

The United States and the Question of Transylvania at the Paris Peace Conference 1919–1920

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The Peace Treaty of Trianon meant to Hungary huge losses of territory—approximately two-thirds of its area. The causes for the dissolution of the Habsburg monarchy – and historical Hungary – were both internal and external. But it was the first world war that was the last straw that broke the camel's back, because the camel—the Dual Monarchy—was unable to solve its internal problems, especially the nationalities problem.

The Romanians were the largest non-Magyar nationality in the Hungarian half of the empire. Since the late eighteenth century there had been a Romanian demand for equal rights with the Magyars (including the Szeklers) and the Saxons of Transylvania. The Ausgleich of 1867 between the Austrian emperor and the ruling Hungarian elite was a bitter disappointment to the Romanians, most of whom had been loyal to the emperor in the Hungarian war of independence of 1848–1849. This decision left the Romanians at the mercy of the Budapest government. Autonomy, perhaps in a federalised Austria, remained the demand of the Romanian opposition during dualism. This opposition was, however, powerless due to the Hungarian electoral system, which was very unfavourable to non-Magyar nationalities. Because the Ausgleich tied the hands of the emperor, the Romanians could not expect any help from Vienna.

Romania, which had gained its independence from the Ottoman Empire in the middle of the 19th century did not initially claim territory from the Dual Monarchy, due to its political dependence on Germany and Austria-Hungary. Romania became a member in the Triple Alliance with the aforementioned states, but when the World War I broke out, Romania did not consider itself to be bound to its allies. Instead it started bargaining between the two warring groups for maximum territorial promises as a price for its support. Finally in August 1916, the Entente Powers promised Prime Minister Ion

I. C. Brătianu vast Austro-Hungarian territories including the whole of the Bánát, Bukovina as far as the river Pruth and the Hungarian territory almost up to the Tisza river. The resulting Bucharest treaty brought Romania into the war on the side of Great Britain, Italy, Russia and France. However the Romanian attack in Transylvania failed and the Central Powers (Germany and Austria-Hungary) occupied most of the Kingdom of Romania through 1917.

The United States and Transylvania in the First World War

The problems of the Balkans and the Austro-Hungarian monarchy were relatively unknown in the United States before the World War I, although a great flow of immigrants from south-eastern Europe had crossed the Atlantic in the preceding decades. Their influence on American politics remained insignificant and the foreign policy of the United States focused on the western hemisphere and the Pacific Ocean. At the beginning of the war the Dual Monarchy was viewed as an important obstacle against "balkanisation", the threat of the area being divided into small, mutually hostile states.¹ Moreover, the Monarchy served as a counter-balancing force against Russia and Germany. President Woodrow Wilson was trying to establish peace between the two hostile alliances. In his speeches from 1916 on the president emphasised the right of national self-determination and the territorial sovereignty of small states, which in Vienna and Budapest created the idea of the president being hostile to Austria-Hungary². The Allies understood the president in a similar way: when Wilson asked both warring sides to express their peace terms, the Allies answered that they wanted the

¹ Ferrell, Robert H., *The United States and East-Central Europe Before 1941*. Notre Dame 1958, 26–27; Seymour, Charles, *The End of An Empire: The Remnants of Austria-Hungary*. In: Edward Mandell House and Charles Seymour (eds.), *What Really Happened at Paris. The Story of the Peace Conference, 1918–1919*. By American Delegates. New York 1921, 87

² *Papers and Documents Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS) The Lansing Papers*, vol. 1. Washington 1939. *The Ambassador of the United States to Vienna (Penfield) to the Secretary of State (Lansing)*. Vienna 3. June 1916, 655–657

dissolution of the Habsburg empire and all the Romanian-inhabited areas of the empire to become a part of Romania.³

The United States on the other hand did not wish to break-up the Dual Monarchy and was quite optimistic of the prospect of a separate peace between the Allies and Austria-Hungary: "It is the President's view that the large measure of autonomy already secured to those older units [of the Monarchy – T.O.] is a sufficient guaranty of peace and stability in that part of Europe so far as national and racial influences are concerned..."⁴

The relations between the United States and the Central Powers became more strained in the spring of 1917, when Germany reopened its unrestricted submarine-warfare and Austria-Hungary joined it. The attempted German-Mexican pact against the United States, revealed in the so-called Zimmermann note, gave the United States a reason to declare a war against Germany on 6. April 1917. Although the United States did not declare war on Austria-Hungary until next December, the diplomatic relations between the two states broke off on 9. April. The spring 1917 revolution in Russia and the involvement of the United States in the war changed the nature of the war from power-politics to a fight between ideologies⁵. Wilson avowed to make the world "safe for democracy".

Wilson and his administration knew about the secret treaties, among them the Bucharest treaty, the Allies made during the war. The president did not approve of the treaties, which he claimed to be a part of the old-fashioned secret diplomacy, which was precisely one of the reasons of the war. As he did not express this opinion very clearly, there were problems later on between the United States and the Allies⁶. Although Wilson did not want the pre-war status quo or the reasons for the war to return, he was careful not to condemn Germany's allies: Prussian militarism was judged as the culprit of the war.

³ FRUS 1917. Supplement 1. The World War. Washington 1931. The United States Ambassador to France (Sharp) to Lansing. Paris 10. January 1917, 8

⁴ Ibid., Lansing to the Ambassador of the United States to Great Britain (Page). Washington 8. February 1917, 40–41

⁵ Lukacs, John A., *The Great Powers and Eastern Europe*. New York 1953, 10

⁶ Mamatey, Victor S., *The United States and East-Central Europe 1914–1918. A Study in Wilsonian Diplomacy and Propaganda*. Princeton 1957, 89–90

The nationalities of Austria-Hungary interpreted the president's messages as support to their demands: democracy and national self-determination were exactly what they were asking for. The Secretary of State Robert Lansing was critical of Wilson's usage of the term "self determination". In his opinion this word, without any clear meaning, was an empty phrase and political dynamite to the nations of Europe⁷. Romania's hopes were raised as well when the United States joined the war.

On the other hand Romania's strategic situation was deteriorating as Russia went through the October-revolution and Italy suffered defeats against Austria-Hungary. In November 1917 King Ferdinand of Romania asked the United States for an assurance that it would accept the terms of the Bucharest treaty, otherwise there might be a danger of Romania leaving the war⁸. At this moment Wilson was ready only to secure the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Romania after the war, not to promise new territories at the expense of Austria-Hungary⁹.

The reluctance of the United States to promise new territories to Romania became more apparent when president Wilson declared his famous Fourteen Points on 8. January 1918. Point ten of this declaration demanded no more than the possibility of "autonomous development" to the nationalities of Austria-Hungary and rejected the idea of breaking up the empire.¹⁰ As a result of Russia's separate peace at Brest-Litovsk and the lack of support to its territorial demands, Romania signed a separate peace treaty, prohibited in the Bucharest treaty, with the Central Powers on 7. May 1918.

On 29. May, after it had become obvious that there was no chance for a separate peace treaty with the Dual Monarchy, the United States gave its support to the Czechoslovak and Yugoslavian

⁷ Lansing, Robert, *The Peace Negotiations. A Personal Narrative*. London 1921, 86-87

⁸ FRUS 1917. Suppl.2. Vol.1. Washington 1931. The Minister of the United States to Romania (Vopicka) to Lansing. Iasi (Engl. form Jassy) 17. November 1917, 309

⁹ *Ibid.*, Lansing to Vopicka. Washington 28. November 1917, 325

¹⁰ FRUS 1918. Supplement 1. Part 1. Washington 1933. President Wilson's speech in the congress 8. January 1918, 12-17

(or Serb, Croat and Slovene) demands for independence.¹¹ Romanian aspirations were disregarded until the autumn of 1918, although Lansing suggested from June onwards yielding Transylvania to Romania as a means of opposing German hegemony in the area.¹²

Although in October it had become clear that the Central Powers would lose the war, the Hungarian territory was still free from occupying troops. The Austro-Hungarian appeals for peace, based on the Fourteen Points, were rejected, and the Allies demanded total capitulation. The internal situation of the empire grew more serious as well and on 18. October the Romanian representative, Vaida Voevod, declared in the Budapest parliament that Hungary had no right to represent its Romanian population at the forthcoming peace conference and according to Wilsonian principles the Romanians were entitled to decide their own destiny.

On 31. October the liberal politician Mihály Károlyi became the premier of Hungary and unlike his predecessors he was willing to make compromises with the nationalities of the country. Although the Fourteen Points were no longer valid, because Wilson had agreed to the break-up of the Habsburg empire, the president's declarations were understood in Hungary as demands for referendums in the disputed areas¹³. The new nationality policy became the task of Oszkár Jászi: the idea was that Hungary should be federalised according to ethnic principles but without touching its territorial integrity. These ideas did not satisfy the Romanians anymore and the attempts to reach an agreement between Jászi and the Romanians failed in Arad in the beginning of November. On 1. December the Romanian popular assembly of Gyulafehérvár (Alba Iulia, Karls-

¹¹ Ibid., Lansing to the Ambassador of the United States to Italy (Page). Washington 29. May 1918, 808–809

¹² Lansing had already earlier regarded point ten of the Fourteen Points declaration as a mistake and saw it necessary to break up the Habsburg empire. FRUS. Lansing papers. Volume II. Washington 1940. Lansing to Wilson. Washington 19. August 1918, 139; Lansing, Robert, *The War Memoirs of Robert Lansing*, Secretary of State. USA 1935, 266–271; Lansing 1921, 173

¹³ Jászi, Oscar, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Hungary*. New York 1924, 38, 57–58

burg)¹⁴ declared the union of Romania and the Romanian-inhabited areas of Hungary and promised liberal rights to the other nationalities of the area.

At the end of October Colonel House, the special representative of president Wilson, was in Paris to discuss with the Allies the basis of the forthcoming peace. Point ten of the declaration from January deemed to be no more valid: Transylvania would undoubtedly become a part of Romania, but the position of the Hungarian, Szekler and Saxon population of the area should be secured. Hungary was now seen as to be free and democratic, but ruled by Magyars who opposed partitioning their country.¹⁵

Because of the events in Hungary there seemed to be proof to the Americans that the Romanians really wanted to separate themselves from Hungary. After several petitions from both American Romanians and the Romanian government¹⁶ the announcement to support Romanian demands came on 5. November:

"The Government of the United States is not unmindful of the aspirations of the Rumanian people without as well as within the boundaries of the Kingdom. It has witnessed their struggles and sufferings and sacrifices in the cause of freedom from their enemies and their oppressors. With the spirit of national unity and the aspirations of Rumanians everywhere, the Government of the United States deeply symphatizes and will not neglect at the proper time to exert its influence that the just political and territorial rights of the

¹⁴ The names of the localities are here given in their Hungarian form, with the Romanian and German forms being given in brackets, when the place is mentioned first time. The preference of the Hungarian names follows the usage at the peace conference of Paris and do by no means refer to any political point of view of the ownership of the area.

¹⁵ FRUS 1918. Suppl.1. Part 1. The Special Representative of the President (House) to Lansing. London 29. October 1918, 408–411

¹⁶ The National Archives of the United States (NA): Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Romania 1910–1944. Microcopy 1198. Roll 1. 871.00/-. The Chairman and the Secretary of the meeting of the „Sons of the Rumanians of Transylvania” to President Wilson. Youngstown, Ohio 3. September 1917; FRUS 1918. Suppl.1. Part 1. Vopicka to Lansing. Telegram. Iasi 21. October 1918, 783; Ibid., Vopicka to Lansing. Telegram. Iasi 26. October 1918, 784; Mamatey, 377

Rumanian people may be obtained and made secure from foreign aggression"¹⁷

The United States thus officially recognised Romania's right to Transylvania, but did not declare its opinion of the size on the area Romania was about to have.

The Romanian Claims at the Peace Conference

In November, Hungary was declared a republic and its ties with Austria were broken. The Austro-Hungarian General Staff had already made an armistice in Padua on 1. November, but in order to strengthen the position of Hungary as an independent state Károlyi signed a new armistice with the Allies in Belgrade on 13. November. There was no reference to the Fourteen Points in the armistices as they were purely military in their character. The Belgrade armistice gave the Allies the right to occupy areas from eastern Transylvania and other points of strategical importance elsewhere as well. Romania on the other hand claimed that their separate peace with the Central Powers was no more valid and joined the war again. In fact this move was encouraged by the minister of the United States to Romania, Charles Vopicka¹⁸. Romanian troops started to move into Transylvania in November and December. Romania's actions had the partial approval of the local French military command but not of the Supreme War Council seated in Paris, nor later on of the Supreme Council of the Peace Conference. The Romanians continued advancing through the winter and Károlyi's appeal to

¹⁷ FRUS 1918. Suppl.1. Part 1. Lansing to Vopicka. Telegram. Washington 5. November 1918, 785

¹⁸ FRUS 1919. The Paris Peace Conference (PPC). Volume II. Washington 1942. Vopicka to Lansing Iasi 9. November 1918, 385; During the German and Austro-Hungarian occupation of southern Romania Vopicka had helped Romania to get financial and material support. Pascu, Stefan and C. Gh. Marinescu, *L'Opinion Publique Internationale et le problème de l'unité nationale et politique des roumains*. Bucuresti 1989, 162; Vopicka, who was from Czech origin, made no secret of his sympathies towards the Romanians and his anti-Habsburg attitude. NA: Microcopy 1198. Roll 1. 871.00/58. Vopicka to Lansing. Iasi 23. 10. 1918

Wilson for Hungary's democracy and territorial integrity was of no avail.¹⁹

On the other hand the United States and the other Great Powers protested against Romania's official declaration of the unification of Transylvania with the Kingdom of Romania, which the government published on 26. December. According to the Allies it was the work of the peace conference to solve territorial issues: no unilateral declarations would be accepted.²⁰

The Peace Conference of Paris began its work in January 1919. On 10. January Wilson introduced his draft for a Covenant of the League of Nations. On the issue of German colonies and the territories of the Turkish and Habsburg empires the Covenant declared "...there shall in no case be any annexation of any of these territories by any State either within the League or outside of it, and that in the future government of these peoples and territories the rule of self-determination, or the consent of the governed to their form of government shall be fairly and reasonably applied, and all policies of administration or economic development be based primarily upon the well-considered interests of the people themselves..."²¹

The President came to the Conference with the idea of self-determination as the ruling principle for the territories of Austria-Hungary. Lansing criticised Wilson later on for not having a more specific programme for the American Commission when he arrived in Paris: the Fourteen Points were too vague to serve as a basis for negotiations²².

¹⁹ FRUS 1919. PPC II. The Ambassador of the United States to Switzerland (Stovall) to Lansing. Telegram. Bern 19. November 1918, 193

²⁰ Ibid., The French Ambassador to the United States (Jusserand) to Lansing. Paris 4. January 1919, 404; NA: Microcopy 1198. Roll 4. 871.01/2. The United States Ambassador to France (Green) to Lansing. Paris 18. January 1919; NA: Microcopy 1198. Roll 4. 871.01/3. The Acting Secretary of State (Polk) to Vopicka. Washington 28. January 1919

²¹ The future League of Nations was given the authority to delegate the government to a certain state but even then, if possible or desirable, the consent of the governed would have to be assured. Lansing 1921, Appendix I: the Presidents draft of the Covenant of the League of Nations. Laid before the American Commission on January 10, 1919, 262

²² Lansing 1921, 169-173

Against Lansing's critique one could mention that there had been since 1917 an official organisation, the Inquiry, headed by Colonel House, that had already made several plans with regard to the new boundaries in Europe. Earlier on it had favoured the integrity of the Habsburg Monarchy, and it had influenced the Fourteen Points as well. At the beginning of the Peace Conference on 21. January the Inquiry submitted its last report. According to this historical Transylvania, the Romanian-inhabited areas of Körösvidék (Crisana, Kreischgebiet), the Austrian province of Bukovina as well as Russian Bessarabia were to belong to Romania, but the areas of Szatmárnémeti (Satu Mare, Sathmar), Nagyvárad (Oradea Mare, Grosswardein) and Arad were to belong to Hungary. The Bánát was to be divided between Romania and Serbia. Ruthenia (Carpatho-Ukraine) would be given to Czechoslovakia in order to establish a contact between this new country and Romania. The position of the Szeklers in the enlarged Romania would have to be secured. In its work the Inquiry did not trust the Hungarian statistics as a given fact and approximated that the Romanians were a clear majority in the areas which Romania claimed.²³

The Romanian Commission arrived in Paris on 11. January. Its leader was prime minister Brătianu whereas the representative of the claimed areas was Vaida Voevod. The United States had approved Romania as an Allied Power and had given a loan to the country, but Romania was not treated as an equal to the Great Powers (i.e. The United States, France, Great Britain and Italy), as the treaty of Bucharest would have suggested.²⁴ The most important issues were

²³ Spector, Sherman David, Rumania at the Paris Peace Conference. A Study in the Diplomacy of Ioan I.C. Brătianu. New York 1962, 98–99; Deák, Francis, Hungary at the Paris Peace Conference. The Diplomatic History of the Treaty of Trianon. New York 1942, 27–28

²⁴ FRUS 1919. The Paris Peace Conference (PPC). Volume II. The American Commission to Negotiate Peace to the Acting Secretary of State (Polk). Paris 16. January, 721–722; *Ibid.*, The American Commission to Negotiate Peace to Polk. Paris 23. January, 721–722; The British prime minister Lloyd George and the foreign minister Balfour argued that Romania had lost its right to equal representation because of its separate peace with the Central Powers. The French foreign minister Pichon tried to defend Romania. FRUS. PPC III. Notes of the meeting of the Supreme Council of the Peace Conference (The Council of Ten)

reserved for the Great Powers at the Council of Ten (the Supreme Council), where were represented the heads of states of the four Great Powers as well as their foreign ministers and two delegates of Japan. Romania was given seats in seven different commissions, but was left out of the two which were of greatest importance to it: the minority-and the territorial commissions.²⁵

The United States sent a mission to Vienna and Budapest to collect and send information to the American Commission to Negotiate Peace. In January this mission, headed by professor Archibald C. Coolidge, sent information about Romanian troops fighting in the Bánát, Máramaros (Maramures, Maramarosch) and Dobrudzha, that is, that Romania did not obey the armistice. According to Coolidge, Károlyi and the Hungarians were expecting help from the United States to avoid the imminent dismemberment of Hungary. Coolidge himself thought that the partition of Hungary would be a mistake: it would have meant that the already threatened economy of Hungary would collapse and that the irredentism of the neighbouring states would only be changed to a Hungarian irredentism. Coolidge had an opinion of Transylvania as well: its ties to the Hungarian Plain were closer than to Romania and therefore its separation from Hungary would be unwise. Károlyi had explained to the mission that Hungary would not oppose the invasion of its neighbours because it expected the results of the Peace Conference.²⁶

Because of the violations of the armistice, Wilson wrote a warning to the belligerents on 25. January, which was issued in the name

12. January 1919, 486–487; Notes of the meeting of the Supreme Council of the Peace Conference 15. January 1919, 546–548

²⁵ Spector, 73, 78

²⁶ The mission told that the Hungarians were complaining about the breaking of the armistice and that the invaders acted as they had come to stay. The Hungarians "rest their whole appeal on the Fourteen Points of President Wilson and say that their only hope is in the sense of justice of the United States and its leader". Károlyi had mentioned that the policy of Hungary was "Wilson, Wilson and again Wilson". FRUS. PPC. Vol XII. Washington 1947. Coolidge to the American Commission to Negotiate Peace. Vienna 13. March 1919, 407; *Ibid.*, Coolidge to the American Commission. Budapest 16. January 1919, 373–374; *Ibid.*, The Secretary of the United States' Embassy in Paris (Gibson) memorandum to Lansing 1. January 1919, 233–235

of the Supreme Council. The warning stated that the Peace Conference sees as its duty

"...to utter a solemn warning that possession gained by force will seriously prejudice the claims of those who employ such means. It will create a presumption that those who employ force doubt the justice and validity of their claim and purpose to substitute possession for proof of right and set up sovereignty by coercion rather than by racial or national preference or natural historical association."²⁷

On 30. January Wilson proposed that the Supreme Council should hear the territorial claims of Romania. At the same time the Great Powers could express their own views to Romanians: in this way they could eliminate the issues on which they agreed and concentrate on the disagreements. Wilson mentioned the results of the Inquiry investigations, not as American proposals, but as a basis for negotiations. The British Foreign Minister Balfour added, that it was important to listen to the interested parties themselves and it was decided, that the Romanian delegation was to be heard the following day.²⁸ Wilson had thus already decided that the territorial arrangements would be done on the basis of the plans of the Great Powers. On the other hand he was arguing for an understanding between the Great Powers and Romania before the Hungarian Government – not to mention the local population of the disputed areas – were heard.

The Romanian delegates appeared before the Supreme Council simultaneously with the Serbian (or Yugoslav) ones on 31. January 1919. Brătianu came to the hearing with a written memorandum dealing with the question of the Bánát: Romania claimed the whole area for itself²⁹. The Serbian representatives Trumbić and Vesnić

²⁷ FRUS. PPC III. Notes of the meeting of the Supreme Council. 24. January 1919, 715

²⁸ Ibid., Notes of the meeting of the Supreme Council. 30. January 1919, 814–815

²⁹ Romania based its claim on 1) the ethnic composition of the area (according to Romanian information there were 600 000 Romanians, 400 000 Germans and less than 300 000 Serbs) 2) that the Swabians (the German population) would not tolerate the division of the area, because that would mean dividing the German minority 3) the division would ruin the economy of the area 4) the fear of Serbia for Belgrade, when the border would be near to the Serbian capital, could be

demanded the division of the Bánát: Serbia should get two of the three counties of the area: Torontál and Temesvár. The third, Krasó-Szörény would be mainly Romanian. The Serbs denied the validity of the Bucharest treaty, because it had been made without the knowledge of Serbia, when the country was already at war.³⁰

After the meeting, Wilson, the British prime minister Lloyd George and the French prime minister Clemenceau were more favourable to the Serbs, although their demands were regarded as being too heavy. The Italian prime minister Orlando and foreign minister Sonnino regarded the Bucharest treaty as still being valid. The reason for this was that the Italians based their territorial claims against the former Dual Monarchy like the Romanians on a secret treaty, the treaty of London (1915), and they were opposed to a strong Yugoslav state as a neighbour to Italy.³¹

The next day (1. February 1919) Brătianu was given a chance to speak again. In regard to Transylvania the Romanian prime minister said, that it was a separate geographical entity, the cradle of the century-old Romanian dream of unification. Transylvania for him meant not only the historical province, but the whole area as far as the Tisza (Theiss)-river as well as the whole of the Bánát. Brătianu emphasised that Romania did not claim Debrecen, because it was ethnically Hungarian. According to the Hungarian statistics of 1910 55% Romanians and 23% Hungarians lived in the claimed area (without the Bánát). Brătianu said that the correct figures were 72% Romanians and 15% Hungarians³². The prime minister also mentioned that in the area there lived a people, who were related to the Hungarians (the Szeklers). This population amounted to 450 000

overcome with a prohibition against the fortification of the Danube frontier-line 5) the Danube would be a natural border 6) the sacrifices of Romania during the war 7) the Bucharest treaty.

³⁰ FRUS. PPC III. Notes of the meeting of the Supreme Council. 30. January 1919, 822–824

³¹ Spector, 88–89

³² According to Brătianu the Hungarian statistics were falsified, because the total amount of Romanians were the same in 1910 as decades before, whereas in the Old Kingdom (Vechiul Regat) there had been a great increase of population.

whereas 250 000 Saxons (Germans) also lived there. On an ethnic basis Romania claimed Bessarabia and Bukovina as well.³³

One argument in support of the territorial claims was drawn up from the acts of union declared by the popular assemblies of Transylvania, Bukovina and Bessarabia. Brătianu admitted that in the declaration of Gyulafehérvár there had been a condition of autonomy until the legal issues with Romania were solved. The British premier Lloyd George doubted the representative character of the assemblies, because the national minorities were not represented in them. Brătianu replied that the Romanians had fought in order to impose their "national will" on the Hungarians and that they were not expected to support Romania. In due time the rights of the minorities would be respected. The British prime minister continued that the will of the majority should be respected, but he hoped that Hungary's oppressive policy would not be continued by Romania. Brătianu answered that the declaration of Gyulafehérvár had already granted the minorities their rights, but that the Budapest government practised Bolshevik propaganda in the area, which meant that some repressive action might be unavoidable. Brătianu opposed a popular referendum in the area.³⁴

At the end of the meeting Brătianu asked for permission to occupy the areas claimed by Romania. In this way they could show to Hungary that Transylvania was lost. Moreover the anarchy and Bolshevik agitation prevailing in the area necessitated a Romanian occupation to maintain order.³⁵ The prime minister repeated his requests to Clemenceau on 8. and 9. February.³⁶

After the Romanian representative left, Orlando repeated that the Bucharest treaty was binding the decisions: Romania's separate peace was not valid, because the country was forced into it. Clemenceau and Lloyd George opposed this view and remarked, that now the Romanians were claiming even more than the treaty of

³³ FRUS. PPC. Vol. III. Notes of the meeting of the Supreme Council 1. February 1919, 845-847

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 846, 848-850

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 850-851

³⁶ Deák, 40

1916 promised, that is the whole of Bukovina and Bessarabia.³⁷ Wilson agreed with them and finally bluntly said that no secret treaty was binding the United States. Lloyd George suggested, that the territorial questions should be moved to special committees, to which each Great Power would send two specialists. Wilson added, that the committees should base their work on ethnic and economic facts, not political ones. Orlando and Sonnino warned that the specialists should be obliged to listen to the interested nations and perhaps to travel to the area in question. This would mean that the committee would change into a court of appeal. Wilson did not think this to be necessary, but advised, that the specialists should examine the facts given by the Serbs and the Romanians critically.³⁸

The question of Transylvania ended after the meeting on the desk of the Committee For the Study of Territorial Questions Relating to Rumania. The representatives of the United States in the Committee were Clive Day and Charles Seymour from the Yale University.³⁹ Colonel House predicted correctly that creating new boundaries meant creating new troubles.⁴⁰ The Transylvanian question passed through the hands of the highest authorities of the Peace Conference in a couple of days. The cause for this was surely that the question was not such a burning issue for the heads of states: the most important task of the Peace Conference was the peace with Germany. Although Transylvania was in square kilometres the largest Romanian territorial claim, the Great Powers viewed Bessarabia, Ruthenia, Bukovina and Bánát as more problematic issues, because for these areas there existed conflicting claims from the victorious powers or the unstable Russia. Hungary was still the enemy. Although Wilson had in his previous politics emphasised the right of self-determination, he was now ready to leave the territorial questions to specialists, whom he trusted to make just boundaries. From this point of view Lansing's critique against the president seems to be

³⁷ Both Clemenceau and Lloyd George had come to office after the treaty of Bucharest was signed. Both statesmen had opposed the treaty when it was made. Spector, 96

³⁸ FRUS. PPC III. Notes of the meeting of the Supreme Council. 1. February 1919, 852–854. Baker, Ray Stannard, Woodrow Wilson and the World Settlement. Volume I. New York 1923, 186

³⁹ Deák, 34

⁴⁰ Nicolson, Harold, Peacemaking 1919. Glasgow 1933, 126

justified: in a couple of weeks he had changed his mind⁴¹ to whether the local population should give its consent to the territorial changes.

The Transylvanian Question in the Territorial Committee

The basis for the American suggestions in the territorial committee was the work of the Inquiry. For the British the work was prepared by the Department of Political Intelligence of the Foreign Office and the French counterpart to them was the Comité d'études. As its first task, the committee had the question of Bessarabia, which all representatives would have given to Romania unanimously. In regard to Bukovina a disagreement emerged: the others wanted to give the whole province to Romania, while the Americans were more willing to save the northern part to a Ruthene-or an east-Galician free State. The American members demanded as well that the acts of union of the popular assemblies should be left unnoticed, because they contradicted the communication given by the Supreme Council on 25. January and restricted the rights of the Peace Conference in making the final decisions.⁴²

On 2. February Clemenceau asked the committee to immediately make a suggestion for the Hungarian-Romanian border, because the Romanians were occupying new territories all the time and Brătianu was looking for excuses to occupy the whole of Hungary to the frontier promised in the Bucharest treaty. When the debate started on 11. February the chairman of the committee, André Tardieu, suggested plainly that the committee should recommend the whole area promised in the treaty to Romania. The Italians suggested a frontier drawn on an ethnic basis, but when they saw that Wilson did not support Italian territorial claims they started to be generous to Romania; they were ready to give Romania the whole territory east of the Tisza.

The French claimed that Romania should be given at least the towns of Szatmárnémeti and Nagyvárad, because of the important railway running through them. Day and Seymour claimed that the

⁴¹ Lansing claims that even the personality of the president changed when he came to Paris. Lansing, Robert, *The Big Four and Others of the Paris Peace Conference*. London 1922, 38

⁴² Spector, 99-102

railway should belong to Hungary. Tardieu continued demanding the railway for Romania, because of its strategic importance; the French General Staff wanted it for Romania so that the country could get a defensible frontier. Behind this demand was the fact that Romania played an important part in the so-called Foch plan, named after marshal Foch, leader of the French General Staff. The Foch plan meant a massive intervention against the Russian Bolsheviks from a front stretching from Finland to the Black Sea. In order to realise the plan it was necessary to secure the Romanian participation in it and the transportation routes along east-central Europe.⁴³ One of these was the railway in question. The specialists of the United States demanded on the other hand that the Romanians should build another railway on their own side.⁴⁴

In the end all members of the committee agreed that the Békés and Csanád counties, claimed by Romania, should belong to Hungary. This meant, that nobody was ready to uphold the Bucharest treaty anymore. It also became clear, that it was not possible for Romania to build a parallel railway.⁴⁵ This meant a new problem in regard to the ethnically Magyar towns of Arad, Szatmárnémeti and Nagyvárad: if they had been left to Hungary and the surrounding countryside to Romania, the trains would have crossed an international boundary each time they left the towns.⁴⁶ It became obvious that whereas the French were guided in their work with Romania's strategic needs, the Americans were pushing for an ethnically more just boundary, which meant more favourable suggestions to Hungary.

Brătianu and Vaida Voevod were given a chance to express their views in front of the committee on 22. February. Romania's more specific claims included now the confluence of the Máros (Mures)-river (in the county of Csanád) and the Tisza as well as the con-

⁴³ Spector, 106, 113; Ormos, Mária, *From Padua to the Trianon*. Budapest 1990, 37–38

⁴⁴ Spector, 102–104; Deák, 48; Ormos, 187–190; Temperley has argued that the reason the railway-line was left to Romania was more economic than strategic: the Romanians needed the line in order to supply food to the northern parts of the country. Temperley, Harold, „How the Hungarian Frontiers were drawn”. *Foreign Affairs. An American Quarterly Review*. No.3. April 1928, 439–440

⁴⁵ Temperley 1928, 440

⁴⁶ Spector, 102–104

fluence of the Tisza and the Danube and Tisza's channels. Moreover the Szatmárnémeti-Nagyvárad-Arad railway should belong to Romania in its entirety, in order to establish a contact to Czechoslovakia and Poland. This meant claiming the north-east part of the Máramaros-county. Brătianu repeated his claims of government-supported Bolshevik-propaganda in Hungary. Now it was time for Romania to show to Hungary the final nature of victory and when the situation was cleared, the national minorities were to be given liberal rights.⁴⁷

Colonel House suggested on 27. February the establishment of a Central Territorial Commission, which should assert the suggestions of the territorial committees (the Hungarian frontiers were studied by committees which were working with Yugoslav and Czechoslovak claims as well). This meant in practice an increase of French influence: for example, Tardieu became the chairman of the Central Commission. In the Romanian committee the Americans had to give in on several occasions: Szatmárnémeti, Nagyvárad and Nagykároly (Carei Mare) were given to Romania. On few points the Americans managed to get their suggestions through: for example the railway line between Nagykároly and Csap (slov. Čop, ukr. Csop) was left to Hungary. If this area, the north-eastern part of Máramaros, would have been given to Romania it would have meant that 300 000 Hungarians would have been transferred to Romania as well, Seymour argued. At most issues the Americans had to compromise, and they ended with the French having their way.⁴⁸ The railway sections left to Hungary were compensatable with waterways, and it was thus possible to realise marshal Foch's master-plan with these boundaries as well.⁴⁹ The territorial committees reached an agreement on the border between Yugoslavia and Hungary on 28. February and between Yugoslavia and Romania (the Bánát was divided) on 2. March. In fact all of Romania's frontiers were ready on 6. March, although some modifications in Transylvania and the Bánát were made and completed on 11. March. Because of the development of the situation in Hungary the final deci-

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 197–198

⁴⁸ Tardieu credited later on France for its help to Romania in the railway question. Tardieu, André, *La Paix*. Paris 1921, 427

⁴⁹ Spector, 109, 121–122

sions were made as late as 6. April and the Central Commission approved the suggestions on 15. April.⁵⁰

Later the mode of working in the committees was discussed: the viewpoint of the committees has been argued to have been unfair to Hungary. The frontiers were not drawn in regard to Hungary's situation, but by different committees from the viewpoint of Romania, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia respectively. This meant, for example, that the territorial losses of Hungary in Transylvania and Slovakia together were so large. Similarly it has been argued, that the suggestions of the committees were not seen as being final by the members of the commissions, but that they thought the Supreme Council would hear the parties involved before making its decisions. Moreover the committees were argued as having an "ad hoc"-nature: they had to deal with different problems whenever a claim or a memorandum arrived at the conference.⁵¹

From the American representatives, Johnson said that he knew the suggestions made by the committees would probably go through in the Supreme Council. Seymour defended the honest purpose of the committees in a pursuit for the best possible results and said he had hoped, that the suggestions would be accepted. On the other hand the members met with a "fait accompli": the rough division of territory was already made on the local level by military means and declarations of independence. It was only a question of defining the accurate boundaries.⁵² Moreover Wilson had assured the specialists that the Supreme Council would approve anything the committee would agree upon⁵³. Anyway, despite the wishes of the American members of the committees, the boundaries were often drawn according to economic and strategic demands, not ethnic criteria.

⁵⁰ Deák, 48; Spector, 123

⁵¹ Nicolson, 117, 126–128; Walworth, Arthur, Wilson and His Peacemakers. American Diplomacy at the Paris Peace Conference. New York 1986, 104

⁵² Seymour 1921, 88, 99–101, 105. According to the British member of the commission Sir Eyre Crowe and an unknown French representative the frontier should have been drawn always to the disadvantage of Hungary, that is, the enemy, when there was a disputed problem. Deák, 53

⁵³ Seymour, Charles (ed.), The Intimate Papers of Colonel House. Volume IV: The Ending of the War. Cambridge, Mass. 1928, 274–275

The Hungarian Soviet Republic and the Territorial Problem

Despite the reluctance of the Supreme Council to modify the Belgrade armistice, the Romanian troops, with the approval of the local French military command, advanced westward to the Hungarian Plain. At the request of the Supreme Council the territorial committee discussed the Hungarian situation on 17. February. It was decided that there should be established a neutral demarcation line between the Romanians and the Hungarians: the Romanians should not be allowed to trespass the Szatmárnémeti–Nagykároly–Nagyvárad–Arad railway line. It was also prohibited to occupy the aforementioned towns. This line corresponded approximately to the borderline suggested by the American specialists. The Hungarians should have stayed behind the line of Vásárosnamény-the confluence of Körös (Cris)-rivers and on the eastern side of the Algyő-river. This line was somewhat west of the Bucharest treaty line. The area between was to be occupied by Allied troops and the demarcation lines should have had nothing to do with the political frontier to-be.⁵⁴ The French demanded for the Romanians a right to occupy the whole railway line, in order to secure transportation routes for the Foch-intervention plan. Day and Seymour tried to oppose the suggestion, but finally agreed to the French demands.⁵⁵ The issue was given to the Supreme Council on 21. February.

Among the supporters of the anti-Bolshevik intervention were the French military command and the British war minister Winston Churchill. Wilson was visiting the United States 15. February–17. March but Lansing – as the leader of the American peace negotiating commission-opposed sending new troops to eastern Europe.⁵⁶ The Supreme Council gave the whole affair to their military advisers for further examination.

The military advisors listened to the Romanian delegation-Vaida Voevod, Dimitrescu and general Coănda-before making their suggestion. It was agreed that the Romanians were allowed to use the railway centres to transport their troops, but they were not allowed to occupy the towns. At the same time the line on the Hungarian

⁵⁴ Temperley, H.M.W., *A History of the Peace Conference of Paris*. Part I. London 1920, 353; Spector, 104–105; Deák, 40–41

⁵⁵ Spector, 195; Deák, 43 and note

⁵⁶ Spector, 106

side was moved a little further to the west: now it was approximately five kilometres west from the treaty line of Bucharest.⁵⁷ The American military adviser general Bliss predicted, that the decision would cause trouble at the peace conference, but voted in favour for it anyway⁵⁸. The Supreme Council approved the decision on 26. February. The representatives of the United States were complaining about the pro-Romanian attitude of the French, but when the French general staff allowed the Romanians to occupy the above-mentioned railway centres, the Supreme Council approved the action.⁵⁹

On 5. March Brătianu demanded the right to occupy the counties of Arad, Bihar, Szatmár and Szilágy and the right to make requisitions in Hungary. The reason given for the latter was that while retreating, the German army had taken away from Romania various supplies, which were badly needed there. Foch demanded on 17. March the right to Romania to advance deep into Hungary, but Orlando, Lloyd George and Wilson opposed the plan. Later Foch managed to get more supplies to Romania.⁶⁰

According to the decision of the Supreme Council of 26. February the leader of the French military mission in Budapest, Lieutenant Vix, got the task of giving the Hungarian government the new lines of demarcation. On 20. March Károlyi received the note but the Hungarian leader could not accept any more occupation of Hungarian territory: no Hungarian government could stay in power after accepting such a note he claimed. In fact Károlyi had already given up his hope in Wilson but Hungary was still too weak

⁵⁷ Deák, 43

⁵⁸ Palmer, Frederick. Bliss, Peacemaker. The Life and Letters of General Tasker Howard Bliss. New York 1934, 378

⁵⁹ Spector, 110

⁶⁰ FRUS. PPC IV. Washington 1943. Notes of the meeting of the Council of Four 17. March 1919, 379–385; Mantoux, Paul, The Deliberations of the Council of Four (March 24–June 28). Notes of the Official Interpreter. Part I: To the Delivery to the German Delegation of the Preliminaries of Peace. Supplementary Volume to the Papers of Woodrow Wilson. Ed. by Arthur S. Link.(Mantoux I). New Jersey 1992. The notes of the meeting of the Council of Four 25. March, 12–13

to oppose the advancing Romanians⁶¹. The note contradicted the armistice of Belgrade, which was the official reason for turning it down. After this Károlyi gave up the governmental power and a Bolshevik-ruled soviet, which was led by Béla Kun took over the government. The soviet government wanted to save the territorial integrity of Hungary as well. When there was no help to be expected from the West, they now turned to Soviet-Russia⁶².

As a result of this crisis the former Supreme Council, the Council of Ten, was divided, and instead of it the Council of Four (Clemenceau, Lloyd George, Wilson and Orlando) continued as the Supreme Council.⁶³ The other half of the council continued its work as the Council of Foreign Ministers, which dealt with issues of smaller importance.⁶⁴

The Coolidge mission arrived in Paris at the end of March to make a report to the commission to negotiate peace. The mission's view was that the Romanians should retreat from Körösvidék and Hungary should be given the Szekler districts, Máramaros and the parts of the Bánát inhabited by the Swabian Germans. Captain Nicholas Roosevelt of the mission suggested autonomy for Transylvania under Romanian rule or that at least the position of the Szeklers should be secured.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Pastor, Peter, Mihály Károlyi and Revolutionary Defence, 1918–1919. In: East Central War Leaders: Civilian and Military. Ed. by Béla K. Király and Albert A. Nofi. Boulder 1988, 89–91; Walworth, 221

⁶² Rothschild, Joseph, East-Central Europe Between the Wars. USA 1988, 145–146

⁶³ Low, Alfred D., The Soviet Hungarian Republic and the Paris Peace Conference. Transactions of the American Philosophical Society. New Series. Vol. 53, part 10. Philadelphia 1963, 43

⁶⁴ Lansing later criticised Wilson's decision to dissolve the Council of Ten. According to him this decision led to even more intrigues and hiding of information. In fact Wilson himself was now to blame for the secret diplomacy, which he criticised earlier. Lansing 1921, 190–194, 209. The secrecy and decision-making in a small circle alienated the representatives of the smaller countries from Wilson, whom they had earlier regarded as their protector. Lansing 1921, 195; Lansing 1922, 70–73, 89

⁶⁵ FRUS. PPC. Volume XII. Coolidge to the American Commission to Negotiate Peace. Vienna 13. March. 1919. Appendix: Roosevelt to Coolidge 12.3. 1919, 406; *Ibid.*, The memorandum of A.C. Coolidge 10. March 1919, 272–276

After the Bolshevik coup Hungary suddenly became the most burning issue of the Conference. It was debated whether the Bolshevik government should be tolerated or not. Wilson was against intervention and using American troops in the area: "He [Marshall Foch – T.O.] speaks to us about "cleansing" Hungary, which is to say crushing Hungarian Bolshevism. If this bolshevism remains within its own borders that is not our concern."⁶⁶ In fact the president held the Romanian expansion as the reason for the Hungarian chaos and behind the expansion he saw the French war-and foreign ministries. It was partly the guilt felt from the Vix-note and the resulting Bolshevik revolution that made Wilson and the Supreme Council take a "soft" attitude in regard to the Bolshevik government⁶⁷.

The American representatives had accepted the Vix-note in the territorial commission, Supreme Council and the council of the military advisers. Still General Bliss began to criticise the demarcation line harshly. According to him the line was completely on Hungarian territory and it should be moved to Romanian territory in order to keep the aggressor in check. The ultimate danger in the new line was a new war, possibly with Russia, which would involve American troops, because all the other countries were war-weary. The whole scheme was the fault of Marshall Foch and the French war-and foreign ministries and their hegemony-plans in eastern Europe. If the United States should take part in deciding the boundaries of former Austria-Hungary, it should demand cancelling the decision of 26. February and uphold the Belgrade armistice. The Romanians should return to their own territory and Hungary should be offered a peace treaty according to the Fourteen Points and Wilson's subsequent declarations.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Mantoux I. The notes of the meeting of the Council of Four 27 March 1919, 47–48

⁶⁷ Gardner, Lloyd C., *Safe for Democracy. The Anglo-American Response to Revolution, 1913–1923*. New York 1984, 244; Baker, Ray Stannard, *Woodrow Wilson and the World Settlement*. Written from his unpublished and personal material. Volume II. New York 1923, 29–30; Walworth, 224

⁶⁸ Baker, Ray Stannard, *Woodrow Wilson and the World Settlement*. Volume II. New York 1923, 30 and Vol III. New York 1923, appendix: Document 26. Bliss' letter to Wilson. Paris 27. March 1919 and appendices: two memoranda, 238–245

Kun informed the Peace Conference, that the Belgrade armistice was from Hungary's point of view still valid, the Vix-note had changed nothing. The Bolsheviks were ready to approve national self-determination, it did not contradict with Hungary's territorial integrity.⁶⁹ To clear out the situation in Hungary the Supreme Council sent a delegation headed by South-African General Smuts to Budapest. Smuts informed Kun on 4. April that the demarcation line was not a political frontier. Kun argued that the frontier-question was of such importance to the Magyars, that no government could accept the Vix-note and survive. Moreover, the Hungarian troops situated against the Romanians were Szeklers, who would disapprove that their homeland would become a part of Romania and would not obey a command to retreat. Kun repeated that he agreed to the principle of national self-determination and said that food was more important than territorial integrity: Hungary was ready to discuss its frontiers with its neighbours. Smuts advised the peace conference to open talks with the Bolsheviks, although Kun and his government rejected Smuts' suggestion of a new demarcation line, more favourable to Hungary.⁷⁰

Lloyd George was in favour of calling the Hungarians to Paris in the beginning of May. Wilson on the other hand warned that the invitation of the Bolsheviks would mean recognising the Kun-government de facto. This meant a risk, as people would think that the peace conference was discussing with Soviet-Russia as well. According to the president it was possible to decide the frontiers of Hungary without consulting the Hungarians. The British prime minister insisted on inviting Kun and finally Wilson admitted that this action would stabilise the Budapest government and the situation in the whole country.⁷¹

In the meantime the Romanian frontiers passed through the Council of Foreign Ministers. Lansing expressed doubt in leaving

⁶⁹ FRUS. PPC. Volume V. Washington 1946. Notes of the meeting of the Council of Four 30. March 1919. Appendix: Memorandum to Prince Borghese, 18

⁷⁰ Ibid., Notes of the meeting of the Council of Four 7. April 1919. Appendix General Smuts to Balfour. Telegram. Budapest 4. April 1919, 41 and Smuts to Balfour 8. April 1919, 62

⁷¹ Ibid., Notes of the meeting of the Council of Four 30. April 1919, 368

(according to him) 600 000 Hungarians under Romanian rule, but when Tardieu explained the strategic necessities of the decision the Secretary of State withdrew his criticism and the borders were accepted on 8. May.⁷² The Supreme Council approved the frontiers on 12. May and considered the frontiers of Austria and Italy as more problematic.

On 16. April the Romanian forces started an offensive and swiftly reached the Tisza, crossing it on 1. May. The Czechoslovak troops joined the attack on 18. May, but their advance was stopped by the Hungarian Red army, which penetrated to Slovakia.

The Conflict between Romania and the United States

A new problem in the relations between Romania and the Great Powers, and especially between Brătianu and Wilson⁷³, emerged with the making of the Austrian peace treaty. At least a part of the Austrian Bukovina was to be ceded to Romania, but one of the clauses of the planned treaty obliged Romania, as well as Poland and other beneficiary states, to secure the rights of the national minorities in the areas of former Austria. In addition, there were plans for separate minorities treaties. Wilson saw the protection of the minorities as vital for maintaining peace. Brătianu on the other hand strictly opposed the treaties as they would restrict Romania's sovereignty, especially when the Great Powers did not have to take similar obligations as the smaller states.⁷⁴

The Council of Foreign Ministers gave an audience to Brătianu on 11. June. The prime minister reclaimed that he could not approve the new frontiers of Romania. He demanded particularly the areas between Csap and Nagykároly and Nagyvárad and Szeged: Roma-

⁷² Ormos, 201; Low, 61

⁷³ Wilson personally did not like Brătianu and did not want to meet him during the spring of 1919. Walworth, 102; Bonsal, Stephen, *Suitors and Suppliants. The Little Nations at Versailles*. New York 1946, 169

⁷⁴ FRUS. PPC III. Peace Conference, Protocol No. 8, Plenary Session of May 31, 1919, 406–409; The attempt to limit Romania's sovereignty and to interfere in its inner affairs for political and economical reasons has been regarded as the ultimate reason in the policy of the Great Powers towards Romania at the peace conference later on as well. Oprea, Ion M., „Les Rapports entre les Grandes Puissances et la Roumanie á la Conférence de la Paix de Paris (1919–1920)”. *Revue Roumaine d'Histoire*. Tome XX, No 2 avril-juin 1981, 319

nia had to get the whole railway line. Between Nagyvárad and Nagykároly the frontier was according to the premier strategically too close (2-3 kilometres) to the railway. Because Romania was not informed earlier of the frontiers Brătianu demanded ten to twelve days to consult with his government on the frontiers. Lansing was of the opinion that the frontiers should not be changed anymore.⁷⁵

Wilson and Lloyd George demanded on 12. June that Brătianu should either accept the new frontiers or leave the conference. At the same time the statesmen suggested inviting Kun to Paris. Clemenceau opposed the idea and thought it would be better to send a new mission to Budapest to examine the situation and to make a new armistice. Wilson added that if Romania would not withdraw, the Allies should not accept the new frontiers of Romania as Allies could not fight in support of an unjust frontier. If Romania would not submit, it should not be regarded as an ally anymore.⁷⁶

Clemenceau had demanded on 7. June that all the warring parties should cease hostilities and the Supreme Council declared that the boundaries were now set and that they were clear. No force could alter them. According to the plan made by Balfour and modified by Bliss, Hungary should retreat its troops from Slovakia until the 18. June and Romania should retreat behind the new frontier from Hungary. A note containing this information was sent to all three governments on 13. June.⁷⁷ In the note to Romania was written that the declared frontiers would be valid until the peace conference would make the final decisions.⁷⁸ In other words, the note gave a hint of possible later revisions.

The declared frontiers were published in the newspapers on 14. June and on 16. June they were known in Bucharest, where they

⁷⁵ Spector, 151; FRUS. PPC IV. Notes of the meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers 11. June 1919, 821-824

⁷⁶ Mantoux . Part II. New Jersey 1992. Notes of the Meeting of the Council of Four 12. June. 1919, 419-420; Ibid., Notes of the Meeting of the Council of Four 13. June 1919, 444-445

⁷⁷ According to Temperley the Hungarian frontiers were thus set on 13. June 1919. Temperley IV. London 1921, 130. In Transylvania the situation really was so, but in western Hungary, or Burgenland, there were later on alterations through a referendum.

⁷⁸ FRUS. PPC VI. Notes of the meeting of the Council of Four. 13. June 1919, 399, 411-416

were received with disappointment. Among the opponents of the new frontiers were included the opposition leader, Take Ionescu, and the Transylvanian leader Iuliu Maniu, who declared, that he would not be ready to join a government that would accept anything less than the Romanian maximum (i.e. Bucharest Treaty) demands.⁷⁹

On the other hand neither did Kun approve of the boundaries. Instead he suggested a meeting in Vienna, where the partition of Austria-Hungary would be discussed. Lloyd George suggested that Paris could be the place of the meeting, but Wilson and Sonnino rejected the idea. Wilson thought that Kun had obeyed the Peace Conference and that his government should now be recognised, but the other statesmen were less inclined to this action. Bliss reported that Hungary had withdrawn from Slovakia, but Romania had not retreated from the Tisza and now Hungary was concentrating troops against the Romanians. Bliss recommended that both parties had to retreat simultaneously immediately.⁸⁰

At the same time the nearing completion of the Versailles Treaty with Germany drew more interest from the leading statesmen. After the signature of the treaty at the end of June Lloyd George, Wilson and Orlando left Paris. The seat of Wilson at the Supreme Council was inherited by the former Acting Secretary of State Polk, while Lansing continued in the Council of Foreign Ministers. Before the heads of states left the conference, they approved on 21. June the suggestions of the Romanian territorial committee for solving the Bukovina and Bánát issues. At the request of the United States the fate of the northern part of Bukovina was still left unsettled and the Bánát was divided between Serbia and Romania in a way that did not satisfy either one of the claimants.⁸¹

Disagreeing with the Allies because of the minorities treaty and the new borders of Romania, Brătianu left Paris on 4. July and threatened to resign from government. Wilson returned to his homeland as well and gave his own opinion of the creation of the Romanian frontiers:

⁷⁹ Spector, 152

⁸⁰ FRUS. PPC VI. Notes of the meeting of the Council of Four 16. June 1919, 518–520

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, Notes of the meeting of the Council of Four 21. June 1919, 591–593

"...great populations bounded by sympathy and actual kin to Rumania were also linked against their will to the conglomerate Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, or to other alien sovereignties, and it was part of the task of peace to make a new Rumania... no natural frontiers could be found for these new fields of adjustment and redemption. It was necessary to look constantly forward to other related tasks."⁸²

During July the Peace Conference still debated whether an armed intervention into Hungary should be made and if so, with which troops. General Bliss did not support an intervention and held his view that the Belgrade armistice had been violated by Romania.⁸³ Herbert Hoover, the leader of the American Relief Administration, was on the other hand in favour of keeping the embargo against Hungary and started advocating ousting Kun by appealing to Hungarian popular opinion. The American mission in Austria and Hungary advocated sending a limited French force to Hungary, but not occupying the whole country.⁸⁴

The events took their own course as the Hungarian Red Army launched an attack against the Romanians in the middle of July. The Romanian army however defeated the Hungarians and reached Budapest with their counter-attack on 4. August. In Budapest the Kun government was succeeded by the Peidl trade union government, which was ousted by a coup d'état by István Friedrich and Archduke Joseph, a member of the Habsburg family. Although the Supreme Council disapproved of the Romanian advance to Budapest it now allowed the Romanian occupation and attempted to regulate it instead. The United States advocated a firmer attitude against Ro-

⁸² Baker, Ray Stannard and William E. Dodd (ed.), *War and Peace*. Vol. II. *Presidential Messages, Addresses and Public Papers (1917-1924)* by Woodrow Wilson. New York 1927. The Presidents speech in the Senate 10. July 1919, 542; In the same speech Wilson described Hungary as being a "new nation" among the other new nations in the area.

⁸³ Palmer, 407-498; FRUS. PPC VII. Notes of the meeting of the Heads of Delegations 17. July 1919, 179-182

⁸⁴ FRUS. PPC VII. Washington 1946. Notes of the meeting of the Heads of Delegations 18. July 1919, 198-200; FRUS. PPC XI. Washington 1947. Notes of the meeting of the Commissioners Plenipotentiary 18. July 1919, 312-322

mania: Hoover demanded an immediate withdrawal⁸⁵. Polk was the first one in the peace conference to question the requisitioning and plundering that the Romanians were doing in Hungary. He warned the Romanian delegate Misu, that if the events in Budapest raised the American popular opinion against Romania, the United States would cease to support the country.⁸⁶

In July, the Supreme Council had decided to send an Inter-Allied Military Mission to Budapest. One task of the mission was to announce that the frontiers were now definitely drawn. The mission reported repeatedly of the Romanian requisitions in Hungary, but was powerless to do anything else than to protest against the excesses. In the Supreme Council, Polk demanded that Romania should be cut off from all military aid and that its status as an ally should be taken away. The Supreme Council decided, however, to send warning notes with a mild wording to Romania.⁸⁷ The Council also refused to deal with a Habsburg-led government in Hungary, which was supposed to be in power due to Romanian help.⁸⁸

On 13. August the Supreme Council got information about Brătianu's conditions for a separate armistice with Hungary. Romania was demanding an economically harsh peace and in addition to former demands all the area east to the Tisza and the county of Békés and the Bánát. Earlier Polk had strongly opposed a separate peace between Hungary and Romania, but these new demands infuriated Clemenceau as well. Now Polk demanded the withdrawal of Allied support from the Romanian claims to Transylvania and the Bánát.⁸⁹ However Brătianu's answer to the preceding warning note satisfied the Council and no measures were thus taken. The Allies

⁸⁵ Hoover, Herbert, *The Ordeal of Woodrow Wilson*. USA 1958, 137; FRUS. PPC VII. Notes of the meeting of the Heads of Delegations 2. August 1919, 480, 490; *Ibid.* The notes of the meeting of the Heads of Delegations 5. August 1919, 529

⁸⁶ FRUS. PPC VII. Notes of the meeting of the Heads of Delegations 4. August 1919, 509

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, Notes of the meeting of the Heads of Delegations 6. August 1919, 548; *Ibid.* Notes of the meeting of the Heads of Delegations 7.8. 1919, 603–607

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 677–679

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, Notes of the meeting of the Heads of Delegations 6. August 1919, 548; *Ibid.*, Notes of the meeting of the Heads of Delegations 13. August 1919, 681–682

preferred a Romanian occupation against the threat of bolshevism or a Hungarian civil war.⁹⁰

The continuing requisitions by the Romanians gave reason for new notes from the Supreme Council to Romania, which all ended with no results. Polk, supported by Balfour, but opposed by the Italian delegate Tittoni and Clemenceau, was even ready to send an American naval unit to the Black Sea to threaten Romania.⁹¹ This was the closest the Americans came to using any military force in the area. Any larger involvement in the area by force of arms both during the Romanian advance and its occupation of Hungary would have been likely to raise strong opposition in the United States⁹². The Americans, like the other Great Powers, were eager to demobilise their war – weary troops.

On the other hand, the French, who wanted to build a "Cordon Sanitaire"-a block of smaller states allied with France against Bolshevik Russia and Germany-were not willing to threaten or weaken Romania. Especially because the United States seemed now to lack the will to support France against Germany and Russia as a balancing force against Germany had disappeared, the importance of smaller allies, Romania among them, grew in French policy .

As Romania did not withdraw from Hungary, new notes were sent to Bucharest. Brătianu claimed in the beginning of September that he had not received the notes from the Peace Conference. As an answer, Polk demanded that the Allies should withdraw their representatives from Bucharest, but Clemenceau advised sending a delegate to Romania instead, and Sir George Clerk was appointed to the task. Meanwhile the Romanian government tended to view the United States as being against their cause.⁹³ In the meeting of the American delegates, Polk mentioned the idea of withdrawing American support to Romanian claims to Transylvania and the denial to accept the Romanian annexation of Bessarabia. The other

⁹⁰ Spector, 177

⁹¹ FRUS. PPC VIII. Notes of the meeting of the Heads of Delegations 2. September 1919, 58–60

⁹² Adler, Selig, *The Uncertain Giant: 1921–1941. American Foreign Policy Between the Wars*. New York 1965, 6–7

⁹³ FRUS. PPC VIII. Notes of the meeting of the Heads of Delegations 3. September 1919, 77–79; *Ibid.* Notes of the meeting of the Heads of Delegations 4. September 1919, 98–101

delegates however viewed the idea as unpractical, because Great Britain, Italy and France did not support it.⁹⁴ On the other hand, the Americans had to be careful because of their economic interests in Romania: Romanian oil and the status of Standard Oil in Romania had to be considered. In fact Brătianu used the oil-monopoly negotiations, which were going on at the same time, as a political weapon, making the British, the French and the Americans compete with one another to get better oil privileges.⁹⁵

The phraseology of the note given by Clerk to the Romanian government, demanding withdrawal from Hungary and the returning of the property taken from Hungary, was stronger than in the preceding notes. Instead of accepting the note, Brătianu told Clerk that Romania demanded the confluence of the Máros-river and the Tisza (in the county of Csanád) and the railway-junction of Békéscsaba, because of economic and strategic reasons. If the Peace Conference would not accept the demands, Romania would leave Hungary in chaos.⁹⁶ As a result of the note from Clerk, Brătianu resigned, and after two weeks he was followed by a government led by Vaitoianu.

Polk and Bliss, and the American member in the inter-Allied military mission to Hungary, General Bandholtz, were becoming increasingly anti-Romanian in their attitudes. Bliss demanded all rights to be taken away from the Romanians in the forthcoming peace, and that America should leave all its obligations in Paris. The Americans were especially enraged by the Romanian attempt to take a part of the items in the National Museum in Budapest, an attempt foiled by Bandholtz.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ FRUS. PPC XI. Notes of the meeting of the Commissioners Plenipotentiary 2. September 1919, 406–407

⁹⁵ Walworth, 101,455

⁹⁶ FRUS. PPC VIII. Washington 1946. The report of Sir George Clerk to the peace conference 7. October 1919, 563–565

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, The report of the Inter Allied Military Mission to Hungary to Supreme Council of the Peace Conference. Budapest 13. October 1919, 678–679; FRUS. PPC XII. Bandholtz to the American Commission to Negotiate Peace. Budapest 6. October 1919, 698; Bandholtz, Harry Hill, *An Undiplomatic Diary By the American Member of the inter-Allied Military Mission To Hungary 1919–1920*. Edited by Fritz-Konrad Krüger. Portland 1933, 79, 136–138

The Americans were however getting anxious to leave Paris. The peace with Germany was already made; the peace with Austria was only lacking the signatures; and the peace treaties with Bulgaria and Turkey were almost ready. The peace treaty with Hungary was also ready, but the attitude of Romania was the obstacle for making the peace. The Commission of the United States made a plan, approved by Lansing, to make separate protocols where the Hungarian territorial losses to its neighbours were accepted.⁹⁸ The Supreme Council objected to the suggestion and preferred to make a general peace with Romania as a participant.

On 4. November 1919 the Romanians started to withdraw from Budapest and on the same day admiral Horthy led an army he had established in occupation-free western Hungary to Budapest. Romanian troops stayed at the Tisza and Vaitoianu finally answered the note from the Supreme Council on 12. November, but he did not comply to the Council's demands.⁹⁹ One reason for the non-compliance of the Romanian government was that the ministers of the Great Powers in Bucharest did not act very strictly in front of the government and advocated in general a more positive attitude towards the Romanians. This led Polk to call Vopicka, the American Minister to Bucharest, to Paris to explain his pro-Romanian behaviour and as a lesson the minister was detained for a while.¹⁰⁰ This led the British, the Americans and even Clemenceau to demand breaking diplomatic ties with Romania. Polk demanded again denying Romania's right to Transylvania, but the British delegate, Sir Eyre Crowe, said this would require the occupation of the area by Allied troops, and there were none at their disposal. Polk argued that the denial would have a moral effect anyway. France and Italy were however not ready to support this demand and it was decided to send one more note to Romania, but this time with a deadline for

⁹⁸ FRUS. PPC XI. Washington 1946. The American Commission to Negotiate Peace to Lansing 9. October 1919, 652

⁹⁹ FRUS. PPC IX. The answer from the Romanian government to the note from the Supreme Council 12. October, 136-137

¹⁰⁰ Spector, 191; FRUS. PPC IX. Washington 19147. The notes of the meeting of the Heads of Delegations 3. December 1919, 460; Vopicka was also suspected from bribery in connection with weapons-importing to Romania. NA: Microcopy 1198. Roll 6. 871.24/53. Assistant Attorney General Leakey to Lansing. Washington 17. April 1919.

the answer. Romania was required to withdraw to the new border, to sign the Austrian peace treaty and the minorities treaty and to admit the right of a commission to investigate Romanian requisitions in Hungary. If Romania would not agree, it would not be considered an ally anymore and diplomatic relations would be severed.¹⁰¹ Finally the new Bucharest cabinet of Vaida Voevod decided to agree to the ultimatum and so the issue of using territorial questions as a form of pressure against Romania was not important anymore.

Because the Congress of the United States was opposing the ratification of the Versailles Treaty, which meant a severe setback for Wilson, the possibilities of the American diplomats to influence the decisions of the Conference were getting smaller. The Department of State wanted to withdraw the American delegation from the Peace Conference as early as possible, but Polk wanted to stay in Paris at least so long, until the problem with Romania was solved¹⁰². When Romania decided to adhere to the demands of the Supreme Council, there was no reason to stay in Paris any longer and so on the same day, 9. December 1919, when the United States signed the minorities treaty, the delegation of the United States left France. Romania signed the treaty, which promised autonomy for the Szeklers and Saxons of Transylvania, the following day.

Ambassador Wallace remained at the Conference as the representative of the United States, although he was instructed to be only an observer at the meetings, not taking part in the decision-making¹⁰³. In practice this meant that the United States had no say in the Conference anymore after the beginning of December.

The Hungarian Search for Support

In Hungary Archduke Joseph had resigned from his post as a regent on 23. August and István Friedrich resigned on 16. November. The new prime minister, Karl Huszár, held up Hungary's right to get back Transylvania, the Bánát and Máramaros and there was

¹⁰¹ FRUS. PPC IX., The notes of the meeting of the Heads of Delegations 12. November 1919, 124–128

¹⁰² FRUS 1919. Volume I. Washington 1934. The American Commission to Negotiate Peace to Lansing, Paris 30. November 1919, 25

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, Lansing to the Ambassador of the United States to France (Wallace). Washington 8. December 1919, 28

hope, that Wilson's Fourteen Points were still valid. For example Count Albert Apponyi, who had earlier on been strict in regard to the nationality policy in Hungary, wrote a booklet with the title "Hungary and the American Peace" (Budapest 1919), where he advocated a peace based on Wilson's principles and liberal rights to the nationalities of Hungary. Hungary was called to the Conference in November and its delegation arrived in Paris in January. The delegation had prepared its suggestions thoroughly: according to it Hungary should stay as it was before the war, because it formed a historical and an economical unity. In regard to Transylvania the delegation claimed that the cultural superiority of the Hungarians over Romanians would secure a better government in the area under Hungarian rule. The nationalities problem would be solved with wide autonomy and the wishes of the local population should be heard; popular referendums were demanded.¹⁰⁴

The leader of the delegation, Apponyi, wanted soon after his arrival to know the status of the United States in the Conference and to establish contacts with the country.¹⁰⁵ The Hungarians were also instructed by the British lord Bryce to search for American support on the Transylvanian question, because the country had not tied its hands with the Versailles Treaty¹⁰⁶. But, as mentioned, the United States had little power in the Conference anymore. Instead of America, Hungary tried to find help from the British and then from France, which, after a change in government seemed to be willing to modify the peace treaty. This attempt proved to be futile during the year 1920.

The second refusal of the Senate to ratify the Versailles Treaty in March meant that America was going to stay out of the peace-treaties system of Europe. This meant that United States did not sign

¹⁰⁴ Les Négociations de la Paix Hongroise. Compte Rendu sur les Travaux de la délégation de Paix de Hongrie A Neuilly s/s Janvier a Mars 1920. Tome I Budapest 1920.(Négociations I). The leader of the delegation Apponyi's introductory speech (Note II: Note de présentation). Neuilly 14. January 1920, 5, 6: Ibid., Note VIII (Sur la question Transylvanie), 136-137, 142-144, 147

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., Apponyi to Clemenceau. Neuilly 14. January 1920, 322; Négociations. Tome II. Budapest 1921. Apponyi to Clemenceau. Neuilly 14. January 1920, 471

¹⁰⁶ Papers and Documents Relating to the Foreign Relations of Hungary. Edited by Francis Deák and Dezső Ujváry. Volume I 1919-1920. Budapest 1939. The Political Diary of the Hungarian Peace Delegation 14. January 1920, 859

the Peace Treaty of Trianon on 4. June 1920, in which Hungary lost historical Transylvania and adjacent territories according to the decision of the Supreme Council from 13. June 1919.

Not signing the peace meant that the United States stayed *de jure* at war with Hungary until it signed a separate peace with the country in August 1921. This treaty secured to America the same rights as the Trianon treaty would have done, without the obligations of the Versailles and Trianon treaties. On territorial questions the United States declared its disinterest. In practice Transylvania was regarded as a part of Romania, although the Hungarian politicians tried to make the best out of the American disinterest to territorial questions, interpreting it as a critique against Trianon¹⁰⁷. On the other hand some of the Hungarian intellectuals felt bitterness because Wilson's principles were not followed at the Paris Peace Conference. Still, because nothing of these principles was mentioned at the armistices there was at least no legal obligation to follow them.¹⁰⁸ One other point of view from the Hungarian side, expressed for example by the long-ruling prime minister István Bethlen, was that the Wilsonian principles were followed in Paris, but that they were too simple to work in an ethnically and culturally diverse area like the former Habsburg monarchy.¹⁰⁹

Conclusions

During World War I Transylvania was a question of small importance to the United States. It was simply a link in a chain of territorial questions that caused unrest in Europe. As far as there was a possibility of a separate peace with Austria-Hungary the Americans refused to partition the empire. When it became obvious that this was not possible the United States was willing to give parts

¹⁰⁷ NA: Records of the Department of State Relating to Relations Between Austria-Hungary and Hungary and the United States. Microcopy M709. Roll 1. 711.64119/36. The Minister of the United States to Hungary (Grant Smith) to the Secretary of State (Charles E. Hughes). Budapest 14. December 1921. Horváth, Eugene, *Diplomatical History of the Treaty of Trianon*. In: Albert Apponyi (ed.), *Justice for Hungary. Review and Criticism of the Effect of the Treaty of Trianon*. London 1928, 113

¹⁰⁸ Temperley 1928, 431–434

¹⁰⁹ Bethlen, (Count) Stephen, *The Treaty of Trianon and European Peace*. Four Lectures Delivered in London in November 1933. London 1934, 96

of Hungary to its neighbours. However the support of the United States to the Romanian claim for Transylvania came later than the support for Yugoslavian and Czechoslovak demands, in part because Romania had made a separate peace with the Central Powers and in part because the signs that the Romanian population of Hungary wanted to join Romania were unknown in the United States until the autumn of 1918. Nor did the Romanians claim this openly before the assembly of Gyulafehérvár.

The size of the area to be allotted to Romania evolved into a bargaining at the Peace Conference. The United States supported a boundary more to the east than the other Great Powers, but it consented to mainly French pressure on many points and ultimately supported a larger Romania. Only concerning minor issues did the American delegates manage to bring about a more favourable solution for Hungary.

What happened to the Wilsonian principles? For example the local population was not given a chance to give its consent to the territorial changes. In this way the Transylvanian question was not much different from many of the other territorial questions dealt with at the Paris Peace talks. A basic problem of the principles was the definition of the terms themselves: what was meant with "national self determination" and how should it have been established? Lansing noticed the problems involved in using simple slogans, which would raise the hopes of different groups and lead to political unrest. The different interpretations of Wilson's ideas made it possible that both the Romanian government and Károlyi thought they were entitled to the support of the United States in the winter 1918–1919. It was November 1918, when America still had troops in Europe and the war was won thanks to U.S. help, that marks the peak of American influence in the question. The disputed areas were later on occupied by the claimants, in the case of Transylvania by Romania. This proved to be a "fait accompli" to the Great Powers: the occupiers would probably have withdrawn from the areas only under military pressure and the Great Powers had no interest in getting into an armed conflict with the new or enlarged states, especially on the side of a former enemy. In the American case this would most likely have raised strong opposition at the home front.

It might also be answered that Wilson's principles met with serious practical problems: there was no possibility, no troops and

no money to organise a referendum on such a vast area like Transylvania. On the other hand there was the problem of neutral control of the referendum and the selection of the "disinterested observer"¹¹⁰. Moreover, the electoral traditions of the area, which excluded the large majority of the population from voting and the methods with which post-war elections were carried out under Romanian rule, were not the best foundation to produce results reflecting the people's will.

The other aspect of the question is that Wilson probably believed that his principles were applied. In part they were followed: the Romanian population was the majority in the area as a whole and according to the ethnic principle it was natural that they should become a part of Romania, at least if they wanted to. In these questions Wilson was willing to trust his experts.

According to the president the problem of the national minorities would have been solved with minorities treaties, which would have secured the rights of ethnic groups. These treaties formed a part of the League of Nations system – a system which would, Wilson hoped, later make the petty territorial quarrels anachronistic. This unfortunately did not happen and the territorial questions which remained open, one of them being Transylvania, gave Hitler a tool with which he could manipulate the area for Nazi-Germany's purposes in the World War II. Still the minorities-and nationalities-problem has remained a burning political issue in present day Transylvania as well as in other parts of the old Habsburg empire, with its most tragic consequences manifesting themselves in the former Yugoslavia.

¹¹⁰ Temperley, H.M.W., *A History of the Peace Conference of Paris. Part VI.* London 1924, 557–558; Temperley 1928, 407