

Le passé qui ne passe pas
The treaty of Trianon and its repercussions
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Every society experiences traumatic events in its history. In modern Hungarian history the Trianon peace treaty of 1920 represents such a case, one that has continued to occupy Hungarian society from the time of its signature up until the present. Sociological surveys conducted in the 1980s showed that the majority of the Hungarian intellectuals (64% in 1983 and 84% in 1989) considered the partition of historic Hungary among Austria, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia at the end of the Great War a wrong and unjust decision. In 1983 35% and in 1989 only 16% thought that it was a fundamentally sound decision to sanction the dissolution of the historical kingdom, but that it was poorly carried out. Only one percent of the respondents approved the ruling without any reservation. To the question of what could happen in the future regarding the “Trianon” borders, 63% stated that they are final and irrevocable. But 34% did not exclude the possibility of revision in favor of Hungary.¹ The results of a more recent research conducted between 2001 and 2006 and representing the entire population show a similar picture. 34% of the respondents believed that the borders determined in 1920 should be considered final. But 18% thought that they can never be accepted. The others hoped that mutually acceptable solutions can be reached by the spiritualization of the frontiers and other peaceful techniques within the European Union.² These outcomes clearly indicate that Hungarian society has not come to terms with the dismantling of Greater Hungary and that the complex problem embodied in the Trianon settlement is still with us. In my talk I deal with two basic aspects of this phenomenon. First, I present very shortly the territorial stipulations and economic consequences of the peace treaty itself. Second, I describe, more in details, its perception in three time periods: the interwar years, the so-called Horthy-time, the Soviet era and the epoch of the new Republic of Hungary established in 1989-1990.

Look at first the Peace Treaty, itself

The Treaty of Trianon that was elaborated in the first half of 1919 by the Paris Peace Conference can be considered a compromise between the extreme claims of the affected nations of the Danube region and the somewhat more moderate wishes of the victorious Great Powers. The idea of a Slav corridor connecting the enlarged South Slave state and Czechoslovakia and some other bizarre and ethnically unjustifiable demands were rejected. In some cases, however, the ethnic principle was overwritten by economic and strategic considerations, as well as by the idea of *vae victis*.

As a result of all these factors, the area of Hungary was reduced from 329,000 square kilometers or, discounting Croatia, from 282, 000 to 93,000 square kilometers; its population dropped from 20,8 million (or without Croatia from 18.2 million) to 7.9 million. Consequently, from a mid-size European state Hungary was turned into a small country of East Central Europe; Poland was over four times, Romania over three times, Yugoslavia almost three times, and Czechoslovakia one and a half times its size. The largest portion of the formerly Hungarian lands – some 103,000 square kilometers -- went to Romania, followed by Czechoslovakia with 61,000, Yugoslavia (not counting Croatia) with 20,000 and Austria with 4,300 square kilometers. As regards population, Romania received over 5 million people, Czechoslovakia 3,5 million, Yugoslavia 1,5 million and Austria almost 300.000. Moreover, Poland and Italy

¹ György Csepeli, *National Identity in Contemporary Hungary*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997) pp. 194-197.

² Mária Vásárhelyi, *Csalóka emlékezet. [Misleading Memory.]* (Pozsony: Kalligram, 2007) pp. 82-84.

also inherited some small areas. Out of a total of 10.6 million people in the detached lands, 3.2 million, that is 30.2%, were ethnic Hungarians (Magyars). Of these, 1,6 million found themselves in Transylvania and other areas awarded to Romania, 1 million in Slovakia and Ruthenia, almost half a million in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The Hungarians in Burgenland awarded to Austria were no more than 25 to 26,000. The percentage of minority ethnic groups in Hungary, which was 46% in 1910, sank to 10% in 1920. The only significant minorities remaining within the new borders were the Germans (550,000 or 7%) and the Slovaks (140,000 or 2%).³

It followed from the territorial changes that the economic consequences of the peace were similarly drastic for Hungary. The overwhelming majority of the natural resources that had been dynamically exploited were located in the detached territories. Not a single one of the salt mines remained under Hungarian control. With the loss of Nagybánya (Baia Mare), Körmöcbánya (Kremnica) and Selmecebánya (Banská Štavnica) there was no longer any mining of gold, silver, copper, mercury or manganese. The oil wells of Nyitra, Transylvania and the Mura Valley also fell into foreign hands. At the same time, the processing plants, largely concentrated around Budapest, remained in Hungary. Thus, a major gap was opened between the amount of national resources and the capacity of various branches of industry.

The treaty set out Hungary's obligations to its neighbors and other European states, as well. According to these the country could not renounce its independence (or in other words re-unify with Austria) without the League of Nation's consent. Another chapter dealt with restrictions on military forces, shipping and aviation. Hungary could maintain a standing army of no more than 35,000 volunteers (i.e. professional soldiers); general army conscription was banned. The country was not permitted to manufacture or purchase armored vehicles, tanks, destroyers, fighter aircraft and other armaments that were essential to modern warfare. The treaty also obliged Hungary to make compensation payments for the following 30 years, starting in 1921, as restitution for the war damages that it had caused.⁴

Having listened to the counter arguments of the Hungarian Peace Delegation arriving to Paris in January 1920 some leaders of the Great Powers realized the dangerous situation they created in East Central Europe. Especially British Prime Minister, Lloyd George argued that they would not want "the Hungarians to become eternal enemies, which is exactly what would happen if the Allies were to leave [...] one third of the total Magyar population" under foreign rule. Although Francesco Nitti, Italian Prime minister, backed Lloyd George and advocated for the reconsideration of the new Hungarian frontiers, the French representatives and the delegates of the small Allies firmly rejected any modification.⁵ The treaty was signed on 4th of June 1920 in the Grand Trianon pavilion located in the garden of the former French royal residence in Versailles.

(The interwar period)

It is quite understandable – and by this I come to the second aspect of my talk -- that Hungarian society in the interwar period considered this arrangement unjust and unacceptable. The prevailing, embittered nationalism had, however, several modalities. The conservative ruling elite of the Horthy era considered Trianon and the loss of two thirds of the country's territory and one third of the Magyar people a historic accident and an unprecedented injustice or crime committed against Hungarians. The typical answer of these groups was a total rejection to acknowledge these territorial changes. From this standpoint the political platform of integral

³ Ignác Romsics, *The Dismantling of Historic Hungary*, op. cit. pp. 169-171.

⁴ Ignác Romsics, *The Dismantling of Historic Hungary*, op. cit. pp. 124-125.

⁵ *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939*, first series, ed. J. P. T. Bury and R. Butler (London: Her Majesty Stationery Office, 1958) vol. 7. pp. 249., 383-388. and 440-449.

revision logically followed. If Trianon is totally unacceptable, if it is a crime, historic Hungary should be restored in its entirety. This platform was supported by a variety of arguments. Some historians presented the thesis of the Hungarian's priority in the Carpathian Basin. As János Karácsonyi, a catholic priest and Professor of church history at the University of Budapest before the war stressed in his essays published in the early 1920's, Hungarians and only they held full historical rights to the territory of Greater Hungary, because when they captured the Carpathian Basin in the ninth century, the area was basically a no man's land. Historical thinking jumped from this observation to the conclusion that the Hungarian nation held an exclusive right to all territories between the Carpathians and the Adriatic.⁶ Albert Apponyi, both as leader of the Hungarian peace delegation in 1920 and as author of the opening essay in the famous propaganda book *Justice for Hungary*, published in 1928, emphasized the cultural superiority and extraordinary political gift of Hungarians, which made them fit to function as a civilizing force in the region and as a protector of the Christian West at the same time.⁷

A third characteristic argument stressed the unusual geographical and economic unity of historic Hungary. The unity was characterized as being singular in Europe and it was claimed that the forced dismemberment of this unity could not be upheld for a longer period of time. According to this view, the reintegration of the detached parts of historic Hungary was an economic necessity without which all of the peoples living in the region would experience disaster, famine, and a general decline. This view was also accepted and popularized by a number of eminent scholars and politicians, including Paul Teleki. "Geography", he emphasized for instance in his university lectures given in the United States in the early 1920s, "is the most important nation building factor," and the Paris Peace Conference had been seriously mistaken when, instead of geography and economy, it had based its decisions basically on linguistic differences.⁸

A further historic argument was based on the allegedly always tolerant Hungarian policies towards the nationalities, beginning with Saint Stephen, the first King of Hungary. This theory, called the „Saint Steven State Concept”, emphasized the peaceful coexistence of the various ethnic groups within Hungary through centuries and projected the reestablishment of this idealized coexistence in the form of a federation in which Hungarians would have enjoyed a status of *primus inter pares*. This solution, as the representatives of this interpretation emphasized, was desired not only by the Hungarians but by the former nationalities as well. Thus, the rebirth of historic Hungary was only a question of time. Among others, Gyula Szekfű, an eminent historian of the time, popularized this deeply unhistorical and unrealistic approach, as well.⁹

The above approach was detailed in a 1928 essay by László Ottlik. The young jurist, who was a close associate of Prime Minister István Bethlen, envisioned a new Hungary within its old frontiers but providing different types of autonomy for non-Magyars depending on their supposed self-governing capacity. Considering that Croatia formed a separate geographical unit with homogeneous population and reached quite a high level of political and cultural niveau he offered to Zagreb an equal status within the future Hungarian Kingdom to Hungary proper.

⁶János Karácsonyi, *Történelmi jogunk hazánk területi épségéhez [Our historic right to the territorial integrity of our country]* (Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 1921)

⁷Albert Apponyi, „The Historic Mission of Hungary and of States Aggrandised to Her Detriment”, in *Justice for Hungary: Review and Criticism of the Effect of the Treaty of Trianon* (London: Longmans, 1928), pp. 3-20.

⁸Paul Teleki, *The Evolution of Hungary and Its Place in European History* (New York: Macmillan, 1923), 211-243. For background also see: Balázs Ablonczy, *Pál Teleki (1874-1941). The Life of a Controversial Hungarian Politician* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), pp. 97-103.

⁹Steven Bela Vardy, *Modern Hungarian Historiography* (New York, Guilford: Columbia University Press, 1976) pp. 62-94.; for Szálasi's ideas see Krisztián Ungváry, „Szálasi Ferenc,” in *Trianon és a magyar politikai gondolkodás, 1920-1953, [Trianon and the Hungarian political thinking, 1920-1953]* eds. Ignác Romsics and Iván Bertényi. Jr. (Budapest: Osiris, 1998), pp.117-133.

Slovakia would enjoy an extended political and territorial autonomy providing the same status both for Slovaks and local Magyars modeled on the constitutional arrangement in South-Africa where the two white communities and their languages, British and Africans, were put on the equal footing. The autonomous Transylvania should be based on the cooperation of Romanians, Magyars and Germans following the Swiss model, while in Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia the Ruthenes would be given full-fledged self-governing rights similar to Slovakia. Contrary to ethnicity-based nationalisms which prevailed in Eastern Europe after the war this state concept emphasized the common history and the mutual economic and political interests of the related peoples.¹⁰

The platforms mentioned above did admittedly not remain unchallenged in the political thinking of the interwar period. Besides the concept of integral revision there were other visions and plans including the program of ethnic revision, based on ethnicity and ethnographical characteristics. Viewed from this perspective, the dissolution of the multiethnic Hungarian state was not as much a result of an arbitrary great power decision, nor of some fatal mistake on the part of the revolutionary governments, but, rather, an organic or natural consequence of historical development. As László Németh, a novelist and essayist put it: “The Habsburg-Monarchy broke up due to the final consequence of nationalism, the principle of ethnic self-determination. As soon as our nationalities had been swayed by this nineteenth century principle, Hungary had no chance to survive unchanged, tolerance would have caused its break-up just as much as intolerance did.”¹¹

This ethnic or linguistic approach was also characteristic of various liberal and democratic forces of the period that formed the leftist opposition of the Horthy regime. In the name of the radical-democrats Ruzstem Vámbéry declared in 1928: „We do not aim at anything else than the completion of the country following the ethnographic pattern and the effective protection of the Hungarian minorities”. A less radical but still liberal personality, Miksa Fenyő wrote in 1935: „The revision must be nothing else than the re-annexation of the ethnically exclusively or predominantly Hungarian regions along the frontiers.”¹²

Some intellectuals, such as the exiled Oszkár Jászi, a radical democrat, or the populist writer and essayist Dezső Szabó went even further. They rejected not only the concept of integral revision, but the idea of a territorial solution at all. „The question, Oszkár Jászi argued, is unfit for a territorial solution. The problem is one of racial autonomy in language and culture, and the racial organization of populations within the common territory”. As a promising solution he proposed the establishment of the confederation of the Danubian peoples.¹³ Dezső Szabó imagined an even larger cooperation: the confederation of all peoples living between the Germans in the West and Russians in the East. Hungary and its neighbors, he wrote, „have two nightmares: Germany and Russia” and they can only escape from that if they establish the Confederation of the East European States.¹⁴

A characteristic product of the rethinking of the Hungarian concept of state and nation was Transylvanism. The maximalist program of Transylvanism did not stop at demanding an autonomous province, but actually desired to have an independent Transylvania or have the principality rejoin Hungary. Moderates, however, would have been satisfied by being granted territorial, political, cultural and religious autonomy within Romania. Due to its peculiar character, Transylvanism had contacts with revisionist ideologies and confederationist,

¹⁰ László Ottlik, „Új Hungária felé” [„Towards a New Hungary”] *Magyar Szemle*, 1928. IV. pp. 1-10.

¹¹ László Németh, „A magyar élet antinómiái,” [Antinomies of the Hungarian Life”] in László Németh, *Sorskérdések [Fundamental questions]* (Budapest: Magvető, 1989), p. 119.

¹² Cited by Zsuzsa Nagy, L., *Liberális pártmozgalmak 1931-1945 [Liberal party movements 1931-1945]* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1986), p. 79.

¹³ Oscar Jászi, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Hungary* (London: P.S. King & Son, 1924), p. 234.

¹⁴ Dezső Szabó, *Az egész látóhatár [The whole horizon] vol. I.* (Budapest: Magyar Élet, 1939), pp. 211-236.

"Danubian" initiatives as well.¹⁵

The break with the idea of Saint Stephen's empire, historical boundaries and the various grand revisionist schemes, as well as the understanding of the consequences of the cultural-linguistic concept of the nation received its most theoretical formulation in István Bibó's essays written during World War II but published only after the end of hostilities. In his long essay titled *Distress of East European Small States* he observed, that "the stability of international demarcation in this region is to be sought not along historical borders (as in Western Europe) but along linguistic borders. All Western attempts to use historical unity for inculcating unified national consciousness into peoples speaking different languages, such as the primary examples of the Polish, the Hungarian, or the Bohemian experiments, failed irreversibly and by now their failures are more or less acknowledged. [...] All other purported views – those using arguments of geography, economics, strategy, the rounding off of borders, ease of transportations, and God knows what else – [...] are, in fact, completely meaningless. Using them on a large scale can lead to grave problems."¹⁶

We must not underestimate the effect of Németh, Jászi, Szabó, Bibó, and others. The way of thinking of the younger generations of the interwar period developed under their influence. Their own generation, however, could hardly be influenced by such ideas. As for the ruling elite and circles of the government, they entirely rejected these approaches, and the state propaganda was based exclusively on the concept of integral revision. A typical example of this was supplied by Rothermere's first proposal of 1927. The English lord had an ethnic readjustment of the frontiers in mind, but his initiative was "corrected" by the writer Ferenc Herczeg, president of the Hungarian Revisionist League by a reminder, that "the so-called Rothermere-line is not a Hungarian proposal [...], the Hungarian nation does not surrender its right to the thousand year old territories."¹⁷ The same attitude characterized Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, a leading anti-German figure as well, who even in 1943 wrote that "Transylvania must be restored as a whole – as an integral unit – to the jurisdiction of the Holy Crown."¹⁸ Even one of the most European-minded Hungarian writers of these years, Sándor Márai, shared the very same expectations. Repeating many stereotypes of the ruling elite's self-image he believed that „Magyars were entitled to a leading role in the Carpathian basin”. He even supposed that in post-war Europe only two nations would be given an „exceptionally important role”: “the Magyar in South-Eastern Europe and the French in West”.¹⁹

Although border revision was always considered as a top priority of the interwar Hungarian foreign policy, the Versailles settlement, including the post-Trianon status quo, could not be seriously challenged until the mid-1930s. By this time, however, European diplomacy had entered a new phase. The reshaping of Europe initiated by Hitler and Mussolini opened the possibility for the realization of Hungarian revisionism. Between 1938 and 1941 Hungary recovered in four stages more than one third (more than half, if we discount Croatia) of the territories and more than five million people that it had lost. It meant that Hungary's territory expanded from 93,000 to 172,000 square kilometers and its population from 9 to almost 15 million. Around one-half of the nearly five million “new” inhabitants were Hungarian, the

¹⁵Zsolt Lengyel, K., *Auf der Suche nach dem Kompromiß. Ursprünge und Gestalten des frühen Transsilvanismus 1918-1928* (München: Ungarisches Institut, 1993) and Franz Sz. Horváth, *Zwischen Ablehnung und Anpassung. Politische Strategien der ungarischen Minderheitselite in Rumänien 1931-1940* (München: Ungarisches Institut, 2007), pp. 101-182.

¹⁶István Bibó, *Democracy, Revolution, Self-Determination: Selected Writings*, ed., Károly Nagy, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), pp. 61-62.

¹⁷*Budapesti Hírlap*, 28 July 1927. For more detailed treatment of the question see Miklós Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revision in Hungary 1920-1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), pp. 103-144.

¹⁸Andrew Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, *Transylvania. Past and Future* (Geneva: Kundig, 1944), p. 152.

¹⁹Sándor Márai, *Röpirat a nemzetnevelés ügyében [Tractate on the Education of the Nation]* (Pozsony: Kalligram, 1993), pp. 46-47, 72-75, 81-87.

others belonged to non-Hungarian communities. So, Hungary once more became a country with a sizeable non-Hungarian mix of minority groups, making up around 21 percent of the total population.²⁰

Under Soviet domination

The territorial changes carried out between 1938 and 1941 lasted only as long as the power of the main challengers to the Versailles settlements. Although the Western Allies, especially the United States supported slight modifications of the Hungarian-Romanian border in favor of Hungary, the territorial terms of the peace treaty signed with Hungary in Paris in 1947 were the same as they had been at Trianon. Hungarians began to acknowledge only at this point that not only integral revision was unimaginable, but even a compromise solution, i.e. revision based on ethnic principles. István Bibó, the outstanding political thinker of the last century, took the position that in accepting the Trianon borders “both physically and spiritually” Hungarians had only two options: avoiding “the maelstrom of mutual and bottomless hatred” they could strive for loyalty and moderation behooving small nations” and yet feel responsible for “the fate of the Hungarians beyond the borders”.²¹ Others, such as Gyula Szekfű, the noted historian and ideologue of the period between the wars, took a similar position. “We must give up the struggle and propaganda for revisionism once and for all”, he wrote in 1947, and we can have “only one wish” with regard to the neighboring states: “honorable observance of the civil rights of Hungarians living in their midst and their humane treatment”.²² This new approach was, of course, a foreign political necessity, as well. The Trianon borders were restored by the active assistance of the Soviet Union which strictly controlled and often determined Hungarian politics between 1945 and 1989.

The communist takeover at the end of the 1940's created, again, a totally new situation in 20th century Hungarian history. Nationalism, no matter which type of it, was considered a harmful relic of the bourgeois past for which there was no room in the socialist society. According to the basic beliefs of Marxism-Leninism in the new socialist societies national identity would disappear and its place was to be taken by a new non-national identity, usually called proletarian internationalism. In other words, as Marx and Engels predicted in the Communist manifesto, the common interests of the entire proletariat would prove stronger than national loyalties. National differences and antagonisms between peoples would fade gradually. Accordingly, national sentiments and differences were allowed to be expressed only in politically harmless cultural activities like folk dances, dress, music, etc.

As a consequence of the above, the question of the Hungarian minorities living in the neighboring states did not surface in public. National oppression was interpreted as a special sub-case of the bourgeois system of exploitation, and party propagandists emphasized therefore that “Hungary as well as its neighbors must combat, first and foremost, the reactionaries and chauvinists. After they have been eliminated, the obstacles in the way to an understanding among our peoples will disappear, as well.”²³

Of course, nationalism and patriotism did not disappear from thinking and sentiment of the people. Paradoxically, suppression even strengthened it and produced a negative coalition of all of the anti-Stalinist forces, including representatives of the previous authoritarian-nationalist

²⁰ Ignác Romsics, *Hungary in the Twentieth Century* (Budapest: Corvina, 1999), pp. 203-204.

²¹ István Bibó, „A békeszerződés és a magyar demokrácia” [The Peace Treaty and the Hungarian Democracy] in *István Bibó Összegyűjtött Munkái I. köt. [Collected Writings of István Bibó. vol. I.]* eds. István Kemény and Mátyás Sárközi (Bern: PMSZE,) 1981), 199.

²² Gyula Szekfű, *Forradalom után [After the Revolution]* (Budapest: Cserépfalvi, 1947), pp. 69 and 203.

²³ Erzsébet Andics, *Hazafiak-e a kommunisták? [Are the Communists Patriots?]* (Budapest: Szikra, 1946), p. 40.

regime, liberals, social democrats, populist writers and even reform communists. The limited political solidarity of the various groups reached the level of joint political action in 1956.

The two weeks of the 1956 revolution were too brief for any coherent concept to emerge about the nation and the minority question. Its national character, however, was evident. The published programs of the various political parties and other organizations all demanded the restoration of the country's independence. The peculiar, politically divided character of the nation was also on people's minds. On 29 October the revolutionary committee of the county of Veszprém demanded that the government devote more attention to the needs of Hungarians living outside of Hungary. The same communiqué also addressed what was seen as the necessity of a Danubian confederation.²⁴

It was quite natural, therefore, that the new communist leadership after 1956 considered nationalism the greatest ideological and political threat. As a 1959 party resolution titled *On Bourgeois Nationalism and Socialist Patriotism* put it, nationalism "was one of the chief weapons of the counterrevolution of 1956." The "nationalist counterrevolutionary ideology", this very same resolution states, often focuses on "the question of borders". This attitude, goes the reasoning in the document, falsifies the historical and ethnographical facts that have led to the formation of these borders. "Nationalists deceive the public by equating Versailles and Paris, the peace treaties after the two world wars. Trianon was an imperialist peace dictate, which caused strife amongst the Danubian peoples, and it contributed to the consolidation of the interwar fascist regime. The Paris Peace Treaty is a democratic charter aimed at establishing peace in the Danubian basin, promoting the cooperation of its peoples and preventing fascism from raising its head once again in the region.

The document is rounded out by a discussion of the conditions of the Hungarian minorities and concludes by stating that there can be no complaints as far as their fate is concerned. "After the working classes assume power, national feuds are replaced by the common cause of building socialism. Mistrust nourished by centuries of strife is replaced by trust and the establishment of friendly relationships. The party and the government have these principles in mind, the most basic needs of our people, the building of socialism and the protection of peace, when it declares that it considers the question of the national borders to be settled. In the development of socialist societies, boundaries lose their significance and function. In the socialist world order, political boundaries melt away with the triumph of communism."²⁵

Kádár and his fellow leaders delivered this message to both the Czechoslovak and Romanian leaders, as well as representatives of the Hungarian minority living in those countries. This proved to be an incentive for these states to continue on the road of national homogenization, which -- the same way as Magyarization before 1918 -- did not recognize the concept of co-nationality but considered members of minorities to belong to culturally and linguistically different subgroups of the otherwise unitary nation. The only exception at this time was Yugoslavia, where the federal principle was given some room to develop. It has to be mentioned, however, that the Hungarian government also attempted to assimilate its own minority groups: the remaining historic nationalities and the rapidly growing Roma population.

Proletarian internationalism and its corollary, antinationalism and neglect of the minority question both within and outside of Hungary was replaced at the end of the sixties by a new doctrine. It acknowledged the nation as a lasting cultural and political entity and in practice promoted the establishment of bonds between Hungarians in the world. This shift in stance, just

²⁴ Ádám Szesztay, *Magyarország és a szomszéd országok nemzetiségpolitikája 1956-1962 [The Nationality Policy of Hungary and its Neighboring States 1956-1962]* (Budapest: Phd Dissertation at ELTE, 2000) pp. 10-15.

²⁵ „A burzsoá nacionalizmusról és a szocialista hazafiságról (1959)” in. *A Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt határozatai és dokumentumai 1956-1962 [Resolutions and Documents of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party 1956-1962]* eds. Henrik Vass and Ágnes Ságvári. (Budapest: Kossuth, 1973) pp. 369-372.

as the concurrent domestic economic reforms and a degree of cultural liberalism, can be regarded as reflections of the pragmatism that characterized János Kádár.

The new approach was heralded in 1974 by a new party document. Noteworthy in this study is the implicit distinction between cultural and political nation, and its support of plural identities which it acknowledges as natural. "The nationalities -- goes the memorandum -- will identify with their leaders and with socialism all the more, if they feel their culture, their language and educational rights and their right to cooperate with their co-nationals is ensured."²⁶

After the publication of this document, a series of newspaper articles and government decrees demonstrated that Hungary had really broken with the old-fashioned internationalism. It soon became obvious that the new Hungarian policy was to focus on the refusal of assimilation and on the support for the Hungarian minorities in the struggle to preserve their identity. Kádárism experimented with what essentially István Bibó and others were promoting in 1947, and what reappeared through a mini renaissance of the national idea under the influence of writers like Gyula Illyés and Sándor Csoóri from the end of the sixties. The mother tongue movement (*anyanyelvi mozgalom*) launched in 1970 was just one visible sign.

As the Hungarian minorities were being viewed in a whole new way, the Hungarian domestic policy was also modified accordingly. The aforementioned assimilation techniques called "automatism" were replaced by positive discrimination for minority cultures around 1970s. In 1972, the constitution was revised, so as to permit acknowledging minorities as collective bodies. This reform was in all likelihood propelled by the hope for reciprocal minority policies from the neighboring countries.

The Hungarian example, however, was only reciprocated by the Yugoslav leaders. The situation turned extremely problematic in Romania, where Hungarians suffered evermore serious discrimination after Ceausescu's rise to power in 1965. The Hungarian government attempted to intervene in the treatment of the Hungarian minority several times. These interventions, however, were not met with success. This failure explains in part why in the years before, during and after the collapse of communism the fate of the Hungarian minorities remained one of the most hotly debated issues. The first coherent program of these years appeared in 1982 and was authored by the editors of *Ellenpontok* or *Counterpoints*, an illegal Transylvanian periodical. The memorandum stated that "two ethnic groups can coexist only if they regard each other as equal partners." Taking this as an axiom, Géza Szócs, László Tókécs and their fellow dissidents claimed autonomy for predominantly Hungarian territories and a "due share" in government. They went on to plead for recognizing Hungarian as an official language, equal to Romanian, in all areas of Transylvania where a Hungarian populace still lived.²⁷

Since the régime change

The collapse of communism in 1989-1990 – and by this I come to my last point -- represented a new turning point in 20th century Hungarian history. While transformations of global political significance were unfolding, major regional upheavals were occurring just to the north and south of Hungary's frontiers. In 1993 Czechoslovakia split, without a shot being fired, into separate Czech and Slovak republics. Multiethnic Yugoslavia, by contrast, broke up in the course of a bitter and bloody series of wars between 1991 and 1995 into five (later six) independent states. The number of states neighboring Hungary increased thereby from five to seven.

²⁶ „A szocialista hazafiság és a proletár internacionalizmus időszerű kérdései” [Some actual questions of socialist patriotism and proletarian internationalism] *Társadalmi Szemle*, 1974/10. pp. 32-47.

²⁷ *Beszélő*, 5-6 (1981-1984), pp. 255-259.

These global and regional realignments fundamentally changed Hungary's position in European politics. The fall of the Iron Curtain opened the way for rapprochement to Western Europe and integration into the network of Euro-Atlantic alliance. At the same time new but historically conditioned tensions emerged between Hungary and its neighbors. These tensions have tended to coalesce around the position of Hungarian minorities living mostly in Slovakia, in Ukraine, in Romania and in Serbia. According to the latest censuses, the total of Hungarians living in these minority communities is around 2,5 million people.

Facing the new situation, the Hungarian foreign political doctrine elaborated in 1990-1991 had three main goals: (1) withdrawal from the Soviet alliance system and accession to the Euro-Atlantic organizations; (2) participation in regional economic and political organizations free from Soviet influence; and (3) increased protection and support for the Hungarian minorities in the neighboring states. In connection with this, József Antall, the first prime minister after the regime change declared: "I consider myself, in spirit, the prime minister of 15 million Hungarians."²⁸

Although Antall's statement caused serious diplomatic difficulties and repercussions, the successive Hungarian governments, especially the conservative-national ones led by Viktor Orbán have followed a similar approach and adopted a policy which sought to offer effective protection and support for Hungarian minorities. During the last 30 years several steps were taken in this direction. The most important ones include

- establishment of a new government office for minority policy, handling the questions of Hungarian communities abroad in 1990. This office, under different names, has continued to function until this day.
- Second, setting up a new satellite-broadcast television channel to reach communities of the Hungarian minority in 1992.
- Third, ratifying the Hungarian-Ukrainian basic treaty in 1993. In this agreement, Hungary recognized the frontiers of the new Ukrainian state while Ukraine promised to guarantee minority rights in cultural affairs and local government.
- Similar basic treaties were also signed with Slovakia and Romania in 1995 and 1996. The right to political and territorial autonomy, however, has been rejected by both states.
- In 1998 a new Foundation was set up to support Hungarian language education in the neighboring countries, including a teacher training college in Ukraine and a new private university named *Partium* in Transylvania located in Nagyvárad (Oradea)
- In 1999 a consultative body (the so-called Hungarian Permanent Conference) composed of representatives of the political parties of Hungary and those of the Hungarian minority communities was established. It has since become the main forum for discussing the problems of Hungarian communities abroad.
- In 2001 a second private university in Romania (Sapientia) with campuses in three Transylvanian cities was established. The institution has been financed by the Hungarian government. In the same year a new law was adopted which granted financial support to Hungarians in all neighboring countries with the exception of Austria to promote the preservation of their ethnic identity. In practice, this support regime provides assistance to those who are travelling to and in Hungary, and whose children attend schools where the language of instruction is Hungarian. In order to qualify for this support, a Hungarian Certificate is needed which is issued on application by Hungary's authorities. The number of people who have this certificate is about 800.000.
- In 2010, after a long and sharp public debate, the Hungarian Parliament adopted a law which grants citizenship to minority Hungarians. Most of the neighboring states have accepted the new policy, but Ukraine and Slovakia have raised obstacles. According to

²⁸ Ignác Romsics, *From Dictatorship to Democracy. The Birth of The Third Hungarian Republic 1988-2001* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007) pp. 297-299. and 303.

the law there is no difference between Hungarian citizens living in Hungary and abroad except that the latter do not pay taxes in Hungary. The number of those who have applied and have been granted citizenship reached one million in 2018.²⁹

The policy of the new Hungarian republic towards the Hungarian minority communities in the last three decades has evolved from supporting the reproduction and development of the national identity of minority Hungarians towards the idea of unifying the divided Hungarian nation without altering frontiers. Although some Hungarian intellectuals, as well as fringe social and political organizations have periodically called for border changes, I think that these voices do not represent the mainstream of contemporary attitudes in Hungary. For the majority of Hungarians both within and outside Hungary, the Trianon syndrome has become detached from the question of revising borders. The idea of ensuring minority rights has become increasingly central, taking the place of the former. The syndrome is sustained, however, by these rights not meeting the European standards consistently in every country and at all times.

Summing up, we can conclude that the three approaches to the Treaty of Trianon discussed in this paper reveal a long-lasting legacy of historical trauma. This upsetting experience found no easy resolution in Hungarian intellectual history. For decades, integral and partial, ethnicity based revisionist platforms defined thinking about nation and nationality. It took the shock of World War II for a policy of reckoning to commence: after 1945, public thinking tended to focus on questions of solving long-standing issues of minority rights and regional cooperation, with revisionist ideas losing influence. Not even 1989 and the return of nationalistic parties changed this pattern, due in part at least to the promise of European integration and the option of peaceful national reunification without border change. While the process is far from being complete and both the historical trauma and the present condition of Hungarians living on the other side of the borders continues to animate political discussion, option Europe has undoubtedly performed better than historical antecedents such as alignment with Nazi Germany and the myth of the socialist brotherhood of nations.

²⁹ Nándor Bárdi, „The Policy of Budapest Governments towards Hungarian Communities Abroad”. in Nándor Bárdi, Csilla Fedinec, László Szarka (eds.), *Minority Hungarian Communities in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011) pp. 456-467.