and their implementation evoked problems connected with emotions on both the Czech/Slovak and minority side. The main problem was connected with the question as to how far towns and villages, who had no Czechs or Slovaks living in them, should use the “Czechoslovak” (e.g. Czech or Slovak) language. The detailed guidelines to the Language Act were issued only after six years. On 3 February 1926 the government passed the special decree containing the details in public administration, court system and local administration and self-government.¹⁴ The decree confirmed the right of the minorities to use their language in local administration but on the other hand placed emphasis on use of the “Czechoslovak language” simultaneously even in districts where no Czechs or Slovaks lived or where they were only few. Official names of districts had to be written

¹¹ French original and Czech translation of the Treaty of Saint Germain see in *Sbírka zákonů a nařízení státu československého* No 508/1921 Sb. Published also in Czech in Zdeněk Veselý, *Dějiny českého státu v dokumentech* [History of the Czech State in Documents], Praha 2003, pp. 282–285.

¹² Court district (*soudní okres*) was a territory over which applied the jurisdiction of the local district court (*okresní soud*). A court district was smaller than an administrative district (*politický okres*).

¹³ Law No 122/1920 Sb. Also Veselý, *Dějiny*, pp. 299–300.

¹⁴ Government Decree No 17/1926 Sb.

always in Czech or Slovak in the first place on all road signs, and the same applied to inscriptions on public buildings and the names of the state or self-governing institutions. The letters used in the text in Czech/Slovak had to be, at least, of the same size as those used for the minority language. According to article 81 of the decree, the organs of local self-government were obliged to publish all decrees also in the "Czechoslovak language" if the district had more than 3000 inhabitants or if it was important from a territorially broader point of view. Such decrees, however, were to be delivered and printed by the state organs. Still, we can say that the language rights of the minorities were quite extensive.

The question of citizenship was fulfilled only partly. Regardless of the text of the Treaty of Saint Germain, the Czechoslovak Citizenship and Domicile Act No 236/1920 of 9 April 1920 granted citizenship only to those former Austrian and Hungarian citizens who had their domicile in a district on Czechoslovak territory already on 1 January 1910 and to the former German citizens living permanently on the territory of the District of Hlučín. The regulation was directed predominantly against the Hungarians in Slovakia who (by the decision of Hungarian authorities) obtained their domicile and Hungarian citizenship after 1 January 1910. The Czechoslovak legal position was founded on the argument that the Treaty of Trianon between the Entente Powers and Hungary of 4 June 1920¹⁵ limited the right of citizenship to those individuals who were Hungarian citizens before 1 January 1910 (articles 61 and 62).¹⁶ Subsequently, the Entente Powers (according to Czechoslovak standpoint) cleared Czechoslovakia from the obligation to grant citizenship to the residents of Slovakia and Ruthenia to those who acquired their domicile and Hungarian citizenship after 1 January 1910.¹⁷

¹⁵ For the French text and the Czech translation see *Shírka zákonů a nařízení států československého*, No 102/1922 Sb.

¹⁶ According to article 62, former Hungarian citizens who obtained domicile in one of the districts of Czechoslovakia or the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (later known as Yugoslavia) after 1 January 1910 obtained the citizenship of the respective countries only if the relevant authorities agreed with it. If the consent was rejected or if the person did not apply for such, the person was regarded as a Hungarian citizen.

¹⁷ See Robert William Seton-Watson, *The Situation in Slovakia and the Magyar Minority*, in: *RWSW-D, I.*, doc. 139, p. 414. For a Czech translation see *Historický časopis* 1 (1993), pp. 76-89.

Despite the clear laws, the implementation of the legal norms noted above was often far from perfect. Austria and Hungary had each a separate citizenship before 1918 and the regulations dealing with domicile and citizenship were different in both parts of the dual monarchy. In Hungary the domicile was automatically acquired by any individual who resided uninterruptedly for a period of years in a district and during this period paid taxes.¹⁸ In Austria, however, the person had to be admitted to the commune, and a special document (the so-called *domovský list*, *Heimatschein*) had to be issued.¹⁹ In practice, mainly in the big cities like Prague or Vienna, many people were living for years without being formally accepted as members of the local commune, which meant that they still had their domicile in the place of their origin.²⁰ Only state and public officials automatically acquired the domicile in the district of their function. On 6 October 1923 the Czechoslovak Administrative Court decided that even in Slovakia and Ruthenia, the domicile could not be acquired automatically and that the express declaration of the commune to which the person moved was necessary. By this decision the Austrian practice was tacitly extended to Slovakia and Ruthenia. Robert William Seton-Watson (in his memorandum about the situation of the Hungarian minority for president T. G. Masaryk) commented upon the new situation as follows: *"The result of this decision was to increase immensely the difficulty of establishing the right of citizenship, and to make it easy for the officials, by every kind of hair-splitting and bureaucratic tactic, to refuse petitions, often after months or years of discussion or correspondence and heavy expenditure. Moreover, the practice was adopted of charging dues for the document when finally granted. The Hungarian appeal to Geneva mentions²¹ the sum of 45,000 Kč as having been exacted in one case: and a Župan²² admitted to me that he knew of a case of over 30,000. Cases of 5,000 – 15,000 appear to be quite common and are, of course, often a desperately heavy burden."*²³ Officially the practice was not directed against any particular part of the population

¹⁸ Law XXII/1886, article 10.

¹⁹ The Domicile Act of 3 December 1863, *Reichsgesetzblatt* 105 (1863).

²⁰ By marriage the wife acquired automatically the domicile of the husband and the children had always the same domicile as their parents.

²¹ For instance, to the League of Nations committee for national minorities.

²² The Regional Governor (in Hungarian *ispán*).

²³ Compare footnote 17.

of Slovakia and Ruthenia. However, Slovaks and Ruthenians, who, very often also could not prove their domicile in the place of residence, were not harassed by the state administration. This was a sufficient proof that the whole action was directed against the Hungarians. There is no doubt that, in this way, the Czechoslovak administration wanted to get rid off "unreliable elements". Due to the military events in Slovakia in 1919 (mainly due to the war between Czechoslovakia and the Hungarian communist regime of Béla Kun) there were many Hungarians in Slovakia and Ruthenia who were considered (rightly or wrongly) as enemies to the public order and security of the Czechoslovak Republic.²⁴ By not granting people Czechoslovak citizenship it was always possible to expel them from the country as unwelcome foreigners or even – in the case of military conflict – as enemy aliens. The situation with citizenship improved in 1926. The Slovak social democrat Ivan Dérer proposed an amendment to the Citizenship Act of 1920. According to the Constitutional Law of 1 July 1926 (known also as "lex Dérer"²⁵), persons without domicile or those unable to prove their domicile could now obtain Czechoslovak citizenship if they had resided in one of the districts of Slovakia or Ruthenia uninterruptedly for four years before 1 January 1910 and did not acquire domicile in a borrow (commune) outside the present territory of the Czechoslovak Republic after this date (article 1). In fact, the requirement of residence was by this way tacitly extended back to 1906 (e.g.: twenty years before the validity of the law). There were political conditions, however. The persons who became citizens of another state after 28 October 1918, and those who openly acted against the security and integrity of Czechoslovakia, as well as those deported from the Republic, were denied the right to obtain Czechoslovak citizenship. According to both Austrian and Hungarian regulations, woman by marriage always acquired domicile (and subsequently also citizenship) of husband and legitimate children followed the domicile of the parents (illegitimate children followed their mother). The application for Czechoslovak citizenship had an

²⁴ About this period see the newly published memoirs of Vavro Šrobár, minister plenipotentiary for Slovakia in 1918–1920: Vavro Šrobár, *Oslobodené Slovensko. Pamäti z rokov 1918–1920 II.* [Liberated Slovakia. Memoirs from 1918–1920 II.], Bratislava 2004. Note: while the first volume of these memoirs were published already in 1928, the second volume remained only as a manuscript and was published only in 2004.

²⁵ Law No 152/1926 Sb.

impact on the whole family.²⁶ While on one hand “Lex Derer” helped ordinary Hungarians, many still remained excluded.²⁷

The question of citizenship was indirectly related to many other problems. Those who were not Czechoslovak citizens were automatically excluded from the state and public service and also from the possibility of obtaining land in the land reform. The land reform was often criticised for its anti-Hungarian character. This criticism was based on argument that most of the land was confiscated from Hungarian owners. Conversely the question was not so simple. The Land Reform Act of 16 April 1919²⁸ sequestered all arable land over 150 hectares (ha) or all agricultural and forest land over 250 ha belonging to the same owner. According to the Acquisition Act of 30 January 1920²⁹ the land was to be divided to peasants for compensation. The original owners were compensated by the Compensation Act of 8 April 1920.³⁰ It is true that in Slovakia mainly the estates belonging to the Hungarian nobility were expropriated, but this was not predominantly because of their nationality. The reason was that in Slovakia, it was mainly the Hungarian nobility (both with and without Czechoslovak citizenship), which owned arable and other land over the given limits. Another question is that the land was distributed mainly to the Czech and Slovak farmers and colonists who were sent to Southern Slovakia and Ruthenia. Article 3 of the Acquisition Act excluded persons without Czechoslovak citizenship from the possibility of obtaining land, and this certainly affected the Hungarians. On the other hand, there were also Hungarian farmers – supporters of the Czechoslovak Agrarian Party – who did obtain land. In his memorandum, R. W. Seton-Watson acknowledged that he was unable to decide whether the complaints of the Hungarians were justified or not.³¹ After studying carefully the materials from the State Land Office (*Státní pozemkový úřad*) it is possible to say that the complaints of the original owners were not justified (they were

²⁶ The same impact had also the option for another citizenship or acquirement of citizenship according to the peace treaty regulations. In other words: a married woman could not decide about her citizenship.

²⁷ See *RWSW-D*, doc. 139, pp. 415–416.

²⁸ Law No 215/1919 Sb.

²⁹ Law No 81/1920 Sb.

³⁰ Law No 329/1920 Sb.

³¹ *RWSW-D, I.*, doc. 139, p. 424.

compensated like other former owners), while the complaints of the Hungarian peasants were partly justified.³²

It should be noted that the situation of the Hungarian minority was also affected by the relations between Hungary and Czechoslovakia, which were, throughout the inter-war years either bad or very bad. The Czechoslovak authorities did not prevent their citizens from travelling abroad; despite this, mutual contacts were rather limited. During the inter-war period, visas were never abolished between the two countries. Local border-crossing for business and personal purposes was possible with special border identity cards (e.g. without passports and visas) but this possibility was limited to people living in the border regions.³³ The poor relations between Prague and Budapest resulted in some problems for everyday life, like the problem of transfers of pensions, especially for the former state and public servants of the Hungarian state living in Slovakia. Czechoslovakia refused to pay them, arguing that the funds remained in Budapest and that it is the duty of the Hungarian government to pay them. Of course, the problem also had a humanitarian dimension. The whole problem was never fully settled despite some progress.³⁴

The cultural and educational problems were certainly smaller than those connected with citizenship. Certainly, the situation of the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia was much better than the situation of Slovaks and Ruthenians in Hungary before 1918. However, the real application of the liberal Language Act of 29 February 1920 and the governmental decree of 3 February 1926 often differed from the written text. The most problematic part of the law was the requirement of 20% minority language-speakers in the district. Formally, the authorities respected the law but simultaneously some districts were artificially divided so that their borders changed. As a result of this practice, even some almost purely Hungarian villages fell into districts with clear Slovak majorities, and the inhabitants of these "transferred villages" lost the right to use Hungarian in their contacts with the district administration. In Seton-Watson's memorandum, mentioned

³² See more: Jan Rychlík, *Pozemková reforma v Československu v letech 1919–1938* [The Agricultural Reform in Czechoslovakia in the Years 1919–1938], in: *Vědecké práce Zemědělského muzea* [Science Studies of the Agricultural Museum], 27, 1987–1988, pp. 143–144.

³³ This border regime was part of the Czechoslovak-Hungarian commercial agreement – see decree No 120/1927 Sb. of 31 May 1927, appendix E.

³⁴ *RWSW-D*, doc. 139, pp. 418–419.

above, this process is described as follows: *"In Bratislava, for instance, by the purely artificial transference of certain communes to Galanta (though they are nearer to Bratislava than to Galanta) and by the addition of certain other communes, the total number of Magyars has been reduced to 17.61 per cent, though of course inside the town of Bratislava they form a compact mass of over 20,000... Still more open to criticism is the re-arrangement of the judicial [court – note Jan Rychlík] districts of Rimavská Sobota, Košice and Nitra, in accordance with Decree Z. 55/1926, with the result the Magyar proportion was again artificially reduced below twenty per cent."*³⁵

The Minority Schools Act of 3 April 1919 (known also as "lex Metelka") confirmed the right of the minorities to be educated in their language.³⁶ If there were enough pupils (students) such schools could be fully financed by the state. The "Czechoslovak" (e.g. Slovak in Slovakia) language was taught as the mandatory subject at all types of minority schools. As far as education is concerned, even according to the memorandum of the Hungarian political parties in Czechoslovakia they were only a few predominantly Hungarian villages without a Hungarian primary school. In 1928, there were 756 purely Hungarian primary schools. In the field of secondary education, however, the situation was worse. There were only seven Hungarian high schools of different types. The Hungarians lacking a regular Teachers College (there was only a parallel class at the Slovak Teachers College in Bratislava), and especially the agricultural and technical training schools.³⁷ Compared with the situation of Slovaks in Hungary before 1918 (when there were no Slovak high schools), the position of the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia was certainly better. The question was, however, whether the situation was sufficient. The Hungarian population compared their situation with that before 1918 when there were Hungarian high schools in many cities and also a Hungarian university (since 1912) in Bratislava. Compared with this, the situation of 1928 had to seem, for them, rather bad. Similar situations occurred as far as cultural institutions were concerned. Another problem was the curriculum of the Hungarian schools: it was quite clear that mainly in history, the emphasis

³⁵ *RWSW-D*, doc. 139, pp. 420–421.

³⁶ Law No 189/1919 Sb.

³⁷ *RWSW-D*, doc. 139, p. 421.

was given to "Czechoslovak" (e.g. mainly Czech) history while Hungarian history was taught mainly from a Slovak point of view. The interpretation of Hungarian history was particularly controversial. Official Hungarian textbooks could not be used in Hungarian schools in Slovakia because of their support for the St. Stephen's Crown Hungary and their overt revisionism as far as the Czechoslovak-Hungarian border was concerned. Also many other Hungarian publications and newspapers, particularly those questioning the Trianon borders, were banned in Czechoslovakia. Limited access to literature published in Hungary was also protested by Hungarian minority circles.

We shall not discuss the above mentioned matters here. Usually in similar cases, the truth is somewhere between the two points – sometimes closer to the Slovak (or rather Czechoslovak) perspective and sometimes closer to the Hungarian perspective. We can say, in general, that the situation of the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia between 1918–1938 was "neither heaven nor hell." It should also be noted that the Hungarian political scene in Czechoslovakia was divided, and there was no unity about the extent to which Hungarians should accept or reject the new state. It is worth pointing out that unlike the German minority, which was certainly in a better situation, the Hungarians remained generally loyal to the Czechoslovak state in the crucial year of 1938. This does not contradict the fact that most of them welcomed the Vienna award of 2 November 1938, when the southern parts of Slovakia and Ruthenia were annexed back to Hungary.

Nándor Bárdi

The strategies and institutional framework employed by Hungarian governments to promote the “Hungarian minorities policy” between 1918 and 1938

This study examines Hungary's foreign policy with regard to the Hungarian minorities in the neighbouring countries and a revision of the country's Trianon borders in the period between the two world wars.¹ After a conceptual clarification, I identify the most important historical consequences of the Trianon Peace Treaty and then offer a periodisation of Hungary's policies towards the Hungarian minorities. Finally, I examine government policy and action in this field, including long-term objectives, strategies, and the institutional framework.

¹ For a recent analysis of the history of Hungary's revisionist policy, see Miklós Zeidler, *A revíziós gondolat* [The Revisionist Idea], Budapest 2001, p. 256. For the “cult” of irredentism, see also Miklós Zeidler, Irredentism in Everyday Life in Hungary during the Inter-war Period, *Regio*, 2002, pp. 71–88. The same author compiled a representative selection of documents on the effects of Trianon: Miklós Zeidler (ed.), *Trianon*, Budapest 2003, p. 932.

1. Concepts and perspectives

The term "Hungarian minorities policy" used in the title of this paper refers to government action in connection with the ethnic Hungarian populations² that fell under the jurisdiction of Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia in 1918. In broader terms, it refers to government action taken not just by Hungary in this field but also by the three aforementioned states. I refer to the political activities of the Hungarian minority political elites as *minority policy*.³ The term *nationalities policy*, meanwhile, denotes the policies of individual governments towards their own national and ethnic minorities.⁴

When interpreting the "Hungarian minorities policy" of Hungarian governments, I consider the following four historical circumstances to be of definitive importance.

1. Relations between Hungary and the neighbouring countries were determined throughout the period by their parallel nation-building endeavours. The long-term sources of conflict were the national movements within the Kingdom of Hungary until 1918 and, thereafter, the Hungarian national minorities in the newly created or expanded states (Czechoslovakia, Romania, and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes). These national movements and minority groups had close links with the institutions and movements of their kin nations and states. Yet they were also subject populations of other nation-building states.

2. A peculiar feature of the Hungarian nation-building process – a feature distinguishing it from counterpart processes elsewhere in the region – was Hungary's limited statehood after 1868. Meanwhile, the main purpose of the other nation-building movements was to establish state institutions or to integrate compatriot groups into the nation's

² According to census data for 1930, the numbers of persons identifying themselves as Hungarians in the neighbouring countries were as follows: 10,442 in Austria, 585,434 in Czechoslovakia, 1,552,563 in Romania, and 465,400 in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.

³ The most important political organisations of the Hungarian minorities were as follows: Christian Socialist Party, Hungarian National Party, and United Hungarian Party in Czechoslovakia; National Hungarian Party in Romania; National Hungarian Party in Yugoslavia. These political parties were active both in local government and in the national parliaments.

⁴ The issue is reviewed in Ignác Romsics, *Nemzet, nemzetiség és állam Kelet-Közép és Délkelet-Európában a 19. és 20. században* [Nation, Nationality, and the State in East Central and South Eastern Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries], Budapest 2004, p. 419.

existing statehood. This was so, for instance, in the case of the Serbs and Romanians living in Hungary. Furthermore, Hungary's status within the Austro-Hungarian Empire helped to conserve imperial attitudes in the country (and the concept of Hungarian statehood stretching back to King Stephen). The result was the dominance of the French state-nation model (the idea of Hungarian cultural superiority and the need to preserve the nation's ascendancy). Moreover, the political elite was rendered unable to deal with the problems of the minorities – since its principal objective was to preserve its status with respect to Austria.

3. The year 1918 saw the separation – from the process of Hungarian nation-building – of regions with a highly developed national consciousness. The Hungarian populations, as “enforced” communities, established separate cultural and political institutions between the two world wars. Although these minority communities were part of the broader political community of the countries in which they resided, they did not contribute to these countries' nation-building efforts. (That is to say, they were no part of the Czech/Slovak, Romanian or Serb political nations.) Their absence may be explained by the fact that in these countries the development of national statehood was conceived as a response to the social and economic positions held by the Hungarian (German and Jewish) communities. Thus, the Hungarian minority elites always formulated their strategies in response to the nation-building policies of both kin-state and home-state.

4. After Trianon, Hungarian nation-building was aimed at restoring a past relationship. However, this revisionist ideology was more than a mere foreign policy objective; it amounted to the broadest and most effective basis for legitimacy of the whole Horthy era. Over a period of 20 years, the contradiction between Hungary's “national” and modernisation aims re-emerged. This contradiction reflected the basic dilemma about the relative importance of external revision and internal social reform. Consequently, “reform” could only come from above and within the framework of right-wing movements in society. As elsewhere in Central Europe, such attempts to achieve supremacy resulted in the ethnicisation of society and the juxtaposing of communities with different ethnocultural identities. In Central Europe, such communities were Germans, Hungarians and Jews. In Hungary this was limited to the latter community-construct. In Hungarian

political thinking, therefore, the issue of national identity (with its focus upon the problems of the Hungarian minorities abroad) became traumatically linked with right-wing political rhetoric and the Jewish question.

2. The consequences of Trianon

2.1. *The creation of large ethnic Hungarian communities abroad.* Based on demographic data for 1910, 3.5 million Hungarians fell under foreign rule in 1918. The numbers have fallen since then, and the current figure is less than 2.5 million. (Based on an index of 100 for 1910, the population of the Carpathian basin increased to 147.9 in 2000, the population of Hungary to 136, while the ethnic Hungarian population outside Hungary decreased to 77.1.⁵) It is important to note the changing identity of a social group and the effect of its demographic/migrational crisis on the political and modernisation process within the larger region. Meanwhile, the countries in question established institutional frameworks – whose functioning became one of the most important aims of national development.

2.2. *The collapse, in 1918, of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which had been a unified economic area.* New customs borders and the process of industrialisation in the successor states (including import-substitution programmes) increased demand for investment capital. Throughout the region, the role of the public sector grew, and there was greater dependence on external economic actors. Backward peripheral regions arose alongside the new frontiers, in areas that had previously sustained prosperous market towns. Even after 1989, the old regional division of labour was not re-established. Only during the past ten years have links been reforged. Such links are particularly strong at local level and in the labour market, but the national borders continue to separate local populations and “peripherise” them.

2.3. Trianon created *a relationship of mutual fear and suspicion* between Hungary and its neighbours. The sensitivity of the relationship is manifest in the fact that a grievance suffered by one of the Hungarian minority communities is perceived in Hungary as a grievance

⁵ Károly Kocsis, *Society and Economy in the Carpathian Basin of the Present*, in: Tibor Bulcsa – Béla Mendöl, *A Kárpát-medence földrajza*, Budapest 1999, pp. 359-360.

ance against an integral part of the nation. Whenever the Hungarian government or public protests such a grievance, the other country's government or public perceives this as interference in its internal affairs. In this way, the public in both countries can easily be provoked. What is important is not who is right, but the existence of sensitivities that can be aroused and transmitted at any time. This phenomenon is accompanied by a kind of "Hungarian complex" – which is stronger in the case of Slovakia and weaker in the case of Romania. For example, any criticism voiced in Hungary and directed at Slovakia elicits great interest among Slovaks and receives symbolic metaphorical significance.

A social psychological consequence of this process – a consequence that we have already noted – is the manner in which the complex of fear surrounding the injustice of Trianon, the suppression of the Hungarian minority communities, and frontier revisionism became the most important legitimising arguments for Hungary's political regime between the two world wars.

3. A periodisation of the "Hungarian minorities policy"⁶

"Hungarian minorities policy" as a separate concept was unknown between the two world wars, as Hungary's support for the Hungarian minority communities in Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia was intertwined with its policy of seeking revision of the Trianon peace treaty. Nevertheless, examining the policies of Hungarian governments towards the minority communities after 1918, we can identify eight distinct periods. An immediate observation is that frontier revision was a major part of government policy only until 1944. After 1944, the issue of the Hungarian minority communities was subordinated to other foreign policy and ideological objectives. In the latter half of the 1980s, however, as Hungary's foreign policy became more independent, the issue again received great weight (thereby casting a shadow over Hungary's relations with its neighbours). Until the mid-1990s, Euro-Atlantic integration was the priority. It is only

⁶ For a more detailed account, see Nándor Bárdi, *Tény és való. A budapesti kormányzatok és a határon túli magyarok kapcsolattörténete* [A History of Relations between Hungarian Governments and the Hungarian Minorities Abroad], Bratislava 2004, p. 272.

since then that the “Hungarian minorities policy” has become a major policy consideration, viewed by the country’s political elite as an integral national issue. Over the years, Hungary’s political elite has tended to consider the establishment of autonomous minority institutions reflecting the specific circumstances of the various countries as the best possible solution to the problems faced by the Hungarian minority communities.

Periods in Hungary’s “Hungarian minorities policy”:

1. Period of a *revisionist view of the future* between the two world wars, 1918–1938/40/41.⁷

The “Hungarian minorities policy” of Hungarian governments between the two world wars was determined by the desire for frontier revision and a *revisionist view of the future*. Although the position appeared from the outside to be clear and consistent, there were various internal aspects. *Tangible revisionist objectives* were always no more than theoretical. It was only in the 1930s that the Gömbös government drew up specific plans, but even then it did not propagate them.⁸ Among the various alternatives, the most vocal support – by means of civil society organisations – was given to the restoration of Historical Hungary. Foreign policy makers, however, tended to support the return of areas inhabited by Hungarians; the idea was to connect the Szekler region with Hungary by means of a corridor that would include Kolozsvár (Cluj). In areas of mixed populations where the majority ethnic group formed merely a minority, plebiscites on national allegiance would be held.⁹ In terms of strategy, “Hungarian minorities policy” during this period reflected Benedek Jancsó’s idea that the Hungarian nation had lost its geographical integrity but not its cultural integrity – which was guaranteed by international treaties. The task was to uphold this cultural integrity, together with Hungarian demographic, economic and cultural positions, so that they

⁷ From the signing of the Treaty of Trianon (4 June 1920) until the First Vienna Award (2 November 1938), then until the Second Vienna Award (30 August 1940), and finally until the attack on Yugoslavia (11 April 1941).

⁸ Miklós Zeidler, Gömbös Gyula [Gyula Gömbös], in: Ignác Romsics (ed.), *Trianon és a magyar politikai gondolkodás 1920–1953*, Budapest 1998, pp. 70–94.

⁹ For a full and accurate analysis of such ideas, see Ödön Kuncz, *A trianoni békeszerződés revíziójának szükségessége. Emlékirat Sir Robert Gowerhez* [The Need for a Revision of the Treaty of Trianon. Memorandum to Sir Robert Gower], Budapest 1934, p. 32.

could be used as points of reference in any new peace negotiations.¹⁰ This explains why Hungary's support for the minority communities between the two world wars placed such great emphasis on religious (denominational) education and the minority press.

2. Immediately prior to and during the Second World War (1938/40/41–1944), Hungary – which had gained territory as well as new minority populations – pursued a *nationalities policy derived from majority status* rather than a “Hungarian minorities policy”. Hungary's former policy position, namely, that the minority issue should be addressed by establishing autonomous institutions, was abandoned. Instead, an updating of the nationalities legislation of 1868 was emphasised.¹¹ Thus, the *nationalities issue* came to be considered as a *language policy issue*. The boldest, albeit ultimately unsuccessful, initiative in this area was Pál Teleki's proposal for the establishment of a self-government system in the Sub-Carpathian region. Teleki was the first to abandon the principle of a single official language (Hungarian) when he proposed the introduction of a second official language – Carpatho-Ukrainian – in the Sub-Carpathian region.¹² In the same way, he broke with the principle of the inviolability of state sovereignty when he submitted to Parliament a legislative bill on the “Carpathian Province and its Self-Government”.¹³ The legislation was never adopted, since it was rejected both by military circles and by public opinion.

Meanwhile, with respect to Slovakia and Romania, the re-annexation of territory by Hungary was followed within months by the adoption of a *policy of reciprocity*. (Based on the principle of reciprocity, grievances suffered by a given national group in Hungary were “repaid” through the introduction of further constraints on the Hungarian

¹⁰ A magyar társadalom és az idegen uralom alá került magyar kisebbség sorsa [Hungarian Society and the Fate of the Hungarian Minorities under Foreign Rule], *Magyar Szemle* 1 (1927), pp. 50–57.

¹¹ This approach was summarised in Pál Teleki, *Magyar nemzetiségi politika* [Hungarian Nationalities Policy], Budapest 1940, p. 30. (The document was republished in a volume compiled by Balázs Ablonczy. Teleki Pál, *Válogatott politikai írások és beszédek* [Selected Political Writings and Speeches], Balázs Ablonczy (ed.), Budapest 2000, pp. 395–414.); András Rónai, *A nemzetiségi kérdés* [The Nationalities Issue], Budapest 1942, p. 22; Imre Mikó, *A jogfolytonosság helyreállítása a nemzetiségi jogalkotásban* [Restoring Legal Continuity in Nationalities Legislation], *Kisebbségvédelem* 1–2 (1941), pp. 1–7.

¹² Decree of the Ministerial Council of 23. 5. 1939.

¹³ István Diószegi, Teleki Pál nemzetiségpolitikája [Pál Teleki's Nationalities Policy], in: *Teleki Pál és kora*, Budapest 1992, pp. 66–78.

minority in the given country, and vice versa.) In Romania's case, this was manifest in the refugee issue, while in Slovakia it took the form of delayed authorisation for the functioning of minority institutions.¹⁴

We know little about *Hungary's efforts to revitalise the re-annexed territories*, apart from capital investment in infrastructure as well as action to alleviate poverty in the Sub-Carpathian region.¹⁵ In this regard, the most important area was the Szekler region. The other predominantly Hungarian-inhabited area, the Csallóköz region in southern Slovakia, was generally more advanced in terms of farming techniques than was Hungary itself. (This was partly because of its role as Czechoslovakia's granary.) The Szekler region, on the other hand, was the recipient not only of infrastructure and equipment (above all machinery, since mechanisation there had ground to a halt after the First World War), but also of expertise and the transfer of knowledge – to use a contemporary term. A great number of adult education courses and rural agricultural training programmes were introduced. This was all due to the development of groups of experts in Hungary (associated with the magazine *Láthatár* and various reform groups) and in Transylvania (associated with the magazine *Hitel* and including the village workers of the church youth movements and, after 1940, the University of Kolozsvár). These groups urged the introduction of such courses and programmes.¹⁶

3. The period of *ineffectiveness* from 1944–1948. At the peace negotiations ending the Second World War, Hungary had no

¹⁴ *A szlovákiai magyarság élete 1938–1941* [The Life of the Hungarian Minority in Slovakia, 1938–1941], Budapest 1941, p. 250; Béni Balogh, *A magyar-román kapcsolatok alakulása 1939–1940 és a második bécsi döntés* [Hungarian-Romanian Relations in 1939–1940 and the Second Vienna Award], Miercurea Ciuc 2002, p. 429.

¹⁵ Péter Hámori, Kísérletek a visszacsatolt felvidéki területek társadalmi és szociális integrálásáról [Attempts to Integrate Socially the Reannexed areas of Upper Hungary], *Századok* 3 (2001), pp. 569–624; Észak-Erdély társadalomtörténete 1940–1944 [A Social History of Northern Transylvania 1940–1944], *Limes* 2 (2006), (a special issue on the topic that is currently under publication).

¹⁶ The role of the *Hitel* circle and the Transylvanian Academic Institute in Cluj should be emphasised. For an account of attempts to modernise the Szekler region after the Second Vienna Award, see Sándor Oláh, *A magyar állam integrációs kísérletei és megvalósításuk 1940 őszétől 1944 nyaráig a székelyföldi Csík és Udvarhely vármegyékben* [Modernisation Attempts by the Hungarian State from the Autumn of 1940 until the Summer of 1944 in the Counties of Csík és Udvarhely], Manuscript, 2002, TLA Kv. 3015/2003, p. 138; Sándor Oláh, Vidékfejlesztés Csík és Udvarhely megyékben 1940–1944 között [Regional Development in the Counties of Csík és Udvarhely from 1940 until 1944], *Székelyföld* 7 (2003), pp. 95–112.

political allies and was therefore unable to secure legal protection for the Hungarian minorities in Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia.

4. The period of *internationalist automatism* when the issue was treated as the internal affair of “friendly socialist countries”, 1948–1966/68. The official position was that the advance of Marxism-Leninism would automatically resolve national conflicts, because such conflicts were due to class suppression by the bourgeoisie and the feudal ruling classes. According to communist theory, the issue would resolve itself as soon as class suppression was eradicated. The national dimension was ignored, and class war became the single priority. At the same time, the nationalities issue was regarded as the internal affair of all communist countries – at least according to the internationalist dogma. Even more importantly, *during this period, there was no independent Hungarian foreign policy.* (And during the two weeks of revolution in Hungary in 1956, the issue was not addressed officially.)

5. During the consolidation of the Kádár regime, as national politics became more uniform and the legitimacy rhetoric changed, the problems of the Hungarian minorities abroad became pressing and unavoidable. This explains the development – from the mid-1960s until the end of the 1970s – of the ideology of “dual identity/loyalty” and of the “bridging role” of the minorities. *Dual identity:* the nationalities (ethnic groups in Hungary and ethnic Hungarians in the neighbouring countries) had affiliation with both their own national culture and the culture of the country of residence. (But in both cultures, the fostering of socialist values was urged.) Thus, such nationalities constituted “bridges” between two nations, thereby overcoming historical prejudices. The nationalities issue continued to be treated as an internal affair, but discussions between the various communist parties and the foreign policy debate were dominated by matters raised by the cultural and educational institutions of the Hungarian minority communities. From the 1970s onwards – due to institutional decline stemming from enhanced homogenisation policies – it was in these areas that the most serious conflicts between Hungary and Romania/Czechoslovakia arose. (In Yugoslavia the position of the Hungarians was considered exemplary, while in the Soviet Union the issue of the

Hungarian minority (in Sub-Carpathian Ukraine) was not really on the agenda.)¹⁷

6. *Attempts in Hungary to deal with the issue institutionally, 1978–1989/92.* Initially, there were programmes in the field of academic research and in a special institute, and then the Foreign Affairs Department of the HSWP became responsible for the issue. In the spring of 1989, the last government of the communist regime established a so-called Nationalities Board to address, at governmental level, the nationalities in Hungary and the problems of the Hungarian minorities abroad. In 1992, the Board was replaced by the Government Office for Hungarian Minorities Abroad.¹⁸

7. The period 1989–1996 saw the establishment of an institutional framework for the Hungarian minorities abroad and the introduction of Hungary's policy of supporting the minorities. It was during this period that the *Hungarian minorities policy and domestic minority policy were re-institutionalised*, with the priority areas of the former being as follows: international minority protection; relations between Hungary and the Hungarian minorities abroad; and financial support for the Hungarian minorities.

8. *The political institutionalisation of relations between Hungary and the Hungarian minorities abroad and the integration of national cultural institutions perceived in ethnocultural terms* began in 1996 after the signing of the basic treaties. There were three significant stages in this process: the establishment of the Permanent Hungarian Conference (1996/1998), the adoption of the Act on Hungarians Living in Neighbouring Countries (2001), and the holding of a referendum on dual citizenship.¹⁹

¹⁷ Iratok a szomszédos országok magyarságának kulturális támogatásáról [Documents on Cultural Support for the Hungarian Minorities in the Neighbouring Countries], *Magyar Kisebbség* 4 (2003), pp. 132–166.

¹⁸ Róbert Győri Szabó, *Kisebbségpolitikai rendszerváltás Magyarországon* [A Radical Shift in Minority Policy in Hungary], Budapest 1998, p. 467.

¹⁹ An interpretation of this process: Zoltán Kántor, The concept of Nation in the Central and East European "Status Law", in: *Beyond Sovereignty: From Status Law to Transnational Citizenship?* Sapporo 2006, pp. 37–51.

4. Government action between the two world wars

4.1. The *revisionist view of the future* contained grave contradictions that had to be addressed by successive governments. A major complicating factor was that *frontier revision was both a foreign policy objective and a means for the Horthy regime to acquire legitimacy from society*. Reference to the re-annexation of the ceded territories functioned both as an expectation and as an argument, permeating the whole government system and often displacing the need to address important economic and social problems. Even Hungary's foreign policy specialists were reluctant to oppose public demands for the re-annexation of all of Hungary's former territories and to propose, in its place, frontier revision plans that were more tangible and which reflected the ethnic map of the region or to argue for the introduction of autonomous institutions as a long-term solution. The third major contradiction stemmed from the fact that international support for frontier revision could only be expected from one or other of the great power blocs rather than from international public opinion as a whole. Hungary had to reckon with the consequences of its essentially pro-German and pro-Italian foreign policy. After 1938, preserving the country's independence (and its various foreign policy options) was just as much a key issue of Hungarian foreign policy as was frontier revision. A further source of contradiction was that in everyday politics the revisionist foreign policy objectives had to be reconciled with the interests of the Hungarian minority communities and political parties in the various countries. That is to say, there had to be consideration for the ability of the Hungarian minorities to integrate into society in those countries and to preserve their economic, social and cultural powerbase. Thus, short-term and long-term interests had to be reconciled simultaneously. This explains why we should address separately *revisionist (foreign) policy* and *the Hungarian minorities policy*.

4.2. It is the aforementioned *strategic* duality that gives rise to the division between the institutional framework and specific political action. In what follows, I indicate *fractures* in the *revisionist ambitions* of Hungarian foreign policy and in the field of *Hungarian minorities policy*.

4.2.1. The period from 1918–1920 was determined both by government action in connection with the peace treaty and by military planning that was often baseless. In 1920–1921, after the signing of

the Trianon peace treaty, the focus of Hungarian foreign policy became action by the West in Hungary (with a view to exerting a positive influence on the Sopron referendum) and a search for international allies. In this latter area, the government's efforts failed; its attempts to establish closer relations with France and Germany were unsuccessful. Thus, for the sake of European consolidation and similarly to the policy pursued by Germany, Hungary implemented a policy of fulfilment from 1921–1927. After Lord Rothermere's revisionist initiative but before the Four-Power Pact (1928–1933), István Bethlen and Hungarian foreign policy makers spoke openly of Hungary's revisionist intentions.²⁰ But it was only in 1933–1934 that specific frontier revision plans were made.²¹ The period 1933–1938 was largely determined by Germany's foreign policy imperatives, which included a demand for a change in international relations. At the same time, Hungarian foreign policy strove for balanced relations with Italy, Great Britain, and the Little Entente countries, while nevertheless subordinating this objective to its revisionist ambitions.

4.2.2. As far as policy towards the Hungarian minorities in the neighbouring countries was concerned, during the period of imperial change (1918–1920/22) the Hungarian government proposed political *passivity* to the Transylvanian elite (formerly the province's government officials), while in Czechoslovakia it suggested a re-organisation of the old political party framework. (In Serbia, citizenship and political rights were uncertain until the conclusion of the citizenship option process in 1921.) When it became clear that a long-term change in international relations would have to be accepted and Hungary's consolidation became the priority, the Hungarian government used its Hungarian minorities policy to support the *integration* of the minorities into the political life of the successor states – by means of independent party politics (1923–1926). In addition to *co-ordinating the unity of the Hungarian political elite*, the policy attempted to establish *local majorities* (vis-à-vis the national power centres) by means of co-operation with other ethnic groups in the Hungarian-inhabited regions (Slovaks, Ruthenes, Germans, etc.)

²⁰ Ignác Romsics, Bethlen koncepciója a független vagy autonóm Erdélyről [Bethlen's Concept of an Independent and Autonomous Transylvania], in: *Magyarságtudatás Évkönyve*, Budapest 1987, pp. 49–64.

²¹ Ibid., and Zeidler, *Gömbös Gyula*.

or with the local dominant ethnic group (Romanians in Transylvania) and to draft *ideologies* against centralisation or to support such ideologies (promoting a separate Transylvanian identity in Romania or a separate Slovak identity and Ruthenian nationalism/separatism in Czechoslovakia). By the late 1920s, the failure of the policy had become apparent. Hungary was insufficiently endowed with politically and economic resources to be able to woo non-Hungarian regional groups away from the centres in Prague, Belgrade and Bucharest. (Moreover, some of the non-Hungarian regional parties were now members of the governing coalitions, or the minority Hungarian parties were also seeking pacts with the governments in power.)²² Thus, from the late 1920s, the ethnic Hungarian parties were everywhere forced into a *defensive position*. Supported by the government in Budapest, they drew attention to their plight by filing complaints to the League of Nations.²³ Meanwhile, in domestic politics, they attempted to persuade the majority parties to accept some kind of legal and political regulation by removing the minority issue from the party political debate. During this period, which may be regarded as the period of increasing national cohesion within the region, the Hungarian government's policy turned to *the internal organisation of the Hungarian communities abroad and to establishing their unity*.²⁴ The main goal was to provide the Hungarian communities with the broadest possible range of assistance. At the same time, a key issue was maintaining the institutional framework for other political alternatives. In the latter half of the 1930s, despite negotiations with the Little Entente and separate discussions concerning the minority question with two of the neighbouring countries (Yugoslavia and Romania), the focus switched to *preparing for frontier revision*.²⁵

²² The National Peasants Party, the successor of the Transylvanian Romanian National Party led by Maniu, provided Romania's prime minister in 1928–1930 and again in 1931–32. In 1923, the National Hungarian Party (in Romania) formed an electoral pact with the People's Party led by Averescu. In 1926, it formed a pact with the Liberal Party and then with the People's Party. In Czechoslovakia, the Smallholders Party led by József Szent-Ivány also tried to pursue a more activist policy in 1926, but it was unsuccessful for domestic political reasons.

²³ Miklós Zeidler, *A nemzetek Szövetsége és a magyar kisebbségi petíciók* [The League of Nations and the Hungarian Minority Petitions], in: Nándor Bárdi, Csilla Fedinec, *Etnopolitika*, Budapest 2003, pp. 59–83.

²⁴ For personnel changes in Hungarian minority politics in Romania, see Imre Mikó, *Erdélyi politika* [Transylvanian Politics], *Hitel* 2 (1942), pp. 176–182.

²⁵ Loránt Tilkovszky, *Revízió és nemzetiségpolitika Magyarországon* [Revision and Nationalities

4.3. Examining the *institutional framework* for this policy, we note the key role played by Prime Minister István Bethlen until 1931. Thereafter the influence of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs grew, and there was a significant decline in the role of civil society organisations, which had served to communicate the “Hungarian minorities policy”. From the early 1920s, István Bethlen reserved the right to manage foreign policy and to hold negotiations with leaders of the Hungarian minority communities.

The work of the Foreign Ministry at the embassies in Prague, Bucharest and Belgrade was linked to the activities of the *Nationalities and Minority Department of the Prime Minister's Office*, which had been set up prior to the First World War.²⁶ Initially, the department comprised two parts: a section responsible for the Hungarian population in territories ceded to other states and a section responsible for the affairs of nationalities in Hungary. November 1918 saw the establishment of a Ministry of Nationalities under the direction of Oszkár Jászi. Following the defeat of the Republic of Councils in the autumn of 1919, various ministries were made responsible for the nationalities in Hungary and for Hungarians residing in the annexed territories: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Propaganda, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Education, the Ministry of Nationalities under the German minority politician Jakab Bleyer, and the so-called Transylvanian Ministry under István Bethlen – which were mostly concerned with preparations for the peace treaty. Two leading figures at the Transylvanian Ministry were Benedek Jancsó and Dénes Sebes, both confidants of István Bethlen. In the spring of 1920, they became responsible for maintaining contacts with Hungarians abroad. But, instead of completing this task within the framework of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or the Ministry of Nationalities, they decided to establish civil bodies with responsibility in this area. Then, in April 1921, the Ministry of Nationalities was

Policy in Hungary], Budapest 1967, p. 349; Gergely Sallai, Az első bécsi döntés diplomáciai és politikai előtörténete [The Diplomatic and Political Background to the First Vienna Award], *Századok* 3 (2000), pp. 597–631.

²⁶ For a selection of the Department's papers, see: Magyarok kisebbségben és szóróványban. *A Magyar Miniszterelnökség Nemzetiségi és Kisebbségi Osztályának válogatott iratai 1919–1944* [Hungarians in Minority and Diaspora. Selected Documents of the Nationalities and Minority Department of the Hungarian Prime Minister's Office, 1919–1944], D. András Bán (ed.), Budapest 1995, p. 732. The preface of the volume (pp. 1–7) contains an institutional history of the Department by Ignác Romsics.

abolished and its functions transferred first to Department No. 3 and then (in 1922) to Department No. 2 of the Prime Minister's Office, which was headed until 1944 by Tibor Pataky. The department was not responsible for ethnic Hungarians in Austria or other countries to the West. Instead, it concentrated on Hungarians living in Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Romania, as well as non-Hungarian ethnic groups living in Hungary. The number of staff in the department increased from 7-9 in the 1920s to 17 in the following decade. Staff responsible for the Hungarian minorities abroad undertook ordinary operational tasks, such as maintaining contact and monitoring affairs. They also performed consultative duties, compiling summary reports on various topics or receiving and forwarding reports from various individuals and social organisations. Most of their written work, however, comprised statistical reports and background information.

The *Ministry of Foreign Affairs* informed the governments of the major powers about the problems faced by the Hungarian minorities; and it was also involved in the production of propaganda for foreign consumption. From the latter half of the 1920s, the Hungarian embassies in Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia established close relations with the Hungarian minority leaders and regularly drafted reports on minority issues. Their communication role was both political and information-based, but they were fully subordinated to Bethlen during his premiership. Later on, Department No. 2 at the Prime Minister's Office won a decisive role in these matters. In addition to preparing internationally for frontier revision, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also contributed to the "Hungarian minorities policy" through its initiatives at bilateral level and in the field of international minority protection. The former was part of its ongoing negotiations with the Little Entente countries. Its efforts in the field of international minority protection included representing minority complaints, supporting the European Minorities Congress, and drafting propaganda in the field of minority law.²⁷

In the spring of 1920, István Bethlen and his confidants from Transylvania – some of whom were initially involved in preparations for the peace treaty and then switched to working in Departments No. 3 and 2 of the Prime Minister's Office – founded the *Bocskay*

²⁷ Ferenc Eiler, *Nemzetközi kisebbségi kongresszusok a két világháború között* [International Minority Congresses in the Interwar Period], *Regio* 3 (1996), pp. 141–168.

Association in support of the “detached areas of Eastern Hungary”. The body was later renamed the *Populist Literary Society* (Népies Irodalmi Társaság – NIT). Then, at a meeting of the Ministerial Council convened on 27 May 1921 to discuss the following year’s budget, the Prime Minister was asked to meet with representatives of organisations concerned with the affairs of Hungarians abroad and to discuss with them opportunities for cooperation. We do not know whether the planned consultation actually took place, but we do know that Bethlen’s proposal for the establishment of a *Centre of the League of Social Associations* was accepted at a cabinet meeting held on 12 August 1921.²⁸ Pál Teleki was appointed as the director of the new body, while Antal Papp was charged with its operational management as Teleki’s deputy. The decree of the Ministerial Council ruled that the Prime Minister was exclusively responsible for decisions concerning the Hungarian minorities abroad. But he was to take such decisions in consultation with the competent ministers. His contact with the social organisations would be exclusively by means of Teleki’s office. The purpose of the Centre was to coordinate social action in Hungary that sought to protect the interests of, and offer support to, the Hungarian minorities abroad. In practice, this meant that the Centre, which functioned during Bethlen’s premiership, administered support for the social institutions of the Hungarian minorities abroad by means of the Rákóczi Association (Czechoslovakia), the St. Gellért Society (Yugoslavia and the Banat region in Romania), and the Populist Literary Society (Romania, excluding the Banat region).²⁹ The Centre also incorporated the Hungarian National Alliance, which drafted propaganda for domestic and foreign consumption. This latter body had taken over the Territorial Defence League in December 1918, and its focus was propaganda for foreign consumption. In the latter half of the 1920s, the Hungarian Foreign Affairs Society, the Institute of Sociography, and the Institute of Political Science were also formally part of the Centre, but Antal Papp, the Centre’s operational manager, played no part in their day-to-day management. Having established the Centre, Bethlen placed

²⁸ Magyar Országos Levéltár [National Hungarian Archives] (MOL), K 27 Mt. minutes, 12. 8. 1921 (pol.)

²⁹ No mention of its operation in the 1930s was found in the fragmentary material: Documents of the Centre of Social Organisations MOL, K 437.

great emphasis on the exclusive right of associations included in the Centre to proceed in non-governmental matters concerning the Hungarian minorities abroad. Nevertheless, these same associations were denied direct contact with the Prime Minister's Office or the ministries, this being the exclusive right of the Centre's secretary (Antal Papp).

Even after the creation of the Centre of the League of Social Associations, the Prime Minister's Office was still responsible for drawing up political decisions and providing specific political support. The associations comprising the League transmitted government support to the Hungarian minorities communities and also undertook unofficial propaganda work abroad. The annual budgetary proposals were drawn up in conjunction with representatives of the Ministry of Finance, the Prime Minister's Office, and the Centre. The only body required to account quarterly for sums spent abroad was Department No. 2 of the Prime Minister's Office.³⁰

Three distinct periods in the functioning of the Centre may be identified. In the first period, 1921–1925, the Centre coordinated the work of the associations in support of the Hungarian minorities abroad and tried to achieve the same in the field of revisionist propaganda. In this latter area, it was rather unsuccessful, owing to the conflicting interests of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Foreign Affairs Society and, most probably, to Teleki's long absence abroad. In the next period, 1925–1932, the Centre was responsible merely for coordinating the assistance given by Hungary through the associations. Revisionist propaganda, meanwhile, became the task of the Revisionist League. The improvement in international relations meant that Hungarian minority politicians were now able to appear on the international stage. Contact with them no longer had to be secretive. Teleki considered his task to be coordination of "expert" preparations for revision (collecting data and drafting plans) in the hope of reopening negotiations between the major powers. For this reason, he supported an enhanced role for the Institute of Political Science. After 1931, the Centre appears to have lost its role of coordinating assistance to the Hungarian minorities abroad.

³⁰ MOL, K 27 (pol.) Mt. minutes 12. 8. 1921. On exemption from the audit, see Antal Papp's letter to Tibor Pataky of 19. 8. 1925. MOL, K 437 – 10 – 1928 – f. 25.

Of the various social associations subordinated to the Centre and maintaining contact with the Hungarian minorities abroad, the most active was the *Populist Literary Society*, which was headed by Benedek Jancsó until 1931. It had three main tasks. First, it took part in forwarding support to Transylvania and in appraising claims. Second, it collected the press material of the Political Department of the Populist Literary Society and carried out analyses of the situation of the Hungarian minority in Romania. Third, it ran a hall of residence for Transylvanian students studying in Hungary and, in the 1930s, organised scholarships and further training courses for Hungarian intellectuals from Transylvania.³¹

In 1923–1924, István Bethlen recognised the poor quality of revisionist propaganda and decided to subordinate government-funded propaganda for foreign consumption to the Centre of the League of Social Associations (under the supervision of Pál Teleki). In order to establish a firm propaganda base, systematic data collection was begun at the *Institute of Political Science*, a body established for this very purpose in 1926. The Institute operated until 1940. (From 1941, as a part of the Pál Teleki Academic Institute, it collected background material to be used in preparing for a peace settlement after the Second World War.) The Institute – which was supervised by Teleki but managed by the geographer András Rónai – analysed statistical data for the neighbouring countries as well as economic, political, legal and minority affairs in those countries. The history of the Institute in the pre-1940 period may be divided into three stages. It was established between 1924 and 1928 with the inclusion and classification of material collected by the Institute of Sociography (est. 1924) and by the associations subordinated to the Centre of the League of Social Associations. From 1928–1936, the Institute's staff, which included 8–10 university graduates and 16–20 assistants, processed press articles and other written material published in the neighbouring countries, classifying such material by subject-matter. The data archives were accessible only to the government and major analyses were not even published by staff members. This all changed in 1936–1938, when a campaign to inform international experts was

³¹ For a more detailed description of the NIT, see Nándor Bárdi, "Action Osten" Die Unterstützung der ungarischen Institutionen in Rumanien durch das Mutterland Ungarn in den 1920er Jahren, in: *Ungarn-Jahrbuch*, 1997. München 1998, pp. 287–337.

set in motion. It was at the Institute that Hungary's arguments at the time of the First Vienna Award in 1938 and the Second Vienna Award in 1940 were drafted. Subsequently, the Institute played an important role in setting up the public administrative apparatus in the reannexed territories.³²

In 1927, in order to coordinate the revisionist propaganda that followed the publication of Lord Rothermere's "Justice for Hungary" article, various social and business organisations came together to establish, with the support of the Hungarian government, the *Revisionist League*. The popular writer Ferenc Herczeg was elected to head the new body. By 1940, 270 volumes had been published by the League – in the major foreign languages and in Hungarian. A periodical entitled Magyar Külpolitika [Hungarian Foreign Policy] was published from 1928 and a newsletter (*Dunai Hírek* [Danubian News]) was published in four languages from 1933. From the autumn of 1934, the English-language newsletter was upgraded and became a proper periodical (*Danubian Review*). The other propaganda arena comprised the League's offices abroad, which tried to persuade public opinion and the media in foreign countries of the benefits of frontier revision. Such offices were opened in London, Paris, Milan, Amsterdam, Geneva, Berlin, Warsaw and Washington. The propaganda focussed on the grievances of the Hungarian minorities, the injustices of Trianon, and the necessity of Hungarian dominance in light of the economic, geographical and historical unity of the region.³³

4.4. In conclusion, I summarise the arguments employed by the institutions promoting frontier revision and the "Hungarian minorities policy" of Hungarian governments. Most of these arguments were first voiced during the peace negotiations after the First World War, but those relating to the minorities represented new elements.

The four main groups of arguments employed in Hungarian revisionist propaganda may be summarised indicatively as follows. The first group included arguments relating to the geographical and economic unity of the Carpathian basin – the cited evidence being

³² Albin Márffy, A Magyar Statisztikai Társaság Államtudományi Intézete [Institute of Political Science of the Hungarian Statistical Society], in: Károly Mártonffy (ed.), *Közigazgatásunk nemzetközi kapcsolata*, Budapest 1941, pp. 586–591; András Rónai, *Térképezett történelem* [Mapped History], Budapest 1989, p. 355.

³³ Miklós Zeidler, A Magyar Revíziós Liga [The Hungarian Revisionist League], *Századok* 2 (1997), pp. 303–352.

historical trends over several centuries (the relationship between highland and lowland areas, as well as Budapest's coordinating role within the Carpathian basin) and the economic anomalies since 1918. The second group of arguments included statements appealing to the historical virtues of Hungarian statehood and the natural cultural ascendancy of Hungarians. The third group took as their starting-point the geopolitical need for power counterbalances between Germany and Russia, that is, for strong and stable countries such as Poland and Hungary (with the latter dominating the Carpathian basin). The point of departure of the fourth cluster of arguments was that the new states had failed to manage the minority issue properly since 1918. It was claimed that instability had increased and that inter-ethnic relations were far worse than they had been before 1918 under the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Linked with this last argument was Hungary's Hungarian minorities policy and the mutually reinforcing arguments of the Hungarian minority elites. In the main, such arguments were directed at the implementation of the provisions of the minority protection treaty and then, in the second half of the 1930s, at criticism of the League of Nations' system for minority complaints. The weaknesses cited included language use problems in Vojvodina (Yugoslavia), the absence of Szekler cultural autonomy as prescribed by the relevant minority treaty (Romania), and the failure to implement administrative autonomy in the Sub-Carpathian region despite many promises by the government in Prague (Czechoslovakia).³⁴

The second means of argument – used above all in the 1920s – focussed upon conflicts between the power centres of the new nation-states and the various regions within those states. The Hungarian tactic was to counter national fault lines with regional dissatisfaction. In Romania, for instance, the aim was to construct some kind of Transylvanian political identity, which could be used to halt penetration of the province by Bucharest's liberal economic and political elite.³⁵ Slogans similar to the one used in Transylvania – i.e. "Transylvania belongs to Transylvanians" – were created for all the

³⁴ A regular forum for discussion and writing between 1922 and 1942 was the periodical *Magyar Kisebbség* [Hungarian Minority], whose different versions were *Glasul Minorităților*, *Die Stimme der Minderheiten*, and *La Voix des Minorités*.

³⁵ Cf. Zsombor Szász, *The Minorities in Rumanian Transsylvania*, London 1927, p. 414.

other regions in the Carpathian basin. In eastern Czechoslovakia, there was criticism of Czech economic and administrative dominance and support for the Slovak national movement and the rights of the "indigenous" populations. In Yugoslavia, the tactic was to inflate regional conflicts between Vojvodina and Belgrade or Zagreb and Belgrade, while carefully positioning the interests of Hungary and the Hungarian minority.

The third group of arguments included public discourses demanding evidence for the fulfilment of pledges made prior to 1918 or on the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. First, the new national and political elites were asked to demonstrate how/whether they had implemented the national demands made by the former national movements. Second, the political goals manifested in 1918 were compared and contrasted with the circumstances on the ground. Third, the liberal nationalities policy of Hungary in the pre-1918 period was compared and contrasted with the policy towards the Hungarian minorities of the successor states.³⁶

³⁶ A high-quality comparison appeared in a work compiled in preparation for the peace negotiations after the Second World War: Sándor Bíró, *The nationalities problem in Transylvania 1867-1940: a social history of the Romanian minority under Hungarian rule, 1867-1918 and the Hungarian minority under Romanian rule, 1918-1944*, New York 1992.

Dagmar Hájková

T. G. Masaryk and his Stances on Minority Issues after the Establishment of Czechoslovakia

The issue of minorities came to be an important element in Masaryk's wartime propaganda, as he devoted a great deal of energy to making it clear that small European nations have a right to their own independent states and that such new countries would be viable. He saw the future as a world federation based on democratic relations between states and nations, and as the reorganization of Europe, not its reconquest. In his view, history confirmed that people aspire towards unity, not uniformity.¹ He saw the overall trend in modern political development leading towards nation states, while realizing that in ethnically complex Central Europe this arrangement was not actually feasible.²

Masaryk promoted the right of the Czechs and Slovaks to an independent nation state (rejecting local autonomy or a federation within

¹ Tomáš G. Masaryk, *Válka a revoluce. I. Články – memoranda – přednášky – rozhovory 1914–1916* [War and Revolution. I. Articles, memoranda, lectures, interviews 1914–1916], Karel Pichlík (ed.), Prague 2005, pp. 116–128. Further expansion in Tomáš G. Masaryk, *Nová Evropa* [New Europe], Prague 1920. His ideas appear topical at a time when linguistic and cultural diversity are under review in Europe and the motto of the European Union is “United in Diversity”. Cf. Peter A. Kraus, *A Union of Diversity. Language, Identity and Polity Building in Europe*, Cambridge 2008.

² Masaryk, *Válka a revoluce. I.*, pp. 60–71.

Austro-Hungary); but he had to point out that this state, like the doomed Habsburg empire, would also have its minorities. *“Although we defend the national principle, we wish to retain our minorities. It may appear paradoxical but it is actually because of the national principle that we wish to retain them... The issue of national minorities is of basic importance not only in Bohemia, but in almost every other country, for almost every state is ethnically mixed... Even if the new Europe cannot be recreated on a strictly ethnic basis, the national rights of minorities must be secured. That will be the case in Bohemia. The Czechs have always called for equal, not higher, rights. In view of its central position it will be in the interests of Bohemia to guarantee full rights to the Germans and its two smaller minorities. Common sense demands it. It would not go against the spirit of this proposal if minority rights were guaranteed by an international tribunal.”*³ Masaryk desired a state for the Czechs and Slovaks that would materialize their yearning for national self-determination, and he believed it would be for the best if this national state had as few minorities as possible. At that time he was even willing to consider an alteration to the borders in favour of German Austria to reduce the German population by about a million. He wrote to Edvard Beneš on this subject in 1916: *“I am not a nationalist. I look at the Slavonic and European whole – if the whole gains then I can tolerate some disadvantages for the parts”*.⁴ At the same time he believed that *“the correct standard for redivision along national lines in Europe consists in the correct application of the majority principle”* and he often stressed that it was more just for three million Germans to be under the rule of nine million Czechs than the other way round.⁵ He saw Austria-Hungary as a state in which minorities – the Germans and Hungarians – oppressed the majority. He anticipated that even though there would be minorities in the new states, there would be fewer of them and the newly created European arrangements would be *“much more democratic, based on a moderate national principle.”*⁶ Moreover, he was

³ Tomáš G. Masaryk, *Válka a revoluce. II. Články – memoranda – přednášky – rozhovory 1917* [War and Revolution. II. Articles, memoranda, lectures, interviews 1917], Karel Pichlík (ed.), Prague 2008, p. 49.

⁴ Dagmar Hájková, Ivan Šedivý (eds.), *Korespondence T. G. Masaryk – Edvard Beneš* [T. G. Masaryk – Edvard Beneš – Correspondence], Prague 2004, p. 156. T. G. Masaryk to E. Beneš, 12. 9. 1916.

⁵ Masaryk, *Válka a revoluce II.*, p. 50. Masaryk sometimes mentioned a figure of 9 million, sometimes 10 million Czechs, sometimes he spoke of Czechs and Slovaks, sometimes Czechoslovaks.

convinced that the national principle required equality of national rights, that the national individuality of small nations had to be recognized at the same level as the individuality of large nations⁷ and that a permanent settlement could not be considered without the regulation of national relations.⁸ He summarized his European reconstruction programme, which he presented during the war, in *New Europe*. There are some differences between the English edition published in late 1918 and the Czech edition published in 1920, due to their timing and their anticipated readership. His opinions on the German and Hungarian minorities are more liberal in the English version. To illustrate anti-Slovak sentiment, the Czech version quotes the Hungarian phrase “Tót nem ember – a Slovak is not a human being”, which is missing in the English version. As a practical resolution to the minorities issue, Masaryk chose a more moderate formulation. The English version states that the Congress (i.e. the peace conference) would pass an internationally guaranteed law ensuring cultural and administrative self-government for the national minorities. In the Czech version, “self-government” is replaced by “národní rovnoprávnost”, i.e. “equality of national rights”. Masaryk was also more careful in 1920 with regard to the alteration of state boundaries. He deleted the sentence “*Ethnographic alterations of state boundaries might be made from time to time in line with the development of national awareness and experience*” and repeated that there would be no purely national states, but that the economic development of all territories, improvements in communications and progress in administration would duly allow for the settlement of minority issues.⁹ A comparison of the two editions shows that Masaryk, who was working in the context of war propaganda at the time of the English version, did not so much significantly change his views as present them more circumspectly.

⁶ Masaryk, *Válka a revoluce II*, p. 15.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

⁸ *Korespondence T. G. Masaryk – Edvard Beneš*, p. 156. T. G. Masaryk to E. Beneš, 12. 9. 1916.

⁹ Both editions, including the English manuscript of *Nová Evropa* were compared by Jiří Kovtun. Cf. Jiří Kovtun, *Knihy s osudem: Masarykova Nová Evropa. Masarykův sborník IX* [Fateful Book: Masaryk's New Europe. Masaryk Anthology IX], 1993–1995, Prague 1997, pp. 106–107.

In autumn 1918 Masaryk chaired meetings of the Central European Democratic Union¹⁰ in Washington and Philadelphia, which can be seen as a vain attempt on the part of the small European nations to settle the arrangements in Central Europe on the premises indicated above. Masaryk himself saw there was no real likelihood that the representatives of European nations aspiring towards independence would agree on any resolution. The only thing he actually wanted of them was for them not to squabble and to present a uniform approach at the future peace conference, but not even this was possible. On 26 October 1918 Masaryk summarized the principal points of discussions: the principle on which the states were to be based was national with certain exceptions, compulsory assimilation was condemned, as were expulsions, abuse of plebiscites, distorted statistics and unreliable censuses, while equal rights and full liberties were advocated for minorities. He knew that there would be no peace in Europe without an endeavour to resolve relations with the nationalities, but at the same time he did not believe that this solution would inevitably be acceptable to everybody.

The Czechoslovak state that rose from the ruins of Austria-Hungary was built on the principles of Czech historical state rights and natural law. It was the national state of the Czechs and the Slovaks (Masaryk also used the term “majority nation”), which provided adequate rights to members of other ethnic groups on an individual basis. As soon as he arrived in his homeland, Masaryk presented his first address to parliament, summarizing his previous activities and providing a reminder of the minorities issue: *“Nobody could hold it against us for being cautious after so many bitter experiences, but I assure you that the minorities in our state will enjoy full national rights and equality of civil rights... By building up truly democratic self-government we have an appropriate means for settling the nationalities issue. Direct division is not possible due to the special broad population mix, and the problem is not only national, but also to a large extent social.”*¹¹ Referring to the Hungarian minority, he emphasized that they would enjoy all civil

¹⁰ In greatest detail Luboš Švec, Herbert Adolphus Miller, psychóza útisku a středoevropská otázka [Herbert Adolphus Miller, Psychosis of Oppression and the Central European Question], *Slovanský přehled* 93, 2007, pp. 289–320.

¹¹ T. G. Masaryk, *Cesta demokracie I. Projevy – články – rozhovory 1918–1920* [Road to Democracy I. Speeches, articles, interviews 1918–1920], Vojtěch Fejlek, Richard Vašek (eds.), Prague 2003, p. 30.

rights. In March parliament responded broadly to the presidential address: *"In the Czechoslovak state created in this manner there will be other nationalities, but only as fragments and minorities; their own national state, created on the basis of the right to self-determination, will be elsewhere, outside the Czechoslovak state. The language and cultural life of these minorities will be fully safeguarded; their equal rights and civil freedoms in public life will also be ensured, for the Czechoslovak Republic as a whole will be a state that is equitable both in national and civil terms, as has already been shown in particular by its law on elections to municipalities with representation of minorities – with the Czechoslovak nation and language in the leading position. It was surely the Czech nation which in the past created the Czech state on this territory; it was the Czech nation which nurtured the idea of its revival and it is also the Czech nation which hand in hand with the old Slovak branch has again restored its state".*¹²

He knew how difficult it was to apply the principle of national self-determination; in mixed areas one claim to self-determination would oppose another. The Germans' demand for self-determination, entailing inclusion within Germany, was opposed by the Czech minorities along the border and the Czech minority in Vienna. Masaryk realized how problematic conflicts could be with dissatisfied minorities. After all, he himself had seen in practice just how the dissatisfactions of minorities were exploited in wartime propaganda and how they had led to the reconstruction of Europe. He wanted the new state to be stable if possible from this standpoint: this was not an easy task, because those who were dissatisfied in the new state included not only the considerable minorities of Germans and Hungarians, but also paradoxically members of the majority Czechoslovak nation. Many Slovaks felt themselves to be a minority oppressed by the Czechs, while the Czechs who lived along the borders as a minority, still feeling threatened by the Germans, were also dissatisfied. In general, however, the Czechs were ultimately satisfied in their aspirations for an independent state; they felt that they were finally winning their place in the sun and many presumed they had a right to special status within the state. So Masaryk despaired over the way things were within the new state: *"I keep finding that our people (and government) are unable to fully comprehend that we are now independent, that we are greater and bigger –*

¹² Draft parliamentary answer to Masaryk's address, March 1919,
http://www.psp.cz/eknih/1918ns/ps/tisky/t0701_03.htm

*they are still stuck in the politics we had under Austria: they wait for commands, they fear making the final decision, they avoid responsibility and they have no initiative. We see the effects here of hundreds of years of servitude and what it has bred into us. What is needed is moral education... in a nutshell, we have the politics of Gotham and Gotham-style politicking here... indeed, our nationalists cannot even get over the old national struggle and its traditions".*¹³ Nothing remained for him but by dint of his personality to convince all those who were dissatisfied that the new state would be a good home for them and to persuade those abroad of this too. So he actually kept up the propaganda at which he had been so proficient during wartime, albeit in a slightly different style. Uncompromisingly, he told members of the minorities that the new circumstances were unalterable and that they had to come to terms with them. In a 1923 speech to the National Assembly and the government on the anniversary of the establishment of Czechoslovakia he again pointed out: *"Our state will naturally have a national character; this ensues from the democratic majority principle. However, because we also have other nationalities, it must be our constant endeavour to ensure that all citizens are fully satisfied in their rights and justified demands".*¹⁴

Masaryk may well have insisted on the principle of the "liberation" of nations, based on the preservation of the historical borders of the Kingdom of Bohemia, but the viability of the state was a more pressing concern for him than any meticulous adherence to principles, whether national or historical. The principle of national self-determination was not the highest objective for him, as *"nationality must also be controlled by a plan with political and moral dimensions: democratic inside and out... for it is an empty slogan if it applies across the board"*.¹⁵ He did not see the state as a linguistic unit, but as an economic unit, uniting citizens through their interests.¹⁶ For the presen-

¹³ Jan Bilek, Helena Kokešová, Vlasta Quagliatová, Lucie Swierczeková (eds.), *Korespondence T. G. Masaryk – Karel Kramář* [T. G. Masaryk – Karel Kramář – Correspondence], Prague 2005, p. 343. T. G. Masaryk to K. Kramář, 24. 3. 1919.

¹⁴ T. G. Masaryk, *Cesta demokracie II. Projevy – články – rozhovory 1921–1923* [Road to Democracy II. Speeches, articles, interviews 1921–1923], Richard Vašek, Vojtěch Fejlek (eds.), Prague 2007, p. 499.

¹⁵ Zdeněk Šolle (ed.), *Masaryk a Beneš ve svých dopisech z doby pařížských mírových jednání v roce 1919 II.* [Masaryk and Beneš in their letters during the Paris Peace Negotiations in 1919], Prague 1994, p. 166.

¹⁶ T. G. Masaryk, *Cesta demokracie IV. Projevy – články – rozhovory 1929–1937* [Road to Democracy IV. Speeches, articles, interviews 1929–1937], Vojtěch Fejlek (ed.), Prague 1997, p. 288.

tation of arguments at the negotiations over territories at the peace conference, he recommended Beneš to provide not only ethnographic, but also economic arguments, basing this on the example of Bratislava (*"there are thousands of Slovaks there, the city lives for the Slovak hinterland, it is German and not Hungarian, and so the Hungarians do not have greater national rights – we need the Danube"*). However, he knew the limits of these demands and warned against excessive claims: *"Kramář and the Slovaks are overdoing the demands for Hungarian territory. Be careful!"*¹⁷

In late January 1919 Beneš, who was still at the Paris Peace Conference, received a message: *"The President does not want much territory populated by Hungarians"*.¹⁸ Masaryk was occupied for a long time with the issue of the size of the Hungarian minority. This issue¹⁹ tied in with the border question, with which Masaryk was not satisfied. He wanted the border to run as much as possible along ethnographic lines, so that the Hungarian territory could not form an administrative unit and so that Czechoslovakia would steer clear of Hungarian members of parliament. *"If it cannot be done immediately then we will do it later..."* he wrote to Beneš,²⁰ who agreed with Masaryk that Czechoslovakia should have as few Hungarians as possible.²¹ In April 1919 Masaryk explained his idea of territorial demands to General Smuts: *"If the Entente gave us the Danube as far as the Ipoly, I would start negotiations with the Hungarians on giving up extra Hungarian territory... so that we have as few Hungarians as possible. Žitný Island and the Komárno area will surely have to go"*.²² He saw border adjustments primarily as an issue of railway lines (he wanted the Hungarians to take a share in financing a through-line). It was in this spirit that he wrote to Kramář: *"Get rid of as many Hungarians as possible! That is why I gave Beneš a plan too"*.²³ In a 1919 interview with Hungarian journalist Leo Margitai, Masaryk admitted that the

¹⁷ Masaryk a Beneš ve svých dopisech, p. 148. T. G. Masaryk to E. Beneš, 5. 1. 1919.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 166. Message from late January 1919.

¹⁹ During the war he even considered a transfer: "The Hungarian minority can even move out, since the Hungarians did not hesitate to force the Slovak population in Srém to move into northern Croatian and even Hungarian areas." Masaryk, *Válka a revoluce. I.*, p. 190.

²⁰ Masaryk a Beneš ve svých dopisech, p. 193. T. G. Masaryk to E. Beneš, 12. 3. 1919.

²¹ Ibid., p. 196. E. Beneš to T. G. Masaryk, 21. 3. 1919.

²² Ibid., pp. 214–15. T. G. Masaryk to E. Beneš, 7. 4. 1919.

²³ *Korespondence T. G. Masaryk – Karel Kramář*, p. 340. T. G. Masaryk to K. Kramář, 18. 3. 1919.

protection of minorities in the state system of the time was not perfect, that a boundary can indeed be set mechanically, but the most important thing was to secure the rights of the minorities. *"As far as that is concerned, you can be satisfied; the Hungarians in Slovakia can enjoy complete equality of rights and will not be exposed to Czechization or Slovakization"*.²⁴ Masaryk, who continued to regard border changes sympathetically, admitted that he was willing to consider radically ethnographic state borders throughout Europe, but immediately added that the linguistic, economic and cultural circumstances were so complex that any systematic implementation was out of the question.²⁵ Masaryk saw the most appropriate minority law as being a general one that would rule out any state within the state. He advocated equality of rights and opposed compulsory assimilation. He believed that a general minorities law could be drawn up in this spirit for all states and for the League of Nations.²⁶ Masaryk gave a number of interviews in which he explained that what was of basic importance in Czechoslovakia was citizenship and that the government did not make any difference between Czechs and Slovaks themselves and Czechoslovaks *"of German blood."* *"All citizens of the Republic, whether Slavs, Germans or Hungarians, have the same rights and the same obligations. Every minority, even the very smallest, will have representation in the municipalities and in parliament"*.²⁷ However, it remains debatable whether or not a difference was to be made between one's own flesh and blood Czechoslovaks and other citizens.

Masaryk summarized his opinions on the resolution of the minority issue in his address on the first anniversary of the establishment of the Republic: *"Our national policy faithfully recognizes the national and linguistic rights of the other nations in our republic. We created the state and so it is entirely natural that it should have its own special character with regard to the essence and the very concept of an independent state. But there will be no compulsory assimilation in our republic. I hope that the League of Nations will contribute to the stabilization of friendly interstate and international relations; in any case it must be the aim of our policy to bolster national tolerance – and not only tolerance – in our republic so the*

²⁴ Masaryk, *Cesta demokracie I.*, pp. 70–71.

²⁵ Masaryk, *Cesta demokracie II.*, p. 121.

²⁶ *Masaryk a Beneš ve svých dopisech*, p. 254. T. G. Masaryk to E. Beneš, 12. 5. 1919.

²⁷ Masaryk, *Cesta demokracie I.*, p. 159.

national minorities will be able to assert their ethnicity quite undisturbed. National minorities could and should have the mission of contributing to the rapprochement of nations and to this desirable internationality".²⁸

From spring 1919 to winter 1920 Masaryk endeavoured to exert an influence on discussions over the Language Act (which was eventually passed together with the Czechoslovak constitution on 29 February 1920). He was aware of the sensitivity of the language question – but for him it primarily meant the language of the minorities and the language used by the so-called majority Czechoslovak nation, i.e. for him personally Czech and Slovak were not the issue. Nevertheless on 7 October 1918 he warned Beneš: *"Watch out they don't cry out for Slovak... but it is not a language issue! Let them write how and if they want. Likewise don't provoke the Germans! Don't designate Czech as the state language (because of the Slovaks too, and perhaps even the Ruthenians), that is obvious. Codify the minority rights. Uncompromisingly against the Germans but let them have their own..."*²⁹ He consulted from afar over the Language Act issue not only with his close aide Beneš, but also with another Czechoslovak representative at the Peace Conference – Karel Kramář. He did not want to admit to national disputes in parliament and he wanted to be accommodating towards the minorities, particularly the Germans, and to use their energies positively for the construction of the state. Kramář answered Masaryk: *"I completely agree with you that we should promulgate a nationalities law ourselves without negotiating with the Germans, without wrangling with them, as a thing that we are doing ourselves because we want to be fair. Of course, there is not the slightest doubt that they will only be called to the National Assembly after peace has been signed and they will definitely be in with us"*.³⁰ In April he sent him a draft Language Act and pointed out: *"There is nothing in there about the Poles or the Hungarians and there won't be until we see how many of them we will have. We will deal with them accordingly"*.³¹ In other respects Kramář's opinion was clear: *"No territorial autonomy – just full civil rights, and the fulfilment of the language and educational demands*

²⁸ Ibid., p. 178.

²⁹ *Korespondence T. G. Masaryk – Edvard Beneš*, pp. 305–306. T. G. Masaryk to E. Beneš, 7. 11. 1918.

³⁰ *Korespondence T. G. Masaryk – Karel Kramář*, p. 345. K. Kramář to T. G. Masaryk, 25. 3. 1919.

³¹ Ibid., p. 351. K. Kramář to T. G. Masaryk, 22. 4. 1919.

*and rights of the other nationalities – but a Czech state.*³² But Masaryk did not agree with Kramář here and so he replied in May that his own proposed Language Act went further than Kramář's and that he wanted to accommodate the Germans to ensure that language disputes did not erupt and *"so that we can devote ourselves in relative peace to constructive work and in particular to social reform, winning over the Germans for this work... If we have disputes with the Germans, we will also face the Hungarians, Poles and perhaps even the Ruthenians."*³³

Practically throughout the year Masaryk worked on his notes on the Language Act, which he classified as highly confidential. The second complete edition was ready on 30 January 1920. There was a huge dispute in parliament over the term language and whether the designation "official" or "state" was to be used. Masaryk insisted on the term "official"; in December 1919 he noted "the official language of the republic is Czechoslovak" and he went so far as to describe Czech and Slovak as dialects.³⁴ On 12 January 1920 he reacted, again in a personal note, to the suggestion that Czech should be a compulsory language at all German secondary schools. He believed this provision did not belong in primary legislation, but in a special decree.³⁵ In his notes on the Language Act he was against the codification of the term "state language." *"In a democracy and a republic that recognizes the equality of all citizens before the law, it is a matter of equitable and impeccable administration: practical need, the speed of bureaucracy and inexpensiveness are the main requirements. Hence democracy places the greatest emphasis on the practical need for an official language, while a 'state language' will not be promoted, as was the case in Austria... in a democratic state with substantial minorities, all languages are state languages".* However, he considered one of the languages to be *prima inter pares*, for the sake of the unity of central administration – and that was to be Czech and Slovak. However Masaryk opposed assimilation, in this case Czechization. Quite the reverse, he wanted to win over the national minorities to collaborate in the interests of the state. He realized that the language issue was of international

³² Ibid., p. 363. K. Kramář to T. G. Masaryk, 6. 5. 1919.

³³ Ibid., p. 367. T. G. Masaryk to K. Kramář, 12. 5. 1919.

³⁴ T. G. Masaryk Institute Archive administered by the Masaryk Institute and Archive of the ASCR (TGMIA), f. TGM R – Institute, 390. Masaryk's notes on the Language Act, 23. 12. 1919.

³⁵ Ibid., 12. 1. 1920.

importance and he considered the most important thing to be winning over the Germans – and then the other minorities would be won over. *“Of course, we recognize the nationalities principle, but as a result we have to recognize it for other nations too... we gain most nationally with a European policy”*.³⁶

In discussions over whether or not to use the term “state” or “official”, Kramář defended “state”. In this he concurred with neither Masaryk nor Beneš. In March 1920 Masaryk sent him the following comment on this terminological question, which was ultimately resolved in the Act by a compromise:³⁷ *“The original government proposal was – ‘state’... I drew attention to the minorities agreement – that ‘official’ should be used because that is how you formulated it and signed it. All the more so because it would be just a matter of terminology and we would have a suitable argument against the possible opposition of the Germans... Otherwise even in public the dispute over this terminology had no response; a certain bitterness arose as the dispute became a more-patriotic-than-thou game”*.³⁸ Masaryk understood the language issue pragmatically and said it was not a political matter for him, but a practical administrative matter.³⁹ However, his own administrative apparatus – the Office of the President of the Republic – basically suffered a great lack of minority staff throughout the First Republic. The parity principle went practically unimplemented at his office and Czech staff, who naturally had an excellent command of German, predominated (the only German staff member in an important position was departmental counsellor Josef Koschin). Translations of Hungarian submissions were outsourced. The minority issue was dealt with for the most part by Emil Sobota, an administrative department staff member.

A key issue for Masaryk was that of relations between the Czechs and the Germans. He considered the Germans to be an important partner; he endeavoured to treat the Hungarians with sympathy, but strictly demanded their loyalty to the new state. In September 1921 the President visited Subcarpathian Ukraine and replied as follows to

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ The Language Act (No. 122/1920, passed on the same day as the Constitution) made the Czechoslovak language the official (state) language.

³⁸ *Korespondence T. G. Masaryk – Karel Kramář*, p. 424. T. G. Masaryk to K. Kramář, 8. 3. 1920.

³⁹ Masaryk, *Cesta demokracie I.*, p. 205.

a deputation from the Hungarian political parties that had submitted a memorandum to him: *"In human terms, I understand that it is not easy for you to fit in with the new situation. I do not wish to bring up re-criminations over the recent past. The state of things is definitive. I anticipate that you will stand on the firm ground of the republic in your own interest. Then you will judge the internal politics of the government objectively and fairly"*.⁴⁰ On 4 March 1922 Masaryk gave an interview for the *Jövő daily*, in which he described the relationship with Hungary as unsatisfactory, seeing the way out as acceptance of the peace accords by Hungary. He pointed out that minorities were protected by the peace accords and that the Czechs did not wish to assimilate anyone.⁴¹ That same year in an interview for *Magyar Hírlap* he declared: *"We expect social loyalty from the minorities. They can remain in opposition just so long as we can negotiate with them in peace... They can put their complaints into print, or bring them up in parliament and the like. After all, we do live in a democratic state."*⁴² In his public appearances he was accommodating and he even tried to speak Hungarian; in August 1923 he commented to his son Jan Masaryk: *"You really should take up Hungarian. Beneš is learning it too."*⁴³

Masaryk had a long career behind him as a university professor, a political orator and a wartime propagandist. So he was highly aware of how important the authority of the president was in a new state and how the personality of a strong, unifying president could help to resolve minority issues. He was aware of his strong personal status and he believed himself able to defend and promote his views. Ultimately he was unable to implement all of his views and demands from the war, because he had to adapt to the new political conditions. Although he had to comment in a more circumspect manner than during his wartime speeches, he always endeavoured – at the most varied levels – to promote his ideas and views.

Masaryk grew up in an environment where multilingualism and multiculturalism were natural. So it is paradoxical at first sight that he considered the best resolution of the minorities issue to be a purely national state. *"Naturally, purely national states would be the best, but*

⁴⁰ Masaryk, *Cesta demokracie II.*, p. 131.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 253–254.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 358.

⁴³ TGMIA, f. TGM – KOR-III, 82. T. G. Masaryk to J. Masaryk, 15. 8. 1923.

these are not feasible. So under the given circumstances we should tentatively demand and provide protection for minorities."⁴⁴ It might be thought that he looked at the advantages of a purely national state primarily from a practical standpoint – e.g. for communications and administration. His objective was a state that was united both politically and administratively. He saw Czechoslovakia as a national state, considering the Czechs and the Slovaks to be a single nation and the idea of the Slovaks as a separate nation to be an ethnic fiction.⁴⁵ He believed it necessary to gain the loyalty of the minorities towards the new state and he saw the means to accomplish this primarily in the resolution of social issues and the provision of adequate rights with regard to education and culture. He wanted "*justice and humanity to be the guidelines for all official dealings*"⁴⁶ and he saw the resolution of the minority issue as a difficult-to-handle, long-term affair that must always be specially addressed. He presumed that the war had to a considerable extent resolved national aspirations in Europe and that the cultural development of national minorities would be safeguarded everywhere. However, he did not see the solution in replacing national sentiment with ideas of internationality, he hoped that the "*individual national programmes would become more positive and that love for one's own nation would not be clouded by antagonism or even hatred and contempt for other nations. Nationalism will remain, but national resentment will not.*"⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Masaryk, *Cesta demokracie II.*, p. 408.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 285.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 298.

Zbyněk A. B. Zeman

Edvard Beneš's foreign policy and the minorities

Before I address the subject itself, I hope that you will allow me to say something about the historical background in which the architects of the Czechoslovak state, Thomas Masaryk and Edvard Beneš, set about their task.

In the second half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries, international politics were marked by an uncommon degree of imitation; it was as if politicians suddenly discovered the witticism that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery. (It was made later by Oscar Wilde. Before about the middle of the 19th century, intellectual achievement, including, say, accomplishments in literature or innovations in industry, crossed all national or state dividing lines; the remarkable thing about the situation under review was that it was confined to the political sphere.) Politicians in Europe set out to follow the fashion designed by the two great nation states, France and England, the richest and most culturally advanced and militarily powerful political units in Europe. The Italians and Germans decided to follow the model in the second half of the 19th century; they thus started the second wave of state building in the Balkans, before the nations of the Habsburg and the Romanov empires followed suit.

In the case of England and France, it had been the political power of the state that had helped to form the nation. It was a long-term

process, whereas the Germans and the Italians used nations to create their states. Military elites in the Balkans and intellectuals in central and eastern Europe took part in this exercise in political imitation; starting from Prague, Masaryk and Beneš worked on a late, fourth wave of nation state formation. They were assisted by military and political developments in the First World War, as much as by the doctrine of national self-determination announced by President Wilson.

The attempt to build nation states on the territory of the former Habsburg empire was often criticized on the grounds of the ethnic complexity of the region; that it was unsuitable for the political application of the doctrine of national self-determination. There existed a further difficulty, and it concerned the uneven definition of national identity among the nations which historians sometimes call stateless; i. e. ethnic groups under imperial rule. Czechoslovakia, as well as Poland and the South Slav kingdom, came into existence in a region of more or less fluid ethnicity. This was reflected in the comparatively high level of national self-awareness of, say, the Serbs or the Czechs on the one hand and, on the other, in the search for self-definition of the Slovaks or, even more so, of the Ruthenes.

The "New Europe", as Masaryk and Beneš conceived it in exile during the First World War, was to bring national self-determination and democracy in place of imperial rule; central Europe was to be a more peaceful and just place. It was a matter about which Masaryk felt strongly; as early as 12 September 1916 he wrote to Beneš that *"...things will be better than they used to be: we have won the attention of Europe, and more; Austria and Hungary will be weakened, therefore we shall all be free. And if we were destined to gain full independence gradually, we will be able, after the war, to prepare ourselves better for another war. It is impossible to talk of lasting peace without a reform of the national situation."*¹ The nationality principle became the underlying assumption of the peace settlement, and it was hoped that it would have a beneficial effect on the affairs of Europe. An American historian argued, many years later, in a similar, though less optimistic, vein as Masaryk had done in 1916, that *"the interwar territorial settlements, for all their weaknesses, freed three times as many people from nationally alien rule as they subjected to such rule."*²

¹ Dagmar Hájková, Ivan Šedivý (eds.), *Korespondence T. G. Masaryk – Edvard Beneš 1914–1918*, Praha 2004, document 111, p. 156.

² Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars*, Seattle and London 1974, p. 4.

The Czechs and the Slovaks achieved an independent state in 1918, which was not yet a nation state. Its minorities amounted to some 35% of the total population, with the dominant nation proclaimed by the constitution – that is the Czechoslovak nation – which was far from firmly established. The peace treaties included two provisions which were innovative and relevant to the question of minorities. One of them concerned the establishment of the League of Nations, which was to regulate the life of the international community; the other directly proposed the protection of minorities. The two issues occupied much of the working time of Edvard Beneš and he, in turn, regarded them as solid guarantees of the legitimacy and existence of the new Czechoslovak state.

The Covenant of the League of Nations, as a part of the peace treaties, embodied the principle of collective security and arbitration of international disputes, reduction of armaments and open diplomacy. The Minorities Protection Treaty was published on 28 June 1919, and its implementation was handed over to the minorities commission of the League of Nations. The commission employed at most eleven officers at any given time, and its remit were the minorities of all the successor states, including Czechoslovakia. It was a formidable task indeed. The Minorities Protection Treaty itself was far from popular with many politicians of the successor states. The Poles in particular regarded it as an unnecessary interference with the sovereignty of their newly independent state, and argued that the governments of the victorious Great Powers came under no such restraints. The resentment of the Poles finally resulted in their refusal, on 13 September 1934, to cooperate with any of the international agencies that monitored the treaty, until such time as its provisions were generally accepted.

The Czechoslovak representatives at the peace conference signed the minorities treaty more readily on 10 September 1919; its acceptance nevertheless presented the government in Prague with difficulties. Masaryk's war-time commitment to American Ruthenians that Subcarpathian Ruthenia, on becoming a part of the Czechoslovak Republic, would enjoy far-reaching autonomy was reinforced by the signing of the Minorities Protection Treaty. The pledge was confirmed in the Czechoslovak constitution of 29 February 1920, without being put into effect. Beneš and the government used at first the argument concerning the extreme backwardness of the province;

later, the “saving clause” of the treaty proved helpful. The subversive tendencies in the province – be they communist, Ukrainian or, especially, pro-Magyar – were deemed by the Czechs to have been so severe as to threaten the integrity of the state; and in that case, the treaty could be temporarily suspended.

Beneš, who inclined to believe in the primacy of foreign policy, and who sometimes became impatient with the political infighting in Prague, was aware of the close connection between the minorities question and foreign affairs. While he briefly served as prime minister, he attended the Assembly of the League of Nations in Geneva between 2 and 21 September 1922. He submitted a draft document on the duty of the minorities to be loyal to their respective states. It was a hopeful proposal, though Beneš must have been aware that loyalty to the state could hardly be enforced by a government decree and, still less, by the decision of an international agency. He nevertheless informed Udržal, a minister in his government, that “*The minority question was victoriously settled by our proposals in the commission. I succeeded in turning the whole matter by putting it on the basis of exact fulfillment of the peace treaties, inoffensively for the states with minorities and directing it against disloyal minorities. This result was made possible by our negotiations behind the scenes with individual delegations rather than in the assembly...*” Beneš did not fail to ask the ministry of foreign affairs to draw his success in Geneva to the attention of the newspapers.³

Whereas the government in Prague was reluctant to allow group complaints, the League of Nations dealt with both group and individual complaints. They were passed on to the committees for minority affairs; together with the standing minorities commission of the League, the committees considered and sorted out the complaints. The most serious ones were passed on to the Council of the League. It was on the whole a meandering process, as the committees suffered from an ignorance of the ethnic problems in the successor states, and their membership frequently changed. In addition, during its almost twenty years’ existence, the standing minorities commission suffered from a dire shortage of personnel.

³ Jana Čechurová, Jaroslav Čechura, *Edvard Beneš. Diplomát na cestách* [Edvard Beneš. Diplomat on the move], Praha 2000, dispatches from 16. and 19. 9. 1922, p. 51–52.

In Geneva, Beneš and his staff learned how to deal with the complaints and with the agencies of the League. A Slovak complaint was, for instance, turned down on the grounds that the Slovak nation did not constitute a minority, as it was a part of the ruling "Czechoslovak" nation. Many complaints by the Sudeten Germans were ruled out of court, because of their political motivation. There was little the League could do to remedy the complaints. The question of sanctions against the states guilty of infraction of the Minorities Protection Treaty remained unresolved; the criteria for assessing the infractions were unclear, and there existed no coherent body of international law concerning minority rights.

The Minorities Protection treaty was, nevertheless, a unique attempt to defend human rights by the means of international law.⁴ The valuable experience of the League of Nations in dealing with minorities matters was unfortunately left to gather dust in the well-kept archives of the League; from the Charter of the United Nations, the idea of protection of the minorities disappeared altogether.

Beneš's official travel schedule faithfully reflected the main thrust of his foreign policy. During the decade after his return from the Paris peace conference, between 1919 and 1929, he traveled abroad fifty times. He visited Geneva and Paris often, as well as London or Rome; from time to time, he made an appearance in one of the capitals of the countries of the Little Entente, Belgrade and Bucharest. For a diplomat of his reputation, Beneš tended to neglect Czechoslovakia's neighbours. Austria, Germany, Hungary and Poland appeared on his itineraries rarely, or not at all. He visited Hallstadt in Austria in 1921 to meet Masaryk on his return from Capri, and met Chancellor Schober and President Hainisch. He visited Vienna three times, on his way to Geneva or Rome. In Berlin and Warsaw, Beneš was welcomed, during the ten years, once only. On his way from London in May 1928, he informed the ministry in Prague that "*I traveled to Berlin as a private person, and I intended to pay at the same time a courtesy visit to the German government for the first time in ten years, especially as, traveling through northern Germany I could not bypass Berlin.*"⁵

⁴ Richard Veatche, *Minorities and the League of Nations in the League of Nations in Retrospect*, Berlin and New York 1983.

⁵ Čechurová, Čechura, *Edvard Beneš*, cable 24. 5. 1928, p. 194–195.

Soon after Hitler came to power in 1933, Beneš became pre-occupied with the presidential campaign, which he successfully concluded as late as 18 December 1935. Towards the end of 1936, Count Trauttmansdorff and Dr Albrecht Haushofer came to Prague on a semi-official visit. Germany that year had breached the provisions of the peace treaties in the Rhineland, and they tried to discover whether Beneš would be willing to consider a non-aggression pact. When the conversation turned to the question of Czechoslovak Germans, Beneš explained to his visitors⁶ that he could not discuss the matter with foreign representatives, as it was a "purely internal Czechoslovak matter." Yet he did not hesitate to explain to his visitors that industrial and economic development would gradually transform Sudetenland into a Czech, or predominantly Czech, territory. The process, Beneš added, was common in regions where an ethnically mixed population lived in a society undergoing the process of industrialization. Beneš, it should be noted, discussed the problem in similar terms as Max Weber had done in his inaugural lecture, when he considered the migration of Polish agricultural labour into East Prussia.⁷ Beneš soon discovered that Hitler was his most resolute enemy. He also realized that, in the case of Czechoslovakia, Hitler was not ready to compromise. The Nazi interference in the lives of the Sudeten Germans was a misfortune for Beneš which, he feared, would nullify his previous political successes.

The First World War brought the Czechs and the Slovaks their own state; the Second World War offered Beneš the chance of making Czechoslovakia a homogenous nation state. At the turn of 1941 and 1942, the president was busy with another memorandum for the British authorities; he again asked them to recognize the borders of Czechoslovakia before the war and he mentioned the possibility of territorial exchanges with Germany and the transfer of some two-thirds of the Czechoslovak Germans. Beneš returned to his experiences from the League of Nations, and to the first attempt to carry out an internationally supervised simplification of an involved ethnic situation. He explained that the agreement would affect about

⁶ Edvard Beneš, *Paměti* [Memoirs], Praha 1947, p. 28 et seq. According to the census of 1921, with mother tongue being used as the criterion of nationality, there lived 23.36% Germans on the territory of Czechoslovakia; in 1930 the proportion was 22.32%.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 28–29.

the same number of people as did the transfer of population between Turkey and Greece.⁸ The exchange, Beneš explained, would take place under international control and with financial compensation. For Slovakia, Beneš suggested a similar transfer of the Magyars, though linked with an exchange of population. The sharpest conflict between the government in exile and its British hosts took place at that time: Hubert Ripka accused the British that they insisted on the admission of German representatives to the State Council while they refused to recognize the borders of Czechoslovakia before Munich and the jurisdiction of the government in exile over all Czechoslovak citizens abroad.⁹

Journeys to Washington and Moscow in 1943 helped Beneš regain his old optimism. An opportunity emerged that, with the help of a strong Soviet Union, Beneš could complete the building of the Czechoslovak national state. Improving Czechoslovakia's chances amounted to the possibility of diminishing German influence throughout eastern Europe; for Beneš an increase in the influence of the Soviets was understandably and in the circumstances of the war, more readily acceptable. During his visit to Moscow in 1943 the president assured Soviet leaders that the British government had no objections to the transfer of the Germans and that German financial institutions and industrial enterprises would be nationalized. He explained that German property could not be transferred into private Czech hands; that it would lead to conflicts and that the Czechs themselves will have to accept far-reaching nationalization of their own property. The expulsion of the Germans would thus be followed by socialization of property; national and social revolutions would go hand in hand.

As far as the plans for the transfers of the German and Magyar minorities were concerned, Beneš was pushing in Moscow at an open door. Stalin had considerable experience of the forced resettlement of ethnic groups, as well as a keen interest in diminishing the influence of the Germans in central and eastern Europe. The Czechoslovak communists in Moscow, who had Germans among their leaders,

⁸ The "Lausanne convention" in 1923 concerned the exchange of 1,221,849 Greek refugees from Asia Minor for 354,647 Macedonian Turks. Dimitri Pentzopoulos, *The Balkan Exchange of Minorities and its Impact on Greece*, London 1962 and 2003.

⁹ Zbyněk Zeman, *Edvard Beneš. Politický životopis* [Edvard Beneš. Political Biography], Praha 2000, p. 204.

accepted Beneš's plan that Czechoslovakia would be a "national and Slav state" after the war.¹⁰

Beneš returned from Moscow in self-confident mood. He was still not certain how many Germans would actually have to leave; his message to the resistance movement in June 1946 referred to some two million Germans. The transfer was to be preceded by the "swiftest occupation and cleansing" of a large part of the border country.¹¹ Shortly before his return journey to Prague via Moscow, on 13 and 20 February 1945, Beneš discussed the German minority question with Philipp Nichols, the Foreign Office representative. Nichols advised the president against legislation in the matter and recommended that a transfer should instead be simply a part of the programme of the Czechoslovak government. Beneš feared that the British would at the last moment change their minds about the transfer of the German minority and he turned to Nicholson with an open threat: "...I will discuss it in Moscow, and we may come to an agreement with Moscow and carry it out ourselves."¹²

Beneš nevertheless took note of British advice after the spontaneous "wild" migration of the Germans from Czechoslovakia, which had lasted until the beginning of August. On 2 August 1945, that is on the day the Potsdam conference ended and after its protocols on the transfer of the Germans and the Magyars had been published, President Beneš signed the decree 33/1945 Sb (amendment 116/1949 Sb) depriving the majority of Czechoslovak Germans and Magyars of Czechoslovak citizenship. The transfer of the minorities continued, now sanctioned by an international protocol. Beneš's earlier hopes, that it should take place under the supervision of an international organization and with financial compensation remained unfulfilled. (Beneš's presidential decree tended to define "anti-fascist" persons narrowly, as those who had actively taken part in the struggle against Hitler's regime. The Allied military authorities, on the other hand, used a broader definition: of the 1,445,059 Germans from Czechoslovakia received by the US Army 53,187 were considered to

¹⁰ *Cesta ke květnu. Vznik lidové demokracie v Československu I.* [The pass to May. The Origin of the People's Democracy in Czechoslovakia I.], Praha 1965, pp. 40–59.

¹¹ T. G. Masaryk Institute Archive administered by the Masaryk Institute and Archive of the ASCR (TGMIA), f. Edvard Beneš V, box 74, quoted in Zeman, *Edvard Beneš*, p. 224.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 251.

have been anti-fascist, among the 786,485 Germans who came to the Soviet zone 42,989 were regarded as anti-fascists.)

The suffering inflicted on the Czechs by Hitler's administration could help to explain individual acts of revenge against the Germans. It could not, however, create, without the help of the politicians, the whole system of post-war retribution, as enforced by the new Czechoslovak legislation. Beneš himself argued after his return to Prague that the Germans had become an unbearable nation, which appeared to the Czechs as a "great human monster".¹³ At a time when it was incumbent upon the intellectual elite to try and dampen down popular passions, Czechoslovak politicians vied with each other in formulating the harshest condemnations of the collective guilt of the German nation.¹⁴

The completion of the building of the nation state was costly for the Czechs as well. Added to war losses, the transfer of the Germans and the partial transfer of the Hungarians resulted in a demographic disaster which exceeded those suffered by the regions in Europe most devastated by the war. Whole villages were deserted, factories and fields were left untended, and the decay of deserted property began. The presidential decree concerning the confiscation of German and Magyar property held out the promise for the Czechs and the Slovaks of untold wealth. The national revolution was pushed forward by economic motivation, of individuals and the state.

Beneš and his government showed at the same time what kind of a society they wished to create, and live in. It was hard for the president to give up the old hope that the Czechs and the Slovaks would one day merge into one political nation. The Slovaks had had a taste of a kind of independence during the war and they, as well as the Czechs, wanted nationally homogenous societies. For the time being, they tolerated the common Czechoslovak state. They had left the ethnic diversity of the Habsburg empire and of the period between the wars far behind them. From East European experience it appears that regions where two or three ethnic groups live together, such as Bohemia and Moravia, and where the position of the dominant nationality was not well established, were most prone to

¹³ Václav Černý, *Paměti* [Memoirs] III., Brno 1992, p. 42.

¹⁴ Prokop Drtina, *Československo, můj osud II/I*. [Czechoslovakia, my destiny II/I.], Praha 1992, p. 63.

national conflicts. In territories with a higher diversity, such as was Bukovina or Trieste, where all ethnic groups could regard themselves as minorities, national peace was easier to maintain. In Bohemia and Moravia, national conflict was in addition underscored by social strife; a situation which proved to be difficult to keep under control by the politics of compromise.

Miklós Zeidler

The League of Nations and Hungarian Minority Petitions*

Introduction

Within the strict and rather rigid framework of the Paris Peace Settlement, which established the new international political system after the First World War, the League of Nations and its ideals represented the flexible element. Such flexibility was based on the intention – or mere promise – that by means of its activities this international organisation for world peace would reduce the gulf between the victors and the defeated, promote multifaceted international co-operation, and establish means for improving its own performance. The peaceful settlement of disputes, the increasing role of international jurisdiction, and the collective deliberation and resolution of economic, labour, cultural, social and health issues, represented the backbone of an extremely ambitious programme. Nevertheless, the programme lacked political, ideological and institutional antecedents. Its implementation would have been exceedingly difficult even if the general international situation had favoured co-operation. But this was far from being the case. Indeed, the war had actually deepened antagonisms between the great powers,

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while the peace settlement had created many new tensions between the smaller countries and had preserved many of the older ones.

Still, supporters of the League of Nations were driven by a different rationale – one that sprang from recognition that, in order to survive, humankind had no choice but to replace traditional great power rivalries with international co-operation. This view was shared, in different measure and for different reasons, by members of the public and professional politicians in many places around the world. Most war-weary people, imbued with a spirit of liberalism, tolerance and humanism, placed their belief in the complex ideals of the League of Nations and greater international co-operation. For the defeated countries, the hope was that co-operation would lead to better relations in general and an improvement in their own situation. The victorious powers, meanwhile, thought that if all parties were able to progress beyond hostile relations, this would render the entire peace settlement acceptable to the defeated states. Although some diplomats and politicians were sincere and altruistic supporters of the League of Nations, nevertheless many of them were principally interested in using the new institution to promote national interests. Representatives of the smaller states were generally supportive of the League, for its establishment with a membership of more than 50 states served to broaden the range of actors participating in international affairs. For their part, the politicians of the major powers were convinced that classical diplomacy in its traditional forms would continue to be viable even under the new framework.

The League of Nations was officially established with the entry into force of the Treaty of Versailles on 10 January 1920. Although the body formally existed until 18 April 1946, it ceased political activities as early as 1940. During the two decades of the League's functioning, its initial successes and many subsequent failures were used both by supporters and by critics to substantiate their respective claims – although no political actor could ever have been satisfied with the entire work of the organisation. Even so, there were many lessons to be learnt from the League of Nations, in terms of the functioning of the international system and opportunities for international co-operation. The founders' intention was that the League should serve as a regulatory framework for the international political system. But this hope proved to be illusory in many respects. In fact, on the contrary, it was the major powers and world political develop-

ments that proved capable of influencing and determining the mechanisms and activities of the League.

Thus, a broad range of intentions and considerations – from altruism to cynicism – influenced the development and application of the standards and mechanisms comprising the international protection of minorities, one of the most important elements of the League of Nations system. In the following, we examine the operation of the new system, based on the example of petitions submitted by Hungarian minorities. We attempt to show how the League's mechanisms for minority protection were used by the various parties involved: the governments of the kin state and the ruling states, the officials and decision-making bodies of the Leagues of Nations, and the national minorities themselves.

The new system of minority protection

The codification of new international regulations governing minority protection began at the Paris Peace Conference with the drafting of standard treaty texts. Then, in the early 1920s, the process continued with the signing of special bilateral treaties.¹ The process was necessary because although the peace treaties concluding the First World

¹ International legal experts, diplomats, historians and political scientists have written many works on the system of minority protection between the two world wars. Of such works, for this paper we used above all those whose content or author was closely connected with the subject matter as indicated by the title. Among the works written by senior staff of the League concerned with minority protection, see Helmer Rosting, *Protection of minorities by the League of Nations*, *The American Journal of International Law* 1923, pp. 641–660; Pablo de Azcarate y Flórez, *League of Nations and National Minorities. An Experiment*, Washington 1945; Idem: *La Société des Nations et la protection des minorités*, Genève 1969. – For the writings of Hungarian diplomats, see *A kisebbségi jogok védelmének kézikönyve* [Manual of Protection of Minority Rights], with an introduction by Gyula Wlassics. Compiled by Zoltán Baranyai, Berlin 1925; Ferenc Mengele, *A Népszövetség jogi és politikai rendszere* [The Legal and Political System of the League of Nations], Budapest 1927; Elek Nagy, *Magyarország és a Népszövetség. Politikai tanulmány* [Hungary and the League of Nations. A Political Study], Budapest 1930. – For historical literature relating to Hungarian affairs see Marie-Renée Mouton, *La Société des Nations et la protection des minorités. Exemple de la Transylvanie (1920–1928)*. (Thèse pour doctorat de 3^{ème} cycle.), Paris 1969; Andrea R. Süle, *A Nemzetek Szövetségének kisebbségvédelmi rendszere és gyakorlata 1919–1938* [The Minority Protection System and Practice of the League of Nations, 1919–1938], (Manuscript) Budapest, n.d.; József Galántai, *Trianon és a kisebbségvédelem. A kisebbségvédelem nemzetközi jogrendjének kialakítása 1919–1920* [Trianon and Minority Protection. The Development of the International Legal System of Minority Protection], Budapest 1989.

War had redrawn the map of Europe in accordance with the principle of national self-determination, nevertheless 62 million Europeans (13 per cent of the total population) were still living in minority status. The authors of the peace, instead of urging the holding of local plebiscites in disputed areas, argued that the legal mechanisms of minority protection should be made available to national minorities.

Contractual protection for certain ethnic and religious groups had already arisen at international level: for instance, at the Congress of Berlin of 1878 on political relations in the Balkans. But such agreements were not very reassuring, since only the signatory parties were concerned about their practical application. For this reason, violations were commonplace and usually went unpunished.²

The "victors" in the war, who were the original members of the League of Nations, and in particular the victorious great powers, who were determined to reform the international system, wished to avoid a recurrence of failure. For them the issue of minority protection was of international importance, and they urged its regulation in multi-lateral international treaties offering more robust guarantees. Both theoretically and in practice, their approach was a novel one. The legal novelty was the enhanced guarantee: the League of Nations – the principal political organisation of the international community – offered its assurance that the new minority protection regulations would be adhered to. The League's Council was responsible for making amendments to the minority protection provisions and for taking action against violating parties.

The minority protection requirements imposed on the defeated states (Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Turkey) were contained in their respective peace treaties signed between 1919 and 1923. Meanwhile, a few minor states that had been raised to the level of the victors (Czechoslovakia, Greece, Poland, Romania, and the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes) were compelled to sign separate minority protection treaties with the great powers in 1919–1920. Several other countries (Albania, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, and Lithuania) undertook to protect their respective national minorities in declarations made to the Council in the course of 1921–1923. Protection for the German minorities of Upper Silesia and the Memel Territory was laid down in international conventions signed between Poland and

² Azcárate, *La Société des Nations*, p. 20.

Germany in 1922 and between Lithuania and Germany in 1924. Finally, Iraq undertook to protect its minorities on independence in 1930. These were the minority protection regulations that were placed under the League of Nations' guarantee – which the League undertook to enforce. (The precise mechanism was that if one of these treaties or agreements were violated, the aggrieved party or parties could submit a complaint to the League.)³

Nevertheless, these new minority protection regulations applied only to Central and Eastern Europe, as well as to Iraq, a former League of Nations mandate. The victorious great powers themselves undertook no such commitments, even though large minorities of long-established or even indigenous peoples as well as immigrant groups, were living on the territories of Great Britain, France, Russia and the United States. As this “double standard” characterised the entire interwar period, the League's minority protection system served to mitigate merely the worst minority policy effects of the transfers of territory made at the expense of the defeated states.

The new provisions failed to provide collective rights to the minorities, but they did guarantee the following to citizens “who belong to racial, religious or linguistic minorities”:

“(1) Equality of all nationals of the country before the law.

(2) Equality in the matter of civil and political rights, and of the admission to public posts, functions and honours.

(3) Equality of treatment and security in law and fact.

(4) Equality of all nationals of the country in the matter of establishing, managing and controlling charitable, religious and social institutions, schools and other educational establishments, with the right to use their own language, and to practise their religion freely therein

(5) Equality in the matter of employment of any language in private intercourse, in commerce, in religion, in the press or in publications of any kind, or at public meetings.”⁴

³ Thus, in Europe, the minority protection treaties guaranteed by the League covered 42 per cent (i.e. 26 million) of the 62 million individuals living under minority status.

⁴ Azcárate, *League of Nations*, p. 60. The appended sources include the texts of the minority protection treaties signed with Czechoslovakia, with the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and with Romania, which in terms of their logic, structure and provisions resemble or are identical with each other and other minority protection treaties.

The procedure applicable to petitions

In the early months of the League's existence, petitions concerning the situation of national and – in many cases – religious minorities were submitted to the Conference of Ambassadors, which was a preparatory decision-making body of the Paris Peace Conference rather than of the League of Nations. However, as minority protection began to fall under the League of Nations' guarantee in the course of 1920, the need arose for a precise procedure applicable to petitions. The first draft of the procedure was adopted in the autumn of 1920. The procedure was amended on several occasions in the course of the decade and finalised only in 1929.

A precise description of the procedure was made for the first time on 25 October 1920: it was then that the Council decided that petitions – which had to be submitted to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations because the minority protection treaties were subject to the League's guarantee – should be forwarded by the Secretary-General (Eric Drummond, Great Britain, until 1933, and then Joseph Avenol, France) to the Council, the state against which the petition had been filed, and other member states. The Council chairman, together with two members appointed by him – jointly referred to as the Committee of Three – were required to examine the petitions filed.

The leaders of the multinational states considered this solution to be prejudicial or injurious. Thus, at the behest mainly of Czechoslovakia and Poland (the states with jurisdiction over Europe's largest German and Slavic minorities), on 27 June 1921 the procedure was so amended that member states should only become acquainted with a minority petition if the response of the defendant state had been appended.

Another amendment favourable to the multinational states was made on 5 September 1923. The amendment imposed stricter requirements on petitioners. Thereafter petitions

“(a) Must have in view the protection of minorities in accordance with the treaties;

(b) In particular, must not be submitted in the form of a request for the severance of political relations between the minority in question and the State of which it forms a part;

(c) Must not emanate from an anonymous or unauthenticated source;

(d) Must abstain from violent language;

(e) Must contain information or refer to facts which have not recently been the subject of a petition submitted to the ordinary procedure.”⁵

In effect, this regulation formulated what had already become standard practice, as the Minorities Section of the Secretariat prepared cases for the Council based largely on such considerations. (A significant change was, however, that if a defendant state disagreed with the Secretariat’s proposal, it could appeal to the Committee of Three, which then reviewed the receivability of the petition.) A further tightening of the rules was that documents arising in the course of the procedure (the petition, the response of the defendant government, and the reports of the Committee of Three and the Council) were only circulated among members of the Council.

An amendment of 10 June 1925 excluded representatives of any state that was somehow involved in the particular minority issue from being members of the Committee of Three. Thus, citizens of the defendant country or of any neighbouring state could not take part in the procedure; nor could representatives of a state in which the majority population was of the same nationality as the complainant minority.

All these amendments served to improve the position of the multinational states and placed (potential) petitioners at an increasing disadvantage. By the late 1920s, this was causing dissatisfaction even among states that had no interest in minority issues. As we shall see below, the League’s minority protection system tended to be rather strict when dealing with petitioners and excessively lax when dealing with defendant states. As a result, many parties regarded the system as partial and biased. Petitioners, for instance, were not allowed to take part in the adjudication process. Indeed, they received no official information about the state of the inquiry. Yet, at the time, the Secretariat disqualified roughly one in two petitions on formal grounds. (Petitioners also faced the problem of manifestly mild judgements and non-implementation by the defendant state.)

General dissatisfaction with the shift in the balance of power to the disadvantage of the national minorities led finally to a partial reversal. An amendment on 13 June 1929 improved the position of

⁵ Azcárate, *League of Nations*, pp. 103–104.

petitioners to the extent that the procedure became more prompt and transparent, as follows: 1. Petitioners had to be informed if their petition was rejected, 2. If necessary the Chairman of the Council could appoint four members to pass judgement on a petition (Committee of Five), 3. Committees of Three could also convene between Council sessions, 4. If the Committee of Three did not propose the adoption of a petition on to the Council agenda, then it had to inform Council members in writing of the results of its inquiry, while once a year the Secretary-General would bring these reports to Council members' notice, 5. The Council urged that if the affected state consented, the Committee of Three should forward its reports to all member states, 6. The Secretary-General published annual statistics on the petitions procedure.⁶

On behalf of the Hungarian government, Count Albert Apponyi, Head of the Hungarian Delegation to the League of Nations, spoke on three occasions (1924, 1925 and 1930) to the Assembly about the need for a reform of the petition procedure. His main suggestions were that the minority complaints of any national group or member state should be made public; that the Council should be required to place them on its agenda; that the representatives of a petitioner should be heard at each stage of the procedure; and that the Permanent Court of International Justice should participate in the proceedings at the very least by submitting an *avis consultatif*. Apponyi's speeches were praised for their rhetorical effect and even met with the agreement of some delegates, but there was still no political will for implementing such reforms.⁷

By 1930, the established form of the complaint procedure was as follows: the petition – which could be submitted by a private individual, minority organisation, church or government, as its purpose was merely to draw a minority grievance to the attention of the League

⁶ The changes in the procedure are made known in the volumes of the *Annuaire de la Société des Nations* 1927–1938, György Ottlik (ed.)

⁷ Following Apponyi's first speech of 9 September 1924, Paul Hymans, the Council's Belgian chairman, stated frankly that the Council could not accept the proposals, because to do so would amount to capitulating to the Hungarian politician. Magyar Országos Levéltár [National Hungarian Archives] (MOL) Külügyminisztériumi Levéltár, A Nemzetek Szövetsége mellett működő magyar Titkárság – Magyar képviselő a Nemzetek Szövetségénél (hereinafter cited as MOL, K 107), 12. cs., 16/2–924/1924. Letter of Zoltán Baranyai, head of Mission to Geneva, to Sándor Khuen-Héderváry, head of the Political Department of the Foreign Ministry (draft of 13. 10. 1924).

and thereby initiate an inquiry – was brought to the Minority Section of the Secretariat for a formal appraisal. If the petition fulfilled the formal requirements, the Section (formally, the Secretary-General) communicated the petition to the defendant government, requesting its observations. Meanwhile, it began preparations for the case. Having received the defendant state's response – which theoretically had to be made within two months, but the deadline could be variously extended – the Section forwarded the matter to the Council, which then appointed the Committee of Three (or possibly a committee of five). During an inquiry, the Committee of Three consulted with representatives of the defendant state, but it never requested information from the petitioner. It then made a proposal concerning a remedy for the grievance or the withdrawal of the case. For the sake of a thorough inquiry and if warranted by the importance of the case, it could submit a case to the Council. Thereupon the Council appointed a Rapporteur, who undertook an inquiry in the matter, presenting his report to the Council plenum, where a representative of the defendant government was also heard. Under such circumstances, a case soon became a highly visible political issue. It was such publicity that states subjected to the procedure tried to avoid. The Council then had four options: to withdraw the case; to propose a compromise solution; to order in a judgement that the defendant state cease the legal violation; or to involve in the procedure the Permanent Court of International Justice at the Hague.

The Minorities Section

The organisation of the League of Nations began to be formed in early 1919. At the time, however, the Peace Conference was concerned with frontier issues. For this reason, the future tasks of the League were still unclear. The selection of the staff of the League's Secretariat proceeded more quickly than did the establishment of the institutional framework.

In the spring of 1919, following a suggestion by Paul Vogt, Norwegian ambassador to London and a friend of Eric Drummond, the League's Secretary-General designate, the latter invited the

Norwegian diplomat Erik Colban to join the Secretariat.⁸ Initially, Colban dealt with the Saarland and Danzig issues, both of which were regarded as falling under the control of the League. Then, in the early summer of 1919, Drummond entrusted him with the issue of minorities, a task that Colban had aspired to from the outset.⁹

Colban then established the Minorities Section, which until 1930 functioned more or less under the same framework, although with increasing numbers of staff. The *Section des Commissions administratives et des Minorités*, or *Section of Administrative Commissions and Minority Questions* was divided into two parts: the *Commissions administratives*, or *Administrative Commissions*, continued to address Saarland and Danzig, as well as exchanges of population and the issues of Eupen and Malmédy, which had been ceded to Belgium by Germany. It was headed between 1919 and 1925 by Huntington Gilchrist¹⁰ (United States) and between 1925 and 1930 by Helmer Rosting¹¹ (Denmark). The division of *Questions des minorités*, or *Minority Questions*, was headed between 1919 and 1920 by Thanassis Aghnides¹² (Greece), between 1920 and 1925 by Rosting, between

⁸ Colban (1876–1956) had previously served as consul in Rio de Janeiro and then as commercial and political counsellor at the embassies in Paris and London. From 1928 until 1930, he headed the Disarmament Section, before his departure from the League of Nations.

⁹ Mouton, *La Société des Nations*, p. 87.

¹⁰ Gilchrist (1891–1975) obtained doctorates in Philosophy, Common Law and Political Economy, and then taught at Peking University. From 1925 until 1928, he continued his work at the League in the Mandates Section. He then found employment in business.

¹¹ Rosting (1893–1945) studied to be a theologian, but for a period of two years he represented Denmark at the International Red Cross. Then, in the spring of 1920, he joined the Secretariat. From 1932 until 1934, he served as the League's High Commissioner in Danzig, before returning to the Section, which he directed from 1934 until 1936.

¹² Aghnides (1889–1984) received a doctorate in Law and then served as head of the press section at the Greek embassy in London. He joined the Political Section of the League in early 1920 and later rose to become one of the League's senior officials.

¹³ Azcárate (1890–1971) was a professor of Public Administrative Law during the First World War. He then became a member of parliament. From 1921 he worked at the Section. In 1933 he was appointed as Deputy Secretary-General. During the Spanish civil war, he left the League of Nations and represented the Republican Government as ambassador to London. After the Second World War, he joined the United Nations, where he served as Principal Secretary of the Conciliation Commission for Palestine (UNCCP).

1925 and 1930 by Pablo de Azcárate y Flórez¹³ (Spain), and then temporarily by Hans Christian Berg¹⁴ (Norway) and Jonckheer W. H. J. van Asch van Wijck¹⁵ (Netherlands).

Meanwhile, in January 1928, Colban resigned from his position as Director of Section. The position was held until 1930 by Manuel Aguirre de Cárcer¹⁶ (Spain). Aguirre was followed by Azcárate, who immediately restructured the organisation of the Section. As a result, the new *Section des questions des minorités*, or *Minorities Section*, relinquished some of its previous responsibilities and was able to devote all its energies to the protection of minorities. In 1934, having returned somewhat prematurely from his Danzig assignment, Rosting became Director of Section. During his term, several acute international disputes served to undermine the system of minority protection. In 1936, Rosting resigned his post in disappointment and departed from the League. After his departure, the petition system became practically impotent. Defendant states no longer implemented the Council's judgements and they even violated the formal requirements of the procedure. After 1936, the Section had a series of different directors – Gerald H. F. Abraham (Great Britain, 1936 and 1937), Peters Schou (Denmark, 1936–1937), and Rasmus Ingvald Berentson Skylstad (Norway, 1938–1940). Clearly, however, events had taken their toll on the Section.

Until the very end, the Section adhered to its own principle that the great powers and states subject to the minority protection treaties should not be represented in the minorities division. The League's minority protection system was therefore administered by staff from Australia, Colombia, India, Iran, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain and Switzerland. (The only exception was Abraham, but he headed the Section only temporarily, for just some months.) On the other hand, the staff of the Administrative Commissions division included an American official and a Yugoslav official, as well as the Scandinavians.

From the outset, the Section received a great number of petitions, including several extremely petty cases. Nevertheless, the staff attempted

¹⁴ Berg (1893–1953) joined the Section in 1928 after four years at the League.

¹⁵ Asch van Wijck (1895–?) joined the Section in 1929 after six years at the League.

¹⁶ Aguirre (1882–?) served previously as Spanish envoy to Tangiers. He left the League in 1930.

to administer all cases with extraordinary patience, in line with the principle of *fairness* and to the parties' mutual satisfaction. During Colban's term (1919–1928), most of the Section's personnel and office staff came from the Scandinavian countries. The Section's work ethic was therefore characterised by tense urgency, emphasis on precision, and mild inflexibility. Colban made notes even on minor matters and he demanded that his staff should do the same. Even when abroad, he still required that all major correspondence as well as telegrams should be forwarded to him daily.¹⁷

Aguirre (1928–1930) evidently considered his directorship of the Section to be merely a staging post in his diplomatic and political career. He was not prepared to work hard or to make personal sacrifices for the sake of minority protection. His leadership was characterised by a decline in the number of documents produced, less direct supervision, and reduced personal involvement in administration. Azcárate (1930–1934) sustained the lax documentary regime and working atmosphere, even though the number of petitions submitted during this period equalled the number of complaints lodged during the entire preceding decade. The expanded staff began to turn itself into a true international society. Still, there was no decline in the work-efficiency of the Section, perhaps because Azcárate considered his tasks to be a true vocation. Indeed, in addition to his management tasks, he was actively involved in minority issues.

Under the Section's own procedure, the first task was the screening of petitions – approximately 480 of 900 petitions submitted between 1920 and 1939 were declared receivable.¹⁸ There followed registration, classification, opinion-forming, preparation, and the making of a proposal. The various documents usually passed through the hands of several members of staff. Only then were they submitted to the

¹⁷ This quirk astonished his colleagues, but has benefitted researchers, for they can easily follow proceedings during Colban's tenure. Most of the internal documents were compiled – especially at the beginning – in English, which all of the staff spoke well and was preferred by the director over French. Colban carried on a lively correspondence – again mostly in English – with Drummond and several staff members of the Foreign Office. As Spaniards and non-Europeans began working for the Section, French increasingly became the working language, and French was used almost exclusively during the terms of Aguirre and Azcárate.

¹⁸ These suspiciously round numbers are, of course estimates, based on the contradictory figures provided in the literature, the League's official publications, and archival notes. Cf. Mouton, *La Société des Nations*, appendix, pp. 83–92; Galántai, *Trianon*, p. 146; League of Nations Archives, Geneva (LONA) R 2165, 1928–1932:4/21661/7833 and the corresponding issues of the *Official Journal*.

Director of the Section. In complex or sensitive matters, the Minorities Section often requested the Legal Section or the Political Section to give an opinion or it conferred with the Secretary-General. If a petition reached the the stage of Committee or Council deliberation, the Section was responsible for dispatching invitations, drafting the agenda, informing members, and under certain circumstances administering separate discussions with representatives of defendant states. It also compiled minutes of the meetings and drafted the reports. As a matter of course, the Section was also responsible for all correspondence in connection with the petition procedure and partially responsible for press relations. In addition, it prepared and administered foreign inspection tours – which were undertaken frequently. Governments with an interest in minority issues corresponded with the League's apparatus on a regular basis. Sometimes they would deluge the Minorities Section with large amounts of press material. This tactic, for instance, was employed by Hungary's Permanent Delegation to the League of Nations.¹⁹

Owing to the nature of the minority problems, the Section's hard and consequential work tended to be criticised rather than praised. Indeed, throughout its work, the Section was continuously under fire. It was accused by petitioners and kin-state governments of being slow to react and of overstepping its competence (by letting cases drag on). Defendant states, meanwhile, criticised it for being naive and gullible with respect to petitions. A constant reproach of both sides was that the Section was biased. For its part, the Council wanted the Section to be more independent, so that it could free itself from apparently minor issues.

Petitioners and defendants

The original intention of those who drafted the system was that the League's minority protection procedure should assist in resolving quickly and satisfactorily problems arising between minorities on the one hand and states exercising jurisdiction on the other. A further expectation was that the system would provide a proper and regulated

¹⁹ MOL, K 107, 12. cs., 16/3.

framework for this to happen. If the atmosphere had been co-operative and peaceful, this objective might have been accomplished. However, the world war and subsequent border changes, as well as the generalised mood of revenge, produced the opposite effect and accentuated opposition. From the outset, in terms of minority policy this created an extremely hostile atmosphere in the Carpathian basin. As far as the Hungarian ethnic group was concerned, the forcible measures adopted by the new states (restrictions on political rights, dismissal of civil servants and public employees, large-scale expropriation of ecclesiastical, community and private property, closure of cultural and educational institutions, limitations on language use, etc.) provoked the hostility of most members of the minority communities, while the response of Hungarian public opinion and the Hungarian government was to formulate a foreign policy based on irredentism and revisionism.

The League's protection of minorities became an arena for acting out such hostility. Rather than promote legal debates aimed at conflict resolution and co-operation, the forum soon became overwhelmed by political discord. The tendency of kin-state governments to line up in support of petitioning minorities merely strengthened this process, for it internationalised the antagonisms. Thereafter the rival states were no longer interested in settling disputes but in magnifying them in full view of the public. Their principal objective was to discredit the other party and to destroy it both morally and legally in front of the League of Nations and international public opinion.

Often petitioners openly accused their "opponents" of ruthlessness, of lacking civility, and of being incapable of leadership. Defendant governments then turned to more complex tactics, comprising both defensive and offensive elements. They regarded the minority protection treaties, which they had been compelled to sign, as having been injurious from the outset and as a manifestation of bias. They viewed minority policy as a domestic affair and considered the complaints of petitioners to be acts of disloyalty or even subversion. Thus, for the defendant states, mediation by the League of Nations amounted to an unfriendly act or unjustified interference. For all these reasons, they tended to have an interest in suppressing problems and avoiding public scrutiny. Only if such tactics failed did they switch to a policy of denial, in which they made light of grievances and portrayed petitioners as criminals.

Under such circumstances, the Hungarian minorities found themselves in a very delicate situation. Their wish was for an immediate improvement in their situation, which required a softening of government policies towards national groups. Even so, they clearly saw the real solution to their problems in the final political goal of territorial revision (frontier readjustment). Political disputes embracing entire minority communities and their leaderships, coupled with pressure from Budapest, Prague, Bucharest and Belgrade, resulted finally in the acceptance of Budapest's policy as authoritative by Hungarians living outside of Hungary, who were encouraged by such factors as the inflexibility of the successor states, the Hungarian government's policy of selective support,²⁰ and a shift in the European balance of power towards the revisionist coalition.

The various actors in the League's system of minority protection were noticeably divided about the best way of solving issues raised in the petitions. The League's experts tended to favour prompt, compromise-based solutions, which were established, wherever possible, on bilateral agreements between the parties. They believed, moreover, that reconciling interests and making equitable compromises was the best way of learning about democracy.

The petitioners wanted their grievances to be remedied as quickly as possible, but the kin-state governments supporting them wished to achieve this with the greatest amount of publicity and by means of a spectacular and prestigious victory. A favourable judgement on the part of the Permanent Court of International Justice – or possibly an *avis consultatif* provided by the Court at the request of the Council – could provide such public spectacle, but even a favourable political decision by the Council was viewed in positive terms.²¹

²⁰ See Nándor Bárdi, A romániai magyarság kisebbségpolitikai stratégiái a két világháború között [Minority Policy Strategies of the Hungarians in Romania Between the Two World Wars], *Regio 2* (1997), p. 32–66, as well as Béla Angyal, *Érdekvédelem és önszerveződés. Fejezetek a csehszlovákiai magyar pártpolitika történetéből* [Interest Protection and Self-Organisation. Chapters from the History of Hungarian Political Parties in Czechoslovakia], Dunaszerdahely 2002.

²¹ Hungarian minority petitions were never examined by the court in The Hague, and the Council plenum deliberated on just two Hungarian expropriation petitions. It was not as part of a minority petition that the law-suit between Pázmány Péter University and the Czechoslovak state was heard by the Permanent Court of International Justice in 1933, in which it upheld the payment obligation imposed on Prague by the joint court of arbitration. Similarly, it was not as a minority matter that the Council heard the expropriation case of the Transylvanian optants in 1923, 1927 and 1930, which concluded with a bilateral agreement in 1930. See also the following note.

In contrast, the defendant states did their utmost to prevent the League's organs from taking petitions seriously. And where they failed in this endeavour, they sought to keep the matter at the political forum, for whereas the countries belonging to the French alliance system had major influence in the Council – which gave the Little Entente countries a tangible advantage during the preparation, making and implementation of Council decisions²² – they had no such advantage at the court in The Hague.²³

Relations between the Section and parties to disputes

"The League of Nations," wrote Azcárate, one-time Director of the Section, "was a purely political body, whose main purpose – rightly – was to support the establishment and maintenance of peace and an atmosphere of co-operation in international affairs."²⁴ The Section worked long term on establishing and fulfilling such co-operation in the field of minority policy, while carrying out the day-to-day administration of disputed issues. It performed such educational and socialising tasks partly in Geneva as part of its contacts with the official representatives of the parties involved and partly in the course of visits and study tours to the various countries.

The Directors of the Section were regularly visited at the Secretariat by diplomats of signatories to the minority protections treaties. Apart from information gathering, the apparent object of such visits was also to exert pressure. The Czechoslovak foreign minister Edvard Beneš and his Romanian colleague Nicolae Titulescu, both of whom were peculiarly respected at the League, made use of this opportunity

²² The Council heard, in three sessions in 1925, the matter of the Banat colonists – which concluded with a compromise agreement on damages, which was subsequently much criticised by the Hungarian side. Then, in five sessions in 1931–1932, it heard the matter of the Székely border-guard landowners. However, its favourable judgement was never implemented by the Romanian government, despite the Council's subsequent requests urging it to do so.

²³ The minority issues heard by the Permanent Court – the case of the German colonists in Poland, the issue of the nationality of Germans in Poland (1923), the Bulgarian-Turkish and Bulgarian-Greek minority disputes (1925, 1928, and 1930), the issue of German minority education in Upper Silesia (1931), and the Albanian minority education issue (1935) – were decided without exception in favour of the petitioners. See Galántai, *Trianon*, p. 149.

²⁴ Azcárate, *La Société des Nations*, p. 68.

on several occasions. The former exerted his influence in almost any matter that threatened to cast a shadow on Czechoslovakia's minority policy. Meanwhile, the latter tended to intervene only when complaints made against Romania had reached the political level.

Although our data is limited, there is evidence of such contacts developing into congenial or amicable relationships. Consequently, the information acquired from such friendly sources was received by the other party in confidence. This did not, however, alter the appraisal of minority petitions. For instance, worth noting is that Colban enjoyed a close relationship with Beneš from as early as 1920, as he did subsequently with Robert Flieder, Czechoslovak ambassador to Berne, and from 1923 with the Romanian foreign minister, Ion Gheorghe Duca. In contrast, as we shall see, he had no such close relationship with any of the Hungarians. Concerning the Spanish directors, we lack similar data, but we do know that Azcárate established a friendship with one of his guides in Czechoslovakia, an engineer by the name of Jaromír Nečas, during a visit to the "Autonomous Ruthene Territory South of the Carpathians" in June 1923, and that years later he still considered him to be a reliable source of information.

There were, of course, examples of the reverse. For instance, several Romanian politicians manifested the inflexibility of their country's minority policy so characteristically that they became the object of criticism in the notes of the Section's staff, who were otherwise exceedingly careful to remain impartial. Compared with the chauvinism exhibited by Prime Minister Ion Brătianu, Education Minister Constantin Angelescu and Cultural Minister Constantin Banu, the Romanian diplomats working in Geneva appeared in a very favourable light. Moreover, they were very successful in using this difference of approach to further the interests of their government. They often explained the failure of their own supposedly more moderate endeavours in terms of the demands of domestic politics. Indeed, politicians who argued successfully that their policies were needed in order to stifle nationalism in the domestic political arena included both Beneš and Hungarian prime minister Count István Bethlen – the former when explaining his delay in granting autonomy to the Ruthene Territory, and the latter when responding to criticism of the 1920 *Numerus Clausus Act* that prevented most Jewish students from attending university.

Among the heads of the Hungarian Delegation to Geneva, staff working at the Section really only liked two: Pál Hevesy (1926–1930)

and to a lesser extent János Pelényi (1930–1933). But this is quite understandable, since the heads of mission rarely visited the Secretariat. It was only Hevesy – a shrewd *charmeur* – and his cultivated and modest successor that managed to endear themselves. Mihály Réz (1921) was unable even to present himself at the Secretariat, since he died within days of his arrival in Geneva. The terms of Elek Nagy (1925–1926) and László Tahy (1934–1935) were too brief for them to establish good relations. Moreover, Tahy generally resided in Berne, where he was also accredited. The dull and laconic László Velics (1935–1938) was unable, by nature, to gain people's confidence.

Zoltán Baranyai, who was present at the very foundation of the mission, provided a degree of consistency. He was posted to Geneva as a Francophile literary man in early 1921. After the death of Réz, he headed the mission for a period of four years until the arrival of Nagy. He then served as Deputy Head of Mission until 1936. Serving alongside the various heads of mission, Baranyai effectively managed its affairs; he was an expert on local conditions and could easily make contacts. His one and a half decades in Geneva enabled him to establish lasting personal relationships. He won the friendship of Helmer Rosting and later the confidence of Azcárate. Whenever possible he successfully used such contacts to intercede in Hungarian minority matters. However, his relationship with Colban was rather cool, despite initial hopes. He always viewed Aguirre with suspicion.

Baranyai's reports in particular offer us an impression of the various Directors of Section as well as insights into the efforts of Hungarian diplomacy in the field of minority policy. After his first meeting with Colban, Baranyai described him as an "absolutely impartial" and "cordial" legal expert, for whom the objective examination of the treaties is sacrosanct.²⁵ Two years later, however, he wrote the following: "[Colban] could once be regarded as a Hungarophile, but for some time he has been under the strong influence of the Czechs; still, with regard to the Hungarians in Romania, he supports the position of the Hungarian minority."²⁶ Four months later, just weeks prior to the Section's much-anticipated visit to Transylvania, he

²⁵ MOL, K 107, 12. cs., 16/1–n.n. Baranyai's report to Count Miklós Bánffy (12. 1. 1921, copy).

²⁶ MOL, K 107, 12. cs., 16/2–42/1923. Baranyai's report to Foreign Minister Géza Daruváry (3. 3. 1923, copy).

warned Benedek Jancsó – who, as one of the acknowledged leaders of Transylvania's Hungarian community, had inquired about Colban – that the director had an “aspic nature” and wanted to be on good terms with everybody.²⁷ After the visit, which ended in failure from a Hungarian perspective, Baranyai's frank opinion was that even though Colban bore some goodwill towards minorities, he was by nature a timid, opportunist and weak man who “could hardly be trusted to keep his promises.”²⁸ A year later, Baranyai no longer had any illusions. As he wrote: Colban just makes promises and he does not act; he seeks good relations with everybody in order to strengthen his position, but the Hungarian minorities cannot expect anything worthwhile from him. Baranyai was pleased to report that the “unprincipled” Colban, who was in actual control of the “arbiter mundi” power, did not wish to extend his tenure, which was to expire two years later. He made the following suggestion: “we must do everything now and in the future to ensure that Colban's sphere of authority is broken.”²⁹

In spite of its exaggeration, Baranyai's image of Colban, his diabolical portrayal, is very useful, because it accurately reflects and records the disillusionment of the Hungarian minorities and of Hungarian diplomacy, after having placed so many hopes in Geneva. The dissonance probably stems from the fact that whereas Baranyai regarded the protection of the Hungarian minorities as a form of compensation for the country's dismemberment, that is, as something connected with past events, Colban in contrast regarded the system of minority protection as a current task directed towards the future, and he wanted it to be treated as such. He did not support a tightening of the rules in the field of minority protection – indeed, during his term the petition procedure was actually altered to the benefit of the defendant states. Rather he was convinced that the multinational states were in a difficult position and that they deserved support as they tried to preserve their stability. Additional factors were Colban's cool discipline, his fair-play mentality, and a resultant desire for compromise – which reflected in part long-term political consider-

²⁷ MOL, K 107, 12. cs., 16/2–n.n. Baranyai's report to Benedek Jancsó (14. 6. 1923, copy).

²⁸ MOL, K 107, 14. cs., 16/9–240/1923. Baranyai's report to Daruváry (3. 11. 1923, draft).

²⁹ MOL, K 107, 12. cs., 16/2–924/1924. Baranyai's letter to Kuen-Héderváry (13. 10. 1924, draft).

ations and in part his self-defensive inclinations. He seldom allowed his emotions to show. When he did so, he would fume about the obvious political cynicism and bad faith of both petitioners and defendants. Meanwhile he was most upset – as the documents show, he took criticism badly – whenever his impartiality was called into question. At any rate, Baranyai was still shooting poison-arrows at Colban in early 1928, by which time, however, a new director of the Section was already awaited.³⁰

Aguirre, who was appointed in the autumn of 1928 after an interregnum of almost a year, received no better commendation from Hungarian diplomats. Even the polite Hevesy was taken aback by the “virgin ignorance” of the new director. Meanwhile, Baranyai was convinced that Aguirre had no understanding of the Hungarian minority problem and the events leading to the Treaty of Trianon: “He still knows little about minority procedural and substantive rights, and he is rather uninformed about the situation of minorities in Central Europe [...] he does not seem very keen to become acquainted with the situation of the minorities.” Moreover, since he had joined the League’s Secretariat from the outside, Aguirre was jealous of Azcárate, a man with experience in international law who was hard-working and more secure when dealing with the intricacies of the petition procedure. There were fears that Aguirre would remove Azcárate from his post as head of division and demote him to the level of Member of Section. Baranyai concluded his report as follows: *“I am afraid that management of the minority department is hardly in more fortunate hands now than it was during Colban’s time. The only consoling aspect is that according to various reports Aguirre does not intend to stay in Geneva for longer than 2–3 years.”*³¹ Baranyai’s predictions were fulfilled: Aguirre was concerned more about his personal career than about a reform of

³⁰ Baranyai in effect accused Colban of colluding with the Council to the detriment of the minorities, when he wrote with some exaggeration the following: “Most of the government representatives were pleased when he suggested a desirable arrangement that was most dear to them – namely, putting the issue aside,” because in this way the Council could shelve the issues while hiding behind the report drawn up by the Secretariat. See MOL, K 107, 6. cs., 7/b–55. (2091/1927) Baranyai’s letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (12. 1. 1928, copy).

³¹ MOL, K 107, 12. cs., 16/7–2020/1928. Baranyai’s report to Foreign Minister Lajos Walko (9. 12. 1928, copy).

the procedure. After cautious inquiries, he made known his moderate opposition to the reform proposals of 1928–1929.³²

Baranyai was more favourably inclined towards Aguirre's successor, Azcárate, whom Hungarian diplomats had regarded from the outset as a supporter of the minorities and consequently as a Hungarophile. In a report compiled in the summer of 1923, Baranyai specifically praised Azcárate, who had just returned from an inspection tour of the Ruthene Territory. He lauded him for not being "misled" by the accompanying Czech government officials and for identifying several minority policy abuses.³³ When Azcárate was appointed to head the Section, Baranyai's only criticism was that this "fine man" was not yet properly acquainted with the problems of the Hungarian minorities or with Hungary's minority policy.³⁴

Owing to a lack of documentary evidence, we do not know how the Hungarian diplomats responded to the appointment of Rosting, following his return from Danzig. The fact that Baranyai established a good relationship with Rosting as early as in 1921 – a relationship that subsequently became even closer during a successful visit by Rosting to Budapest later on in the year – implies that Rosting's appointment was welcomed by the Hungarian mission in Geneva. But a factor to consider is that Rosting had left Danzig because of his impotence in the face of the growing Nazi influence. His bitter experiences may quite possibly have led him to change his views on minority protection petitions, particularly since the revanchist states were using such petitions as a political weapon. At any rate, during his tenure (1934–1936) he pursued the more cautious line established by Colban (with which he was better acquainted), rather than try to imitate Azcárate's more inquiring and active approach.

A peculiarity of the minority protection system was that the League of Nations did not consider the petitioners to be parties to the procedure. Their role was merely to draw attention to legal violations,

³² German Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann, Canadian Foreign Minister Raoul Dandurand, and Azcárate urged that the petition procedure should be speeded up and extended, and raised the possibility of establishing a permanent minority commission. The League of Nations debated the plans, and this led to the Council Resolution of 13 June 1929, which introduced moderate reforms. For Aguirre's stance, see MOL, K 107, 12. cs., 16/1–287/1929. Baranyai's report to Walko (29. 1. 1929, draft).

³³ MOL, K 107, 12. cs., 16/2–162/1923. Baranyai's report to Daruváry (26. 6. 1923, copy).

³⁴ MOL, K 107, 6. cs., 7/b–164/1930. Baranyai's letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (17. 1. 1930, draft).

and so the staff of the League's Secretariat only rarely met with them personally. Indirectly, this was of advantage to the defendant states, because their diplomats and politicians made regular visits to the League's offices in Geneva, where they could easily butter up staff working at the Section while ignoring the petitioners. Moreover, particularly at the beginning but also sporadically later on, some of the petitions submitted were very imperfect drafts. The authors made badly punctuated and poorly argued representations to non-existent officials of non-existent organisations. The sober-minded, constructive and cultivated diplomats initially enjoyed a seemingly invincible advantage over the "vulgar", "disloyal" and "mischief-making" petitioners. Nevertheless, as the quality of petitions improved – owing in part to assistance from kin-state governments – and as the inflexibility of the defendant states became ever more manifest, so this advantage gradually disappeared. Indeed, squabbles sometimes occurred between politicians, diplomats and the staff of the League's Secretariat concerning the conduct of diplomats from the Little Entente countries.³⁵

In addition to establishing close contacts in Geneva, the staff of the Section – in particularly the founder and first director Erik Colban – considered foreign trips to be very important. Such trips were viewed as opportunities to win the trust of governments and to become better acquainted with the real situation of the minorities. Colban visited Vienna, Budapest and Warsaw as early as 1921–1922. He also made regular visits to Czechoslovakia and later travelled to Greece, Yugoslavia and Romania.

From the Hungarian perspective, Rosting's visit to Budapest in 1921 was particularly successful. Baranyai personally accompanied his Danish colleague, and Rosting was received by Miklós Horthy, Regent of Hungary, and by Prime Minister István Bethlen. At a luncheon, he also met with the foreign minister, Count Miklós Bánffy, and with the head of the Foreign Ministry's political department,

³⁵ Even the famous British understatement could not conceal the contempt of Foreign Secretary Austen Chamberlain or of Alexander Cadogan for comments made by Titulescu and by Nicolae Petrescu-Comnen, head of the Romanian legation in Geneva. There was general astonishment when Titulescu threatened, at the time of the debate on the matter of the expropriation of the Banat colonists, to sue each individual farmer before the Romanian courts (with easily predictable consequences) if the Permanent Court brought a judgement against Romania. See LONA, R 1627, 1919–1927:41/42766/1481. Colban's memorandum to Drummond (22. 6. 1925).

Count Sándor Khuen-Héderváry. Escorted by Zsombor Szász and Ferenc Herczeg, Rosting was then taken to the Augusta-colony and to the cattle trucks at Nyugati Railway Station in Budapest, where he received a taste of the sufferings of Hungarian refugees from the neighbouring states. This experience left a deep impression on him.³⁶

High expectations preceded the visit of Colban, Azcárate and the Frenchman Marcel Hoden (Information Section) to Transylvania in August 1923. However, the results of the trip were less than satisfying: after a time the members of the delegation were inclined to admit to themselves that due to the oddities of their itinerary (planned by Bucharest) they had seen little of the real situation of the minorities. Not wishing to upset his hosts, Colban even avoided meeting with the political representatives of the Hungarian minority. Meanwhile, a meeting with the heads of the Hungarian churches in Cluj (Kolozsvár) was held in an extremely bad atmosphere. The Romanian government was highly satisfied with the result. In the *Journal de Genève* of 17 August 1923, it even published its semi-official communiqué, stating that the delegates of the League of Nations had been persuaded of the unfounded nature of Hungarian complaints and the exemplary standards of Romanian minority policy.³⁷ Less than a month later, Bethlen and General Gábor Tánczos, visiting Geneva for the League's Assembly in 1923, demanded an explanation from Colban.

At the tense meeting, Bethlen told Colban that the delegation's failure to consult with Hungarian minority leaders had created a very bad impression. He asked that the Council and the Secretariat consider it their duty to undertake greater responsibility for the Hungarian minorities.³⁸ The matter was a thorn in the side of the Hungarian diplomats for years. At the Assembly in 1924, the Hungarian delegation launched an intense attack on the League's record in the

³⁶ MOL, K 107, 12. cs. 16/3–48/1921. Baranyai's report to Bánffy (3. 7. 1921, draft) and Rosting's travel report (15. 6. 1921). See also LONA, S 344, No. 4. Correspondence between Rosting and Baranyai (May–June 1921).

³⁷ Mouton provides information on preparations for the journey, its course and subsequent events: Mouton, *La Société des Nations*, pp. 190–219. For Colban's travelogue account, see LONA, R 1625, 1919–1927: 41/30120/1481.

³⁸ LONA, R 1690, 1919–1927: 41/30922/30730. Colban's confidential memorandum (15. 9. 1923). Colban's mission received a poor rating from the Hungarian side. Cf. MOL, K 107, 12. cs., 16/2–382/1923. Jancsó's letter to Baranyai (2. 11. 1923.) and Baranyai's response (1. 12. 1923, copy).

field of minority protection. Apponyi urged fundamental reforms, while Tánzos proposed a reduction in the Section's budget. They personally accused Colban of favouring Romania and of influencing the procedure to an extent that went beyond his own authority.³⁹ In 1926, the Hungarian chargé d'affaires to Bucharest lamented that whenever Colban visited Transylvania, he was always duped by the Romanian authorities and was only willing to see parties that were favourable to the Romanian side, advising the Hungarian minority leaders that it would be "far more effective to resolve their grievances by directly negotiating with the Romanian government than by submitting petitions to the League."⁴⁰

Over time such disillusionment ossified into an inflexible distrust, leading to a decline in the number of Hungarian petitions for some years. From the end of the decade, however, the numbers rose once again. Still, the intention was almost invariably to accentuate conflict rather than seek an improvement. Meanwhile the defendant states were quick to accept the challenge.

Hungarian minority petitions

The dynamic of the petitions concerning Hungarian grievances closely reflected developments in world politics. International affairs – especially in Europe – were characterised by the formation and consolidation of a new political system between 1920 and 1924, a period of *détente* between 1925 and 1929, economic and political instability and crisis between 1930 and 1933, the German–Japanese(–Italian) challenge between 1933 and 1938, and failure of the system between 1938 and 1940 – leading to the outbreak of war and the disintegration of the League of Nations.

Over the period, the practices surrounding Hungarian petitions developed as follows: 1920–21 – Hungarian diplomacy and the minorities just sounded out the situation (amid the legal and political instability of the ratification period, the most visible activity was undertaken by foreign church organisations); 1922–25 – the first wave

³⁹ Mouton, *La Société des Nations*, p. 231.

⁴⁰ MOL, K 107, 12. cs., 16/2–268/1928. Report of Béla Szentirmay, counsellor of the embassy to Bucharest, to Walko (9. 11. 1926, copy).

of minority petitions (with the legal and political conditions of presenting minority grievances in place, and since under the terms of the peace treaty Hungary was prohibited from pursuing revisionist propaganda, the only method of attracting international attention was to keep the minority issue on the agenda); 1926–29 – a visible decline in the number of petitions (it is unclear whether this was due to the failure of the first major minority petitions, gratitude for the League's help in Hungary's financial reconstruction of 1924, the franc forgery scandal of 1925, or the changing focus of Hungarian diplomacy, including closer relations with Italy and the associated policy of frontier revision); 1930 – the second wave of petitions (encouraged initially by the Great Depression, which underscored the problems in Central Europe, and then by the advance of the revanchist coalition of the axis powers), which concluded with Hungary's exit from the League on 10 April 1939.

**Petitions concerning the injuries of Hungarian minorities
(to the League of Nations + to other international boards)⁴¹**

Year	Number of petitions against			All
	Czechoslov.	Yugoslavia	Romania	
1920	0+1	0+1	1+2	1+4
1921	1+1	0+1	3+6	4+8
1922	6	5	2	13
1923	1	0	0	1
1924	3	0	1	4
1925	4	0	5	9
1926	0	0	0	0
1927	1	0	1	2
1928	1	0	0	1
1929	0	1	1	2
1930	2	6	3	11
1931	3	2	3	8
1932	1	3	0	4
1933	0	1	5	6
1934	1	0	9	10
1935	0	0	5	5
1936	0	1	3	4
1937	0	0	5	5
1938	0	0	0	0
1939	0	0	0	0
All	24+2	19+2	47+8	90+12

Not all of the initial petitions may be regarded as classical minority petitions. The parties submitting such "reports", "appeals", "memoranda" and "exposés" (the International Red Cross, churches, and sympathetic supporters) were sometimes not directly affected by the

⁴¹ These are approximate numbers due to the sometimes unclear standards used for the filing of different documents. Minority petitions were often followed by supplementary petitions, and the Secretariat and the Council took the liberty of separating or uniting certain cases.

grievance. Moreover, many petitions were addressed to another body such as the Ambassadors' Council – or other successor organisation of the peace conference – rather than the Secretariat.

Typically, such petitions were based on generalisations or sought remedies or mediation in some personal matter – harassment, requisition, pension rights, etc. It was only from 1922 that minority petitions in the classical sense were made, in which entitled individuals or institutions submitted their complaints in a proper manner and to the competent forum with precise legal references. Petitions made against the Little Entente countries generally contained objections to agrarian reforms, educational policy, press regulations, and restrictions on minority community life and language use. From the outset, the Hungarian government also encouraged the Ruthenian minority in Czechoslovakia to petition for the introduction of autonomy in the Ruthene Territory, to which Prague had earlier pledged itself in a treaty. Sometimes it assisted in the drafting of texts, provided financial support, monitored the progress of a petition, and smoothed its path. The Hungarian government hoped that provincial autonomy would improve the situation of the tens of thousands of Hungarians residing in the region and that territorial self-government would pave the way over time for the return of the region by its own volition to Hungarian sovereignty. Meanwhile, the Council repeatedly acknowledged – although with increasing reluctance – that Prague merely produced optimistic reports about the Ruthene Territory's development but refused to introduce autonomy.

The greatest successes were achieved by Hungarian petitions against land reforms that clearly strengthened the economic and political interests of the ruling nations while damaging Hungarian interests. Such petitions were on the agenda against Czechoslovakia for years. In the end, however, the League of Nations accepted Prague's arguments and its pledge to distribute expropriated estates in a manner that was also fair and proportionate to the minority populations. In the case of Romania, the Council on two occasions sustained Hungarian objections. Thus, in 1925, Bucharest was obliged to offer compensation to farmers from the Banat region amounting to 700,000 golden francs, and in 1932, after a long delay, it recognised a claim for damages arising from the expropriation of forests owned collectively by former Szekler border guards in the Csík region. Nevertheless, in the first instance, the redemption sum was negligible, while in the

second case the systematic sabotage of implementation led to disappointment among the petitioners.

In contrast with these high-profile cases, some petitions against Romania had a more favourable outcome, such as the cancellation or amendment of legislative bills and government measures. In some cases, this was achieved without the involvement of the Council. Positive examples include the amendment of Anghelescu's education bills in 1925, the reopening of the Calvinist college in Oraştie (Szászváros) and the reintroduction of Hungarian-language tuition at the Unitarian college in Oradea (Nagyvárad) in 1926, and the cancellation, in 1937, of measures introduced by the Romanian minister of trade that discriminated against commercial employees of ethnic minority background.⁴²

Summary

The aim of the League of Nations' minority protection system was on the one hand to correct mistakes and on the other hand to educate its members in the art of peaceful coexistence, thereby providing a framework for learning about democracy and humanity. Still, in an atmosphere of mutual distrust, the system soon became an instrument for rivalry acted out in full view of international public opinion. Finally, it collapsed under the baleful pressure of the impending war.

Although the treaties were "functional" in both international legal and political terms – that is, they served to regulate real problems in line with contemporary standards – and the indefatigable staff administering the procedure worked with expertise and enthusiasm – nevertheless the minority disputes all too often became a question of confidence within the rival alliance systems of "victors" and "defeated". In this way, international minority protection became a new secondary arena for the pursuit of international conflicts, where both politicians and diplomats could try out the weapons of their profession in a new environment.

The defendant states used all means to rebuff the attacks launched by the minorities and their supportive kin-states. Hungarian tactics

⁴² Mouton, *La Société des Nations*, p. 412, and C.523.1937.I. (October 1937)

were very diverse, ranging from simple provocation to meticulous and precise action. Meanwhile the counter-attack tended to be supercilious in the case of Czechoslovakia and aggressive in the case of Romania, while Yugoslavia would simply issue automatic denials.⁴³

It is hardly surprising that this system of minority protection received criticism from all sides. The states signatory to the international minority protection treaties were never reconciled to the infringement on their sovereignty. In some cases, they had little choice but to defend themselves against the accusations of the minorities. Although they bore in mind treaty provisions when drafting legislation, they nevertheless used all means to find loopholes in the treaties' articles. And in the course of implementation, they went one stage further, frequently breaching the rules. They considered minority complaints to be no less than expressions of disloyalty on the part of their own citizens, motivated by the propaganda and hostility of the kin state (e.g. Hungary). Meanwhile, the region's national minorities, as well as the states that were required to support their ethnic kin living in other countries, regarded the minority protection system as highly ineffective. Although they were keen to see petitions submitted, they were continuously urging a reform of the system.

The politicians with a leading role in the League of Nations Council, where minority petitions were ultimately judged, considered the protection of minority rights to be almost a burden. Each case gave rise to an extremely delicate situation, forcing the Council repeatedly to take a position on international disputes. Many Council members would have evaded this responsibility if they had been able to do so, despite the prestige of their new "official" role. But there were many compelling arguments against their doing so: a retreat would have gravely damaged the League's prestige and abandoning

⁴³ For instance, in 1922 and again in 1929, Czechoslovakia arranged for hollow counter-petitions to be submitted against Hungary. Moreover, for a period of almost two decades, it defied treaty provisions and Council resolutions ordering the introduction of autonomy in the Ruthene Territory. For their part, Romania and Yugoslavia were unwilling even to sign the minority protection treaties. Then, in the spring of 1922, as a protest against the Committee of Three's decision to examine the Hungarian petition concerning Transylvanian land reform, Romania closed its mission in Geneva, re-establishing it only three years later. In the 1930s, it did its utmost to slow down the Council procedure in cases concerning Romania's national minorities. Meanwhile Yugoslavia stood completely aloof. It simply denied all allegations made in the petitions and consistently rejected even the publication of commission reports.

the guarantee would have rendered the minority issue a source of even greater conflict. Possible solutions included the establishment of international courts (the Permanent Court of International Justice, the courts of arbitration, and possibly an international court for minority issues) a broadening of their scope, bilateral minority protection treaties, or *ad hoc* political intervention. But compared with all these ideas, the existing system (with its own rules, the practice of compromise designed to sustain peace, and the supervisory role played by the great powers) still seemed the best.

International minority protection could not divorce itself from general international politics. After a brief period of improving international relations, the new international system, whose inception had occurred amid the division into victors and defeated, began to reflect once again antagonistic blocs of a military and political nature. This fact rendered the peaceful and reasonable administration of minority problems almost impossible. The efforts to eliminate national provisions violating the minority treaties as part of a process of legal harmonisation or due to the League's mediation were in vain. The mentality and purpose that gave rise to discrimination continued to exist. In vain did the minorities receive amends in Geneva, for they continued to succumb to the daily struggle in their own countries. As long as international relations were characterised by confrontation, there could be no hope for peace.

As Pablo de Azcárate wrote in a retrospective study: "In the matter of minority protection, one had to find not the solution to the problem but the practical means of intervention in a situation that was explosive, sensitive and politically, legally – and even emotionally – complex, while preventing the dangers from turning into reality and thereby jeopardising international co-operation. This was the fundamental objective of the League of Nations. This implied, however, that the protection of minorities would be a long-term task, requiring common sense, circumspection, a sense of proportion, and considerable patience and understanding. On top of this there needed to be a willingness for self-sacrifice, for it was predictable that the task could never be fully accomplished, and much less to the satisfaction of all."⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Azcárate, *La Société des Nations*, p. 72.

One can only agree with Azcárate's conclusion. Perhaps one might add, however, that the political lessons to be drawn from the League's two decades of minority protection were bound to be more weighty than the practical results.

Ferenc Eiler

“Minority Foreign Policy” The Role of Czechoslovakia’s Hungarian Minority in the European Minorities Congress 1925–1938

I. The Hungarian minorities’ scope for action in the international arena

Between the two world wars, Europe’s national minorities had few opportunities for action in the international political arena. Essentially, there were just two possibilities: first, the minorities could submit petitions to the League of Nations as complainants; second, they could become involved, as independent actors, in the work of various supra-national organisations – albeit such organisations had little power to exert pressure.

The League of Nations’ regional mechanisms for international minority protection presented opportunities for action that were special in several respects.¹ In cases of violations of the law, ecclesiastical,

¹ Scholarly works in Hungarian on minority protection under the League of Nations include: Arthur Balogh, *A kisebbségek nemzetközi védelme* [The International Protection of the Minorities], Berlin 1928; László Buza, *A kisebbségek jogi helyzete* [The Legal Situation of the Minorities], Budapest 1930; Erzsébet Szalayné Sándor, *A kisebbségvédelem nemzetközi jogi intézményrendszere a 20. században* [The System of International Legal Institutions in the Twentieth Century], Budapest 2003; Ferenc Eiler, *A két világháború közötti nemzetközi kisebbségvédelem rendszere* [The System of International Minority Protection Between

cultural and social organisations, political parties, and private individuals could petition the League of Nations for protection against their own state with a view to redressing real or perceived grievances. Nevertheless, under the rules of the complaint procedure, the role of the minorities ended with the dispatch of petitions to Geneva. This was because the League did not recognise aggrieved parties (i.e. the minorities) as legal entities and it therefore excluded them from subsequent stages of the procedure. Further, before the procedure was reformed at the League of Nations Council session in Madrid in 1929, minority petitioners were not officially told whether the Council was considering a petition or whether it had decided to accept the reply of the country in question and thereby lay the matter to rest.

Between 1921 and 1938, approximately 1000 petitions were submitted to the Secretariat, but just 473 of these petitions met the prescribed criteria of form and content. Petitions excluded at this stage were automatically ignored by the Council's committee of three (later, committee of five), which was responsible, under the preliminary procedure, for deciding whether or not the Council should launch an official procedure in the matter. Most petitions addressed the minority policies of countries that had gained territory after the First World War. Receivable petitions were made as follows: Poland – 203; Romania – 78; Greece – 41; Czechoslovakia – 36; and Yugoslavia – 35.²

The Hungarian government as well as civil society organisations registered in Hungary (*League of Hungarian Women, Bocskai Association, Hungarian-Szekler Association, etc.*) accounted initially for most of the complaints submitted to the League of Nations or other international fora, concerning the situation of Hungarian minorities. However, as the Hungarian minority political parties became established political actors in the successor states, this situation changed.

the Two World Wars], *Pro Minoritate Autumn/Winter* (1997), pp. 64–90; Miklós Zeidler, A Nemzetek Szövetsége és a magyar kisebbségi petíciók [The League of Nations and the Hungarian Minority Petitions], in: Nándor Bárdi, Csilla Fedinec (eds.), *Etnopolitika. A közösségi, magán- és nemzetközi érdekek viszonyrendszere Közép-Európában*, Budapest 2003, pp. 59–85.

² The actual number of minority petitions is a matter of debate. This is largely because it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between new petitions and petitions submitted as additions to older petitions, although the Minority Section of the Secretariat did not count the latter as separate petitions. The cited numbers are based on research carried out by Sebastian Bartsch, who relied on six volumes of records kept by the Section. Sebastian Bartsch, *Minderheitenschutz in der internationalen Politik*, Opladen 1995, pp. 103–106.

Soon, the political, social and ecclesiastical organisations of the minorities themselves were petitioning the League. Between 1920 and 1938, 90 petitions concerning Hungarian minorities were submitted to the League, while 12 petitions were sent to other international fora.³ Of these petitions, 47 dealt with grievances in Romania, 24 with grievances in Czechoslovakia, and 19 with grievances in Yugoslavia.⁴ The Secretariat declared most of these petitions to be receivable (i.e. as fulfilling the criteria of form and style) and forwarded them to the Council. Committees of three were established by the Council to inquire into the complaints. In a majority of cases, the Committee of Three simply acknowledged the response of the petitioned state and closed the matter. At other times, however, governments voluntarily addressed grievances before they reached the Council, or the Committee of Three hammered out compromise solutions behind the scenes.

The Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia was the first Hungarian minority to make use of the opportunities provided by the League: 14 petitions concerning its complaints were submitted between 1921 and 1925.⁵ In the subsequent period, the number of petitions fell significantly, but it rose again in 1930–1932 (6 petitions). Most of the petitions relating to the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia – apart from those concerning the general situation – addressed the failure of the Czechoslovak authorities to introduce autonomy in the Carpathian region – as was required by the provisions of the minority treaty, or abuses in connection with the process of acquiring citizenship. In general terms, the League of Nations failed to live up to the expectations of petitioners, as the

³ Zeidler, *A Nemzetek Szövetsége*, p. 80. Major works on the Hungarian petitions include: János Csuka, *A délvidéki magyarság története 1918–1941* [The History of Hungarians in Yugoslavia, 1918–1941], Budapest 1995, pp. 401–405; Gustave Kóvér, *Non, Genève ne protège pas les minorités nationales!* Geneva 1938, pp. 86–158; Imre Mikó, *Huszonkét év. Az erdélyi magyarság politikai története 1918. december 1-től 1940. augusztus 31-ig* [Twenty-two Years. The Political History of the Hungarians in Transylvania from 1 December 1918 until 31 August 1940], Budapest 1941, pp. 302–308; Herbert von Truhart, *Völkerbund und Minderheiten-Petitionen*, Leipzig and Vienna 1931, pp. 137–154.

⁴ Petitions concerning grievances of the Hungarian minority in Yugoslavia were submitted to the League of Nations by Imre Prokopy, who had resettled in Hungary and who co-operated closely with the Hungarian Prime Minister's Office. Imre Prokopy, *A jugoszláviai magyar kisebbség védelmében a népszövetségi Tanácshoz intézett panasziratok sorsa* [The Fate of Petitions Submitted to the League of Nations Council on Behalf of the Hungarian Minority in Yugoslavia], in: Zoltán Csuka, *A visszatért Délvidék*, Budapest 1941, pp. 67–81.

⁵ Zeidler, *A Nemzetek Szövetsége*, p. 80.

Council regularly accepted the Czechoslovak government's official response to petitions. The fact that just one petition was submitted to the League after 1932 indicates the extent of this loss of confidence.⁶

Nevertheless, action by Hungarian minorities in the international arena was not restricted to petitions submitted to Geneva – the main disadvantage of which was the passive role assigned to the minorities under the procedure. At the margins of international politics, there were several other organisations dedicated – *inter alia* – to the problems of minorities, whose work was open to the involvement of minority politicians. Until the mid-1920s, the two most important organisations of this type were the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the International Union of League of Nations Associations.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union established a Committee on Ethnic and Colonial Issues in 1923. Thereafter it occasionally addressed the issue of international minority protection. Still, in order to attend its meetings as fully-fledged representatives, politicians were required to be elected members of parliament. This effectively excluded the Hungarian Party in Yugoslavia from the work of the organisation, since it had no parliamentary representation – with the exception of the period 1928–1929. Meanwhile a representative of the National Hungarian Party of Romania attended an Inter-Parliamentary Union committee meeting just once. This occurred on 14–15 February 1923, when Party Chairman Samu Jósika sent József Willer, a prominent figure in the National Hungarian Party who later became a member of parliament, as his representative to Paris. The Transylvanian politician's ten-point package of proposals, a key demand of which was recognition of the minorities as legal entities, received a cool response from the Inter-Parliamentary Union. After July 1923, relations between the National Hungarian Party and the international forum were broken off indefinitely.⁷ At subsequent Inter-Parliamentary Union conferences, the only Hungarian group to be represented was Czechoslovakia's Hungarian minority – usually in the person of Géza Szüllő.⁸

⁶ Andor Jaross, A Nemzetek Szövetsége és mi kisebbségi magyarok [The League of Nations and We Minority Hungarians], *Magyar Kisebbség* 21 (1933), pp. 597–98.

⁷ Mikó, *Huszonkét év*, pp. 81–82.

⁸ Ernő Flachbarth, A csehszlovákiai magyarság küzdelme jogaiért a nemzetközi fórumokon [The Struggle of the Hungarians in Czechoslovakia for Their Rights at International Fora], *Magyar Kisebbség* 6 (1928), p. 208.

The International Union of League of Nations Associations, the other supranational organisation, which was concerned with the popularisation and dissemination of League of Nations ideas, established a Minority Committee at a conference held in Vienna on 15 October 1921. For the Hungarian minorities, League of Nations associations were more attractive than the Inter-Parliamentary Union as an arena for political initiatives. Where possible, the Hungarian minorities formed League of Nations associations that were independent from those of majority national groups of their respective states. Nevertheless, it was not easy for the Hungarian minorities to establish and register their associations. They faced several obstacles, which were erected by national governments fearful that the minority politicians would damage their countries' reputations. For instance, the Romanian authorities prevented the Hungarian minority in Romania from founding the League of Nations Association of Hungarians in Romania until 14 May 1927. It was finally established in Odorheiu Secuiesc (Székelyudvarhely).⁹ In addition, the Union of League of Nations Associations of Romania, most of the members of which were of course ethnic Romanians, subsequently succeeded in blocking official recognition of the Hungarian minority's League of Nations association until 1930.¹⁰

The Hungarian minority in Yugoslavia established a League of Nations association in Subotica (Szabadka) on 15 July 1928. In Yugoslavia, the problem was not merely controversy surrounding official approval for the association's charter.¹¹ After the dissolution of the country's political parties in 1929 and the establishment of a dictatorship, a rival association was founded at the behest of the Yugoslav government by Gábor Szántó, who was co-operating with the new regime. The authorities immediately registered this second

⁹ Its chairman was Arthur Balogh (member of the presidential council of the Hungarian National Party from 1928; senator: 1926–37), the honorary president was István Ugron (chairman of the Hungarian National Party: 1923–26), the secretary-general István Sulyok (journalist, member of parliament: 1932–33).

¹⁰ Mikó, *Huszonkét év*, p. 83.

¹¹ The Association's chairman was György Sántha (chairman of the Hungarian Party: 1922–29); its co-chairmen were Imre Várady (co-chairman of the Hungarian Party: 1922–29; member of parliament: 1927–29) and Árpád Falcione (co-chairman of the Hungarian Party: 1922–29); and its secretary-general was Leó Deák (secretary of the Hungarian Party: 1922–24; and its vice-chairman: 1924–29).

body, rather than the previous association formed by the legitimate leaders of the Hungarian community.¹²

The first League of Nations association to be established was the Hungarian League of Nations Association in Czechoslovakia established in Lucenec (Losonc). Founded in 1922, this association became particularly active in the Union of League of Nations Associations.¹³ The authorities delayed approval for the association's charter until 1925, but this did not prevent Hungarian delegates from taking part in the general assemblies of the Union and in the work of the minorities committee.¹⁴ Géza Szűllő usually represented the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia at the International Union of League of Nations Associations, as he also did at the Inter-Parliamentary Union. On account of his personal ambition, excellent knowledge of languages, and formidable debating skills, Szűllő, who became chairman of the National Christian Socialist Party in 1925, was ideally suited to this role. At International Union debates, this persuasive figure who never shied away from conflict did his utmost to pillory Czechoslovakia and its minority policies and to promote frontier revision, using propaganda to discredit Czechoslovakia.¹⁵ Szűllő forged close relations with the Prime Minister's office and Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Hungary, and he regularly informed Hungarian government bodies about his experiences abroad.

Nevertheless, for both international organisations, minority protection was merely one of many topics. Indeed, just a fraction of their resources could be devoted to the minority issue. Even so, the two organisations did provide a limited degree of international publicity for the endeavours and grievances of the minorities. This was so despite the fact that the minorities committees of the two organi-

¹² For a description of these events, see *Magyar Kisebbség* 17 (1931), p. 617.

¹³ The Association's chairman was the industrialist Béla Novák, while its honorary chairman was Géza Szűllő (chairman of the National Christian Socialist Party: 1925–31; member of parliament: 1925–38) and its vice-chairman was Ernő Flachbarth (head of the Hungarian parties' central office in Prague: 1925–29). After personnel changes in 1931, its chairman was János Esterházy (chairman of the National Christian Socialist Party: 1932–36; acting chairman of the United Hungarian Party: 1936–38; member of parliament: 1935–38) and its acting vice-chairman was Andor Jaross (acting chairman of the Hungarian National Party: 1933–36; chairman of the United Hungarian Party: 1936–38; member of parliament: 1935–38).

¹⁴ Flachbarth, *A csehszlovákiai magyarság küzdelme*, p. 208.

¹⁵ Géza Szűllő, *Magyar Szemle* 4 (1938), pp. 372–375.

sations were always very restricted in scope and their declarative resolutions and recommendations were not binding on member states of the League of Nations.¹⁶ Even the minority politicians did not overrate the two organisations' significance.¹⁷

In 1925, however, there arose a body specifically concerned with minority protection issues, whose membership comprised Europe's officially recognised national minorities. The Estonian journalist Ewald Ammende founded the European Minorities Congress as a representative organisation of the national minorities. Through the effective use of international press coverage and inter-minority solidarity, the aim was to establish the Congress as a voice that would be listened to even by the major political actors.¹⁸ It was this body that became the focus of the Hungarian minorities' endeavours in the foreign policy sphere.

II. The Hungarian role in the European Minorities Congress

Throughout the fourteen years of its existence, the European Minorities Congress functioned as a loose organisation. It defined itself as

¹⁶ The League of Nations Council and the Secretariat were, at times, rather unenthusiastic about the work of the International Union of League of Nations Associations. "The work of the International Union is less than appreciated in some areas. The resolutions elaborated by the International Union and sent as recommendations to the League of Nations are viewed as inconvenient and rather untactical interference in the League's field of competence... The work of the International Union in the field of minority protection is therefore strongly criticised [by officials of the League] – also in terms of directing the attention of public opinion to the problem; on the other hand, they are convinced that these efforts will not achieve anything at the League of Nations Council." Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (PAAA) R 60463, nn. Report of Aschmann, German consul in Geneva, to the German Foreign Ministry, dated 30. 10. 1925.

¹⁷ "This International Union, which is an appendage of the world's talking shop – the League of Nations, and a gymnastics association for the redundant elderly and young 'would-bes', held a meeting in Brussels, adopting resolutions that nobody takes seriously apart from themselves." Országos Széchényi Könyvtár [National Széchényi Library] (OSZK), Kézirattár [Archives], F. X. X/27. Géza Szűllő's report on the conference and other discussions of the International Union of League of Nations Associations. Paris, 12. 2. 1925.

¹⁸ In the summer of 1925, Ammende summarised his ideas concerning the organisation. See Ewald Ammende, *Az európai nemzeti kisebbségek képviselői számára rendezendő konferencia szükségességének indokai, irányelvei és programja* [Reasons for the Holding of a Conference of Representatives of Europe's National Minorities, and Guidelines and Programme of the Conference], in: Ferenc Eiler, *Nemzetközi kisebbségi kongresszusok a két világháború között*, (Supplement to *Regio* 3 (1996), pp. 158–166.

a “congress community” whose various branches met once a year, usually in Geneva.¹⁹ At such conferences, which generally lasted three days, the debate followed points on the agenda selected in advance by the Board. At the end of the meeting, resolutions were adopted as uniform positions of the Congress, and these were then sent to the League of Nations and to the press. Between conferences, the Board, which comprised members representing the various ethnic groups, was entitled to take decisions on essential issues. The Congress’s founder, Ammende, administered the organisation from 1925 until his death in 1936, and he became head of its permanent office in Vienna in 1927.²⁰ Characteristically, in organisations that meet just once a year and whose members are separated by great distances, the fulltime secretary becomes extremely influential – even if he has no right to make final decisions on major issues. In the case of the European Minorities Congress, Ammende’s personality and his network of contacts certainly left their mark on the work of the organisation.

To gain international acceptance of the Congress and to promote organisational efficiency, Ammende laid down two important principles at the outset: recognition of the League of Nations as the legitimate forum of international minority protection (including acceptance of the League’s exclusive prerogative for frontier revision); a ban on criticism of sovereign states during conference debates. The aim of the former rule was to increase international acceptance of the Congress, while the latter’s objective was two-fold: to counter the anticipated criticism from states and to prevent kin-states from sowing division between the various minorities. Adherence to these princip-

¹⁹ Scholarly works on the work of the Congress include: Rudolf Michaelsen, *Der Europäische Nationalitäten-Kongress 1925–1928. Aufbau, Krise und Konsolidierung*, Frankfurt am Main, Bern, New York, and Nancy 1984; Sabine Bamberger-Stemmann, *Der Europäische Nationalitätenkongress 1925 bis 1938. Nationale Minderheiten zwischen Lobbytivismus und Großmachtinteressen*, Marburg 2000; Béla Bellér, *Az Európai Nemzetiségi Kongresszusok és Magyarország a kisebbségvédelem rendszerében 1925–1929* [The Congress of European Nationalities and Hungary in the System of Minority Protection, 1925–1929], *Századok* 5 (1981), pp. 995–1040; Ferenc Eiler, *Az Európai Nemzeti Kisebbségek Kongresszusainak határozatai 1925–1937* [Resolutions of the Congresses of European National Minorities], Szeged 1996; Ferenc Eiler, *Kisebbségvédelem és/vagy revízió? Magyar részvétel az Európai Nemzetiségi Kongresszuson 1925–39* [Minority Protection and/or Revision? Hungarian Participation in the Congress of European Nationalities], (Dissertation manuscript) Pécs 2005.

²⁰ Ammende died in Beijing in 1936. His successor – initially as temporary and then as permanent secretary-general – was the Baltic German Ferdinand Uexküll-Güldenband, who became the chief editor of *Nation und Staat*.

les had two important consequences: firstly, the organisation did not fall apart despite recurring internal differences; and secondly, the organisation's work was necessarily limited to an analysis of theoretical issues and became rather insipid as a result.

As far as the outside world was concerned, the Congress was free of all influence from the member states. The minorities themselves were required to secure the resources necessary for the Congress's operation. In fact, however, the organisation was never completely free of state influence. Newspapers in various countries claimed that the new organisation was a German government initiative. This was not true. Indeed, Ammende's initial endeavours were opposed by the German Foreign Ministry. While the Congress made use of the resources and experiences of the European League of German National Groups,²¹ it was not until 1928 that the German Foreign Ministry agreed to provide financial support to the organisation. Thereafter it tried incessantly to turn the Congress into an instrument of German foreign policy.²²

In contrast the Hungarian government welcomed the Congress initiative from the outset. Bethlen received Ammende, the German minority politician from Estonia, while on vacation at his private estate. The Congress idea had evidently caught the Hungarian prime minister's imagination; there were several reasons for his support. Bethlen's principal hope was that the Congress would serve as an effective and influential organisation in the international political arena – with its own permanent office and official journal.²³ A secondary expectation was that the organisation would serve as a catalyst for co-operation between the German and Hungarian minorities of the successor states, thereby promoting frontier revision. Such motives encouraged successive Hungarian governments to provide substantial financial support to the Congress throughout the 14 years of its existence.²⁴ During his visits to Budapest and in his frequent reports,

²¹ PAAA, R 60462, nn. Gen. Consul Müller's memorandum on action concerning the International Congress of Minorities. 5 September 1925; PAAA, R 60462, nn. Report of Freytag, German ambassador to Bucharest. Bucharest, 18. 9. 1925.

²² PAAA, R 96562, p. 088. Memorandum of Poensgen (League of Nations' department). Berlin, 7. 4. 1928.

²³ PAAA, R 60462, nn. Report of Welczeck, German ambassador to Budapest, to the German Foreign Ministry. Budapest, 27. 8. 1925.

²⁴ Until the early 1930s, Ammende received – after the lesser sums of the initial years – 8000 Swiss francs from the Hungarian Foreign Ministry, as a contribution to the Hungarian

Ammende regularly informed senior Hungarian government officials about his plans, his experiences during his travels, and news concerning international organisations. His contacts in Hungary included Permanent Deputy Foreign Minister Sándor Khuen-Héderváry, State Secretary for Minority Affairs at the Prime Minister's Office Tibor Pataky, and – on occasion – Prime Minister István Bethlen.

Ammende also made contact with the political leaders of the Hungarian minorities in order to persuade them to attend the Congress's first conference in Geneva. He immediately came to an agreement with Szüllő and Flachbarth, representatives of the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia who regularly attended meetings of the International Union of League of Nations Associations and who were presumably known to him personally. The leaders of the National Hungarian Party in Romania, on the other hand, first checked the credentials of the German politician with the government in Budapest and with leaders of the Transylvanian Saxons before acceding to his request.²⁵ Real difficulties arose in connection with the Hungarian political elite in Yugoslavia, which, fearing retribution, initially rejected Ammende's invitation to Geneva.²⁶ Only under pressure from the government in Budapest were they prepared to attend the conference.²⁷

The Hungarian minorities subsequently sent representatives to the Congress's conferences each year; the only other group to do so was the German minority in Poland. The total number of delegates was small: over the years, just 16 Hungarian delegates attended the confe-

group. In addition he received 5000 francs from the Prime Minister's Office and 5000 francs from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as extraordinary payments. The amount was reduced somewhat from the beginning of the 1920s. The exact amount granted to the Congress (to Ammende) cannot be determined, owing to a lack of documentary evidence. The greatest problem is that we know very little about the extraordinary payments made before 1928 and after 1934 (indeed, we do not even know whether such payments took place). Based on payments received by the minority congresses between 1925 and 1938, the total support granted to them exceeded 140,000 Swiss francs. In addition, the Hungarian government paid for the travel and per diem expenses of Hungarian delegates.

²⁵ Elemér Jakabffy, *Adatok családunk történetéhez. (kézirat) XII. rész* [Data on the History of Our Family. (Manuscript) Part 12], Library of the Teleki László Foundation, K 3066/2005.

²⁶ Magyar Országos Levéltár [National Hungarian Archives] (MOL) K 64, 1925-47-503-400. Report of András Hory, Hungarian ambassador to Belgrade, to the Hungarian Foreign Ministry. 30. 9. 1925.

²⁷ MOL, K 64, 1925-47-503-309. Directive of the Political Department to Wodianer, chargé d'affaires to Belgrade. Budapest, 7. 9. 1925.

rences. Moreover, five of the 16 delegates attended on just one occasion, so their role may be regarded as negligible.

Generally speaking, Géza Szűllő represented the Hungarian minorities at the Congress's conferences. As vice-chairman of the Hungarian group and as board member, Szűllő attended and spoke at each of the 14 conferences. The only other figure to do so was the Polish German Kurt Graebe, chairman of the organising committee of the Congress. Two other important Hungarian politicians were Elemér Jakabffy, who attended 12 conferences as a representative of the Hungarian minority in Romania, and Leó Deák, who attended 11 conferences as a representative of the Hungarian minority in Yugoslavia. The Hungarian group's legal expert, the international lawyer Arthur Balogh, attended eight conferences.

The Hungarian delegates belonged to the pre-war generation; most of them had legal degrees and were of noble background. They tended to be key figures in the Hungarian minority political parties or at least were affiliated with them, against whom the Hungarian prime minister's office had expressed no reservations.²⁸ Fourteen of the delegates were members of their parties' national leaderships, while two of them worked primarily as journalists or publicists. Half of the Hungarian delegates were elected as members of parliament at least once during the interwar period. Géza Szűllő, Elemér Jakabffy, Arthur Balogh, and János Jósika were elected on several occasions to the legislature, while János Esterházy, Andor Jaross, Dénes Strelitzky, and István Sulyok were elected just once. Most of the delegates held senior positions in League of Nations associations run by Hungarians.

Members of the Hungarian group and the Hungarian government shared the same basic position on the Congress. This facilitated cooperation on strategic issues between the Hungarian actors having influence on the organization; however, some smaller disagreements did occur. They evaluated this branch of Hungarian foreign policy in terms of the country's axiomatic revisionist ambitions. For them, the main function of the Congress was to raise international awareness of minority issues. They therefore regarded it as a lobby tool that could be employed in the international campaign to amend the guarantee procedure of the League of Nations. At least at the outset, they also

²⁸ Public figures with social democratic or communist views were automatically excluded when the lists of delegates were being compiled.

regarded the Congress as a forum where they could forge political co-operation between the German and Hungarian minorities of the successor states and could persuade the German minorities – which had reservations towards the Hungarians – of the benefits of revision. Thus, when periodising the history of the Congress in terms of its Hungarian members, the definitive factor is their relationship with the Congress's policy and with its German actors.

The first period was 1925–29, a time of harmonious co-operation. This initial five-year period saw the establishment and consolidation of the organisational framework of the Congress. The annual conferences systematically addressed the various aspects of the minority question, and the organisation developed theoretical positions on all conceivable issues.²⁹ The Congress survived despite being abandoned by the Poles (who were dissatisfied with the German minority's demand for cultural autonomy) and by Germany's minorities (who sought to protest the Congress's failure to recognise the Frisian community in Germany as a national minority).³⁰ The Congress tried unsuccessfully to persuade the League of Nations to adopt it as a partner. Its participation in international efforts to reform the League of Nations in 1928–29 failed to achieve the anticipated results.³¹

During this period, both the Hungarian government and the Hungarian minority delegates applied a policy of wait-and-see. The Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regularly transferred sums of money to Ammende (by means of Flachbarth), while the minority delegates prepared for and participated in the work of conferences. There were, however, several signs of an impend-

²⁹ In accordance with its self-imposed limits, the Congress did not deliberate on the principle of self-determination or the issue of frontier revision.

³⁰ Declarations of Jerzy Kaczmarek and E. Christiansen of 24 August 1927, in: *Sitzungsbericht des Kongresses der organisierten nationalen Gruppen in den Staaten Europas*, Vienna and Leipzig 1928, pp. 123–125.

³¹ In 1929, both member-states and international organisations made comments to the Committee of Three (appointed by the League of Nations Council) concerning the planned reform of the minority protection procedures. The memorandum drawn up by the Congress's board highlighted the following points: complete openness of the procedure, participation of minority petitioners in the procedure, improved practice of the committee of three, regular opinions from the Permanent Court of International Justice in The Hague, the need for an experts committee working alongside the League, and compliance with the spirit of the minority protection treaties by those states under no obligation to protect their minorities. Memorandum of the Board of the Congress of European Nationalities, *Nation und Staat*, August 1929, pp. 583–84.

ing clash between the Hungarian group and the Congress's leadership. The government in Budapest was aware that the organisation could not make demands on the League of Nations and its member states in contradiction of the terms of the peace treaties – and therefore accepted that the Congress would concentrate for the time being on conceptual issues. In contrast, however, the Hungarian minority delegates from Czechoslovakia, Géza Szűllő and Ernő Flachbarth, demanded increasingly urgently that the Secretary-General abandon the academic conceptual approach and address instead specific grievances of the various minorities.³² Under such circumstances, the government in Budapest naturally took notice of the growing influence of the German group within the Congress and of the German Foreign Ministry.³³ Moreover, there had been no real improvement in relations between the German and Hungarian minorities. Although at the conference in 1928 the German and Hungarian minorities in Romania signed a declaration of intent concerning the co-ordination of future political action, nevertheless the agreement was short-lived: in the same year, the German minority party, rejecting the idea of a minority block, formed an alliance with Romania's governing party.³⁴

The period 1929–1932 was characterised by languishing co-operation and growing Hungarian reservations. As a prelude, in 1929, by means of concerted action behind the scenes, the Hungarian group compelled the Congress's leadership to publish a detailed, country-by-country analysis of the situation of the various minorities.³⁵ Although designed to reveal specific grievances, the volume nevertheless failed to advance the broader goal of replacing the Congress's theoretical approach with concrete analysis and criticism.³⁶

Meanwhile, Ammende became less popular in Budapest. For two years after the proclamation of dictatorship in Yugoslavia, he failed to persuade the Yugoslav authorities to permit the legitimate leaders of

³² OSZK, Kézirattár, F. X. X/27. Szűllő's report on the Inter-Parliamentary Union's conference in Berlin. Bratislava (Pozsony), 5. 9. 1928.

³³ MOL, K 64, 1928-47-190 (108/1928). Report of Ambassador Forster to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Belgrade, 23. 1. 1928; OSZK, Kézirattár, F. X. X/27. Szűllő's report on the Inter-Parliamentary Union's conference in Berlin. Bratislava (Pozsony), 5. 9. 1928.

³⁴ For the text of the agreement, see *Sitzungsbericht [...] 1928*, pp. 158–159.

³⁵ For discussions with Ammende during the Congress, see Jakabffy, *Adatok családunk történetéhez*, pp. 28–29.

³⁶ Ewald Ammende, *Die Nationalitäten in den Staaten Europas. Sammlung von Lageberichten*, Vienna 1931.

the Hungarian minority to attend the Congress's conferences. An upset Pataky put pressure on Ammende, who finally succeeded in persuading the Yugoslav authorities to issue a passport to Deák.³⁷ This "hiccup" was bad enough from the Hungarian government's perspective, but what made the situation even worse was that Ammende, acting under pressure from the Slav minorities in the Congress, sought to involve the legitimate leaders of the Slovak community in Hungary in the work of the Congress. Caught between two fires, Ammende personally requested Bethlen to support the inclusion of Lajos Szeberényi, dean of Békescsaba.³⁸ He warned the Prime Minister's Office that if it failed to accede to his request, then the full weight of Czechoslovakia's propaganda machine would be directed against Hungary's minority policy. Consequently, as far as international public opinion was concerned, Hungary would be transformed from accuser to accused. Despite Ammende's warning, Bethlen did no more than permit Szeberényi to travel to Geneva, accompanied by Nándor Bernolák, leader of the government's puppet organisation.³⁹ In the end, Szeberényi failed to take part in the Congress's meetings and the Slovak question was removed from the agenda indefinitely. Nevertheless, the incident caused a crisis of confidence in relations between Ammende and the Hungarian government.

During the final six years of the Congress's existence, there was constant tension between the Congress's leadership and the German group on the one hand and the various Hungarian actors on the other. A fundamental change was a significant weakening of Ammende's influence in Budapest following Bethlen's departure from government and Kálmán Kánya's appointment as minister. Kánya harboured a personal antipathy towards Ammende, because, as Hungarian ambassador to Berlin, he had been called to account by Ammende for the shortcomings of Hungarian minority policy. Moreover, Kánya was sceptical that the benefits of the Congress's activities were proportionate to the financial sums invested.⁴⁰ Thus, under Kánya,

³⁷ Bundesarchiv (BA), Nachlaß Wilfan (N 1.250), Fasz. 5. 1174. Ammende's letter to Wilfan. Vienna, 10. 8. 1933.

³⁸ MOL, K 64, 1931-47-579. Ammende's letter to Bethlen. Vienna, 9. 7. 1931.

³⁹ MOL, K 64, 1931-47-579. Kristóffy's comments, dated 24 July, on Ammende's letter to Khuen. Ammende's letter to Khuen-Héderváry. Vienna, 18. 7. 1931.

⁴⁰ MOL, K 64, 1935-47. nn. Memorandum without title or date. (Probably written by Kristóffy, definitely in 1935.)

the withdrawal of the Hungarian group from the Congress was repeatedly raised as a possibility during negotiations between the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Although Pataky shared Kánya's reservations, he nevertheless accepted Szüllő and Jakabffy's arguments for staying in the Congress. He therefore consulted with the Foreign Minister and arranged for the continued payment of support – although the amount was reduced. The illusions of the Hungarian minority leaders had been dispelled some time before, but they still considered it important to participate in the Congress. Their principal fear was that by staying away they would relinquish the field to other minority politicians who were loyal to their governments. Additionally, they were unwilling to give up the opportunity for annual meetings – held in peaceful surroundings at League of Nations headquarters – between the Hungarian minority politicians of the three countries.⁴¹

An embarrassing dispute concerning the representation of the German minority in Hungary further deepened the antagonism between the Hungarian and German groups. Acting behind the backs of the Hungarian government and the Hungarian delegates, the German Foreign Ministry and the European League of German National Groups invited the Basch group, which was more radical and harsh in its criticism of the Hungarian government's minority policy, in place of the pro-government minority politician Gusztáv Gratz, leader of the Hungarian German Cultural Association. The dispute – which prompted Elemér Jakabffy to leave the organisation in order to avoid association with the radical German group – was never fully resolved.⁴² Indeed, during the Congress's final two years, the only instrument preventing an overt schism was an agreement between the Hungarian and German groups that no German minority politician from Hungary should take part in Congress meetings as a fully-fledged representative.

⁴¹ OSZK, Kézirattár, F. X. X/28. Szüllő's report on the congress in 1933. Without addressee or date.

⁴² BA, N 1.250, Fasz. 8. 849. Jakabffy's letter to Wilfan. Lugos, 12. 6. 1937.

III. Delegates of the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia and the Congress

To the outside observer, the Hungarian group was a united force at the Congress's plenary sessions and committee meetings. Nevertheless, leading figures within the group were less than uniformly disposed towards the Congress until the early 1930s. Differences in attitude stemmed from diverse temperaments and from difference appraisals of the Congress's objectives and tactics. The Hungarian representatives from Czechoslovakia were particular adamant in their opposition to Ammende's strategy of moderation – a strategy that adhered strictly to the Congress's charter, favoured a conceptual approach to minority issues, and prioritised the survival of the organisation. On this issue, Szüllő, Flachbarth, Jaross and Esterházy were all in agreement.

Delegates of the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia, and their contributions at the conferences

Participants	Congress conferences	Total/Contrib.
Géza Szüllő	25c, 26c, 27c, 28a, 29a, 30a, 31a, 32c, 33b, 34a, 35a, 36c, 37c, 38a	14/14
Ernő Flachbarth	25b, 26a, 27a, 28a,b	4/5
Andor Jaross	29, 30b, 32b	3/2
János Esterházy	31b, 32b	2/2
László Aixinger	32	1/0
Pál Szvatkó	32	1/0

a) papers; b) remarks; c) welcoming speeches

A strained relationship between Ammende and Szüllő was perceptible from the outset. Whereas Szüllő considered the Congress to be an international forum for disseminating minority propaganda, Ammende wished to integrate the organisation into international politics. In Ammende's view, nothing was more damaging than radical voices dominating the Congress, for this would lead others to

typify the organisation as a revisionist body.⁴³ In turn, this would render the Congress an ineffective actor vis-à-vis the League of Nations and the international press and would force the German government to undertake a fundamental review of its policy of support.

At board meetings and – less obviously – at conferences too, Szüllő applied the same tactics and style he used in the Czechoslovak parliament.⁴⁴ It is no accident, therefore, that Otto Junghann, who arrived in Geneva in 1926 as an observer and a representative of the League of Nations Association of Germany, reported to the German Foreign Ministry, citing the example of Szüllő, that “the Hungarians, in line with their nature, consider the proper resolution of problems to be of lesser importance, and they appraise the international minority movement in terms of its direct propaganda effect.”⁴⁵ In his inauguration speech at the Congress’s second conference, Szüllő planned to severely criticise the League of Nations. It was only under pressure from the board that he toned down his speech.⁴⁶

Szüllő was very much aware of Ammende’s abilities, whom he regarded as a talented individual with valuable international contacts.⁴⁷ Even so, as early as 1928, he became convinced that the Secretary-General was principally serving German interests while attempting to suppress Hungarian ambitions.⁴⁸ Szüllő was basically

⁴³ The role of propaganda in Szüllő’s ideas is well illustrated by a report to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1926: “The Hungarians are operating in a skilful manner, three representatives have already come from Yugoslavia, which is a positive sign. In general, I can state that the Hungarians’ propaganda skills are developing visibly.” OSZK, Kézirattár, F. X. X/27. Szüllő’s report to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. No title, 26. 8. 1926.

⁴⁴ Szüllő’s efforts after the First Vienna Award were praised by Magyar Szemle as follows: “Time has shown that Géza Szüllő’s persistent and negativist policy was true realpolitik... There was hardly an international conference or European minority or parliamentary meeting at which he failed to appear or failed to remind those in attendance of the circumstances in Czechoslovakia. Here too, his work was characterised by the same regular and consistent negativism he exhibited in domestic politics.” Géza Szüllő, *Magyar Szemle* 4 (1938), pp. 372–375.

⁴⁵ PAAA, R 60464, nn. Otto Junghann, The Second Congress of Nationalities in Geneva, 25–27 October 1926, (Sic. the conference was held in August rather than October). No date.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ “The conference itself is worthless. A valuable person in it is Ammende, who is exceptionally talented, very affordable, and thus very suitable. One could make use of him at this conference or even at future conferences to be convened by minorities from detached parts of the Monarchy. I believe he really does enjoy good relations with the most important papers.” OSZK, Kézirattár, F. X. X/28. Szüllő’s report on the congress in 1933. No date.

⁴⁸ “At the minority conference, the Germans are prevaricant, and I think that this German interest is represented by Ammende, who is a clever journalist but rather insensitive to the reasons why we Hungarians support the institution.” OSZK, Kézirattár, F. X. X/27. Szüllő’s report on the Inter-Parliamentary Conference in Berlin. Bratislava (Pozsony), 5. 9. 1928.

right to draw this conclusion. At any rate, he was not prepared to stand back and watch, and so he frequently turned board meetings into a battlefield. He was fully aware that his attitude would win him few supporters among his colleagues, and he knew that Ammende disliked or even feared him.⁴⁹ In this, Szüllő was not mistaken. While paying a visit to the head of the Political Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ammende complained about Szüllő, claiming that the Hungarian minority politician was severely damaging the interests of the minorities through his appearances on the international political stage. At the time, Jakabffy shared Ammende's views. He regarded Szüllő's aggressiveness and vitriol at conferences as offensive to all; he proposed that those responsible should remind Szüllő and Flachbarth to apply scientific objectivity when making their contributions and to avoid behaviour that cast them as propagandists on a par with Rothermere.⁵⁰

Even so, to claim that Jakabffy and Szüllő, two very different politicians, were always divided by differences of opinion and tension would be an exaggeration. As Hungarian minority politicians, both men shared the same final objective. Still, in the view of the more constructive and objective Jakabffy, Szüllő's conflictual approach and cynical style were bound to be ineffective. His reservations were probably strengthened by the realisation that Szüllő considered Hungarians to be superior to the peoples of the successor states, for the Transylvanian Jakabffy had always considered such feelings of superiority to be extremely damaging.⁵¹ The dissatisfaction was, however, mutual. Indeed, just a month later, Szüllő wrote the following about Jakabffy to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: "A few inquiries need to be made about Jakabffy, because he considers the minority conference to be an end in itself and is impressed by the size of it; he finds it difficult to accept that our goal is not to be content minorities

⁴⁹ "It is very difficult for me to hold my position among these men [i.e. Ammende, Motzkin, Wilfan – F. E.], but I can do it, because I feel that even though I frequently displease them, they respect my will." OSZK, Kézirattár, F. X. X/27. Szüllő's report on the Inter-Parliamentary Conference in Berlin. Bratislava (Pozsony), 5. 9. 1928.

⁵⁰ MOL, K 64, 1928-47-488. Apór's daily report. Budapest, 6. 8. 1928.

⁵¹ "At dinner, he continued his witticism, which greatly annoyed me at the time. He said such things as: »Recently, a Slovak politician told me that Hungarians are so conceited because when they came here a thousand years ago, they had some animal leather on the shoulders. No, I replied, that's not the reason; it's because you received us in the servants' quarters!«" Jakabffy, *Adatok családunk történetéhez*, p. 53.

in some country or other, but that our final goal is that we should not be minorities in that foreign country.”⁵²

Szüllő harboured a strong antipathy towards the Italian Slovene Josip Wilfan, the chairman who worked closely with Ammende and who also lived in Vienna from 1928. His hostility had various causes. Unlike Szüllő, Wilfan was a cautious individual, inclined towards a mediating role. Moreover, he fostered close contacts with the Yugoslav Foreign Ministry and was therefore considered by Szüllő to be a leading figure in the Slav lobby that was automatically opposed to Hungarian interests.⁵³ Despite such reservations, Szüllő was abundantly aware of the Congress's need for Wilfan – whose departure would have exposed the organisation's German and Hungarian orientation.⁵⁴ Nevertheless, Szüllő was unwilling to avoid offending Wilfan, who turned out to be rather sensitive. Following a board meeting in Vienna in 1937, Szüllő wrote the following: “Wilfan is a sick Slovene agitator with the spirit of a prophet. He almost had a stroke when I confronted him. At any rate, I saw the extent to which the Slavs hate us, but this gives me strength.”⁵⁵ The antipathy perceived by Szüllő was indeed present in Wilfan – and not just because his style was so different from Szüllő's offensiveness. The conceptual approach favoured by the Congress suited his purposes well, and presumably even the Yugoslav government had no objection, in view of the fact that the Congress's articles left no room for the articulation of secessionist objectives. The “academic nature” of the Congress led Szüllő to condemn not just Wilfan and Ammende, but also Leo Motzkin, leader of the Jewish group.

As his reports indicate, Szüllő's favourite German minority politician appears to have been the Czechoslovak German Wilhelm

⁵² MOL, K 64, 1928-47-527. Géza Szüllő's report to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Bratislava (Pozsony), 5. 9. 1928.

⁵³ “The chairman of our conference was Wilfan, a passionate Slovene and a Slav of the most fanatical type, who binds himself to the Hungarians as a member of a minority, but who in the depths of his soul – I can see and feel it – hates Hungarians.” OSZK, Kézirattár, F. X. X/27. Szüllő's report on the Inter-Parliamentary Union's conference in Berlin. Bratislava (Pozsony), 5. 9. 1928.

⁵⁴ MOL, K 64, 1937-47-372. Szüllő's report on the minority conference's board meeting. For Ammende too, it was important that Wilfan belonged to the Slav group. In connection with the Board's preparatory visit to London, he proposed to Hasselblatt that the Wilfan should be given a leading role. BA, N 1. 250, Fasz. 33. Ammende's letter to Hasselblatt. No marking. Bombay, 21. 2. 1936.

⁵⁵ OSZK, Kézirattár, F. X. X/8. Szüllő's report to Pataky. Budapest, 3. 2. 1937.

Medinger and the Latvian German Paul Schiemann. Medinger, however, died in 1934, while Schiemann, a man of democratic convictions, ceased organising the German minorities at international level when the Nazis took power in Germany; he subsequently withdrew from the Congress. By that time, the German minority leaders were being co-ordinated by Werner Hasselblatt, head of the Berlin office of the European League of German National Groups. Hasselblatt was rather willing to co-operate with the new Nazi regime, and it was he who, after Ammende's death, took over actual control of the Congress, with the support of Uexküll-Güldenband and in co-operation with Wilfan. Szüllő evaluated his relationship with Hasselblatt and his associates in terms of Hungarian interests. Although he disliked Nazi ideology, his criticism of supporters of the radical German line, which became increasingly dominant after 1934, was not based on philosophical considerations. Instead, he based his actions on the extent to which their practical steps accorded with Hungarian expectations – which he regarded as the sole correct response.⁵⁶ He criticised Hasselblatt, whom he referred to as “a philosopher intoxicated by Nazi ideas and confused by Hegelian definitions”, essentially for the same reason as he criticised Rutha, the foreign policy spokesman of the Sudeten German Party, namely for excessive passivity.⁵⁷ In the end, the relationship between Hasselblatt and Szüllő deteriorated to such an extent that the tug-of-war concerning the representation of the German minority in Hungary escalated into mutual threats and sermonising at the Stockholm conference in 1938.⁵⁸

Flachbarth, Esterházy and Jaross were essentially in agreement with Szüllő; they too wished to broaden the Congress's scope, which they considered to be excessively narrow. All three men committed multiple violations of the rule prohibiting the public criticism of

⁵⁶ “At the conference in Stockholm, it was evident that the Nazi German delegates in attendance were just as hostile to the Hungarians as they were to the Slavs. Hasselblatt's malice is tarred with the same brush as Wilfan's. The irresolute manner of the deceased Ammende was better than the current trio of Uexküll, Hasselblatt and Wilfan.” OSZK, Kézirattár, F. X. X/24. Szüllő's report on the minority conference held in Stockholm in August 1938. No date.

⁵⁷ OSZK, Kézirattár, F. X. X/38. Szüllő's report on the minority conference's board meeting held in Vienna on 6–7 August 1936. No date.

⁵⁸ OSZK, Kézirattár, F. X. X/24. Szüllő's report on the minority conference held in Stockholm in August 1938. No date.

sovereign states. They and representatives of the Ukrainian minority in Poland were the only delegates called to order on several occasions by the presiding chairman. Hungarian demands for a detailed and critical debate and the naming of states were not just made at the time of the fight for the publication of a volume entitled *Situation Reports*. In 1930, for instance, during his first speech to a Congress conference, Andor Jaross addressed primarily the discriminatory practices of the lesser states in Central Europe that had gained territory after the war.⁵⁹ He severely criticised Poland, Romania, Greece, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. In doing so, however, he violated the articles of the Congress, a fact made quite plain to him by Wilfan.⁶⁰

In light of the above events, it was perhaps inevitable that the conflict between the chairman, Wilfan, and the radical Czechoslovakian Hungarian group should become more acute at the Vienna conference of 1932. Rather than address a point on the agenda, János Esterházy pilloried the discriminatory policies of Czechoslovakia's government.⁶¹ Wilfan interrupted Esterházy's speech on three occasions, and a lively polemical argument arose between the younger Hungarian politician and the older Slovene. Several times Wilfan called Esterházy to order, citing the articles of the Congress. But Esterházy refused to comply, and so Wilfan interrupted the meeting, suffering a heart attack as he left the chamber. At the afternoon session, in a short but tough speech, Jaross expressed his support for Esterházy's position: "The time will come when the Congress will have to take a more radical position. The many theoretical disputes no longer interest the minority peoples. They are waiting for important words that draw the attention of the whole world."⁶²

In the late 1920s, Szűllő criticised the Congress on several occasions in his reports to the Prime Minister's Office. A contributing factor was his growing perception of German domination of the Congress. After Germany's exit from the League in 1933, Germany had even less interest in radicalising the Congress's tone. In the mid-1930s, however, the German group launched a series of

⁵⁹ *Sitzungsbericht [...] 1930*, pp. 78–83.

⁶⁰ "It's up to everyone to decide how to speak outside the Congresses, but at Congresses we must look for a solution to the minority problems within the framework of states." *Ibid.*, p. 80.

⁶¹ For the lecture and the minutes of the debate, see *Sitzungsbericht [...] 1932*, pp. 125–129.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 141.

initiatives aimed at influencing the British public. It even began planning for a conference to be held in London in 1937. As far as the Germans were concerned, the real objective of the London conference was two-fold: to provide a legal platform for politicians of the Sudeten German Party and to inform British public opinion of the grievances and demands of the German minority in Czechoslovakia.⁶³

The Hungarian Foreign Minister supported the proposed conference in London, because he believed that progress by the Sudeten Germans would also benefit the Hungarian minority.⁶⁴ In the end, the conference turned out to be very similar to previous conferences. Conference speakers concentrated on the failings of the League of Nations and the need for reform, while advancing minority autonomy as a possible means of resolving conflict.⁶⁵ A further demand was that the Congress be recognised as a proper negotiating partner as part of the League's reform. A weakness of the London conference was that Germans evidently accounted for half of the representatives in attendance, and that many of them had come from Czechoslovakia.⁶⁶ Moreover, although Szűllő considered the London conference to have been a profitable exercise, his opinion was far less positive than that of his German colleagues. Unlike Hasselblatt, he was dissatisfied with both the conference's organisation and the response it received in the press. In his view, the whole event had been perceived by the international community as a German affair, owing to the large number of German delegates. This had greatly reduced its propaganda value.⁶⁷

Following the political advance of the Sudeten German Party in Czechoslovakia, Szűllő cast his antipathy aside and demonstrated a willingness to be more flexible with regard to the representation of

⁶³ PAAA, R 60533, L 497889. Hasselblatt's letter to Twardowski. London, 17. 7. 1937.

⁶⁴ PAAA, R 60533, L 497860-L 497861. Hasselblatt's report on conversations held during the League of Nations General Assembly.

⁶⁵ For a summary of the lectures by Jósika and Balogh, see "A szervezett nemzetkisebbségek kongresszusa Londonban, Jósika János báró előadása az Országos Magyar Párt kisebbségi szakosztályának 1937. szeptember 3-án Sepsiszentgyörgyön megtartott ülésén." [The Congress of Organised National Minorities in London. Baron János Jósika's Lecture to the Minority Department of the National Hungarian Party at a Meeting in Sepsiszentgyörgy on 3 September 1937], *Magyar Kisebbség*, 1 October 1937, pp. 502-506.

⁶⁶ Twenty-eight delegates attended the London conference. Sixteen of them were German, of which 6 came from Czechoslovakia.

⁶⁷ MOL, K 64, 1937-47-408. Szűllő's report on the minority congress in London. No date.

the German minority in Hungary. His position was less strident than Jakabffy's. Indeed, he wished to sweep any differences under the carpet for the time being.⁶⁸ Szüllő subordinated the issue of Hungary's German minority to the political situation in Czechoslovakia. He was concerned that the Hungarian German Cultural Association, which had been "organised on Hungarian national lines and was supported by the Hungarian state", had been bluntly rejected by German delegates. In order to support the London conference, which he hoped would further weaken Czechoslovakia, he was prepared to accept a compromise whereby no representative of the German minority in Hungary would officially attend the conferences of the Congress. His argument fell on receptive ears, and the Hungarian government consented to a "temporary cease-fire".⁶⁹

Nevertheless, after the Stockholm conference in 1938, Szüllő proposed to the Hungarian government that the Hungarian group should withdraw immediately from the Congress and thereby "liquidate" an organisation that no longer had a purpose. Although Szüllő was clearly upset at Hasselblatt's strident manner, nevertheless his proposal was no transitory whim based on passing emotion. Instead, his change in position seems to have been motivated by major political events. After Austria's annexation by Nazi Germany, the noose was rapidly tightening around Czechoslovakia, and territorial revision was anticipated. Under such circumstances, the Congress, having already suffered a decline, was clearly redundant.

After the Munich Agreement, the German minority politicians tried to resuscitate the organisation, seeking to hold a conference in 1939. As preparations for the conference were underway, Secretary-General Uexküll-Güldenband travelled to Budapest, where the Hungarian government failed to assure him that the Hungarian groups would take part. Like his predecessor, Hungarian Foreign Minister Csáky was highly sceptical of the value of the Congress and

⁶⁸ "...my aim here is to use the strength of the Germans to promote our cause. This is the reason why I do in fact accept Henlein's legislative proposals – in which claims are made which strengthen the minorities, thus the Germans in respect of Hungary, but also the Hungarians in respect of Czechoslovakia – because if this legislation goes through, then it will mean no less than »finis Ceccoslovakia«". OSZK, Kézirattár, F. X. X/8. Szüllő's report. 30. 5. 1937.

⁶⁹ OSZK, Kézirattár, F. X. X/40. Agreement between Géza Szüllő and Heinrich Rutha. Bratislava (Pozsony), 1. 7. 1937.

reluctant to offer his support.⁷⁰ If the Hungarian delegates had attended the conference, then, by agreement, the Hungarian minority in Slovakia would have been represented by János Esterházy rather than by Géza Szüllő, as the latter had become a Hungarian citizen following the First Vienna Award...

⁷⁰ BA, Deutsche Stiftung, (R 8043)/1000, pp. 7–12. Uexküll-Güldenband, Report on my journey to Hungary, Yugoslavia and Romania. 12 April–4 May 1939.

László Szarka

The Principle and Practice of Ethnic Revision in Hungary's Foreign Policy in Connection with the First Vienna Award

There is a consensus among international historians concerned with border conflicts and frontier revision in Central Europe in the 20th century that the principal aim of Hungarian foreign policy between the two world wars was to secure the most favourable revision of the frontiers instituted by the Treaty of Trianon (1920). Nevertheless, non-Hungarian scholars of the history of Hungary's revisionist efforts still approach the regional and international context of such efforts in a rather inarticulate manner, hardly distinguishing between Hungarian foreign policy propaganda and the objectives of Hungary's official foreign relations.¹

In this regard, the most recent findings of researchers in Hungary are more subtle and discerning; they indicate essential differences between the policies of Hungary's various interwar governments.²

¹ See, for instance, recent Czech and Slovak works such as Ladislav Deák, *Viedenská arbitráž. 2. november 1938. Dokumenty I–III*. [Vienna Award, 2nd of November, 1938 I–III.], Martin 2002, 2003, 2006; Jindřich Dejmek, *Československo, jeho sousedé a velmoci ve XX. století (1918 až 1992). Vybrané kapitoly z dějin československé zahraniční politiky* [Czechoslovakia, its Neighbours and the Great Powers in the 20th Century (1918–1992). Selected Chapters from the History of Foreign Relations of Czechoslovakia], Praha 2002.

² Anikó Kovács-Bertrand, *Der ungarische Revisionismus nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg. Der publizistische Kampf gegen den Friedenvertrag von Trianon (1918–1931)*, München 1997;

Within the context of diplomatic history, the revisionist objectives of Hungarian foreign policy may be defined as manifestations of a foreign policy programme which although it expressed a demand for the restoration of the status quo ante, nevertheless employed a gradualist approach to border revision rather than seek, unrealistically, the integral (global) revision of the Trianon borders. In Hungarian propaganda and foreign policy decision-making, ethnic and integral revision thus became means and objectives that were sometimes complementary and sometimes contradictory.

On 22 May 1929, seeking to clarify misunderstandings arising from the Rothermere campaign, Hungarian Foreign Minister Lajos Walko sent a circular to Hungarian ambassadors in which he analysed the relationship between ethnic and integral revision. Walko, a member of the Bethlen government, pointed out to the ambassadors that it would be unwise to stress the ethnic principle and the associated possibility of a partial revision of the borders, because this would jeopardise Hungary's efforts to achieve a complete revi-

Anikó Kovács, Adalékok a magyar revíziós mozgalom történetéhez [On the history of the Hungarian revisionist movement], *Regio* 3 (1994); Pál Pritz, Magyar diplomácia a két háború között. Tanulmányok [Hungarian diplomacy between the two wars. Studies], Budapest 1995; Ignác Romsics (ed.), Trianon és a magyar politikai gondolkodás 1920–1953 [Trianon and Hungarian political thought 1920–1953], Budapest 1998; Magda Ádám, The Munich Crisis and Hungary: The Fall of the Versailles Settlement in Central Europe, in: *The Munich Crisis, 1938. Prelude to World War II.*, London 1999, 82–121; Miklós Zeidler, Mozgáster a kényszerpályán. A magyar külpolitika „választásai” a két világháború között [Room for manoeuvre on a fixed track. Hungarian foreign policy “choices” between the two world wars], in: Ignác Romsics (ed.), Mítoszok, legendák, tévhitek a 20. századi magyar történelemről, Budapest 2002, pp. 202–203; Balázs Ablonczy, Trianon-legendák [Trianon legends], *ibid.*, pp. 132–161; Miklós Zeidler, A revíziós gondolat [Revisionism], Budapest 2001; *A magyar irredenta kultusz a két világháború között* [The Hungarian irredentist cult between the two world wars], Budapest 2002; Gergely Sallai, *Az első bécsi döntés* [The first Vienna Award], Budapest 2002; Balázs Ablonczy, *Teleki Pál* [Pál Teleki], Budapest 2005. Recent objective Czech and Slovak works include: Eva Irmanová, *Maďarsko a versailleský systém* [Hungary and the Versailles System], Ústí nad Labem 2002, and several studies by Andrej Tóth, including Výsledek prvního restauračního pokusu Karla Habsburského v Maďarsku na jaře 1921 – uzavření československo-rumunské malodohodové spojenecké [The Result of the First Restoration Attempt of King Charles in Hungary in the Spring of 1921: the Signing of the Czechoslovak-Romanian Alliance Agreement], *Slovanský přehled* 4 (2002), pp. 521–533; Miroslav Michela, Reakcia slovenských politických kruhov a tlače na Rothermerovu akciu 1927–1928 [Reaction of the Slovak Politics and the Press to the Action of Lord Rothermere 1927–1928], *Historický časopis* 3 (2004), pp. 503–522; Miroslav Michela, A Rothermere-akció visszhangja Csehszlovákiában 1927–1928 [Reaction in Czechoslovakia to the Rothermere campaign, 1927–1928], *Századok* 6 (2005). <http://www.sza-zadok.hu/archiv/pdf/0506mm.pdf>

sion.³ In another approach, Hungarian proponents of revision such as Pál Teleki and István Bethlen chose to emphasise historical (integral) demands or partial (ethnic) claims depending on whether they were trying to influence Hungarian or international public opinion.⁴

Considering the international objectives of the Horthy regime, the choice between ethnic or integral revision (the latter implying the restitution of historical Hungary) was the fundamental issue faced by Hungary as it formulated territorial claims against its neighbours and made specific claims at the time of the territorial changes prior to the Second World War. This applied to the Transylvanian, Banat and Székely regions as well as to the clarification of objectives concerning areas in Czechoslovakia with Hungarian or non-Hungarian majorities.⁵

Hungary considered support from the major European powers to be the most important means of realising this strategy. In this sense, frontier revision was defined in the interwar period as a political goal that was to be achieved exclusively by diplomatic means. Ethnic revisionist demands were a constant feature of Hungarian government policy towards the Hungarian minorities in Romania, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. Indeed, although Hungary attempted to utilise the opportunities provided by the minority protection system, the Hungarian government repeatedly reminded Hungarian minority leaders in the three successor states that it considered territorial revision to be the optimal solution.⁶

³ Magyar Országos Levéltár [National Hungarian Archives] (MOL), K-63, 3259/1927, 1930-21/25-216. The circular letter is cited in György Ránki (ed.), *Magyarország története 1918-1919, 1919-1945* [The history of Hungary, 1918-1919, 1919-1945], Budapest 1978, p. 559.

⁴ This is illustrated by István Bethlen's speech at Hősök Square, Budapest on 26 May 1929, in which he surprised his audience by explicitly expressing faith in the legitimacy of the demand for "everything back!" – which called into question his previous and subsequent foreign policy position, including the revisionist claims made at Debrecen in March 1928. Kovács-Bertrand, *Der ungarische Revisionismus*, pp. 218-220, pp. 236-237.

⁵ The diversity of the ideas of Pál Teleki, István Bethlen and Gyula Gömbös concerning the reacquisition of Czechoslovak territories that had belonged to the Kingdom of Hungary before 1918, is reflected in the variability and uncertainty of revisionist aims with regard to Upper Hungary. For more details on this, see the studies by Balázs Ablonczy, Lóránt Péteri and Miklós Zeidler in: Romsics (ed.), *Trianon és a magyar politikai gondolkodás*, p. 24, pp. 35-38, pp. 80-83.

⁶ For connections between Hungarian minority protection and revision, see Ferenc Eiler, *Kisebbségi külpolitika. Csehszlovákiai magyar részvétel az Európai Nemzetiségi Kongresszus tevékenységében 1925-1938* [Minority foreign policy. Participation of Czechoslovakia's Hungarians in the activities of the European Minority People's Congress, 1925-1938], *Fórum Társadalomtudományi Szemle* 3 (2005), pp. 123-140.

Lajos Steier, a conservative historian who was considered an authority on the Slovak issue after 1920 described Hungary's revisionist programme vis-à-vis Czechoslovakia as homogeneous – at three different levels. First, as far as “Upper Hungary” was concerned, Hungarian revisionism had just one aim, namely “the natural reintegration of a base [established over] a thousand years” – a reintegration that would prevent the further atomisation of Central Europe. Second, according to a study published by Steier in 1933, in the light of this primary objective, Hungary could not be satisfied with border amendments based on the ethnic principle, since a crucial aim of Hungarian revisionism (understood as a complex of political and territorial issues) was the establishment of “Hungarian solidarity” as a part of Central European integration – that is, the merger of all Slovakia with Hungary. Third, in the mid-1930s, efforts to “rescue parts of the nation” annexed by Czechoslovakia were regarded by the Hungarian public as the most important foundation for all such efforts.⁷

At the same time, it is clear that the nation-state realities of interwar Central Europe that were reflected in Steier's three-level revisionist model, were the greatest obstacles to its implementation in practice. Indeed, without the re-establishment of the Habsburg empire, the reintegration of the pre-1918 Hungarian state was – after 1920 – just as unrealistic as the notion of a Habsburg restoration. Similarly, the background and foreign and domestic policy conditions necessary for the establishment of a Hungarian-Slovak joint state were absent. Yet this was the point of departure for revisionist planning with regard to “Upper Hungary” for some time – and until as late as 1938 in the case of certain leading Hungarian politicians, who usually referred to it as the realistic outcome of a plebiscite designed to settle the fate of the region.⁸

Hungarian settlements in “Upper Hungary” were surveyed in geographical, demographic and statistical research that was overseen by Pál Teleki and served mainly revisionist objectives for areas close to the national frontier and within the so-called “precise” and “banded”

⁷ Lajos Steier, *Felsőmagyarország és a revízió* [Upper Hungary and revision], Budapest 1933, p. 25; pp. 32–33.

⁸ In this regard, see the development of the plans of István Bethlen. Loránt Péteri, Bethlen István [István Bethlen], in: Romsics (ed.), *Trianon és a magyar politikai gondolkodás*, pp. 37–38, pp. 45–46.

linguistic boundaries. Conductors of the survey attached great importance to even slight changes in the Hungarian–Slovak ethnic boundary or in the ethnic composition of the towns and cities of the region, especially in Bratislava (Pozsony) and Košice (Kassa), as well as to radical ethnic changes in Užhorod (Ungvár) – the result of immigration and assimilation.⁹

Although all leading foreign policy decision-makers and authoritative figures were aware of the grave geopolitical, foreign policy and military risks and threats arising from revisionism, nevertheless Hungarian decision-makers could not resist the temptation of frontier revision at the time of the Anschluss and the Czechoslovak crisis of 1938.¹⁰

Nevertheless, the ethnic principle laid down in the (Four-Power) Munich Agreement and in its supplementary protocol relating to Hungary set clear limits to the excessive territorial claims associated with integral revision.¹¹ Following the Munich Agreement, Hungarian diplomacy's emphasis on ethnic revision as well as its support for German rearmament and the anti-Comintern pact as the practical expression of its revisionism, gave rise to a growing contradiction with its previous principles. In a leading article published on 20 August 1938 (the national holiday), István Bethlen expressed his concerns and anxieties with regard to the revisionist political course directed by the Germans: "We shall perish in revisionism; it will engulf us in war. We have regained Upper Hungary, which is a good thing; and we have got Ruthenia back too, we can digest them, receive them, and administer them. Transylvania will be next; I dread what will happen then. If Transylvania is returned, we shall for ever be indebted to the Germans, who will then demand we pay the price. And this price will

⁹ András Rónai, *Térképezett történelem* [Mapped history], Budapest 1988, p. 124.

¹⁰ The foundation of Hungarian foreign policy, a strategy defined as peaceful and based on a negotiated revision guaranteed by the European great powers, was pushed aside at the time of the Kiel talks in August 1938 and in the autumn months of the Czechoslovak crisis. Pál Pritz, *A kieli találkozó. Forráskritikai tanulmány* [The Kiel conference. A source criticism study], *Századok* 3 (1974), pp. 646–680.

¹¹ In a supplementary statement to the Munich Agreement, representatives of the four powers provided for the Hungarian and Polish question in Czechoslovakia as follows: "The heads of government of the four powers declare that the question of the Polish and Hungarian minorities in Czechoslovakia, if such is not settled by agreement between the governments involved within the next three months, shall become the subject of a new meeting between the heads of government present here." Dénes Halmossy (ed.), *Nemzetközi szerződések 1918–1945* [International treaties 1918–1945], Budapest 1983.

be making war alongside them; the country itself will be the price of revision."¹² Similar thoughts were expressed by Pál Teleki to a group of close associates.

Earlier and more recent source publications have partially clarified the manner in which integral revision was gradually replaced by ethnic revision. Integral revision was present throughout the period in the "all or nothing" demands of revisionist propaganda, but alongside such demands – and increasingly in place of them – ethnic revision became the priority. Hungarian diplomacy had wished to prepare for such frontier revision by gaining the support of the major European powers, thereby establishing some kind of European consensus; however, this became increasingly unlikely with the rise of Nazi Germany.¹³

From the outset, successive Hungarian governments sought to supplement ethnic revisionist demands and the strategy of focussing on the annexation of Hungarian-populated areas of the adjacent countries with illusory demands for plebiscites to be held in all areas that had historically belonged to Hungary. The preliminary proposals of Nationalities' Minister Oskár Jászi, the demands for a plebiscite submitted by the Hungarian peace delegation led by Albert Apponyi to the Paris Peace Conference in January 1920, and the Hungarian plans put forward at secret French-Hungarian negotiations in May 1920, sought the drafting of final borders based on plebiscites.¹⁴

As far as decisions on territorial questions were concerned, plebiscites proved to be effective only in well-defined compact areas and where they were subject to international supervision. In 1920, neither the great powers nor Hungary's neighbours regarded plebiscites as the appropriate means of determining the fate of territory lost by Hungary, and their position was closely linked with the ethnic composition and spatial structure of the territories under discussion. Prior to the finalisation of the borders at Trianon, the Hungarian government urged the holding of plebiscites with regard to all annexed territory. According to a speech made by Apponyi to the Supreme Council of the peace conference on 16 January 1920, Hungary would have been prepared to accept unconditionally the results of plebiscites supported

¹² Miklós Zeidler cites Teleki's fears, which proved to be legitimate, from the memoirs of György Barcza. György Barcza, *Diplomataéveim 1911–1945* [My years as a diplomat 1911–1945], Budapest 1994. Zeidler, *Mozgástér a kényszerpályán*, p. 193.

¹³ Zeidler, *A revíziós gondolat*, pp. 85–87.

¹⁴ Zeidler, *Mozgástér a kényszerpályán*, pp. 170–171.

by the peace conference.¹⁵ The plebiscite principle arose once again in connection with the Czecho-Slovak-Hungarian border disputes of 1938: at the negotiations in Komárno, Hungary proposed the holding of plebiscites in seven disputed border zones. The German government – and Hitler personally – intervened to dissuade the Hungarian leadership from pressing its demand, and indeed the opportunity was soon lost.¹⁶

All the leading Hungarian politicians of the era were aware of the internal conflict between integral and ethnic revision. Even Pál Teleki, the most committed supporter of integral revision, was forced to acknowledge European (and Central European) nation-state realities and to accept the alternative of ethnic-based territorial changes.¹⁷

Arguments in the territorial disputes between Hungary and Czechoslovakia

As far as Hungarian-Czechoslovak relations were concerned, the Hungarian proposals made during negotiations held in Bruck, Mariánské Lázně (Marienbad) and Brno in 1921 considered partial (ethnic) revision and the ethnic adjustment of borders to be prerequisite to a bilateral settlement.¹⁸ This explains the avid interest in

¹⁵ In the name of this idea (national self-determination, the principle put forward by US President Wilson), which is incidentally an axiom of healthy human ideas based on morals, we demand a plebiscite for those parts of our country which they wish to separate from us. I declare that we do in advance submit to the result of this plebiscite, whatever it may be. Of course, we demand that the plebiscite should be held under circumstances which ensure its freedom." Magda Ádám, Győző Cholnoky (eds.), *Trianon. A magyar békeküldöttség tevékenysége 1920-ban. Válogatás a magyar béketárgyalások. Jelentés a magyar békeküldöttség működéséről Neuilly-sur-Seine-ben I-II. kötetéből. Törképmelléklet III/B. kötet. Budapest 1920–1921* [Trianon. The work of the Hungarian peace delegation in 1920. Selection from the Hungarian peace negotiations. Report on the operation of the Hungarian peace delegation. In Neuilly-sur-Seine, vols. I-II. Map appendix III/B. vol. Budapest 1920–1921], Budapest 2000, p. 227.

¹⁶ Sallai, *Az első bécsi döntés*.

¹⁷ Ablonczy, *Teleki Pál*, pp. 240–241.

¹⁸ At negotiations held on 14–15 March 1921 in Bruck, Austria between the Hungarian prime minister Pál Teleki and foreign minister Gusztáv Gratz and Czechoslovak foreign minister Edvard Beneš, it was mentioned that Prague was ready to make territorial concessions to Hungary, but that in exchange Prague wished to receive a guarantee for the Hungarian-Czechoslovak border. Ferenc Boros, *Magyar-csehszlovák kapcsolatok 1918–1921-ben* [Hungarian-Czechoslovak relations in 1918–1921], Budapest 1970, pp. 275–81. László Szarka, *Kisebbségvédelem, reciprocitás, revízió* [Minority protection, reciprocity, re-

Hungary for statements made by President Masaryk concerning the possible return of the Csallóköz region or other areas with Hungarian majorities. In the interwar period, relations between Hungary and Czechoslovakia were among the most tempestuous in East Central Europe, and this was particularly true after Hitler's rise to power in Germany and increased co-operation between Hungary and Germany in foreign policy.¹⁹

In addition to revisionist plans focussing on border areas with Hungarian majorities, throughout the period revisionist plans based on a combination of historical, geographical and economic principles were put forward in relation to the Carpathian region, Transylvania and the Banat and Vojvodina regions. These were the ideas which – as shown by the example of Gyula Gömbös's plans of 1934 – tried to provide a rationale for Hungarian claims to territories without Hungarian majorities such as the Carpathian region and parts of Transylvania.²⁰

In this regard, one can perceive, in the revisionist ideology relating to Slovakia and the Carpathian region, the continuous mixing of elements of ethnic and integral revisionism. This applies in particular to the Carpathian region, where Hungarian foreign policy focussed on historical arguments for its re-annexation, while establishing that the region's Ruthenian majority did not belong to the majority population within Czechoslovakia as well as reminding the international community of Czechoslovakia's failure to introduce Carpathian autonomy as foreseen under the minority protection treaty of 1919.²¹

vision], in: *Fejezetek a csehszlovákiai magyarság történetéből*, Bratislava 1993, p. 91; Endre Tóth, *Az első kétoldali tárgyalások Csehszlovákia és Magyarország között (1921) – Bruck an der Leitha (I–II.)* [The first bilateral negotiations between Czechoslovak and Hungary (1921) – Bruck an der Leitha (I–II.)], *Fórum – Társadalomtudományi Szemle* 1–2 (2002). <http://epa.oszk.hu/00000/00033/00009/toth.htm>

For relations between Czechoslovakia and Hungary, see Ladislav Deák, *Hra o Slovensko v politike Maďarska a Polska v rokoch 1933–1939* [Game for Slovakia in the Politics of Hungary and Poland in 1933–1939], Bratislava 1991; Dejmek, *Československo*, pp. 199–207.

¹⁹ László Szarka, *Zmeny v národnostnej politike T. G. Masaryka po roku 1918* [Changes in the Nationality Politics of T. G. Masaryk after 1918], in: *T. G. Masaryk a strední Evropa*, Brno 1994, pp. 43–50.

²⁰ Miklós Zeidler, Gömbös Gyula [Gyula Gömbös], in: Romsics, *Trianon és a magyar politikai gondolkodás*, pp. 87–91.

²¹ Csilla Fedinec (ed.), *Kárpátalja 1938–1941. Magyar és ukrán történelmi közelítés* [The Carpathian region 1938–1941. The Hungarian and Ukrainian historical approach], Budapest 2004, pp. 217–275; Csilla Fedinec, *Kárpátaljai autonómia-koncepciók 1918–1944 között* [Carpathian autonomy ideas, 1918–1944], *Kisebbségkutatás* 3 (2001), pp. 450–469; Csilla Fedinec, *Kárpátaljai autonómia, határváltozások 1918–1944* [Carpathian autonomy, border changes 1918–1944], in: Cecília Pásztor (ed.), *„... ahol a határ elválaszt” Trianon és követ-*

Even today, there is some disagreement among Czech, Slovak and Hungarian historians concerning whether or not Hungarian foreign policy makers were aware that this alternative was not realistic after 1920 – despite its hopes for a Hungarian orientation among a more actively autonomous Slovak political elite and the return of the Slovak nation to Hungary. The ambivalent relations maintained with Hlinka and his group, the Tuka affair and its aftermath, and the failure of Slovak-Hungarian cooperation in Slovakia, were signs of the Slovak elite's reluctance to seek a solution in Budapest even at the time of the Czechoslovak crisis.²²

Hungarian planners that sought Hungarian-Slovak co-operation even after 1938, ignored the rapid progress of Slovak national development during the two decades of the Czechoslovak Republic – it had progressed just as swiftly as Croatian, Slovenian or even Austria national development. They also disregarded the fact that this development had been accompanied by a constant strengthening of the Slovak autonomous movement.

With a view to changing the opinions and positions of the Slovak leaders, János Esterházy contacted Jozef Tiso. The latter, however, remained true to the second Czech-Slovak Republic both during the Munich Crisis and in the weeks leading up to the Vienna Award.²³ He was inclined to do so because he recognised that political trends in Central Europe – which were increasingly set by Hitler – would sooner or later enable him to set up an independent Slovak state.²⁴

kezményei a Kárpát-medencében ["... where the border divides" Trianon and its consequences in the Carpathian basin], Salgótarján 2002, pp. 415–436.

²² A particular burden on Hungarian-Slovak relations was the Tuka affair, during which Tuka's relationship with the Hungarian government became clearly apparent, a relationship which had never been decisive in the internal political decisions of Czechoslovakia. See Tímea Veres, A Tuka-per közvetlen előzményei a cseh és szlovák sajtóban [The immediate antecedents of the Tuka case in the Czech and Slovak press], *Fórum – Társadalomtudományi Szemle* 1 (2004). http://www.foruminst.sk/publ/szemle/2004_1/szemle_2004_1_veres.pdf

²³ Ladislav Deák, *Viedenská arbitráž 2. november 1938 – Mnichov pre Slovensko* [Vienna Award, 2nd of November, 1938], Veda 1993, p. 105; Sallai, *Az első bécsi döntés*, p. 75.

²⁴ Despite all the internal conflicts of the Czech-Slovak relationship, both before and after the Munich crisis, a compromise was found which could have preserved the legal institution of Slovak autonomy without further measures by Hitler. Tiso's negotiations in Berlin in October 1938, which were commissioned by the Czecho-Slovak government and addressed Hungarian territorial claims, won Hitler's support for the Slovak position with regard to Bratislava, Nitra and Košice. Such German support strengthened opposition to Hungary's stance in Slovak government circles.

In 1938, Tiso's personal envoy Ján Farkaš travelled to Warsaw and Budapest to gauge the positions and policies of the two governments with regard to the newly independent Slovakia. In the course of consultations with Foreign Minister Kálmán Kánya, which were attended by Pál Teleki, Gábor Apor, Tibor Pataky and János Esterházy, Tiso's personal envoy was asked whether Slovakia would join forces with Hungary in the event of Czechoslovakia's disbandment.²⁵

In relation to Czechoslovakia and its Hungarian minority and in connection with the possibilities of Hungarian revisionist foreign policy in the latter half of the 1930s, one has to consider several aspects in order to realistically appraise the process leading to the Vienna Award. Within the great-power context of the Czechoslovak crisis of 1938, Hungarian foreign policy attempted to maintain the impression that it sought the combined support of the four European great powers and that it did indeed enjoy such support – at least at a theoretical level – under the post-Anschluss circumstances. In their attempts to counter further Nazi aggression and expansionism, Great Britain and France may have believed during the weeks and months of the Czechoslovak crisis that their conciliatory stance would succeed in halting and appeasing a sabre-rattling Germany. Nevertheless, the main thread of the two West European powers' policy towards Central Europe remained counterbalancing the conflict-enhancing effects of the Berlin-Rome axis, preventive action to prevent conflict in the powder kegs, and the consequent rejection of any further frontier revision.

Meanwhile, in Czechoslovakia's foreign policy isolation, domestic policy and minority policy developments were more closely linked with Germany's increasingly aggressive stance and with an awareness of the limited usefulness of the Little Entente and the Soviet alliance. Nevertheless, it is worth analysing in more detail the domestic policy – above all minority policy – context of the Czechoslovak crisis, leaving aside for the moment its foreign policy aspects.

Even though the escalation of the minority issue in Czechoslovakia (which involved the Sudeten German, Slovak, Polish, Ruthenian and

²⁵ According to a brief memorandum of the Slovak politician's journey, Hungarian government circles considered Slovakia's complete annexation by Hungary to be the ideal solution even after the Munich Agreement. Jan Rychlík, *Češi a Slovinci ve 20. století. Česko-slovenské vztahy 1914–1945*, Bratislava 1997, pp. 321–322.

Hungarian minorities) was closely linked with a post-Anschluss radicalisation of Hitler's foreign policy and its effects on the minorities, an additional factor was indisputably the unresolved legal and political situation of the minorities – which comprised more than 50 per cent of the country's population. The efforts of Prime Minister Milan Hodža (1935–1938) to draw up a nationalities' statute failed to resolve the minority issue; a constitutional crisis loomed.²⁶

Such foreign and domestic policy developments stirred Czechoslovakia's two other neighbours – Poland and Hungary – to action. Even so, in the weeks following the Munich Agreement, it became clear that in both cases the signing of a bilateral agreement as foreseen in the supplementary protocols to the Munich agreement would be unattainable.

The possibility of a bilateral solution, and obstacles raised at the Komárno negotiations

As noted above, even in the days and weeks following the Munich Agreement, Hungarian policy-makers considered it possible that Slovakia would be driven towards Hungary by the Czechoslovak government crisis and the declaration of Slovak autonomy made at Žilina (Zsolnay) on 6 October. At the same time, Jozef Tiso's reticence towards Hungary and the Slovak government's outright rejection of a union between the two countries were acknowledged with regret by the Hungarian government at a cabinet meeting held on 7 October 1938 to discuss the consequences of the Slovak declaration of autonomy.²⁷

The speed of events accelerated in early October, and there were fears that, similarly to the Sudeten German areas, ethnic conflicts would break out in the Hungarian-inhabited areas of southern Slo-

²⁶ Valerián Bystrický, *Národnostný štatút a štátoprávne programy na Slovensku v roku 1938* [The Nationality Statute and Political Law Programs in Slovakia in 1938], *Historický časopis* 1 (1992), pp. 52–68; László Szarka, *Národnostní statut a rozpory mezi Benešem a Hodžou, Střední Evropa* 26 (1992), pp. 50–53; Josef Harna, *Národnostní politika Hodžovy vlády*, in: *Národnostní otázka v Polsku a Československu v meziválečném období. Sborník z mezinárodní vědecké konference (26–27. 10. 2004)* [The Nationality Question in Poland and Czechoslovakia between the Two World Wars. Materials of an International Conference], Praha 2005, pp. 94–107.

²⁷ Sallai, *Az első bécsi döntés*, p. 76.

vakia and in the Carpathian region. The Hungarian government constantly considered the option of provoking border incidents or choosing not to prevent them. The Hungarian National Council, which had been established by representatives of the United Hungarian Party, abandoned its previous caution and adopted a resolution on 7 October in which it demanded the return to Hungary of all areas inhabited by Hungarians as soon as possible: *"The lawful representatives of the Hungarian people in Czechoslovakia declare that true to the 1000 years of historical past and the sacred bonds of blood, they wish to return to the mother country, to Hungary."*²⁸

After an intensive exchange of notes, the government in Prague – fearing a repeat of Poland's unilateral military solution – accepted the Hungarian government's urgent proposal for bilateral negotiations and appointed a Czechoslovak negotiating team comprising exclusively Slovak delegates and headed by the president of the Slovak autonomous government Jozef Tiso. Negotiations began on 9 October at the Town Hall in Komárno (Komárom); the Hungarian delegation was headed by Foreign Minister Kálmán Kánya.²⁹

At a session of the ministerial council held on 8 October, Prime Minister Béla Imrédy and Foreign Minister Kálmán Kánya confirmed that the Hungarian proposal to be made at Komárno formulated Hungary's territorial claims based on the ethnic principle laid down in the Munich Agreement rather than on historical grounds. Nevertheless, the Hungarian foreign minister indicated that as far as the Carpathian region was concerned Hungary wished to adhere to the historical principle, that is, to the re-annexation of the whole of the Carpathian region. Kánya also emphasised that he was not particularly concerned that the bilateral talks might fail, since in Hungary's view the decision of the great powers was of equal value and sufficient as far as Hungarian interests were concerned. *"In the case of Ruthenia, we continue to demand a plebiscite. Everywhere, we continue to seek the return of predominantly Hungarian areas. We are prepared to negotiate over a couple of villages at most. In areas inhabited by the western Slovaks (tótság), they comprise 85% of the population. In such areas we may have*

²⁸ The full text of the resolution is given in Sallai, *Az első bécsi döntés*, pp. 222–223.

²⁹ Gyula Popély, 1938 – A komáromi magyar-szlovák tárgyalások [The Hungarian-Slovak negotiations in Komárom], *História* 8 (1992), pp. 11–15; Sallai, *Az első bécsi döntés*, pp. 82–103.

no hopes. Like the Germans, we demand that the data of the Hungarian census of 1910 be taken into account. We do not wish to negotiate for long with the Czecho-Slovak government. If we are unable to come to an agreement with them, we shall turn to the great powers for a decision."³⁰

Hungary's basic demands for frontier revision were contained in the official Hungarian territorial proposal submitted during the Hungarian-Czecho-Slovak negotiations held in Komárno from 9–13 October 1938. The essence of the proposal was the re-annexation by Hungary of predominantly Hungarian areas in Slovakia and the Carpathian region, based on the ethnic data of the Hungarian census of 1910.³¹ In its response of 11 October, the Czecho-Slovak delegation firmly rejected the Hungarian territorial proposal, emphasising Czecho-Slovakia's insistence on a solution that took into consideration ethnic changes since 1910 as well as Slovak economic interests.³²

In disputed cases the Hungarian delegation led by Foreign Minister Kálmán Kánya considered a non-territorial solution to be a possibility as far as Bratislava (Pozsony) was concerned. His proposal for a plebiscite in Bratislava turned out to be just as unrealistic as the offers made by the Hungarian delegation in many other disputed areas.³³ Despite the demands made by Bratislava's Hungarian population to the negotiators in Komárno, Point 5 of the Vienna Award in the end provided equal legal status to each of the three minorities living in the city.³⁴ In the case of Nitra (Nyitra), Jelšava (Jolsva) and various adjacent villages, it considered further

³⁰ MOL, K 27, Miniszterelnökség. Minisztertanácsi jegyzőkönyvek. 1938. október 8. 198. doboz [Prime ministership. Council of ministers' minutes. 8 October 1938. Box 198.]

³¹ For the text of the proposal, see Appendix 1.

³² For the Czecho-Slovak response, see Appendix 2.

³³ "If the Slovak delegation, as we may infer from leaked reports, would not be willing at any price to recognize the right of Hungarians to Bratislava [Pozsony], we shall request the Delegation not to renounce Bratislava [Pozsony] under such circumstances or any other circumstances, but rather to offer that the issue be decided by plebiscite – of course, while assuring the voting rights of those who lived there in 1918 as well as their descendants. It is our solemn conviction that such a plebiscite will affirm Bratislava's [Pozsony's] unshakeable allegiance to the Hungarian nation and to its old homeland." MOL, K 64, res. pol. – 1938. 75. csomó. Pozsonyi magyarok kérelme a komáromi magyar delegációhoz, 1938. október 10. [Petition of Bratislava Hungarians to the Hungarian delegation in Komárom, 10 October 1938.]

³⁴ "Similarly, a Hungarian-Czechoslovak committee must agree on special rules concerning the protection of persons of Hungarian ethnicity that remain on Czechoslovak territory and persons of non-Hungarian descent living in territory that is to be transferred. This committee shall take special care to secure for the Hungarian national group in Bratislava

negotiations and consultations possible. At the same time, the Hungarian proposal – which referred to the fundamental principles laid down in the Munich Agreement – proved to be unacceptable to the Czecho-Slovak delegation and the autonomous Slovak government for a variety of reasons:

As far as the ethnic composition of towns and cities was concerned, the census of 1910 overrepresented the Hungarian population, owing to assimilation pressures. The extent of the distortion is demonstrated by the fact that according to the 1910 data, Hungarians formed a relative majority in Bratislava (Pozsony), Nitra (Nyitra), Banská Bystrica (Besztercebánya) and Zvolen (Zólyom); indeed, the effects of Magyarisation could be felt generally and throughout the bilingual, dual-identity contact zones.

The Czecho-Slovak delegation made no official response to Pál Teleki's opinion, heard many times during the Komárno negotiations, that between 1910 and 1930 the Hungarian-Slovak ethnic boundary had changed only in the region's urban areas, while in the villages there had been little real movement. For its part, in a counter-proposal, the Czecho-Slovak delegation chose even to ignore the ethnic data of the 1930 Czechoslovak census (which it otherwise regarded as the point of departure); clearly, its aim was to realise Czecho-Slovak economic, transport and demographic interests when designating the new boundary.³⁵

From the outset the Hungarian delegation was quite aware that no Czecho-Slovak government could agree to surrender Nitra (Nyitra), Košice (Kassa) or Bratislava (Pozsony), still less the transfer of all three cities. Although the Hungarian side indicated that it could conceive of a special agreement – a non-territorial solution – with regard to Bratislava (Pozsony) and Nitra (Nyitra), the extension of the

the same legal position as for other national groups present there." The text of the Viennese court of arbitration is provided in Sallai, *Az első bécsi döntés*, pp. 235–236.

³⁵ For the ethnic background to the Vienna Award frontier, see, inter alia, István Hollós, A régi magyar államterület népességének fejlődése 1910–1930 között [Population development in the former Hungarian state territory between 1910 and 1930], *Hungarian Statistical Gazette*, 1932, pp. 891–914; Alajos Kovács, A magyar-tót nyelvhatár változásai az utolsó két évszázadban [Changes in the Hungarian-Slovak linguistic boundary in the past two centuries], *Századok*, 1938, pp. 561–575; László Fogarassy, Pozsony város nemzetiségi összetétele [The ethnic composition of the city of Bratislava], *Alföld* 8 (1982) pp. 59–74. For a detailed analysis of the Hungarian and Czecho-Slovak territorial proposals, see Sallai, *Az első bécsi döntés*, pp. 82–103.

ethnic argument to the three cities essentially ruled out the signing of a bilateral agreement at Komárno.³⁶

The central governments of both countries as well as the autonomous Slovak government hoped that the public failure of bilateral negotiations might be followed by a result at the great powers' arbitration court that was more favourable to any concession that might have been achieved in bilateral talks. Moreover, even after Komárno, most of the Hungarian cabinet considered British, French, Italian and German involvement in the decision-making process more important than a compromise solution negotiated with the Czecho-Slovak government. Thus, after the failure at Komárno, diplomatic offensives were launched by both the Czecho-Slovak and Hungarian governments: a Slovak delegation headed by Tiso and a Czecho-Slovak delegation headed by Chvalkovský held talks in Germany; Kálmán Darányi explained Hungary's position in personal meetings with German Foreign Minister Ribbentrop and Adolf Hitler, while in Rome, Hungarian diplomatic staff requested the support of Mussolini and Foreign Minister Ciano for Hungary's position.³⁷

Germany interfered in the conflict between the two countries, doing so covertly before the Komárno negotiations and overtly after their conclusion. For the time being, it supported the Slovak position (formulated by Tiso) in most of the disputed areas (such as Bratislava, Nitra, Košice, and Užhorod). Sensing that its position was being undermined, Hungary sought the intervention of Ciano and Mussolini; their assistance proved sufficient to modify German policy as far as Košice and Užhorod were concerned.³⁸

A comparison of the minutes drawn up by the Hungarian and Czecho-Slovak delegations at Komárno grants us a better understanding of the negotiating positions of the Hungarian delegation led by Pál Teleki and the Czecho-Slovak delegation led by Jozef Tiso. As far as the ethnic principle is concerned, the two positions exhibit the following basic differences. Both in the diplomatic note submitted at

³⁶ This fact was recorded at an extraordinary meeting of the Council of Ministers on 14 October, at which the Hungarian government evaluated the Komárom discussions.

³⁷ Ladislav Deák, *Viedenská arbitráž, I.*, pp. 131–135; György Ránki, Ervin Pamlényi, Loránt Tilkovszky, Gyula Juhász (eds.), *A Wilhelmstrasse és Magyarország. Német diplomáciai iratok Magyarországról 1933–1944* [Wilhelmstrasse and Hungary. German diplomatic documents about Hungary, 1933–1944], Budapest 1968, pp. 303–306.

³⁸ Sallai, *Az első bécsi döntés*, pp. 120–123.

the outset of negotiations and in the arguments put forward by Kálmán Kánya and Pál Teleki, the Hungarian side adhered strictly to the ethnic data of the 1910 census, while accepting that certain disputes could be debated separately.

The Hungarian side insisted on the prompt return of villages and towns where a Hungarian majority was undisputed. It was also willing to accept local plebiscites after a mutual debate of the ethnic data of the disputed areas. As far as the disputed towns were concerned, the Hungarian side indicated it could appreciate the Slovak perspective as far as Bratislava and Nitra were concerned. In the case of Bratislava, it saw German interests behind this perspective, in light of German historical and demographic predominance in the city. In the case of Košice (Kassa), Mukačevo (Munkács) and Užhorod (Ungvár), however, the Hungarian delegation and Hungarian diplomacy were unyielding.

During the first two days of negotiations, the Czecho-Slovak delegation attempted to gain time to assess Hungary's demands and to elaborate an appropriate response. A fundamental tactic of the delegation was to cast doubt on the accuracy of the 1910 census data and to establish the accuracy of the 1930 Czechoslovak data. Rather than surrender areas with Hungarian majorities, they measured the determination of the Hungarian delegation by holding out the prospect of far-reaching national autonomy. In addition, they argued against plebiscites as a means of resolving disputed issues, on grounds of the fluctuating ethnic composition of the cities and the changing ethnic self-identification of Jews, etc.³⁹

German and Italian mediation attempts in October 1938

After the failure of the Komárno negotiations, the German and Italian governments attempted to mediate between the two parties on the disputed issues. First, a Czecho-Slovak delegation led by Jozef Tiso was received by Ribbentropp and Hitler. Then, on 14 March, the German government held talks with Czecho-Slovak Foreign

³⁹ The Slovak minutes of the negotiations are given in Deák, *Viedenská arbitráž*. For the Hungarian minutes, see Diplomatic documents, The debates at the Komárom negotiations are analysed in detail by Sallai, Gergely: Cf. Popély, 1938, pp. 11–15.

Minister Chvalkovský and with the former Hungarian prime minister Darányi.⁴⁰

According to the memorandum of Darányi's discussions with Hitler, the German leader, recognising that his country had a regional interest in Slovak autonomy, rejected Hungary's plans for holding plebiscites, arguing that neither Slovaks nor Ruthenes wished to be automatically reincorporated in the Hungarian state. The German Führer identified Hungary's military indecisiveness as undermining its negotiating position and he reproached Darányi for Hungary's failure to exploit the opportunities: "If war had taken place, then Hungary could have obtained the whole of Slovakia. But now it has to make do with what is possible."⁴¹

In this context, Darányi was also asked at the negotiations in Munich whether he wished to occupy part of Slovakia, with a plebiscite being held in the other part. The former Hungarian prime minister thought that an occupation would be possible only in the Hungarian-inhabited areas, in view of the anticipated hostility of Romania and Yugoslavia. Hitler summarised this part of the discussions as follows: "*The decisive factor is not who is right but who has the might.*"⁴²

In separate discussions, Darányi consulted with Ribbentrop about Czecho-Slovakia's rejection of Hungary's border proposals and the resulting problems concerning Bratislava (Pozsony), Nitra (Nyitra), Košice (Kassa), Mukačevo (Munkács) and Užhorod (Ungvár). The German foreign minister interpreted Darányi's position as being that Košice and Užhorod would be left out of Hungarian territorial proposals. Darányi protested against such an interpretation in his letter of 23 October.⁴³ He continued to demand that Košice and the two Carpathian towns should be placed under Hungarian sovereignty, stating that plebiscites would be the best solution for disputed towns such as Nitra (Nyitra), Jelšava (Jolsva) and Smolník (Szomolnok).⁴⁴ In his response, Ribbentrop recognised Hungary's claim to Košice

⁴⁰ Hewel követ feljegyzése Hitler kancellár és Darányi miniszterelnök megbeszéléséről [Notes of Ambassador Hewel concerning the discussion between Chancellor Hitler and Prime Minister Darányi], Ránki, Pamlényi, Tilkovszky, Juhász (eds.), *Wilhelmstrasse*, pp. 303–306.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., pp. 309–311.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

(Kassa), but gave his support to the Czecho-Slovak position on Užhorod (Ungvár) and Mukačevo (Munkács).⁴⁵

German and Italian mediation gave rise to a further proposal by the Czecho-Slovak government on 22 October, which in terms of territory corresponded to a degree of 93 per cent with the terms of the Vienna Award. Nevertheless, the Hungarian government accepted the offer of German-Italian (two-power) arbitration for Košice (Kassa), Užhorod (Ungvár) and Mukačevo (Munkács).

When the Vienna Award was being drafted, the ethnic principles laid down in the Munich Agreement were superseded by a fluctuating Hungarian revisionist foreign policy that tended to reflect the aims of historical revisionism and integral frontier revision. Differences of opinion between the Hungarian and Czecho-Slovak governments concerning the precise location of the ethnic boundary and changes in the ethnic composition of the population ruled out a prompt bilateral agreement. Hungarian foreign policy was reluctant to acknowledge the increasingly Slovak character of the disputed cities – a result of Czechoslovakia's assimilation and settlement policies – or the effects on ethnic composition of the colonisation of southern Slovakia. On the other hand, the census of 1910 had also failed to offer a true picture, owing to Magyarisation and statistical manipulation.

Staying within the context of diplomatic history and foreign policy analysis, relations between Czechoslovakia and Hungary in the interwar period were characterised by a grave contradiction between Czechoslovakia's domestic policy towards its Hungarian minority and Hungary's plans for frontier revision. A bilaterally acceptable solution came only after international intervention – which was commenced by the four powers at the time of the Czecho-Slovak crisis and concluded on 2 November 1938 by Germany and Italy. Even so, the Vienna Award became a source of conflict between the two countries during the war, since it embodied the hostage logic of "reciprocal" minority policy and raised the spectre of ethnic cleansing.

As far as the Carpathian region was concerned, its re-annexation in full was an acknowledged part of Hungarian revisionism based on the combined historical, ethnic and integral principles. The First Vienna Award invoked solely the ethnic principle even in the case of

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 311.

the Carpathian region, but with the dissolution of the Czecho-Slovak Republic on 14 March 1939 and the establishment of the Czech-Moravian Protectorate and the Slovak state (with German assistance), Hungary was permitted to occupy the remainder of the Carpathian region by force. The Hungarian occupation of the Carpathian region and the subsequent military conflicts between Hungary and Slovakia indicated that Pál Teleki's fears concerning the high price of revisionist successes would be borne out sooner than anticipated.

Appendix 1

Memorandum of the Hungarian Delegation at the Komárno Negotiations Concerning Hungarian Territorial Claims (10 October 1938)¹

In the course of the Komárno discussions, the Hungarian delegation submitted the following note: "It has always been Hungary's firm political objective to establish conditions for the peaceful co-existence of our peoples in the Carpathian basin. The government of the Kingdom of Hungary would like to believe that the government in Prague is aware of the efforts made by Hungary in recent years with this goal in mind.

The government of the Kingdom of Hungary is firmly convinced that a lasting peace in the region can only be established if Czecho-Slovakia's new borders are promptly established and the Czecho-Slovak state is transformed in accordance with the desires of each nationality living in its territory. Thus, Hungary is very sympathetic to the demands of the Slovak and Ruthenian peoples, which seek to assert their right to decide their future course freely.

¹ The original French text of the memorandum and its appendix is given in: Magda Ádám, Gyula Juhász (eds.), *Diplomáciai iratok Magyarország külpolitikájához* [Diplomatic documents concerning Hungary's foreign policy] (DIMK) II., Budapest 1967, Document no. 487/b., pp. 741-742. An abbreviated version of the Hungarian note is given in Deák, *Viedneská arbitráž*, pp. 76-78.

The government of the Kingdom of Hungary is of the view that only means of exercising this right would be hold separate plebiscites under international supervision, and that such plebiscites would contribute in the most effective manner to the establishment of peace between the Hungarian, Slovak and Ruthenian peoples.

Hungary devotes special attention to the problems of the Slovaks and Ruthenians, but it is particularly interested in the fate of areas inhabited predominantly by Hungarians.

As regards this issue, Hungary has developed its position based on the principle of equal treatment with the German and Polish peoples. This principle was also applied during the decision-making process at the four-power conference held recently in Munich.

Based on the principle of equal rights, Hungary requests the unconditional return of the Hungarian-inhabited areas in Slovakia and the Carpathian region, in the same manner as has happened in the case of areas inhabited by Germans and Poles.²

The attached map indicates in detail Hungary's claims concerning the Hungarian-inhabited areas. This map also shows the areas where – in the Hungarian government's view – the Slovak and Ruthenian peoples should express their opinion in plebiscites.

The attached note contains Hungary's proposals concerning the method of evacuation and the taking into possession of the transferred areas.

When formulating these demands, the intent of the Hungarian government has been that lasting peace should develop between our peoples. It is convinced that such a peace can only be established by eliminating the causes of future friction.

The Hungarian government's firm conviction is that the Czechoslovak government, which professes to similar sentiments, will show

² The government in Prague was informed on 10 October of the territorial consequences of the Hungarian proposals indicated on a map. The frontier proposed by the Hungarian delegation and the plebiscites foreseen in disputed cases were stated in the telegram as follows: "At the end of the conference, the Hungarian minister Kánya submitted in a long exposé the Hungarian claims, in which he demanded separate plebiscites in Slovakia and the Carpathian region, as well as the immediate transfer of territory delineated in the following manner: Dévény – Pozsony – Récse – Horvátgurab – Pusztafödemes – Mocsonok – Csápor – Nyitra – Zbehy (?) – Gimes – Zsitvaújfalu – Kiskozmály – Tolmács – Újbars – Kálnok – Léva – Nagykereskény – Szántó – Gerbóc – Gács – Losonc – Rimaszombat – Jolsva – Rozsnyó – Szomolnok – Kassa – Felsőolcsva – Szinna – Kalsa – Töketerebes – Urány – Pálóc – Ungvár – Munkács – Királyi." T. G. Masaryk Institute Archive administered by the Masaryk Institute and Archive of the ASCR (TGMIA), f. E. Beneš, part I, sig R 326, box 188.

the same willingness towards Hungary as it did towards Germany and Poland, thereby promoting the development of relations between the Hungarian, Czech, Slovak and Ruthenian peoples.

The Hungarian government hopes that with regard to the above issues an agreement will be reached as soon as possible, which would allow Hungary to contribute to a guaranteeing of the new situation."

Annexe

Proposals of the government of the Kingdom of Hungary concerning the method of evacuation and the taking into possession of areas returned to Hungary.

I. Evacuation deadline: within 10 days of

During the term, units of the Czecho-Slovak military, police, gendarmerie, customs and border guard, must be withdrawn to the interior of the country. The corresponding Hungarian units will then occupy the evacuated areas.

Regarding the maintenance of law and order during the transition period, the Hungarian government reminds [the parties] of its proposal of 3 October concerning the establishment of joint committees.

Details of the evacuation and taking into possession, including the possible securing of zones and sections for the evacuation, are contained in the agreement between the commanders of the Hungarian and Czecho-Slovak armies, who have been invested with full powers. The Hungarian proposal of 3 October concerning the symbolic occupation of the two cities remains in force.

II. The evacuated areas must be handed over to Hungary in their current state, together with their facilities, public buildings, private houses, and accessories. Thus, military and economic facilities (factories, mines), land, river and air transport means (railways, bridges and roads, ports, etc.), public utility works (gas works, electricity works, etc.) should be transferred in an unchanged state. The transfer of means of transport shall be accompanied by the transfer of appropriate rolling stock.

Food, fuel, and raw material stocks, as well as industrial goods, should be left in the evacuated areas in sufficient amounts to satisfy the average needs of the population in the given area and the public and private institutions located there. The livestock and equipment of agricultural plants must remain in place. The documents of admi-

nistrative and judicial authorities, including birth, marriage and death certificates and land registry documents as well as material deposited with these authorities, must remain in place. The same applies to the art treasures of museums and other secular institutions, to artistic and scientific collections, and to historical monuments. Further details shall be elaborated by the International Commission established under the Munich Agreement; the commission shall be expanded to include a Hungarian member, to be appointed by the government.

III. The government of the Kingdom of Hungary reiterates its proposals of 3 October concerning the immediate demobilisation of military, police and gendarmerie forces serving in the re-annexed territories and their prompt return to the mother country.

IV. The Hungarian government reiterates its proposal concerning the release of all political detainees and prisoners of Hungarian ethnicity in Slovakia and the Carpathian region.

V. Legal, administrative, financial and economic issues arising from the re-annexation of the territories shall be settled by a Hungarian-Czecho-Slovak joint committee. The committee shall begin its work as soon as the re-annexation has been concluded.

MOL – K 64 – res. pol. – 1938 – 7.

Appendix 2

The Czecho-Slovak Response to the Memorandum of the Hungarian Delegation at Komárno (11 October 1938)¹

The Czecho-Slovak delegation agrees in full with the wish of the Hungarian delegation, the peaceful coexistence of the two nations along the Danube. It hopes that the current discussions may promote the achievement of this aim.

The note of the Hungarian delegation, dated 9 October of this year, concerns both the Slovak and Ruthenian question and the question of the Hungarian population. As far as the Slovak and Ruthenian question is concerned, the Czecho-Slovak delegation is of the view that this question falls outside the scope of the current discussions. It cannot be, therefore, the subject of the present debate. [The delegation] notes that the Munich Agreement – to which the Hungarian ambassador also refers in his note in Prague, dated 1 October 1938 – relates exclusively to the Polish and Hungarian minorities.

Concerning the question of the Hungarian minority, the Czecho-Slovak delegation reiterates that it has always attempted to settle this question in the most liberal and just manner possible. The government in Bratislava continues to do so, and has just established separate sections for the Germans and the Hungarians.

¹ Archiv Ministerstva zahraničních věcí [Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Prague], – Praha – Právní sekce – VI/4 – 1938.

The Hungarian demands made in the Hungarian government's note are aimed at the annexation by Hungary of the Hungarian-inhabited areas. These demands, as they feature on the attached maps, are fully unacceptable to the Czecho-Slovak delegation. They do not correspond at all to the real position of the nationality and are in complete opposition to the economic, transport etc. interests of the country. By way of illustration, the delegation points out that it cannot accept any proposal which would place Bratislava (Pozsony), Nové Zámky (Érsekújvár), Košice (Kassa), Užhorod (Ungvár) and Berehovo (Beregszász) outside the borders of the country.

The Czecho-Slovak delegation hopes that grounds for continuing the negotiations will be found.

Miklós Zeidler

**A comparison of the minority protection
articles from the treaties between the
and: Czecho-Slovakia
(September 10th 1919);
Serb-Croat-Slovene State
(September 10th 1919);
Roumania (December 9th 1919)**

TITLE

Treaty Between the Principal Allied and Associated Powers and Czecho-Slovakia signed at Saint-Germain-en-Laye on September 10th 1919

Treaty Between the Principal Allied and Associated Powers and the Serb-Croat-Slovene State signed at Saint-Germain-en-Laye on September 10th 1919

Treaty Between the Principal Allied and Associated Powers and Roumania signed at Paris on December 9th 1919

CONTRACTING PARTIES

The United States of America, The British Empire, France, Italy, and Japan, the Principal Allied and Associated Powers, on the one hand
And Czecho-Slovakia, on the other hand;

The United States of America, The British Empire, France, Italy, and Japan, the Principal Allied and Associated Powers, on the one hand
And the Serb-Croat-Slovene State, on the other hand;

The United States of America, The British Empire, France, Italy, and Japan, the Principal Allied and Associated Powers, on the one hand
And Roumania, on the other hand;

PREAMBLE

Whereas the union which formerly existed between the old Kingdom of Bohemia, the Markgraviate of Moravia and the Duchy of Silesia on the one hand and the other territories of the former Austro-Hungarian Monarchy on the other has definitely ceased to exist; and

Whereas the peoples of Bohemia, of Moravia of part of Silesia, as well as the peoples of Slovakia, have decided of their own free will to unite, and have in fact united,

Whereas since the commencement of the year 1913 extensive territories have been added to the Kingdom of Serbia, and

Whereas the Serb Croat and Slovene peoples of the former Austro-Hungarian Monarchy have of their own will determined to unite with Serbia in a permanent

Whereas under Treaties to which the Principal Allied and Associated Powers are parties large accessions of territory are being and will be made to the Kingdom of Roumania, and

Whereas Roumania desire of her own free will to give full guarantees of liberty and justice to all inhabitants both of the old Kingdom of Roumania and of the

in a permanent union for the purpose of forming a single sovereign independent State under the title of the Czecho-Slovak Republic; and

Whereas the Ruthene peoples to the south of the Carpathians have adhered to this union; and

Whereas the Czecho-Slovak Republic in fact exercises sovereignty over the aforesaid territories and has already been recognised as a sovereign independent State by the other High Contracting Parties;

The United States of America, The British Empire, France, Italy, and Japan, on the one hand, confirming their recognition of the Czecho-Slovak State as a sovereign and independent member of the Family of Nations within the boundaries which have been or may be determined in accordance with the terms of the Treaty of Peace with Austria of even date;

Czecho-Slovakia on the other hand, desiring to conform her institutions to the principles of liberty

union for the purpose of forming a single sovereign independent State under the title of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, and

Whereas the Prince Regent of Serbia and the Serbian Government have agreed to this union, and in consequence the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes has been constituted and has assumed sovereignty over the territories inhabited by these peoples, and

Whereas it is necessary to regulate certain matters of international concern arising out of the said additions of territory and of this union, and

Whereas it is desired to free Serbia from certain obligations which she undertook by the Treaty of Berlin of 1878 to certain Powers and to substitute for them obligations to the League of Nations, and

Whereas the Serb-Croat-Slovene State of its own free will desires to give to the populations of all terri-

and justice, and to give a sure guarantee to all the inhabitants of the territories over which she has assumed sovereignty;

The High Contracting Parties, anxious to assure the execution of Article 57 of the said Treaty of Peace with Austria;

Have for this purpose named as their Plenipotentiaries, that is to say:

[Here follow the names of the plenipotentiaries.]¹

Who after having exchanged their full powers, found in good and due form, have agreed as follows:

tories included within the State, of whatever race, language or religion they may be, full guarantees that they shall continue to be governed in accordance

with the principles of liberty and justice;

For this purpose the High Contracting Parties have appointed as their plenipotentiaries:

[Here follow the names of the plenipotentiaries.]⁴

...
...
...
...

The Principal Allied and a Associated Powers, taking into consideration the obligations contracted under the present Treaty by the Serb-Croat-Slovene State, declare that the Serb-Croat-Slovene State is definitely discharged from the obligations undertaken in Article 35 of the Treaty of Berlin of July 13, 1878.

Have after the examining the question together, agreed to conclude the present Treaty, and for this purpose have appointed as their plenipotentiaries the following, reserving the right of substituting others to sign the treaty:

[Here follow the names of the plenipotentiaries.]⁷

Who have agreed as follows:

FUNDAMENTAL NATURE OF REGULATIONS INCLUDED IN ARTICLES 2-8

Chapter I.

Chapter I.

Chapter I.

Article 1.

Article 1.

Article 1.

IMPERATIVE LEGAL ADJUSTMENT

<u>Czecho-Slovakia</u>	<u>The Serb-Croat-Slovene</u>	<u>Roumania</u> ⁹
undertakes that the	<u>State</u>	...
stipulations contained
in Articles 2 to 8 of this
Chapter shall be recog-
nised as fundamental
laws, and that no law,
regulation or official
action shall conflict or
interfere with these
stipulations, nor shall
any law, regulation or
official action prevail
over them.		

DEFENCE OF LIFE AND LIBERTY

Article 2.

Article 2.

Article 2.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

<u>Czecho-Slovakia</u>	<u>The Serb-Croat-Slovene</u>	<u>Roumania</u>
undertakes to assure full and	<u>State</u>	...
complete protection of	...	...
life and liberty to all in-	<u>the Kingdom</u>	...
habitants of <u>Czecho-</u>	...	<u>Roumania</u>
<u>-Slovakia</u> without	...	...
distinction of birth,	...	...
nationality, language,	...	...
race or religion.	...	...

All inhabitants of <u>Czecho-</u>	<u>the Kingdom of the</u>	<u>Roumania</u>
<u>-Slovakia</u> shall be entitled	<u>Serbs, Croats and</u>	...
to the free exercise,	<u>Slovenes</u>	...
whether public or private, ...	...	...
of any creed, religion or ...	...	...
belief, whose practices ...	...	...
are not inconsistent with ...	...	...
public order <u>or</u> public ...	...	<u>and</u>
morals. ...	...	...

GRANTING AND CHOOSING CITIZENSHIP

Article 3.

Subject to the special provisions of the Treaties mentioned below Czecho-Slovakia admits and declares to be Czecho-Slovak nationals *ipso facto* and without the requirement of any formality German, Austrian or Hungarian nationals habitually resident or possessing rights of citizenship (*pertinenza, Heimats-recht*), as the case may be, at the date of the coming into force of the present Treaty in territory which is or may be recognised as forming part of Czecho-Slovakia under the Treaties with Germany, Austria or Hungary respectively, or under any Treaties which may be concluded for the purpose of completing the present settlement.

Article 3.

...
...
...
... the Serb-Croat-Slovene State Serb-Croat-Slovene ...
...
... Austrian, Hungarian and Bulgarian ...
...
...
... as the case may be in territory ...
...
... the Serb-Croat-Slovene State under the Treaties with Austria, Hungary or Bulgaria ...
...
...
...
...
...

Article 3.

Roumania ...
Roumania ...
...
... all persons habitually resident at the date of the coming into force of the present treaty within the whole territory of Roumania, including the extensions made by the Treaties of Peace with Austria and Hungary, or any other extensions which may hereafter be made, if such persons are not at that date nationals of a foreign state other than Austria or Hungary.
...
...
...
...
...

Nevertheless <u>the persons</u> ...	<u>Austrian and</u>
<u>referred to above</u> who ...	<u>Hungarian nationals</u>
are over eighteen years ...	...
of age will be entitled ...	...
under the conditions ...	...
contained in the said ...	...
Treaties to opt for any ...	...
other nationality which ...	...
may be open to them. ...	...
Option by a husband will ...	...
cover his wife and option ...	...
by parents will cover their ...	...
children under eighteen ...	...
years of age. ...	...
Persons who have ...	...
exercised the above right ...	...
to opt must within the ...	...
succeeding twelve ...	...
months transfer their ...	...
place of residence to ...	...
the State for which they ...	...
have opted. They will ...	...
be entitled to retain their ...	...
immovable property in ...	...
<u>Czecho-Slovak territory.</u> <u>territory of the Serb-</u> <u>Roumanian territory.</u>	
They may carry with ...	...
them their movable ...	...
property of every ...	...
description. No export ...	...
duties may be imposed ...	...
upon them in connection ...	...
with the removal of ...	...
such property. ...	...

GRANTING CITIZENSHIP

Article 4.

Article 4.

Article 4.

Czecho-Slovakia admits
and declares to be
Czecho-Slovak nationals
ipso facto and without
the requirement of any
formality persons of

The Serb-Croat-Slovene
State admits and
declares to be Serb-
-Croat-Slovene

Roumania admits and
declares to be
Roumanian
 ...
 ...
 ...

<u>German, Austrian or Hungarian nationality who were born in the territory referred to</u>	<u>persons of Austrian, Hungarian or Bulgarian nationality who were born in the said territory</u>	<u>persons of Austrian Hungarian nationality who were born in the territory transferred to Roumania by the Treaties of Peace with Austria and Hungary, or subsequently transferred to her, of parents habitually resident there, even if at the date of the coming into force of the present Treaty they are not themselves habitually resident there.</u>
above of parents	...	...
habitually resident or	...	...
possessing rights of citizenship (<i>pertinenza</i> , <i>Heimatsrecht</i>), as the	...	...
case may be, there, even	...	...
if at the date of the	...	...
coming into force of	...	...
the present Treaty they	...	...
are not themselves	...	...
habitually resident or	...	...
did not possess rights	...	...
of citizenship there.	...	...
Nevertheless, within two	...	...
years after the coming	...	...
into force of the present	...	...
Treaty, these persons	...	...
may make a declaration	...	...
before the competent	...	...
<u>Czecho-Slovak</u> autho-	<u>Serb-Croat-Slovene</u>	<u>Roumanian</u>
rities in the country in	...	...
which they are resident,	...	...
stating that they abandon	...	...
<u>Czecho-Slovak</u> nationality,	<u>Serb-Croat-Slovene</u>	<u>Roumanian</u>
and they will then cease	...	...
to be considered as	...	...
<u>Czecho-Slovak</u> nationals.	<u>Serb-Croat-Slovene</u>	<u>Roumanian</u>
In this connection a	...	...
declaration by a husband	...	...
will cover his wife, and	...	...
a declaration by parents	...	...
will cover their children	...	...
under eighteen years	...	...
of age.	...	...

CHOOSING CITIZENSHIP

Article 5.

Czecho-Slovakia
undertakes to put no
hindrance in the way
of the exercise of the
right which the persons
concerned have, under
the Treaties concluded
or to be concluded by
the Allied and Associated
Powers with Germany,
Austria or Hungary, to
choose whether or not
they will acquire
Czecho-Slovak nationality.

Article 5.

The Serb-Croat-Slovene
State
...
...
...
...
...
...
...
...
Austria, Bulgaria
or Hungary
...
...
Serb-Croat-Slovene

Article 5.

Roumania
...
...
...
...
...
...
...
...
Austria or Hungary
...
...
...
Roumanian

GRANTING CITIZENSHIP

Article 6.

All persons born in
Czecho-Slovak territory
who are not born
nationals of another
State shall *ipso facto*
become Czecho-Slovak
nationals.

Article 6.

Serb-Croat-Slovene
...
...
...
...
Serb-Croat-Slovene
...

Article 6.

Roumanian
...
...
...
...
Roumanian
...

CITIZENSHIP OF JEWS IN ROMANIA (IN ROMANIAN TREATY ONLY)

Article 7.

Roumania undertakes to
recognise as Roumanian
nationals ipso facto and
without the requirement of
any formality Jews
inhabiting any Roumanian
territory, who do not pos-
sess another nationality.

LEGAL EQUALITY OF CITIZENS

Article 7.

Article 7.

Article 8.

EQUAL RIGHTS TO ADMINISTRATIVE, PROFESSIONAL AND INDUSTRIAL CAREERS

<u>All Czecho-Slovak</u>	<u>Serb-Croat-Slovene</u>	<u>Roumanian</u>
nationals shall be equal
before the law and shall
enjoy the same civil and
political rights without
distinction as to race,
language or religion.

FREE USE OF LANGUAGE

<u>Differences of religion,</u>	<u>Difference</u>	<u>Differences</u>
creed or confession shall
not prejudice any
<u>Czecho-Slovak</u> national	<u>Serb-Croat-Slovene</u>	<u>Roumanian</u>
in matters relating to
the enjoyment of civil or
political rights, as for
instance admission to
public employments,
functions and honours,
or the exercise of pro-
fessions and industries.
No restriction shall be
imposed on the free use
by any <u>Czecho-Slovak</u>	<u>Serb-Croat-Slovene</u>	<u>Roumanian</u>
national of any language
in private intercourse, in
commerce, in religion,
in the press or publica-
tions of any kind, or at
public meetings.

Notwithstanding any establishment by the	...	...
<u>Czecho-Slovak</u> Govern-	<u>Serb-Croat-Slovene</u>	<u>Roumanian</u>
ment of an official	...	...
language, adequate	...	...
facilities shall be given	...	...
to <u>Czecho-Slovak</u>	<u>Serb-Croat-Slovene</u>	<u>Roumanian nationals</u>
<u>nationals of non-Czech</u>	<u>nationals of other speech</u>	<u>of non-Roumanian</u>
<u>speech</u> for the use of	<u>than that of the official</u>	<u>speech</u>
their own language,	<u>language</u>	...
either orally or in writing,	...	...
before the courts.	...	...

RIGHT TO ESTABLISH SELF-SUPPORTIVE CHARITABLE, RELIGIOUS, SOCIAL, AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

<i>Article 8.</i>	<i>Article 8.</i>	<i>Article 9.</i>
<u>Czecho-Slovak</u> nationals	<u>Serb-Croat-Slovene</u>	<u>Roumanian</u>
who belong to racial,
religious or linguistic
minorities shall enjoy the
same treatment and
security in law and in fact
as the other <u>Czecho-</u>	<u>Serb-Croat-Slovene</u>	<u>Roumanian</u>
<u>-Slovak</u> nationals. In
particular, they shall have
an equal right to establish,
manage and control at
their own expense charit-
able, religious and social
institutions, schools and
other educational
establishments, with the
right to use their own
language and to exercise
their religion freely therein.

RIGHT FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION IN MOTHER TONGUE

Article 9.

Article 9.

Article 10.

FAIR SHARE OF EDUCATIONAL, RELIGIOUS, AND CHARITY BUDGET

<u>Czecho-Slovakia</u> will	<u>The Serb-Croat-Slovene</u>	<u>Roumania</u>
provide in the public	<u>State</u>	...
educational system in	...	...
towns and districts in	...	...
which a considerable	...	...
proportion of <u>Czecho-</u>	<u>Serb-Croat-Slovene</u>	<u>Roumanian nationals of</u>
<u>-Slovak nationals of other</u>	<u>nationals of other speech</u>	<u>other than Roumanian</u>
<u>than Czech speech are</u>	<u>than the official language</u>	<u>speech are resident</u>
<u>residents adequate</u>	<u>are resident adequate</u>	<u>adequate facilities for</u>
<u>facilities for ensuring that</u>	<u>facilities for ensuring that</u>	<u>ensuring that in the</u>
<u>the instruction</u> shall be	<u>the instruction</u>	<u>primary schools the</u>
given to the children of	...	<u>instruction</u>
such <u>Czecho-Slovak</u>	<u>Serb-Croat-Slovene</u>	<u>Roumanian</u>
nationals through the	...	...
medium of their own	...	...
language. This provision	...	...
shall not prevent the	...	...
<u>Czecho-Slovak Govern-</u>	<u>Serb-Croat-Slovene</u>	<u>Roumanian</u>
<u>ment from making the</u>	...	...
teaching of the <u>Czech</u>	<u>Serb-Croat-Slovene</u>	<u>Roumanian language</u>
<u>language obligatory.</u>	<u>language obligatory in</u>	<u>obligatory in the</u>
In towns and districts	<u>the said schools.</u>	<u>said schools.</u>
where there is a consi-	...	...
derable proportion of	...	...
<u>Czecho-Slovak</u> nationals	<u>Serb-Croat-Slovene</u>	<u>Roumanian</u>
belonging to racial,	...	...
religious or linguistic	...	...
minorities, these minori-	...	...
ties shall be assured an	...	...
equitable share in the	...	...
enjoyment and application	...	...
of the sums which may	...	...
be provided out of public	...	...
funds under the State,	...	...
municipal or other budget,	...	...
for educational, religious	...	...
or charitable purposes.	...	...

The provisions of the ...
present Article apply only ...
to territory transferred to ...
Serbia or to the Kingdom ...
of the Serbs, Croats ...
and Slovenes since ...
January 1, 1913. ...

Chapter II.

SPECIAL RIGHTS AND AUTONOMY FOR CERTAIN NATIONAL AND RELIGIOUS MINORITIES (PARTICULAR IN EACH TREATY: RUTHENIANS IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA, MOHAMMEDANS IN THE SERB-CROAT-SLOVENE STATE AND SZEKLER IN ROMANIA)

Article 10.

Czecho-Slovakia under-
takes to constitute the
Ruthene territory south
of the Carpathians within
frontiers delimited by the
Principal Allied and
Associated Powers as
an autonomous unit
within the Czecho-Slovak
State, and to accord to
it the fullest degree of
self-government compa-
tible with the unity of
the Czecho-Slovak State.

Article 10.

The Serb-Croat-Slovene
State agrees to grant to
the Mussulmans in the
matter of family law and
personal status provisions
suitable for regulating
these matters in accord-
ance with Mussulman
usage.
The Serb-Croat-Slovene
State shall take measures
to assure the nomination
of a Reiss-UI-Ulema.
The Serb-Croat-Slovene
State undertakes to ensure
protection to the mosques,
cemeteries and other
Mussulman religious
establishments. Full
recognition and facilities
shall be assured to Mussu-
lman pious foundations
(Wakfs) and religious and
charitable establishments now
existing, and the Serb-Croat-
Slovene Government shall

Article 11.

Roumania agrees to
accord to the commu-
nities of the Saxons
and Czecklers¹⁰ in
Transylvania local
autonomy in regard to
scholastic and religious
matters, subject to
the control of the
Roumanian State.

not refuse any of the
necessary facilities for the
creation of new religious
and charitable establishments
guaranteed to other private
establishments of this
nature.

Article 11.

The Ruthene territory
south of the Carpathians
shall possess a special
Diet. This Diet shall have
powers of legislation in
all linguistic, scholastic
and religious questions,
in matters of local admi-
nistration, and in other
questions which the laws
of the Czecho-Slovak
State may assign to it.
The Governor of the
Ruthene territory shall
be appointed by the
President of the Czecho-
-Slovak Republic and
shall be responsible
to the Ruthene Diet.

Article 12.

Czecho-Slovakia agrees
that officials in the
Ruthene territory will be
chosen as far as possible
from the inhabitants
of this territory.

Article 13.

Czecho-Slovakia guarantees to the Ruthene territory equitable representation in the legislative assembly of the Czecho-Slovak Republic, to which Assembly it will send deputies elected according to the constitution of the Czecho-Slovak Republic. These deputies will not, however, have the right of voting in the Czecho-Slovak Diet upon legislative questions of the same kind as those assigned to the Ruthene Diet.

**MINORITY RIGHTS AS BEING OF INTERNATIONAL CONCERN
ROLE OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS**

Article 14.

Czecho-Slovakia agrees that the stipulations of Chapters I and II so far as they affect persons belonging to racial, religious or linguistic minorities, constitute obligations of international concern and shall be placed under the guarantee of the League of Nations.² They shall not be modified without the assent of a majority of the Council of the League of Nations. The United States, the British Empire,

Article 11.

The Serb-Croat-Slovene State agrees that the stipulations in the foregoing Articles ...
...
...
...
...
...
...
...⁵
...
consent of the Council ...
...
...

Article 12.

Roumania agrees that the stipulations in the foregoing Articles ...
...
...
...
...
...
...
...¹¹
...
assent of the majority of the Council ...
...
...

France, Italy and Japan	...	...
hereby agree not to	...	...
withhold their assent	...	...
from any modification	...	...
in these Articles which	...	...
is in due form assented	...	...
to by a majority of the	...	...
Council of the League	...	...
of Nations.	...	...

<u>Czecho-Slovakia</u> agrees	<u>The Serb-Croat-Slovene</u>	<u>Roumania</u>
that any Member of the	<u>State</u>	...
Council of the League of	...	...
Nations shall have the	...	...
right to bring to the	...	...
attention of the Council	...	...
any infraction, or any	...	...
danger of infraction, of	...	...
any of these obligations,	...	...
and that the Council may	...	...
thereupon take such	...	...
action and give such	...	...
<u>direction</u> as it may deem	<u>directions</u>	...
proper and effective in	...	...
the circumstances.	...	...

<u>Czecho-Slovakia</u> further	<u>The Serb-Croat-Slovene</u>	<u>Roumania</u>
agrees that any difference	<u>State</u>	...
of opinion as to questions	...	...
of law or fact arising out	...	...
of these Articles between	...	...

the <u>Czecho-Slovak</u>	<u>Serb-Croat-Slovene</u>	<u>Roumanian Government</u>
<u>Government</u> and any one	<u>State</u>	...
of the Principal Allied	...	...
and Associated Powers	...	...
or any other Power,	...	...
a Member of the Council	...	...
of the League of Nations,	...	...
shall be held to be	...	...
a dispute of an internati-	...	...
onal character under	...	...
Article 14 of the Cove-	...	...
nant of the League of	...	...
Nations. <u>The Czecho-</u>	<u>The Serb-Croat-Slovene</u>	<u>Roumania</u>
<u>-Slovak Government</u>	<u>State</u>	...
hereby consents that any	...	...
such dispute shall, if the	...	...

other party <u>hereto</u>	<u>thereto</u>	<u>thereto</u>
demands, be referred	...	...
to the Permanent Court	...	...
of International Justice.	...	...
The decision of the	...	...
Permanent Court shall	...	...
be final and shall have	...	...
the same force and effect	...	...
as an award under	...	...
Article 13 of the Covenant.	...	...

OTHER REGULATIONS

<i>[Articles 15 to 21 of Chapter III stipulating diplomatic, commercial, customs, communications, transit, patent and copyright questions are not reproduced here.]</i>	<i>[Articles 12 to 16 of Chapter II stipulating commercial, customs, communications and transit questions are not reproduced here.]</i>	<i>[Articles 13 to 17 of Chapter II stipulating commercial, customs, communications and transit questions are not reproduced here.]</i>
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CLOSURE

The present Treaty, in
French, in English and
in Italian, of which in
case of divergence the	...	...
French text shall prevail,	...	...
shall be ratified. ³ It	... ⁶	... ¹²
shall come into force	...	...
at the same time as the	...	...
Treaty of Peace with	...	...
Austria.	...	...
<i>[Parts of the Protocol stipulating the process of ratification are not reproduced here.]</i>	<i>[Parts of the Protocol stipulating the process of ratification are not reproduced here.]</i>	<i>[Parts of the Protocol stipulating the process of ratification are not reproduced here.]</i>
<u>In faith whereof the above-named Plenipotentiaries have signed the present Treaty.</u>	<u>In faith whereof the hereinafter-named Plenipotentiaries, whose powers have been found in good and due form, have signed the present Treaty.</u>	

DATE

Done at Paris, the	...	...
<u>tenth day of September,</u>	...	<u>ninth day of December</u>
one thousand nine	...	...
hundred and nineteen,	...	...
in a single copy which	...	...
will remain deposited in	...	...
the archives of the	...	...
<u>French Republic,</u> and of	...	<u>Government of the</u>
which authenticated	...	<u>French Republic</u>
copies will be	...	...
transmitted to each of	...	...
the Signatory Powers.	...	...
		<u>Plenipotentiaries who</u>
		<u>in consequence of their</u>
		<u>temporary absence from</u>
		<u>Paris have not signed the</u>
		<u>present Treaty may do</u>
		<u>so up to December</u>
		<u>20, 1919.</u>
		<u>In faith whereof the</u>
		<u>hereinafter-named</u>
		<u>Plenipotentiaries, whose</u>
		<u>powers have been found</u>
		<u>in good and due form,</u>
		<u>have signed the</u>
		<u>present Treaty.</u>

IGNATURES

<i>[Here follow the names of the plenipotentiaries.]</i>	<i>[Here follow the names of the plenipotentiaries.]</i> ⁷	<i>[Here follow the names of the plenipotentiaries.]</i>
--------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------

Notes

- ¹ Signed for Czecho-Slovakia by Karel Kramář, President of the Council of Ministers, and Edvard Beneš, Minister for Foreign Affairs.
- ² League of Nations guarantee for "certain articles" of the treaty granted on November 29th 1920.
- ³ Documents of ratification submitted on July 16th 1920.
- ⁴ Signed for the Serb-Croat-Slovene State by Nikola Pašić, formerly President of the Council of Ministers and Ante Trumbić, Minister for Foreign Affairs.
- ⁵ League of Nations guarantee for Articles 1 to 10 of the treaty granted on November 29th 1920.
- ⁶ Documents of ratification submitted on July 16th 1920.
- ⁷ Since the Serb-Croat-Slovene State signed the treaty on December 5th, the names of her plenipotentiaries are not listed here.
- ⁸ Signed for Roumania by General Constantin Coandă, Corps Commander, formerly President of the Council of Ministers.
- ⁹ Initially, Articles 1 to 8 of the three treaties were almost identical and were designed to be the basic foundations of the protection of minorities in each country. However, due to the late insertion of a new article – numbered as Article 7 – into the Romanian Treaty (granting citizenship to Jews living in Romania), the subsequent articles had to be renumbered, which pushed the original Articles 7 and 8 one place back, the latter one – now numbered as Article 9 (on the right of establishing charitable, religious, social and educational institutions) – even falling formally outside of this obligation. Archival documents reveal that this fact escaped the attention of both the Hungarian and Romanian governments, and while the Minorities Section discovered the mistake, they were cautious enough not to disclose it so that this codificational lapse do not cause indignation in Hungary neither a tendency in Romania to neglect its validity.
- ¹⁰ Incorrect spelling of Szeklers.
- ¹¹ League of Nations guarantee for Articles 1 to 11 of the treaty granted on August 30th 1921.
- ¹² Documents of ratification submitted on September 28th 1920.

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Abbreviations

MOL – Magyar Országos Levéltár [National Hungarian Archives]

LONA – League of Nations Archives, Geneva

PAAA – Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts

OSZK – Országos Széchényi Könyvtár [National Széchényi Library]

TGMIA – T. G. Masaryk Institute Archive administered by the Masaryk Institute and Archive of the ASCR

BA – Bundesarchiv

DSNIŠ – *Dokumenty slovenskej národnej identity a štátnosti* [Documents on Slovak National Identity and Statehood]

RWSW-D – *R.W. Seton-Watson and His Relations with the Czechs and Slovaks. Documents*

(1906–1951)

DIMK – *Diplomáciai iratok Magyarország külpolitikájához* [Diplomatic documents concerning Hungary's foreign policy]

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Résumé

This monograph provides an insight into the way minority issues were dealt with in Czechoslovakia and Hungary from 1918 to 1939. The first part of the book provides clear analyses of interwar minority policies in Czechoslovakia and Hungary by Eva Irmanová, Jan Rychlík and Nándor Bárdi. Eva Irmanová analyses the origins and foundations of Czechoslovak and Hungarian interstate relations, presenting the implementation methods and content of possible alternative solutions to the Slovak question within the framework of the new Hungarian and Czechoslovak states in the 1918–1919 crisis period. The author deals with the negotiations between Hungarian Minister for National Affairs Oskar Jászi and Czechoslovak ambassador plenipotentiary in Budapest Milan Hodža at the end of November and the beginning of December 1918. The study refers critically to the inability at the time to achieve a federative or cantonal reformation of the Hungarian state based on ethnic regions, as the Hungarian government had proposed on the Swiss model. The study by Jan Rychlík sheds light on the ethnopolitical consequences of the disintegration of the Hapsburg Empire, stressing the illusory nature of attempts to create ethnically pure national states in multiethnic Central Europe. There were marked differences between the minorities in the new Czechoslovak state. The three-million-plus German minority had historical roots in the historical lands of the Hapsburg Empire and its German, particularly Sudeten German, identity only developed under the Czechoslovak Republic. In Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia, the Hungarian minority was historically, nationally, linguistically, culturally and politically connected to both the old and the new Hungary, so this issue posed a great challenge for Czechoslovak minority and foreign policy. International commit-

ments on minorities arising out of the Minorities Treaty concluded with Czechoslovakia at Saint Germain-en-Laye on 10th September 1919, as well as positive internal minority language legislation allowed for the creation of a relatively favourable political and legal environment for the development of individual minority communities in the Czechoslovak Republic. In addition to the language laws, minority schooling was managed fairly well, as were adult education and culture, even though contacts with the "mother state" or "external homeland" were restricted. Rychlík also critically analyses the negative aspects of interwar minority policies, such as the discriminatory solution to the issue of state citizenship, which had a negative impact on Hungarian minority elites.

Nándor Bárdi primarily highlights the institutional framework and the Budapest government's Hungarian national minorities strategy. He points out that the problem of revisionist foreign policy has previously been examined primarily at the level of political propaganda and that less attention has been paid to the issues surrounding Hungary's external national minority policy. The author presents a precise chronological overview of this external national minority policy, highlighting the special features of each individual stage and analysing the orientation of Hungarian government approaches to church and educational policy towards Hungarian minorities. He analyses in detail the strategic ideas behind official government policy, as well as unofficial and semi-official political aspirations. He clearly differentiates between the concepts behind revisionist foreign policy and Hungarian national minority policy and he describes the institutional network involved in governmental and non-governmental minority policy. Government policy was handled from the outset by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. In the unofficial sphere a leading role was played for a long time by various societies that were closely connected to the government sphere. These included the Hungarian Revisionist League, the Union of Social Associations and various other pseudo-associations, whose activities revolved around particular Hungarian minorities: Rákóczi's Union for the Czechoslovak Hungarians, the People's Literary Society for Transylvania and Gellert's society for the Yugoslav Hungarians.

Dagmar Hájková presents the theoretical and practical standpoints assumed by the first Czechoslovak president T. G. Masaryk in dealing

with the minorities issue in Czechoslovakia in 1918. His wartime ideas of a federative arrangement for Central Europe and his focus on the principle of national self-determination were expressions of his understanding of a "new Europe" or a new Central Europe. Masaryk was aware of the advantages of a state inhabited by just one nation, but he was also well aware of the fact that in the context of ethnically very mixed territory this situation was irresolvable. At the same time he was also aware of the issues raised by the presence of national minorities in the newly created states. However, he was convinced that ensuring the solid economic performance of the state was the priority and that a democratic approach to the minorities on the basis of individual equal rights would guarantee the smooth operation of the state. At the same time he believed that the southern Slovak border should run along ethnographic lines as much as possible and he did not advocate the creation of a large Hungarian minority on Czechoslovak territory. He very closely followed and guided the main trends in state nationalities policy, wishing to create a system in which the minorities would not be threatened by any pressure to assimilate and could develop their own cultural potential. In his speeches he expressed sympathy and an accommodating attitude towards the Hungarian minority, but insisted upon loyalty towards the new state.

Zbynek Zeman assesses the share of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the subsequent Czechoslovak president Edvard Beneš in jointly creating an ethnopolitical model for the First Republic. He analyses Beneš's stance towards the international system for protecting minorities at the League of Nations and he presents the President's reevaluation of minorities policy and his attitude to the multiethnic First Republic heritage during his wartime London exile. Miklós Zeidler also touches on the foreign context of interwar Central European ethnic problems, referring to the connection between the petitioning activities of individual Hungarian minorities and the international minorities protection system. He has carefully documented the secret political support of the Hungarian "mother state" and the reactions and responses of the individual neighbouring states to which the accusations applied, i.e. Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia. The author refers to the pros and cons of this protection system, the primary aim of which was to correct mistakes made by the peace settlement and to contribute towards peaceful coexistence. But in the Central European atmosphere of animosity

and distrust the exact opposite took place. The petitions came to be used for mutual attacks and to stir up tensions. They rarely brought about any settlement in the sphere of minority conflicts.

In his study, Ferenc Eiler deals with possible alternative international solutions to the Central European minorities issue. The limited diplomatic options of Hungarian diplomats and organizations with regard to minority rights were gradually expanded through petition campaigns for the League of Nations Secretariat. Other international organizations were addressed, such as the League of Nations Union of National Leagues, the Interparliamentary Union and the European Nationalities Congress, which placed great stress on the rights of minorities. The author focuses on the activities of the European Nationalities Congress and on the activities of the Hungarian representatives at this organization. From the outset Hungarian governments secretly supported this organization through the Ministerial Presidium Office, anticipating that it would draw attention to the situation of the national minorities in successor states and help to improve the League of Nations international system for protecting minorities. Hungarian minority politicians played a significant role in the work of the European Nationalities Congress, constantly liaising with Hungarian governments. The chief representative of the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia was Géza Szűllő, Chairman of the Provincial Christian-Socialist Party. The European Nationalities Congress did not succeed in creating a model of cultural autonomy that might be acceptable in European countries. Nor did it succeed in renewing the international minorities protection system.

After Hitler came to power in Germany, the relatively settled ethnic relations in Central Europe rapidly became more fluid and mobilized. Czechoslovak and Hungarian foreign and minority policy alternatives did not overlap, even though discussions between the Little Entente and Hungary resulted in a fairly significant prior agreement during the Bled negotiations. László Szarku examines the crisis year of 1938 and considers the possibilities of ethnic inspections and bilateral arrangements, which throughout the discussions remained without any prospect of success, however. Hungarian revisionist plans anticipated a bilateral position until the Munich Agreement, with the option of a form of Slovak autonomy that could lead to all of Slovakia voluntarily being annexed by Hungary. The

unreality of such ideas meant that Hungary reacted nervously to the implementation of a supplementary protocol to the Munich Agreement, which led first to the Komárno negotiations and then to the Vienna arbitration. As for Subcarpathian Ruthenia, Hungarian governments never gave up on the possibility of acquiring the entire territory, particularly in view of the strategic goal of a joint Polish-Hungarian border. The author analyses the process and the consequences of the diplomatic and internal policy preparations for the Vienna arbitration, as well as why and how the ethnic principle ultimately became the dominant criterion and argument for determining the new borders between Hungary and the Second Czecho-Slovak Republic.

These studies are supported by documents on the international commitments of Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Romania within the framework of the international minorities agreements of 1919, as well as documents on the final controversial diplomatic stage of interwar Czechoslovak-Hungarian minority and ethnopolitical relations.

Czech and Hungarian Minority Policy in Central Europe 1918–1938

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... [the book does] not revive old political debates in the disguise of historical scholarship but the four Czech and four Hungarian historians look into the complexity of the issues related to the position and aspirations of national minorities in Czechoslovakia unbiased, without prejudices... None of the authors aims at convincing the reader about the correctness of one or the other national argument related to the political conflicts rooted in national majority-minority relations in Czechoslovakia. Instead, they offer a very comprehensive picture of pros and cons from all perspectives. The major points of reference are not real or assumed national or nationality interests but preconditions of European and Central European regional security.

Atilla Pók



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