

THE LONG SHADOW OF TRIANON: HUNGARIAN ALLIANCE POLICIES DURING WORLD WAR II

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The Treaty of Trianon was the peace settlement that the victors of World War I imposed on Hungary after the war. The treaty's severity was unprecedented in modern European history. By dismembering the multi-ethnic "historic Kingdom of Hungary" the treaty left Hungarians less than a third of their former territory and transferred 3.3 million of them to neighboring states. Not surprisingly, Trianon came as a shock to the Hungarian people and constituted an enduring blow to the Magyar national psyche. During the next quarter century, Hungarians were obsessed with the idea of reversing this dictum and the primary objective of their foreign policies was the creation of international conditions in which the revision of Trianon could become possible. For this purpose the regime in Budapest sought allies, as this aim could be attained only with outside help. By the first half of 1941 this search had led to Hungary's entanglement in an alliance with Nazi Germany. Once Hungary became a partner in the Nazi war, the danger emerged that if the country did not toe the German line, Hitler would reverse the frontier adjustments that he had rendered earlier in Hungary's favor. Already during the late summer of 1941 some of Hungary's statesmen realized that the Third *Reich* might not win the war, but their plans to limit their contribution to the Nazi war effort and to prepare for defection from the Axis were frustrated by the fear that, if they abandoned or weakened the alliance with Berlin, no more "lost" Hungarian lands could be regained and lands already recovered might be forfeited again.

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No agreement exists among historians as to whether the First or the Second World War constituted the greater tragedy for Hungary. A solid argument can be made for characterizing the second of these great conflicts as having been more cataclysmic in its effect on Hungary's evolution. Still, some historians insist that World War I had more profound and more lasting impact. When they do so, they inevitably refer to the most dramatic consequence of that conflict, the peace settlement that followed the war, the Treaty of Trianon of June, 1920.

The question of which of the twentieth century's great conflicts inflicted more damage on Hungary may never be settled conclusively. This is so partly because

it is not possible to isolate the impact of these wars, or to discuss them in isolation from each other. Though the author of these lines can think of many reasons for viewing the developments of 1939–1945 as having caused enormous damage to Hungary, he has to admit that the roots of these events can be traced back to what had happened during 1914–1920. In fact, it can be argued that without the great tragedies of those years, the Second World War may not have been as cataclysmic in Hungary as it was. More precisely, as will be suggested in this paper, without the Treaty of Trianon, Hungarian involvement in the Second World War might have been on a more limited scale, and it might even have started later. If, indeed, the First World War had been the greater tragedy for Hungary, it was so because that conflict, or more precisely its consequences, helped to predetermine the country's involvement in the second.

As far as its immediate impact is concerned, there can be little doubt that World War II caused the greater physical damage to Hungary. During the final phases of the conflict the country was a battleground between Axis and Allied (mainly Soviet) forces. This stands in sharp contrast to the First World War when only peripheral areas of Hungary were invaded. The human¹ and material costs of the movement of the front through the country in 1944–45 are still being felt by Hungarian society and the visible signs of the destruction wrought still scar the landscapes of many Hungarian cities and villages.² Furthermore, unlike the First World War, which was followed by only a temporary occupation by foreign troops of most of Hungary, the Second World War resulted in foreign rule that lasted nearly two generations. During it totalitarian control was introduced and time-honored Hungarian institutions were abolished. In fact, Hungary's communist rulers tried to mould a pluralistic, Christian, western-oriented country into a one-party, atheist state, with a command economy and a regimented culture oriented entirely towards the despotic world of Soviet Russia. Today, more than a decade after the end of the communist experiment in the country, Hungarian society is still only in the initial stages of recovering from the totalitarian rule that had been imposed on it in the wake of World War II.³

Historians who argue that World War I had been the greatest tragedy of modern Hungarian history almost invariably refer to the fact that it was in the wake of that conflict that the “thousand-year-old” historic Kingdom of Hungary had been dissolved, and Hungary was reduced to a land-locked little country, a shadow of its former self.⁴ It is difficult to disagree with this line of argument. The Treaty of Trianon, which was imposed on Hungary in June of 1920 by the victors of World War I, was unparalleled in its severity in modern European history.⁵

The most dangerous long-term effect of the Treaty of Trianon was the impact it had on the Hungarian national psyche. The post-1920 generations of Hungarians were intensely preoccupied with the “tragedy of Trianon” and with schemes for reversing the treaty's territorial provisions. One consequence of this type of in-

tense preoccupation was the tendency to blame all the country's wrongs on Trianon. Not surprisingly, many of interwar Hungary's economic and social problems were not effectively debated and solved.

There were, however, even more menacing psychological effects of Trianon. As Professor S. B. Várdy has observed, the initial Hungarian reaction to Trianon "was emotional, haphazard, [and] misdirected..." What was most misdirected in these reactions was the tendency to blame the tragedy of Trianon on Hungary's millennium-long ties to Europe. In a way, this type of reaction is understandable. In the destruction of their 1,000-year-old kingdom many Hungarians saw the betrayal of their nation by Europe, the very Europe to which Hungarians throughout the centuries had tried so hard to belong. The national disenchantment with everything Europe stood for led many Hungarians to search for alternative identities, to a re-examination of their roots and history, and to the embracing of their Eastern heritage and cultural connections. It led to the rise of the "Turanian" movement in Hungary with its nostalgia for the pre-Christian values and traditions of the Magyars. It also led to what Várdy calls the rise of the "new-Paganism" i.e., fascism, a political movement that "offered quick, simplistic and often less than moral solutions to the nation's complex and long-standing problems".⁶

While many in Hungary searched for salvation from the wrongs and humiliations imposed by Trianon in a new, largely un-European national identity combined with right-wing radicalism, the country's leaders sought to reverse the judgement of Trianon through other means. These included sustained efforts to convince the governments of the powers primarily responsible for the drafting of the treaty's provisions, of the injustice of those terms. Hungary's leadership also embarked on a propaganda campaign, conducted both at home and abroad, to rally public support to the cause of treaty revision. On the international level, the campaign achieved little beyond attracting a few converts to the cause, while at home the campaign preached to the converted and managed to keep the frenzy of revisionist clamor at a near-constant boiling point.

Besides engaging in propaganda to convince the outside world of the injustices of the Trianon treaty, Hungary's leaders tried to use diplomacy to further their aims. Post-World War I Hungary, unlike the Hungary of the Dual Monarchy of the pre-1918 period, had its own foreign office and the beginnings of a national diplomatic service. This independent foreign policy apparatus faced an uphill struggle. Not only was the state it represented a small, land-locked and impoverished country, but it was highly isolated. Its neighbors had greatly benefited from the dismemberment of Hungary and banded together in the so-called Little Entente, a strategic alliance created to make sure that the new territorial order in Central Europe would not be disturbed.

Hungary's policy-makers knew full well that, without friends – and, especially, great power friends – their chances of breaking the country's isolation and mak-

ing any progress in the direction of treaty revision would be marginal at best. The fact that for small, weak countries alliance policy is far more important than it is for great powers, was not lost on the Hungarian leadership. For these reasons, for inter-war Hungary alliance policy was the cornerstone of the country's foreign policies and this situation continued – in fact, intensified – after the outbreak of the Second World War.

The search for allies took Hungary's policy-makers in several directions. For a brief time in the early post-war period it seemed that France, the very France that was behind some of the most onerous provisions of the Treaty of Trianon, would be the object of Hungary's search for a great power ally, but dallying with the idea of friendship with Paris proved ephemeral.⁷ More promising were the prospects of cultivating links with Italy, a country that was also unhappy with the post-war territorial settlements, not because they brought losses for Italians but because they did not provide enough gains. Indeed, by the end of the 1920s, Mussolini's Italy came closest to being the great power friend that Hungary's leadership had sought.

The rise of the Nazis to power in Germany promised to change the European power constellation. The new German government's anti-Versailles rhetoric was welcomed by certain of Hungary's leaders who wished to cultivate Berlin's friendship. The complicating factor was the cool relationship that existed between Hitler and Mussolini during the mid-1930s. In this connection it has been pointed out that it was Gyula Gömbös, Hungary's Premier from 1932–1936, who tried to smooth the differences between the two.⁸ By the time Mussolini was driven closer to Hitler by the international developments starting with the fall of 1935 – the crisis over Italy's invasion of Ethiopia and the outbreak of civil war in Spain – the way was clear for better relations between Budapest and the countries of the newly established Rome-Berlin Axis. Nevertheless, Hungary proceeded in her quest for powerful allies with a great deal of circumspection, especially in the wake of Gömbös's illness and death in the early autumn of 1936.

The events of the following eighteen months, culminating in the Nazi annexation of Austria in March of 1938, reinforced these tendencies. The man at the helm of Hungarian foreign policy at this time was Kálmán Kánya, Minister of External Affairs from February 1933 to November 1938. Under his guidance, the primary aim Hungarian foreign policy after the Austrian *Anschluss* became the preservation of Hungary's free hand in international affairs through the avoidance of subordination of the country to Nazi German influences. The quest for revising the territorial provisions of the Treaty of Trianon was not given up, but it was pursued with caution and was sought in a manner that would not prejudice Hungary's independence and would not lead to involvement in a European conflict on the side of Nazi Germany.⁹

To counter the ever-growing influence of Nazi Germany in East Central Europe, Kánya and a few other members of Hungary's elite looked to Great Britain, the only European great power that in their estimate could act as a possible bulwark against further German expansion. By the late autumn of 1938, however, it became increasingly evident to Hungary's policy-makers that the expectations attached to the idea of cooperating with Britain to counter German influence were unrealistic. The "British card" proved to be a less-than-viable element in Hungary's alliance policy. The fundamental reason for this turn of events has been pointed out by American historian Thomas Sakmyster, who concluded that at the time the British statesmen assigned a "very low priority" to Hungary in their strategic thinking and displayed a "striking ignorance" of that part of Europe.¹⁰

The disappointment of several of Hungary's leaders in Great Britain's behavior in the Czechoslovak crises of 1938 and 1939 varied in intensity and longevity. A few of them, such as Premier Béla Imrédy, became profoundly disillusioned with Great Britain, while others retained faint hope that London could one day be counted on as a friend of Hungary.

Hungary's leaders' basic attitudes to their country's alliance policy were being shaped already during the years leading up to the outbreak of the war in September of 1939. Only a few members of the country's elite were irrevocably committed to one orientation or another. The situation that existed in this connection on the eve of the war can be described as a faction of the Hungarian leadership leaning toward an alliance with Nazi Germany, while another faction, realizing the danger of such alliance, searched for some other alignment to serve Hungary's interests. Some advocates of the latter persisted in the increasingly vain belief that friendship with Italy could counterbalance German influence in central Eastern Europe, while a few continued to cherish the hope that Britain would become more interested in exerting her influence in the region.

These contradictory tendencies in Hungarian strategic thinking continued after the outbreak of the war. Unfortunately for the prospects of a Hungarian free hand in foreign policy, the preoccupation of some of Hungary's statesmen with their country's independence had to co-exist with the desire of the vast majority Hungarians, and especially the members of the military and right-wing political parties, for treaty revision. The crises of the first two years of the war and, especially, the triumphs of Nazi arms throughout Europe, would have significant impact on the thinking of Hungary's masses, as well as her elite, on the question of alliance policy.

Revisionist ambitions had a momentum of their own. Success in one direction increased expectations of victory in the others. The regaining of what is today's southern Slovakia through the First Vienna Award of November 1938 only increased Hungarian hopes for treaty revision elsewhere in the Carpathian Basin.

The fact that every change in the international borders in Hungary's favor made the country more indebted to Nazi Germany was lost on many of the advocates of the "gathering in" of the detached Hungarian lands.

The danger of reliance on Berlin, however, was not dismissed by Count Pál Teleki who became Hungary's Premier early in 1939. His alliance policies have been described as "cooperation with Germany" and the simultaneous cultivation of "favorable relations with the West."¹¹ The German plank in Teleki's policies soon paid dividends when, with Hitler's secret approval, the Hungarians occupied Carpatho-Ruthenia in March of 1939, thereby completing the disintegration of the post-World War I state of Czechoslovakia. The re-acquisition of this part of the Carpathian Basin created a joint Hungarian-Polish border and gave vague hopes to a few of Hungary's leaders that with greater cooperation between Poland, Hungary and Italy, German influence in the region could be curbed.

As war-clouds gathered over Europe's skies in the summer of 1939, Teleki tried to make sure that his country would remain neutral in the forthcoming confrontation, and that it would retain the good-will of Great Britain and France. Partly for these reasons, on the eve of the expected German attack on Poland, Teleki announced his government's plan to remain neutral in the conflict. He held to his position despite Hitler's furious protests. Moreover, when war broke out, the Teleki government denied the Germans' request for the use of northern Hungary's railways for the shipment of German troops to Poland's southeastern borders.¹²

Despite the crisis in German-Hungarian relations of the late summer of 1939, throughout this period Budapest strove to maintain friendly ties with Berlin and to exploit German-Hungarian friendship and the unsettled international situation for its own purposes. The Hungarians' quest for treaty revision during the first year of the war was directed against Rumania. They hoped to maneuver the government in Bucharest into a position in which it would have to make substantial territorial concessions to Hungary, without the country committing itself to a military alliance with Germany.

International developments of the time offered hope to Hungary's leaders that this policy would work. The fact was that Rumania's strategic position had gradually deteriorated. The destruction of Czechoslovakia had shattered the Little Entente. Rumania's international circumstances further weakened in the late summer of 1939. At the time, Bucharest was aligned with Britain and France, but the sudden rapprochement between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia at the end of August, and especially the occupation of Poland by these two powers in September, isolated Rumania. The Bucharest government's predicament was further exacerbated by the fact that Hungary was not the only country eager to press territorial demands against it. In the wake of the Great War, Rumania had gained lands not only from Hungary but also from Bulgaria and Russia. The Bulgarian claim to

southern Dobruja probably did not alarm Bucharest unduly, but the desire of the Soviet Union to regain Bessarabia was more threatening. Furthermore, Rumania was also a possible target for a military occupation by Germany. The Ploesti oil-fields were one of the most important sources of energy in Europe and Hitler could not afford to allow them to fall into unfriendly hands. Against these dangers the Rumanians had few defenses. France and Britain were hardly in a position to offer serious help. Although they had issued a guarantee to Rumania in the spring of 1939, the growth of German influence throughout Central Europe meant that this commitment had lost its credibility.

Bucharest's increasing difficulties gave rise to hopes in Budapest that the "Transylvanian question" could be solved in a manner satisfactory to Hungary's interests. How differently Hungary's civilian and military leaders approached this issue is illustrated by the plans that were advanced by ex-Premier Count István Bethlen and Chief of the General Staff Henrik Werth. The scheme of the former, outlined in a long, secret memorandum to the government, started with the premise that Germany would lose the war. Accordingly, Bethlen argued, Hungary should remain neutral in the European struggle and preserve her strength for the attainment of her national aims at war's end. Bethlen hoped that by participating in some kind of a security arrangement for postwar Europe, and by not annexing Transylvania but allowing it to become an autonomous member of a loose East European federation, Hungary could obtain Western diplomatic support for her plans.¹³

General Werth's schemes for Transylvania were different. The Chief of Staff was not willing to wait until the outcome of the war was settled. When the Russian threat against Rumania surfaced in the winter of 1939–1940, Werth urged his government to prepare for the recovery of Transylvania by force in case of an armed conflict between Moscow and Bucharest.¹⁴ In April of 1940 Werth approached his government with a memorandum. He began by asserting that Germany would more than likely emerge victorious in the war. Werth, who had just held discussions with members of the German General Staff, informed his civilian superiors that the Germans had offered their cooperation against Rumania. But simple military cooperation was not sufficient according to Werth. Hungary had to abandon her neutrality and become an ally of Berlin so that she could regain the lands she had lost in the wake of World War I. Knowing that certain members of his audience were not convinced of Germany's invincibility, Werth added that, even if Germany did not win the war, Hungary could retain her conquests because at the end of a long struggle the Allied Powers would be "too weak to send large forces into the Danube Valley."¹⁵

The approach that the Hungarian leadership after some delay adopted differed from that advocated by Werth. Teleki was repelled by the idea of abandoning the country's neutrality. Unlike Werth, he was doubtful about the prospects of a Ger-

man victory. He felt that the superiority of moral strength and physical resources was on the Allied side. In a letter to Horthy, he rejected the Chief of Staff's proposals.¹⁶

Although Teleki rebuffed Werth's plan of regaining Transylvania with German military help, he did not give up hope of attaining a revision of his country's eastern boundaries through other means. The opportunity seemed to have presented itself in the summer of 1940. At the time Hitler was still hoping to force Britain to her knees and thereby ending the war in Western Europe. To do this Hitler needed peace elsewhere in Europe, especially in the southeast, from where came many of the foodstuffs, fuel and raw materials needed by the German war machine. In the meantime, the Russians had decided to act. At the end of June they confronted Rumania with an ultimatum demanding the return of Bessarabia. The Soviet move caused hectic activity in Hungary. The country's armed forces were mobilized and frantic efforts were made to ascertain Rome's and Berlin's attitudes to a Hungarian occupation of Transylvania in case of a Russo-Rumanian conflict.¹⁷ But that conflict never came about: Rumania surrendered Bessarabia to the Soviets without a fight and from Berlin came word that Germany would be most unhappy about any disruption of peace in Eastern Europe.¹⁸

Even though the best opportunity for regaining Transylvania was lost, the Hungarians continued their threatening attitude towards Rumania, demanding at the same time that the dispute be submitted to a conference attended by the statesmen of Germany, Italy, Hungary and Rumania. Teleki's aim was evident: threatened by a Hungarian-Rumanian conflict at the time when Germany's interest demanded peace in Eastern Europe, the Axis powers would be forced to support the Hungarian claims in any negotiations on the issue. Hitler, however, did not wish to act as a mediator in a territorial dispute between Hungary and Rumania. In mid-July, he rejected the idea of a four-power conference and told the Hungarians to negotiate with the Rumanians on a bilateral basis.¹⁹

In order to counter these threats, Rumania's King Carol took steps to improve his country's international position. In the spring of 1939, after the German occupation of Prague and Hungary's re-annexation of Ruthenia, he mobilized Rumania's army and, to imbue his people with a spirit of resistance, proclaimed the slogan "not one furrow," referring to territorial concessions desired by the Hungarians. It was at this time that Bucharest accepted an Anglo-French guarantee, but balanced it with an economic agreement with Germany which, in the words of one historian, "assured a dominant position for Germany in the Rumanian economy."²⁰ While King Carol had realized the need to appease the Germans already in 1939, most of his subjects did not do so until the fall of Paris to the *Wehrmacht* in June of 1940. This development caused disappointment and a great deal of soul-searching in Bucharest. Its lessons were not lost on King Carol and his advisers. Soon Rumania renounced the Anglo-French guarantee. Next, the

government sought a rapprochement with the leaders of the extreme rightist Iron Guard movement. At the same time, more right-wing politicians were co-opted into the country's leadership and anti-Semitic laws were introduced.²¹

As could be expected under the circumstances, the Hungarian-Rumanian discussions, mandated by Hitler in July, achieved nothing.²² There was no real reason for Bucharest to make concessions: by this time Rumania had acquired a new friend in Germany. The Hungarians could do no more than continue their threats against Rumania and hope that Hitler, for the sake of peace in Southeastern Europe, would intervene in the dispute. They did not have to wait long. In August the *Führer* decided to settle the question of Hungarian-Rumanian relations. This was almost exactly what the Hungarians desired, but they wanted Hitler to act as a mediator in the dispute and not as an arbiter. They did not want to see another Vienna Award announced in which Germany and Italy imposed a settlement favorable mainly to German interests. If everything else failed, Teleki was prepared to accept arbitration, but he wanted the Rumanians to ask for it: if Bucharest called for arbitral award, Budapest could insist on certain preconditions. Moreover, if the revision of the boundaries came about through arbitration requested by Rumania, the settlement would have greater legitimacy in the eyes of the West, and Hungary would have a better chance to retain the territories gained at the end of the war.

Teleki's plan then, was to threaten war in Southeastern Europe and compel the Rumanians to request Hitler's intervention. But Teleki was double-crossed. At the critical moment, Werth informed the Germans that, as a final measure, Hungary was willing to accept arbitration rather than go to war.²³ After such a disclosure, it was not difficult for Berlin to call Teleki's bluff. In the end the fate of Transylvania was settled by another German-Italian dictum, one which transferred northern and easternmost Transylvania to Hungary. The new territorial arrangement, as well as the manner it was imposed, left both Budapest and Bucharest bitterly dissatisfied.²⁴ Nevertheless, for the Hungarians, the Second Vienna Award proved to be the high-point of 1940. It has been argued that this event signaled the reduction of Hungary to the status of an Axis puppet state,²⁵ yet it did not mark of her involvement in the Nazi war. Nevertheless, the Award was soon followed by Hungary's accession to the Tripartite Pact, a move which several contemporary observers, as well as later-day historians, have deemed to have achieved the above result. Still, Hungary's leadership continued to avoid involvement in the German war.

As has been mentioned above, Teleki was aware of the increasing danger to his policy of German friendship (coupled with territorial revisionism), yet neutrality in the war. Especially menacing were the rumors that Hitler was preparing to invade Russia. To strengthen the prospects of continued Hungarian neutrality even in such an eventuality, Teleki took steps to improve relations between Budapest

and Moscow,²⁶ and continued to cultivate good relations with still nonbelligerent Italy, even though he was aware of the fact that the "Italian connection" no longer had the same value in counterbalancing German influence as it used to have years earlier.

The best opening Teleki had to bolster his country's dwindling sovereignty was establishing closer links with Yugoslavia. Indeed, with Slovakia and Rumania being Nazi client states, the only substantial window Hungary had toward the non-Axis world was through Belgrade. So, Teleki initiated negotiations with the regime of Prince Paul, the Yugoslav Regent. The result was the signing of a Hungarian-Yugoslav treaty of peace and friendship in December. The statesmen of both countries no doubt believed that through this agreement they had reduced the chances of their countries becoming involved in the war. Teleki's policy of closer links with Belgrade was predicated on the Yugoslav government maintaining an attitude of friendly neutrality *vis-à-vis* Berlin. While Prince Paul was inclined in this direction, certain elements of Yugoslav society were not, as the two countries' rulers soon found out.

Early in the new year Teleki and his closest associates made preparations for the possible failure of their plans to stay out of the expected German-Russian conflict. At a meeting attended by Horthy, Teleki, Bethlen and a few others, a plan for the creation of a Hungarian government-in-exile was drawn up. It was to be put into effect in case the Germans made demands on Hungary that were incompatible with Hungarian sovereignty, in which case Teleki's government would resign and Horthy would appoint a new government headed by a prominent Hungarian statesman residing in the West, while he himself would go into passive "internal exile" in Hungary. The leading representatives of the Atlantic democracies were consulted in regards to this plan and London was asked to promise to recognize such government. Such promise was not received by the Hungarians; nevertheless, they sent Tibor Eckhardt, the leader of the opposition Smallholder Party, to the West to act as the spokesman for Hungary should Teleki's worst fears materialize.²⁷

No sooner did Eckhardt leave the country than another crisis developed in East Central Europe. In view of Hitler's desire to strengthen Nazi influence in Eastern Europe, Berlin was anxious to gain assurances from Belgrade of Yugoslavia's friendly disposition toward the Axis. Accordingly, Prince Paul's regime was pressured into acceding to the Tripartite Pact. This deed, however, precipitated a military *coup* in Belgrade, accompanied by demonstrations throughout Serbia in favor of the Allies. Hitler was incensed and decided to crush Yugoslavia. As Hungary was in the path of one of the armies ordered to take part in this operation, she was expected to cooperate.

The Yugoslav coup of late March constituted a severe blow to Teleki's scheme of prolonging Hungary's neutrality in the war. Hitler considered Budapest's col-

laboration essential and informed Horthy accordingly. In return for Hungarian participation, the *Führer* was ready to support Hungary's territorial demands on Yugoslavia. Horthy reacted to Hitler's offer by acknowledging the existence of Hungarian claims in the south and welcoming the idea of discussions between members of the German and Hungarian general staffs. The question of "if," "when," and "under what circumstances" Hungary would participate in the war was then discussed first at a meeting of the cabinet and then at a meeting of the country's Supreme Defense Council (SDC). At this latter meeting six of Hungary's leaders spoke against accepting Hitler's suggestion of unconditional Hungarian participation in the planned war against Yugoslavia, while four argued in favor of it.²⁸

In the debates about participation in the campaign against Yugoslavia, Hungary's leaders stated many of their concerns; however, certain worries they dared not to voice openly as they would have angered the Germans. Some of these concerns were expressed only in secret correspondence. In a confidential letter dealing with this subject, written later by Bethlen to Eckhardt, the former Premier spoke of Hungarian fears in April of 1941 that the Germans planned the establishment of a German state southeast of Hungary based upon the large ethnic German population there. Bethlen also pointed out that the unwritten condition of the December 1940 Hungarian-Yugoslav pact of friendship had been a promise by the Yugoslavs that they would not abandon the pro-Axis line of their foreign policy. If Bethlen's state of mind is any indication of the attitudes of Hungary's leaders in those crisis-ridden days of late March and early April, then it can be said that the reluctance to get involved in the war was counterbalanced by a feeling of betrayal by the Yugoslavs as well as a fear of the further envelopment of Hungary by an expanding Third Reich.²⁹ Most members of Hungary's elite seem to have come to the conclusion that Hitler had offered them the choice between the proverbial carrot and the stick and, after some agonizing, they decided to opt for the former. The one leader who was most troubled with this state of affairs was Teleki. As the hours passed, he increasingly saw his scheme of avoiding involvement in the war collapsing. Less than thirty-six hours after the adjournment of the SDC's meeting, he committed suicide.³⁰

The crisis of the early spring of 1941 did not bring about the final stage of Hungary's descent to the status of a Nazi satellite. Teleki's worst fears did not materialize: the British did not declare war on the country as he had probably feared in the last hours of his life, and the Germans did not create a full-fledged German state on Hungary's southern border. For a while Hungary could continue to enjoy nominal non-belligerence in the war; however, this state of affairs was not to last very long.

The next crisis in Eastern Europe came when Hitler launched the invasion of the Soviet Union in June. Unlike in the case of the Yugoslav war, when the *Führer* had asked for Hungarian cooperation as soon as he had decided to act, no advance

request for Hungarian participation in *Operation Barbarossa* was issued in Berlin.³¹ The *Führer* did not even inform Budapest of his intention to attack Russia. The Hungarian Chief of General Staff Werth, however, was sure of the forthcoming German move and asked his country's civilian authorities to offer their help to the Germans. Werth in fact warned László Bárdossy, the man who succeeded Teleki as Premier, that reluctance on Hungary's part to participate in the war might result in a situation whereby the border between Hungary and Rumania might be again adjusted by the Germans, this time in favor of Rumania, which according to Werth's knowledge had already committed itself to participation in the Germans' planned Russian campaign. Werth's demands for a Hungarian offer of a military alliance with Germany were rejected by the government.

On the 22nd of June, *Operation Barbarossa* was launched by the Germans. The next day, General Kurt Himer, the *Wehrmacht's* representative in Hungary, informed Werth that the German military would welcome a Hungarian offer of cooperation in the war, and that the offer would have to be "voluntary," as the German government did not wish to make a formal request.³² Once again the cabinet debated the question and once again it decided against making such an offer. Indicative of the unease with which the government had acted, was a decision to suspend diplomatic relations with Moscow as a concession to the Germans and those elements of the Hungarian public who were demanding a show of solidarity with the Nazi "crusade against Bolshevism."³³

On the 26th of June the city of Kassa (today's Košice) in northeastern Hungary was bombed. To this day no one knows for sure who had done this bombing, but the Hungarian command of the time blamed the attack on Russia. Bárdossy, who had opposed Hungary's entry into the war up to now, came to suspect that the bombing was a staged provocation to get his country involved in the war and felt that if the Germans were willing to go to such lengths to drag Hungary into the conflict, resistance was useless.³⁴ So, when the cabinet met that same day to discuss the matter, Bárdossy himself proposed the declaration of a state of hostilities between Hungary and the Soviet Union. The next day the Hungarian air force staged a raid against certain Soviet targets and soon a few units of the army joined in the Axis invasion of Russia. Hungary once again deployed her military in support of Germany. On this occasion the decision proved to be a prelude not to an occupation operation in former Hungarian lands but to irreversible involvement in war. Still for the time being, the Hungarian commitment to the Nazi war machine remained a token one.

The debate in Budapest about wartime Hungary's alliance policies was not settled in June of 1941, it just underwent a mutation. For those among Hungary's elite who favored a German alliance the focus shifted from a question as to who should be Hungary's preeminent ally to a query emphasizing what should be the nature and extent of Hungary's commitment to the Nazi war effort. At the same

time, for those among Hungary's statesmen who at one time or another before June, 1941 had doubted the German alliance, second thoughts about committing their country to the Nazi cause were not long in surfacing.

Among those who argued that the Hungarian commitment to Nazi Germany should be more substantial was General Werth. Already in the summer of 1941 he began demanding the deployment of more Hungarian troops to the Russian front. He next submitted another long memorandum to the government in which he accused Hungary's civilian leadership of obstructing the war effort and thereby damaging the country's national interests. He called for the sending of half of Hungary's military forces to the front as proof of Budapest's commitment to the Axis cause.³⁵

Not all of Hungary's generals agreed with the Chief of Staff. Lieutenant-General Ferenc Szombathelyi, the commander of the units already on the Russian front, also produced a memorandum on the situation in which he advised the ending of the Hungarian military's involvement in a war the outcome of which he deemed uncertain. Next, Szombathelyi was given a hearing by Horthy after which the Regent asked for Werth's resignation.³⁶ Werth had no choice but to comply and did so on the pretext of ill-health. His successor became Szombathelyi. Simultaneously another pro-German officer, General H. László, the chief of the General Staff's Operational Section, was also replaced. This change in Hungary's military command has been seen by some historians as a "reversal" of Hungary's alliance policy.³⁷ Not surprisingly, it was followed by a request by the Hungarian leadership that Hungary's troop commitment on the Russian front be reduced. The request was opposed by Hitler but, at least for the time being, he did not insist on the Hungarians making a more substantial commitment to the war effort – no doubt because in the late summer of 1941 Hitler still believed that his war would soon end in victory.

Hungary's leaders, in particular Horthy and his closest advisors – including above all his eldest son István – had come to the conclusion, already before the autumn of 1941, that Hitler might not win the war.³⁸ Unfortunately for them, acting on these conclusions proved far more difficult than they ever imagined. In fact, in December their hopes of reversing the German alliance suffered serious setbacks.

The first of these came early during the month when Horthy, who was almost seventy-three at the time, took ill. His illness kept him from functioning as a head-of-state and even gave rise to rumors that he had only a short time to live. It was just at this time, only a few hours before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, that an ultimatum came from London that Hungary should withdraw its troops from the Russian front otherwise she would find herself at war with Britain. As the ultimatum could not be complied with without precipitating a crisis in German-Hungarian relations, Britain duly declared war.³⁹ Next came the fallout from

the Japanese attack on the United States. As is known, Washington responded to this with a declaration of war on Japan. This in turn resulted in a declaration of war by Berlin on Washington. The Bárdossy government was told to follow suit, and it did.⁴⁰ Worse still, early in the new year, the German military command, realizing that Hitler's dream of quick victory had crumbled, succeeded in badgering the Hungarians into committing more of Hungary's forces to the Russian front. The man who accomplished this task was Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop, who used the time-honored method of threatening his Hungarian counterparts and, at the same time, offering them rewards. In particular, in his discussions with Horthy, who had recovered from his illness by the first week of the new year, the German stressed that declining the request for more troops could infuriate Hitler, and that accepting it could help Hungary in her quest for regaining even more lost Magyar lands.⁴¹

Despite this fateful concession to Berlin, which in a year's time would lead to the greatest tragedy in modern Hungarian military history, Horthy continued on the path of preparing his country for a possible break with the Third *Reich*. One of his undertakings that some historians see as having been made with this purpose in mind was his effort to arrange for an orderly succession to his position as Regent should he die or become incapacitated. Several candidates' names were brought forth, including Horthy's own son István, which proved the most attractive to the old man.⁴²

Horthy's endorsement of the candidacy of his son has been dismissed by some as a bid to establish a "Horthy dynasty," but this interpretation is emphatically rejected by historian Peter Gostony who concluded that the elevation of István Horthy to the post of Vice-Regent was an essential element of Miklós Horthy's plan to pave the way for Hungary's defection from the Axis. Considering the aged Horthy's vulnerability to illness, as well as to being made hostage by the Germans, it was essential – so Gostony argues – to have a high-profile successor whose sympathies were squarely with the Western democracies.⁴³

The next major move Horthy undertook was to make way for the appointment of a new head-of-government for Hungary, someone who would be willing to undertake the task of leading Hungary out of the Nazi cobweb. Horthy did not see Bárdossy suitable for this purpose as he had evidently lost faith in Hungary being able to follow any other course of action besides the German alliance. Accordingly, Horthy requested Bárdossy's resignation and replaced him with Miklós Kállay, a man Horthy believed to have the inclination and the guts to stand up both to the Germans and Hungary's own right-wing radical factions.⁴⁴

With Kállay's appointment as Premier began wartime Hungary's arduous quest for a complete revamping of the country's alliance policy. It was a quest without realistic hopes. Some historians, including András Bán, refer to this period of Hungary's wartime history as an end-play, as an epilogue to the story of Hunga-

ry's loss of the Western Powers' respect and trust in 1941.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, international events, such as the Allied landings in North Africa in late 1942, the German defeat at Stalingrad soon thereafter, the abortive defection of Italy from the war in 1943, and the rumors of a planned Allied invasion of the Balkans gave rise to a belief among Kállay and his associates that everything was not lost and that their hopes for a strategic surrender to the western democracies were not completely unrealistic.

The enormity of the difficulties faced by Kállay were not underestimated by him and his associates. The danger they faced was obvious: if the government was seen as boycotting the Nazi war effort, the Germans – and/or their followers in Hungary – could drive it from office. Accordingly, Kállay embarked on a policy of double-dealing and double-speak, which soon became obvious to all and became known to Hungarians as the “*kállai kettős*,” the double-dance of Kállay. Kállay's supporters understood and tolerated it, the pro-Nazi elements of Hungary's elite detested it, while ex-Premier Bárdossy warned that, through his double-dealing, Kállay was likely to lose the goodwill of the Germans, without gaining that of the British and the Americans.⁴⁶

The story of the Kállay government's secret contacts with the Western Allies has been told before.⁴⁷ For the purpose of establishing and maintaining these contacts the Hungarians dispatched secret agents to neutral capitals: Stockholm, Istanbul, Lisbon and Berne. Coordinating the activities of a loose collection of amateurs (entrusting diplomats with such tasks would have immediately attracted the attention of the Germans), proved difficult. But the gravest problem that would confront the Kállay government in its secret negotiations with the Western Allies was the fact that whatever it offered was seen as too little by the governments in London and Washington, while whatever the latter demanded, was seen as unreasonable by the Hungarians. In the end, it was Hitler who dealt the final blow to Kállay's scheming. In March of 1944 he ordered the *Wehrmacht* to occupy Hungary and forced the appointment of a government in Budapest that he could trust.

Interestingly enough, not even this development put an end to the Hungarian search for a change in the country's wartime alliance policy. The fact was that Horthy and his closest advisors were most unhappy with the situation that developed after their country had been occupied and were determined to regain a measure of control over Hungary's affairs. Little could be done while the Nazis were still in control of much of Central and Western Europe but the situation changed after further reverses were suffered by the *Wehrmacht*, especially in France after the Allies' landing in Normandy. In late August of 1944 Horthy replaced the government installed by the Nazis in March with a government made up of his most trusted military officers and senior civil servants.

To the surprise of many, Horthy's move did not bring retaliation from Berlin, despite the fact that it had obviously irritated Hitler and his entourage. Some

compromises were made in the composition of the new government to appease Berlin, nevertheless the new administration did embark on its mission. Many pro-Nazi officials, installed only recently after the German occupation of Hungary, were removed from power, and the deportation of Jews to Nazi concentration camps – discontinued on Horthy's orders even before the new government had taken office – was stalled by obstructionist tactics.

The new government had two rather contradictory objectives: to keep the country from being occupied by the Red Army and to prepare Hungary's defection from the war. Some members of the cabinet could not decide which of these objectives was more important, and they could not realize, or were slow to realize, that both of these objectives could not be pursued simultaneously. Horthy himself seems to have been placing greater emphasis on Hungary's exit from the war. For this purpose he dispatched two secret missions, one to Anglo-American headquarters in Italy and the other to Moscow. Although both delegations managed to reach their destinations, they failed to attain their aims. The first delegation was basically rebuffed while the second was in the end presented with armistice terms that were impossible to implement.

The Germans got wind of these activities and undertook various counter-measures. They began arming members of Hungary's right-radical Arrow-Cross Party and sheltered the party's leaders from possible arrest by pro-Horthy authorities. They dispatched special SS operations units, commanded by Otto Skorzeny, to kidnap important members of Horthy's entourage. Their foremost prize became Miklós Horthy Jr., by then the Regent's only surviving child.

As is well-known, the Horthy regime's attempt of 15 October to defect from the war failed. Elements of the Hungarian military sabotaged Horthy's efforts. In Budapest itself, some members of the security forces defected to the Arrow-Cross. More importantly, the German high command in Budapest took no chances. They saw to it that officers suspected of unconditional loyalty to Horthy were arrested early during the crisis. Furthermore, soon after Horthy had made his armistice announcement, they captured the radio center and began issuing counter-proclamations. They also brought heavy armor into the streets and threatened to take Horthy's headquarters by force. Horthy soon realized what he should have known much earlier: he and his advisers had been virtual hostages of the Germans from the very start. Within about 36 hours the whole affair was over. With the royal palace surrounded by German units, and with key members of the cabinet detained by SS troops, the Hungarians had to yield. Under the threat of severe sanctions, the Nazis could dictate the terms of the recantation of Horthy's armistice proclamation and arrange for the transfer of power to the right radical Arrow-Cross party and its leader Ferenc Szálasi. With that development concluded the last of the Hungarian wartime attempts to change the country's alliance policy.

Despite the hopes of some of Hungary's leaders to the contrary, Hungary remained Hitler's "last ally."

Since the end of the Second World War Hungarian alliance policies during the war have been assessed in various ways. During the country's age of communism, and especially in the 1950s and 1960s, historians accused the country's ruling elite of acting on their class interests, which tied them right-wing causes and an alliance policy that excluded cooperation with the democratic powers, the foremost of which – according to the official ideology of the day – was the Soviet Union. Even before the demise of communism and especially after the return of political pluralism to Hungary in 1989, historical interpretations began to change. By the late 1990s, very different opinions had begun to surface. Not unrepresentative among them was the judgment of András Bán, who concluded that after 1938 the primary objective of Hungarian foreign policy became the "preservation of the country's independence" and after September of 1939, "keeping it out of the war."⁴⁸

The important role that the Hungarian quest for the recovery of territories lost through the Treaty of Trianon had played in Hungarian alliance policies just before and during World War II, has been acknowledged by historians both before and after 1989. And there can be no doubt that the overwhelming desire to revise the territorial terms of that treaty had a powerful impact on the country's policies. Although a few of Hungary's leading statesmen realized the danger of achieving territorial change with German help, they refused to restrict their efforts in this direction. Even though treaty revision indebted Hungary more and more to Nazi Germany, the policy of seeking it was not abandoned or abated throughout 1940, or in the spring of 1941, when it increasingly carried the risk of offending the western democracies and threatened with the prospect of leaving Hungary with having no other viable option than the German alliance.

After Hungary's involvement in the war, the desire for further territorial revision, or the keeping of the lands already regained, continued to prejudice the chances – and at times these chances were very slim indeed – of reversing Hungary's strategic commitment to the Third *Reich*. The threat, intimated early in 1942 by Ribbentrop, that Hungary might lose some territories that she had regained earlier, played a role in the country committing greater forces to the Eastern Front. Similar threats later during the war kept the Hungarian government toeing the German line.

Some historians, including Bán, have argued that Hungary's successive governments had no other option than to pursue treaty revision.⁴⁹ Indeed, in view of the almost unanimous support for treaty revision by the general public of Hungary, and especially by such influential elements of the Hungarian body politic as the armed forces, opportunities for regaining of "lost Magyar lands" could not be

missed, especially on such occasions as the imminent collapse of Yugoslavia in the spring of 1941. Much later, in the fall of 1944, it was a largely vain hope of Horthy to expect Hungary's soldiers to turn against the Germans, who had been their comrades-in-arms for three years, and whom they no doubt regarded as the "liberators" of the lands that had been returned to Hungary between 1938 and 1941.

The failure of Hungary's wartime regime to abandon the German alliance of 1941 was not just a function of Budapest's revisionist policies in that year and thereafter, but was the result of the fact that much of Hungarian society was deeply imbued with the spirit of revisionism. The responsibility for this state of affairs has to be shared by all of Hungary's post-1920 governments. Through their relentless and pervasive propaganda they had helped to keep revisionist sentiments at a constant boiling point. When revisionism became a danger to the maintenance of a Hungarian "free hand" in foreign and strategic policies, these sentiments could not be simply turned off. The momentum built up by the pre-war, i.e., pre-September 1939, revisions of the territorial provisions of the Treaty of Trianon carried the country into the Second Vienna Award in the summer of 1940 and the war against Yugoslavia during the following spring. These events sealed the fate of Hungary's search for allies as they committed the country to an alliance with the Third *Reich*. This alliance, despite the efforts of Horthy, Kállay, Bethlen and their associates, could not be reversed even though it became obvious to these people, apparently already in 1941, that Germany might lose the war. Hungary was fated to remain Hitler's "last ally" and suffered accordingly at the hands of the peacemakers at war's end. Not surprisingly, she lost all the territories she had ever regained.

This brings us back to the question as to which of the world wars of the twentieth century had inflicted greater damage on Hungary. After examining the Second World War and the failure of Hungary's wartime alliance policy, or more precisely the inability of the country's leaders to retain a free hand in foreign affairs and to preserve their country's neutrality, especially during the critical year of 1941, leads us to the conclusion that it was this second great conflict that caused the greater and the more lasting damage. Had involvement in the war been avoided, or at least delayed to 1942 or 1943, it is conceivable that the revision of some of the terms of Trianon might have been allowed to stand,⁵⁰ and a precedent for more than the temporary adjustment of the frontiers established. But as Hungary had been one of Hitler's first East European allies, and became his last ally, all prospects for treaty revision had vanished in this war. The tragedy that had started for Hungary in 1914 and reached its zenith in 1920, was completed during World War II.

Notes

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1. Human costs included military and civilian casualties, a massive exodus of refugees, as well as the deportation of tens of thousands to Soviet labor camps. The war also saw the destruction of most of the country's Jewish community and the expelling of a large part of Hungary's German ethnic group at war's end.
2. I describe the material destruction and economic losses in a number of my publications including "Hungary and the Second World War," an introduction to *Hungary in the Age of Total War, 1938–1948*, ed. N. F. Dreisziger (New York: East European Monographs/Columbia University Press, 1998), 3–24; and in "Thousand Years of Hungarian Survival," an introduction to the volume *Hungary, 1001–2001: A Millennial Retrospection*, ed. N. F. Dreisziger (Budapest and Toronto: The *Hungarian Studies Review*, 2001), 38–47.
3. For further details see my "Hungary and the Second World War," 15–21; and "Thousand Years of Hungarian Survival," 41–47.
4. This argument has been used recently by S. B. Várdy, in his review of the book *Hungary in the Age of Total War, 1938–1948*, which appeared in the *Hungarian Studies Newsletter* (New Brunswick, NJ, USA), Nos. 58–61 (2000): 7.
5. As a result of this treaty Hungary lost 71.4 % of her territory and 63.6% of her population. Rumania alone received a larger share of the Kingdom of Hungary's former territory than that which was left to Hungary. The excuse for this territorial settlement was the principle of national self-determination, but in the application of this principle the rights of millions of Hungarians to self-determination were disregarded: historic Hungary's dismemberment involved the transfer of close to 3.5 million ethnic Magyars to the so-called "successor states." Hungarian calls for plebiscites in the territories concerned were ignored, with the minor exception of the case of the town of Sopron on the Hungarian-Austrian border. The irony of dismembering the multinational Kingdom of Hungary was the fact that the states that benefited most from it were themselves multi-national, in some cases even more mixed ethnically than Hungary had been before 1918.

With the territorial losses came the loss of resources and infrastructure. For example, Hungary lost 89% of its iron-production capacity, 84% of its forests, and 62% of its railway lines. What was left of the country had to rely very heavily on imports of raw materials. Although the country retained most of its food producing capacity, it had to depend on fickle and greatly disrupted export markets to produce any income from exported produce to pay for the imports that became essential for the national economy. Poverty became rampant in the country's villages.

The treaty also disrupted Hungary's transportation and communication systems. Most of Hungary's railway lines found themselves in detached territories. Even lines in the Hungarian heartland ended up with parts of them passing through foreign territory. The same happened to some roads and telegraph lines. Water transportation systems were also disrupted. The treaty, furthermore, caused mass migrations. During 1920, 426,000 refugees left the successor states and settled in Hungary, often swelling the ranks of the unemployed. For a recent summary of the terms and immediate impact of the Treaty of Trianon see Tibor Frank, "Treaty revision and doublespeak: Hungarian neutrality, 1939–1941," in *European Neutrals and Non-Belligerents*

- during the Second World War, ed. Neville Wylie (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002), 151–153.
6. Steven Béla Várdy, “The Impact of Trianon upon Hungary and the Hungarian Mind: The Nature of Interwar Hungarian Irredentism,” in *Hungarian Studies Review*, 10 (1983): 21; a revised and enlarged version of this paper has appeared in *Hungary in the Age of Total War, 1938–1948*.
 7. Magda Ádám, “France and Hungary at the Beginning of the 1920’s,” in *Essays on World War I: Total War and Peacemaking, A Case Study on Trianon*, ed. Béla K. Király, Peter Pastor and Ivan Sanders (New York: Social Science Monographs, Brooklyn College Press, distributed by Columbia University Press, 1982), 145–182, especially p. 172.
 8. Gyula Juhász, *Magyarország külpolitikája, 1919–1945* [Hungary’s foreign policies, 1919–1945] (Budapest: Kossuth, 1969), 161. On Gömbös’s pro-German sentiments and his disappointments concerning Hitler’s refusal to support Hungarian revisionist aspirations in the east and the south, see Magda Ádám, “A Versailles-i Közép-Európa összeomlása: A müncheni válság és Magyarország” [The collapse of the Central Europe created at Versailles: The Munich crisis and Hungary], *Századok*, 133/134 (1999): 689.
 9. For an overview of Kánya’s diplomacy in this period see Endre B. Gastony, “Hungarian Foreign Minister Kálmán Kánya, Hitler, and Peace in Europe, August–September, 1938,” *Hungarian Studies Review*, 8 (Spring, 1986): 3–34, republished in Dreisziger, *Hungary in the Age of Total War*, 213–238. Gastony’s overall conclusions are shared by Thomas L. Sakmyster: *Hungary, the Great Powers, and the Danubian Crisis, 1936–1939* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1980), see the conclusions, especially p. 237.
 10. Sakmyster, *Hungary*, 234. For a more recent and more detailed analysis of Anglo-Hungarian relations of the time see András D. Bán, *Illúziók és csalódások: Nagy-Britannia és Magyarország, 1938–1941* [Illusions and Disappointments: Great Britain and Hungary, 1938–1941] (Budapest: Osiris, 1998), especially chapter 1, part 3. Bán sees British interest in and knowledge of Hungary in more positive terms.
 11. Frank, “Treaty revision,” 159. According to Frank, the Teleki government was “conservative and cautious in its politics” with the exception of its anti-Semitic legislation which went far beyond the anti-Jewish legislation of Teleki’s predecessors (158–159).
 12. On Hitler’s “stormy” reaction to Teleki’s plan to observe neutrality in the upcoming conflict see Frank, “Treaty revision...,” 160f. After the onset of hostilities, the Hungarians, instead of facilitating the German’s assault on Poland, opened the border to Polish refugees. Tens of thousands came. In time, most of the Polish soldiers who managed to escape to Hungary were allowed to proceed to the West, where they joined the Polish units which, after the Normandy invasion of 1944, fought alongside Allied troops. For Hungary’s policies during September 1939 see Gyula Juhász, *Magyarország külpolitikája, 1919–1945* [Hungary’s Foreign Policy, 1919–1945] (Budapest: Kossuth, 1969), 207–209. For more details, see the same author’s *A Teleki-kormány külpolitikája, 1939–1941* [The Foreign Policy of the Teleki Government, 1939–1941] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1964).
 13. István Bethlen’s secret memorandum, undated but probably written in early September, 1939, has been printed in *Magyarország külpolitikája a II. világháború kitörésének időszakában, 1939–1940* [Hungary’s Foreign Policy in the Era of the Outbreak of World War II], Gyula Juhász, ed. (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1962), volume IV of the series *Diplomáciai iratok Magyarország külpolitikájához, 1936–1945* [Diplomatic Documents on Hungary’s Foreign Policy, 1936–1945], László Zsigmond general ed. (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1962–1982), doc. no. 577 (pp. 743–761). The memorandum is summarized in English in my study: “Count Istvan Bethlen’s Secret Plan for the Restoration of the Empire of Transylvania,” *East European Quarterly* 8 (1975): 413–423.

14. C. A. Macartney, *October Fifteenth: A History of Modern Hungary, 1929–1945* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1957, 2nd edition, 1961, 2 vols). Published in the United States as *A History of Hungary, 1929–1945* (New York: Praeger, 1957) 2 vols. My references are to the British edition, vol. 1, 388–389.
15. Werth's memorandum is cited in Juhász, *A Teleki-kormány külpolitikája*, 103f.
16. *Ibid.*, 106.
17. *Ibid.*, 121–124.
18. Telegram, [Ribbentrop], to State Secretary von Weizsäcker, 1 July 1940, giving instructions to von Erdmannsdorff, the German Minister in Budapest. Also, memorandum by [Weizsäcker], 2 July 1940, detailing the German démarche to the Hungarians. Printed in *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918–1945* (hereafter DGFP), Raymond James Sontag, John W. Wheeler-Bennett, et al. eds. Series D (1937–1945), Vol. X, *The War Years, June 23–August 31, 1940* (London, 1957), doc. nos. 75 and 81.
19. News of Hungary's threatening attitude was reported to Berlin by Erdmannsdorff, the German minister in Budapest. See his telegraphic reports of July 1st and 2nd, printed in DGFP, Series D (1937–1945), Vol. X, *The War Years, June 23...*, doc. nos. 69 and 85. The record of the discussions between Hitler, Count Ciano and the Hungarian delegation of 11 July 1940 are given in doc. no. 146 (179–182). These events are summarized in Juhász, *A Teleki-kormány külpolitikája*, 150f.
20. Nicholas Nagy-Talavera, *The Green Shirts and the Others: A History of Fascism in Hungary and Rumania* (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 1970), 303. In his memoirs, Rumanian diplomat Alexandre Cretzianu tells the story of the economic negotiations with the Germans and the origins of the Anglo-French guarantee. According to him, Viorel Tilea, the Rumanian Minister in London, told the Foreign Office that the Germans had presented his government with an ultimatum to accept the proposed economic pact. Tilea's ruse worked: it resulted in the offer by London and Paris to extend a guarantee to Rumania, in order to forestall a possible German invasion of that country. British efforts to have Moscow, Warsaw, and Ankara involved in the guarantee were not successful. Alexandre Cretzianu, *Relapse into Bondage 1918–1947: The Political Memoirs of Alexandre Cretzianu*. S. D. Spector, compiler, chapter 7 in *Southeastern Europe 16* (1989 [1997]): 58–61. Rumanian discussions with the Foreign Office were conducted at the time by Tilea and Cretzianu.
21. Nagy-Talavera, *Green Shirts...*, 304–305.
22. The story of these negotiations is outlined in András Hory, *Még egy barázdát sem* [Not even one furrow] (Vienna, 1967), 34–73. Hory was a senior diplomat in Hungary's diplomatic service during the late 1930s. He headed the Hungarian delegation.
23. Memorandum by Teleki addressed to Regent Miklós Horthy, 1 September 1940. Printed in Miklós Szinai and László Szücs (eds), *Horthy Miklós titkos iratai* [The secret papers of Miklós Horthy] (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1965), doc. no. 49 (pp. 233–239).
24. The award transferred about a million Rumanians to Hungary and left almost half a million Hungarians within the new boundaries of Rumania. A settlement which would have been satisfactory to both sides was probably impossible. For further details see Macartney, *October Fifteenth*, vol. I, 422–424. For the award's text, see DGFP, Series D (1937–1945), Vol. X, *The War Years, June 23...*, doc. no. 413 (pp. 581–584).
25. Eva S. Balogh, "Peaceful Revision: The Diplomatic Road to War," *Hungarian Studies Review* 10 (1983): 43–51.
26. Teleki would have no doubt preferred a Hungarian-Russian non-aggression pact, but because Horthy opposed this idea, he had to be satisfied with a trade agreement and such gestures of friendship as the return of the Hungarian flags that the Tsarist army had captured at the end of the Hungarian struggle for independence in 1849. On improving relations between Hungary

- and the USSR see Peter Pastor, ed. *A moszkvai magyar követség jelentései 1935–1941* [The Reports of the Moscow Legation, 1935–1941] (Budapest: Századvég Kiadó & Atlantisz Kiadó, 1992), documents 180 to 214.
27. See my paper, “Bridges to the West: The Horthy Regime’s Reinsurance Policies in 1941,” *War & Society*, Vol. 7, No 1 (May 1989): 1–23. This and the following parts of this paper are based in large part on my essay “Hungary Enters the War, March–December, 1941,” in *Hungary in the Age of Total War*, 63–66.
 28. The most strident pro-German position was taken by Werth, while historian Bálint Hóman, the Minister of Cults and Education, saw Hungary’s future in terms of taking the side either of Germany or Russia, a situation in which siding with Hitler seemed the lesser of two evils. Antal Náray, *Náray Antal visszaemlékezése, 1945* [The recollections of Antal Náray, 1945], edited and introduced by Sándor Szakály (Budapest: Zrínyi Katonai Kiadó, 1988). Náray was the SDC’s secretary and was in charge of keeping the meeting’s minutes.
 29. The text (apparently reconstructed from memory, as the original had been destroyed) of István Bethlen’s July 1941 letter of Tibor Eckhardt can be found in the latter’s papers, Box 2, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Ca.
 30. On the crisis leading to Teleki’s suicide see the concluding parts of Loránt Tilkovszky, *Pál Teleki, 1879–1941: A Biographical Sketch* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1974). For an overview of the crisis and of Horthy’s role in it, see Sakmyster, *Hungary’s Admiral*, 255–262.
 31. What follows is based on my essay “Hungary Enters the War,” 66–67, and an earlier article of mine: “New Twist to an Old Riddle: The Bombing of Kassa (Košice), June 26, 1941,” *Journal of Modern History*, 44 (June 1972): 232–242.
 32. *Documents on German Foreign Policy*, vol. 13, doc. no. 54. On the antecedents of Hungary’s decision to enter the war against Russia see my “New Twist,” and C. A. Macartney, “Hungary’s Declaration of War on the U.S.S.R. in 1941,” in *Studies in Diplomatic History and Historiography*, ed. A. O. Sarkissian (London, 1961), 158f.
 33. The argument that, until the 26th of June, Bárdossy did not want to join the German invasion of the USSR is made in my article “New Twist,” 234–235. See also Francis S. Wagner, “Diplomatic Prelude to the Bombing of Kassa: Reflections and Recollections of a Former Diplomat,” *Hungarian Studies Review* 10 (1983): 67–78.
 34. Several scholars have suggested that Bárdossy’s conclusion might have been accurate, though no concrete evidence has ever been found to support their theories. For the most substantial of these arguments see Thomas Sakmyster, “The Search for a Casus Belli and the Origins of the Kassa Bombing,” *Hungarian Studies Review*, 10 (1983): 53–65.
 35. Sakmyster, *Hungary’s Admiral*, p. 270.
 36. *Ibid.*, 271f.
 37. Notably by Mario D. Fenyo, the author of *Hitler, Horthy and Hungary: German-Hungarian Relations, 1941–1944* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972). Fenyo calls this change “one of the mysteries” of Hungary’s participation in the war. Fenyo discusses Hungary’s entry into the war and the early phase of her involvement in Hitler’s Russian campaign in chapters 1 and 2. The deterioration of Budapest’s relations with Britain and the United States is discussed in chapter 3.
 38. Swiss-Hungarian historian Peter Gostony (known to Hungarians as Gosztonyi) had argued that Horthy was the first Axis leader to realize that the Red Army would not collapse under the German onslaught and that already in September, 1941 he had decided that Hungary “had to get out of the war.” Péter Gosztonyi, *A Kormányzó, Horthy Miklós* [The Regent, Miklós Horthy] (Budapest: Téka, 1990), 128–136. This date is also accepted as the time of Horthy’s “conversion” by Sakmyster who, writing in 1989, explained that the men who brought the Regent around to this view were “Bethlen and a few trusted military advisors.” See Thomas Sakmyster’s

- chapter on Horthy in *Hungarian Statesmen of Destiny, 1860–1960*, ed. Paul Bódy (Highland Lakes, NJ: Atlantic Research and Publications, 1989), 113. In his biography of Horthy, Sakmyster gives a somewhat different explanation, one which stresses the influence that István Horthy had on his father. Sakmyster, *Hungary's Admiral*, 271f.
39. The German invasion of the USSR in June, 1941 created an alliance between London and Moscow. In September Stalin asked Britain to declare war on Finland. The British leaders had reservations about complying with the request but Stalin persisted. At the end of November, the UK leaders decided to give in to his demands and soon issued ultimatums to the government of Finland, as well as those of Hungary and Rumania, demanding that they end their military operations against the USSR. As these demands were not complied with, the UK went ahead with the declarations of war.
 40. Bárdossy did not believe that Hungary's involvement in the war could be reversed. In any case, with Hungary being at war with the UK, Bárdossy did not feel that it mattered much if she was at war with the US as well. See my papers: "A Dove? A Hawk? Perhaps a Sparrow: Bárdossy Defends his Wartime Record before the Americans, July 1945," *Hungarian Studies Review*, 22 (1995): 71–90; and "Was László Bárdossy a War Criminal? Further Reflections," *Hungary in the Age of Total War*, 311–320.
 41. Sakmyster, *Hungary's Admiral*, 274f.
 42. The story is discussed in Rita Péntek, "István Horthy's Election as Vice-Regent in 1942," in *Hungary in the Age of Total War*, 276–280.
 43. Gosztonyi, *A kormányzó*, 135–138.
 44. Sakmyster, *Hungary's Admiral*, 282–285.
 45. Bán, *Illúziók*, especially part III (the conclusions).
 46. Sakmyster, *Hungary's Admiral*, 286.
 47. Among others by István Mocsy, "Hungary's Failed Strategic Surrender: Secret Wartime Negotiations with Britain," in *Hungary in the Age of Total War*, 85–106. The story of the 1944 mission Horthy sent to Allied headquarters in Italy is told in Laura-Louise Veress, *Clear the Line: Hungary's Struggle to Leave the Axis During the Second World War*, ed. Dalma Takács (Cleveland, OH: Prospero Publications, 1995).
 48. Bán, *Illúziók*, 11. I had come to similar conclusions in my *Hungary's Way to World War II* (Toronto: Helicon, 1968) see especially the conclusions, 179–188.
 49. Bán, *Illúziók*, 12.
 50. The very first revision of the territorial provisions of the Treaty of Trianon, granted through the First Vienna Award, had grudging approval in Western Europe, including tacit approval in London. Gastony, "Hungarian," in *Hungary in the Age of Total War*, 235; and Balogh, "Peaceful Revision," 45. No such recognition was accorded to Hungary's post-1938 revisions of the Trianon settlement.

