

## CHAPTER FIVE

### PEACE NOT NEGOTIABLE

By the end of World War I, Poland had gained her independence as a result of the successful offensive of the Central Powers. It is true that both Germany and Russia had other plans for Poland — but fortunately both powers collapsed and eventually an independent Poland was reborn with the consent of the Allied Powers.

In the South, however, the peace Treaty of Trianon put an end to a thousand-year old order in the Carpathian Basin.

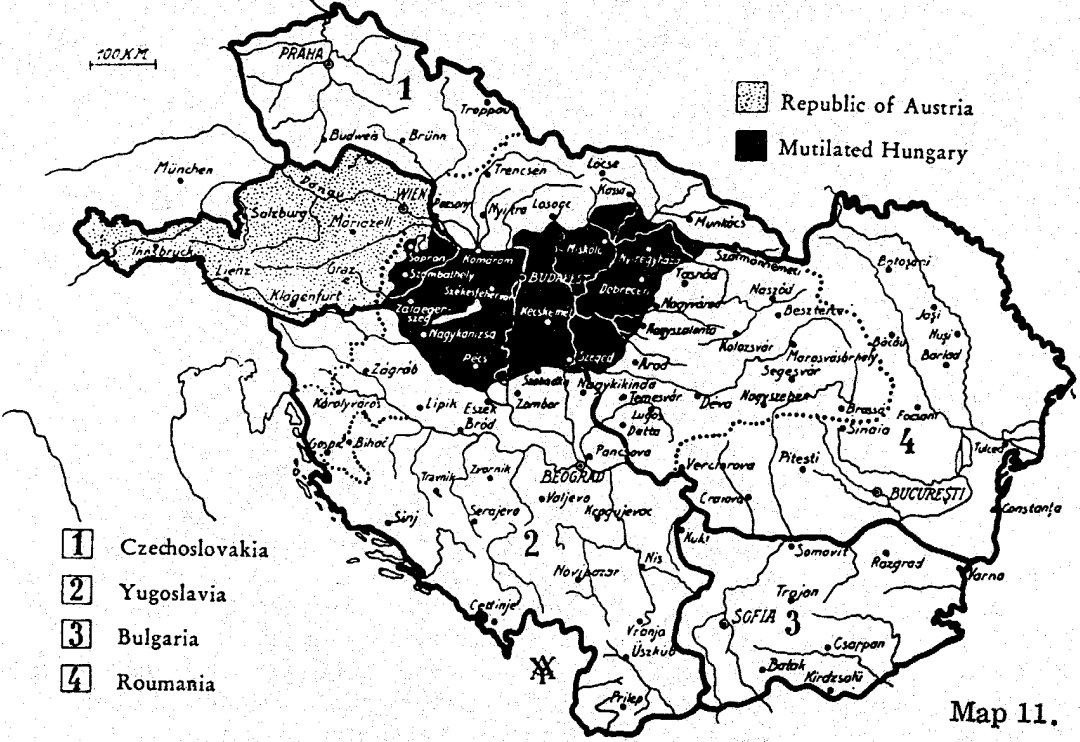
On January 16th, 1920, the Allies presented the peace conditions to the Hungarian delegation in Paris. The Peace Conference approved the Treaty on February 26, 1919, but it was delivered to the Hungarian peace delegation almost one year later, when the war- and revolution-ridden country was more apathetic and ready to accept it.

The new Hungarian government, formed with the consent of the Allies after the

## The States of the Danubian Basin before World War I



## The States of the Danubian Basin after the Peace Treaties



collapse of the terrorist bolshevik regime, replied on February 10th. It denied that the Slovaks, Rumanians, Croatians and smaller nationalities intended to join the newly created states of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia and the state of enlarged Rumania. It also disputed the claims that the nationalities constituted a majority in all the areas to be detached, and asked for plebiscites.

Count Apponyi and the members of the Hungarian delegation, arrived in Paris on January 7, 1920. They were practically imprisoned in the suburb of Neuilly, guarded by policemen, who would not allow anyone to leave. The delegation was denied an opportunity to present the maps and memoranda prepared by the experts, and to submit their views to the Conference.

It is worth remembering that the War had been caused by great-power rivalry. As years went by, it became necessary to offer to the war-weary public of the Allies more plausible war-aims. So the convenient slogan "liberation of the oppressed nations" was launched. This pious dictum was particularly welcome in America. President Wilson, who thought of himself as the saviour of mankind and the prophet of the Covenant of the League of Nations, promptly assumed the role of the "Protector of Oppressed Minorities" and thus managed to bring America into the European war on the basis of his Fourteen Points. To Wilson all this was only theory and naive belief, but to the Central European panslav propagandists (Masaryk and his circle) Wilson's attitude became a most welcome political tool which enabled them to climb aboard the Allied bandwagon of "liberation". They were accepted as the sole experts in Central European matters and eventually they claimed the status of official representatives of states and governments which only existed at that time in the wishful thinking of a few panslav agents. They held no authority from the so-called "oppressed nationalities". Apart from physical separation, there was an unmistakable difference of attitudes between the Slav emigrés (Masaryk and others) and

the Slav "minorities" within the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy. The attitude of the autochthonous Slav population of the dual Monarchy is best illustrated by the fact that many of the leaders of the Austrian war effort were of Czech, Serbian or Croatian origin — more aggressively "Austrian" and pro-German than the Hungarian politicians and generals. The armament industry of the Monarchy was entirely in the hands of the Czechs who faithfully and without protest or sabotage produced the weapons to defend their alleged "oppressors".

"The fixing of the peace terms, as well as the final decision, rested, formally at last, with the Allied Powers. In reality, however, their decisions in the matter were strongly influenced beforehand by the propaganda waged, without competition by the leaders of the Succession States, and several of their influential friends who served as experts at the peace conference and influenced the peacemakers in favor of their protégés. The Allies had by then accepted the idea of the Monarchy's dissection, though some of their leading statesmen were worried about the consequences of the elimination of this major state which had served as an important factor in the European balance of power. This propaganda had an easy task against a Hungary which was in the worst imaginable situation. Hungary was in the camp of the vanquished enemy, as the ally of Germany. Her enemies accused her, without any foundation, of responsibility for the Great War. The revolutionary chaos, into which the nation was driven by despair, turned, for a while, the enemies of Bolshevism against Hungary, too. The liquidation of the reign of terror and the restoration of law and order was, on the other hand, represented by anti-Hungarian propaganda as mere reaction and vengeance.

Members of the Supreme Council considered the Hungarian question of minor importance beside the German one, and besides, had a very meagre knowledge of the political, economic and nationality problems of the region, as may be ascertained

rest of their old friends, the leaders of the national minorities, who were bent on the destruction of Hungary.

It was also presumed that for the sake of the great and general interest one had to overlook certain obvious injustices, such as the placing of millions of ethnic Hungarians under foreign and hostile rule. Of course the three neighbours of Hungary were out to build up their own exclusive national regimes, but were smart enough to present their aims in such a form, and equipped with such arguments and promises, to the Allied Powers that the latter saw in them the victory and the very incarnation of their own ideals". (1)

"In fact, the victim eventually slaughtered at Trianon, had been selected for that role well in advance. As we have seen, Pan-slavism had conspired, even before the 1914-1918 war, to pluck Hungary to pieces and share out the spoils". (2)

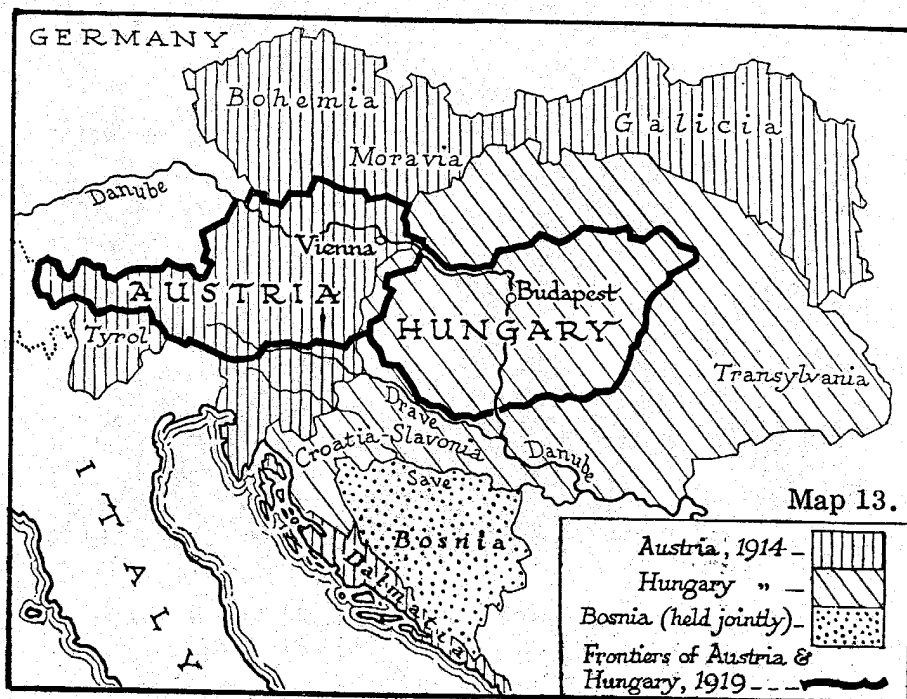
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"When the Hungarian delegates were at last told about the fate that had been prepared for their country so great was their sorrow that they almost felt paralysed. They set to work immediately, neverthe-

less, and for four months running they applied themselves to showing up the historic errors, the geographical monstrosities and the economic absurdities which Edouard Benes had termed the decisions of the Peace Conference. And as if those decisions amounting to arbitrary confiscation had anything to do with law or justice, the Hungarian delegation continued with scrupulous industry turning out submission upon submission, note upon note". (3)

"Unfortunately, all their efforts proved to be a total waste. While confined to the Château de Madrid ( their hotel-prison) like a colony of lepers, the victors never communicated with them orally, only in writing. The considerable mass of documents, maps and statistics which they had brought with them was never consulted, the same as nobody ever read the notes they produced on the spot. Never at any moment did the Hungarian delegates have a chance of discussing matters bilaterally with the victors". ( 2)

"The sincere wish of the population in question could have been best determined through plebiscite, to be held under fair conditions in the different districts affect-



from the historic sources at hand. Thus, in most cases, they rather accepted, after little or no resistance, those "solutions" proposed by the Czechs, Rumanians and Serbs,

and the ever-popular "experts" supporting their case. These latter were, apparently fully convinced that they were doing the right thing by backing exclusively the inte-



New states and acquisitions by the reshaping of Central Europe after World War One.

ed. This was what the Hungarians, confident in the victory of their cause, really wanted. Receiving the peace draft, Count Albert Apponyi, Hungary's delegate, requested in a memorable address, the Allies to consult those about whom they are to decide as to their genuine desires. He also announced that Hungary was ready to comply with the verdict of any plebiscite held under just conditions. This most natural solution, however, was not consented to by the new conquerors.

The general plebiscite was prevented also by the fait accompli brought about by the military occupation of the territories in question, by the hastily reorganized Czech, Rumanian and Serbian armies. All three neighbours were, in fact, already before the Peace Treaty, in military control of the territories which they wished to acquire for themselves.

No Hungarian was allowed to take part in the negotiations preparatory to the peace. Hungary was invited in only after a decision was reached, following the hearing of the Czech, Rumanian and South Slav aspirations and then only for the purpose of accepting the ready-made conditions. The peace was not a negotiated, but a dictated one. There was no willingness to listen to

the Hungarian delegation's arguments. As proved by diaries and documents, published since, no one thought of checking to any serious extent the correctness of data supplied by those who wished to document their claims against Hungary". (1)

The Hungarian peace delegation received on May 6, 1920, the verdict of the Supreme Council in Paris: it repelled any modification on the prepared treaty and as a main point it rejected Hungary's proposal for plebiscite. The delegation had no other choice than to return to Hungary. Count Apponyi, the leader of the delegation resigned and declared that any further action should be on the side of the Hungarian government.

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(1) Steven B. Várdy, Ph. D. Duquesne University U.S. History of the Hungarian Nation.

(2) Yves de Daruvar: The Tragic Fate of Hungary ( France)

(3) Robert Vallery-Radot: La Hongrie et l'esprit maçonnique des Traités, extract from La Revue Hebdomadaire pp. 21, Paris 1929.