

AMERICAN WAR TIME POLICY PLANNING ON HUNGARY 1942–1946

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Three weeks after Pearl Harbor, on December 28, 1941, President Roosevelt approved the Department of State's setting up of the Advisory Committee on Post-War Foreign Policy. Its task was to work out the policies that would guide the U.S. in the postwar negotiation of peace. Though under other names, the Committee continued to function, in fact until the end of the war.

The accumulated material was deposited in the National Archives by the State Department in 1970. The collection was catalogued as the *Notter File*, and made available to researchers in 1974.¹ The purpose of this study is to present the various points of view that emerged in the course of the Advisory Committee's discussions of the future of Hungary and its place in the proposed "East-European Union".

1. The Composition of the Advisory Committee

The Advisory Committee first met on February 12, 1942. It included not just scholars and university professors, but also leading associates of the Department of State. The chairman of the Committee was Secretary of State Cordell Hull, its deputy-chairman was Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles, while the person who actually ran the day-to-day workings of the Committee was Leo Pasvolsky (1893–1953), an economist of Russian descent, and one of Hull's advisers. The Advisory Committee spent its first meeting setting up six subcommittees, the most important of which were the Political Subcommittee and the Territorial Subcommittee. The former, whose sessions were generally chaired by either Hull or Welles, dealt with global and regional political issues. The latter, the Territorial Subcommittee, was charged with mapping the territorial and ethnic disputes of the world and suggesting border revisions that might eliminate or at least minimize these tensions.

The chairman of the Territorial Subcommittee, and one of the key figures of the Advisory Committee as a whole, was Isaiah Bowman (1878–1950) a

professor of geography. As president of the National Geographic Society from 1915 to 1935, Bowman had travelled the world over, his interest in geopolitics making him an avid student of international relations, his specialty at Johns Hopkins University after 1935. The other key figure of the Advisory Committee was Hamilton Fish Armstrong (1893–1973), the member of the above two subcommittees best versed in European affairs, and the editor of *Foreign Affairs*, the semi-official quarterly of the Department of State. Armstrong, whose job as editor since 1922 had gained him an extraordinary range of contacts, was particularly knowledgeable about Eastern Europe.

Other names that we come across in reading the minutes of the various subcommittee sessions as those of Adolf A. Berle (1895–1971), a lawyer and from 1938 Deputy Secretary of State; Anne O'Hare McCormick (1882–1954), foreign policy analyst of the *New York Times* and the first woman journalist to win the Pulitzer Prize; Herbert Feis (1893–1972), economist, economic consultant to the Department of State at the time, and later one of the best-known historians of the war and cold war years, and Cavendish W. Cannon (1895–1962), a career diplomat, and head of the State Department's Southeast European Section in 1944–1945.

The Advisory Committee and its various subcommittees had a research staff to help them in their work. By the summer of 1942, thirty graduate students who had just received their Ph.D. degrees 'or were just about to' were recruited specifically for this job. The research staff consisted of fifty-five people at the end of 1942, of ninety-six in mid-1943, and of seventy-seven when it was terminated in 1944. The de facto head of the research staff was a youngish career diplomat, Harley Notter (1903–1950). His lieutenant, and also the head of the group of research staffers working on territorial issues, was Philip E. Mosely (1905–1972), a Harvard graduate, and a specialist in East European history. In the early 1930's, Mosely, then a young teaching assistant, spent two years in the Soviet Union; the years 1935–36 saw him spend a number of months in the Balkans. It was at that time that he also visited Transylvania. Except for Armstrong, Mosely was the member of the Advisory Committee most familiar with the Danube region. Other members of the research staff working on Eastern Europe, and thus on Hungary, were Harry N. Howard (1902–1987), John C. Campbell (1911–). Cyril E. Black (1915–1969), and Thomas F. Power (1916–1988). All of them young historians at the start of their careers, in the postwar years they were to follow their boss, Philip E. Mosely, in making a name for themselves in the postwar decades as the chief East-European experts, Balkan experts and Kremlinologists of the United States.²

2. The "East-European Union" and Hungary

The idea of a confederation of "eastern", "east-central" or "central" European states—was first raised in the U.S. in the fall of 1918, once the fate of the Habsburg Monarchy was sealed. Once the U.S. delegation withdrew from the Paris peace talks at the end of 1919, however, and particularly after President Woodrow Wilson lost the 1921 election and isolationism became the order of the day, the idea was shelved, until Hitler's *Drang nach Osten* gave it a new urgency.

By 1942, the time the Advisory committee started its work, postwar economic and political cooperation between the countries of Eastern Europe was taken for granted, and it was only natural that the Political Subcommittee, in charge of regional planning, should give it considerable attention. Eight entire sessions were devoted to the matter in the spring and summer of 1942, and the issue was returned to periodically in 1943 and 1944. Of the concrete proposals discussed, four were considered particularly carefully: those of Wladislaw Sikorski, of Edvard Beneš, of Otto von Habsburg, and the plan jointly worked out by Tibor Eckhardt and János Pelényi. Sikorski, the head of the London-based Polish government-in-exile, advocated a loose, primarily economic confederation of all the states lying between the Baltic Sea and the Adriatic, and Germany and the Soviet Union. Beneš's idea, which enjoyed the support of a number of the exiled politicians of the countries concerned, was two confederations: a Balkan federation centering on Yugoslavia and Greece, and a Central European federation centering on Poland and Czechoslovakia. The Yugoslav-Greek pledge of cooperation of January 15, 1942, and the Polish-Czechoslovak agreement of January 19 of the same year seemed to have laid the groundwork for such a system. Archduke Otto's proposal was a Danubian federation of the lands of the former Habsburg Monarchy, one in which dynastic and national aspirations were reconciled in the spirit of the twentieth century. Though this never concretely specified, it was clear that he himself was to be the Habsburg at the helm of this federation. The Eckhardt-Pelényi proposal envisioned three loosely-knit federative units, the Balkan, the Polish-Baltic, and the Danubian—the last much like the Danubian Union envisioned by Archduke Otto, consisting of Austria, Hungary, Bohemia, Slovakia, Transylvania and perhaps Croatia.³

The Political Subcommittee examined the above proposals from two salient points of view: security and economic viability. The security consideration meant that they wanted the new federation to be proof against a possible German or Russian attack, and even a joint Russo-German aggression, as in 1939. The other main consideration, economic rationality, involved

establishing a unit of the size optimal for a domestic market, so that a functional economy might serve to alleviate some of the social tensions endemic to the region, and become the basis of a functioning democracy.

Both security and economic considerations argued for the Subcommittee's taking a stand for the largest and strongest units possible, already at its very first sitting. This ruled out the Eckhardt-Pelényi plan for a tripartite region, and also Archduke Otto's proposal, which had left out the Balkans and the Polish-Baltic Sea region. What remained was Sikorski's suggestion, and perhaps Beneš's.

Another point at issue in connection with the proposed federation was its precise nature and organization, i.e. the measure of autonomy the member states would retain, and the competence of the organs of central government. The majority on the Subcommittee agreed that given the legacy of national conflict and non-cooperation in the region, federation was, at best, a long-range goal; initially, what was realistic was a loose confederation of sorts. The issue arose as to how far it was necessary or feasible to carry economic cooperation over into the political sphere. Some of the members would have been content to see no more than a tariff and currency union for a start. Others insisted on the need for close political cooperation without political coordination.⁴

The Political Subcommittee dealt very little with the matter of borders, leaving it to the Territorial Subcommittee to do so. It did, however, declare that the confederation must aim to bring about "cohesive national groups", and that possibly, border adjustments would need to be made to this end. Furthermore, the creation of smaller national units than the ones existing at the time was not out of the question. The points on which the Political Subcommittee had reached a consensus as of June 19, 1942, were outlined in a few pages by the research staff, the gist of which reads as follows:

The regional organization should have the form not of a federation but of a union of independent and sovereign states, cooperating for limited objectives through common non-legislative institutions, loosely rather than tightly organized. Provisionally the union is considered as including all states of Central and Eastern Europe between Russia and Germany from and including Estonia on the North to Austria on the West and Greece on the South.⁵

The Political Subcommittee returned to the East-European Union issue at several sessions in late 1942 and early 1943. One reason for this was that they had "polled" the émigré politicians of the region, and had found little enthusiasm for a plan that wanted to see the entire region become one federal unit.

That a federation embracing the entire region would indeed, be problematic was the conclusion arrived at also by Notter, Mosley, and other members of the research staff. They concluded their analysis of February 10, 1943, by pointing out that an Eastern Europe spreading from Finland to Greece was illusory in the extreme: the areas involved looked back on no common history, were heterogeneous in respect of culture and religion, and, in fact, had absolutely nothing in common besides their backwardness and subjection to Germany. With no internal cohesion to bind it, they noted, it was very dubious if this test-tube baby of a federation would prove in any way viable. Notter and his group believed the federation would stand no real chance unless the victorious allies or some international body were to assume protectorate over it "for an indefinite period".⁶

The Political Subcommittee sought to bridge the chasm between its own recommendations and the reservations of the exiles and its own research staff by espousing, as of early 1943, also "a possible but less desirable alternative", a plan calling for two East European federations, a "Balkan" and a "northern" union. This, naturally raised other problems, such, for instance, as where Austria and Hungary were to belong, and even Croatia and Slovenia, in the absence of a Unified Yugoslavia. Since the "Danubian countries" as such belonged organically neither to the Balkan unit nor the Polish-Czech unit, a number of people began to toy with the idea of a South German-Austrian-Danubian unit, which, of course, was tantamount to the rehabilitation of the Eckhardt-Pelényi, and the Otto von Habsburg proposals. As of the summer of 1943, the Political Subcommittee was able to come up with no unanimous stand on this matter. After that, it no longer wanted to, for it would have been senseless to force a decision on a matter which, more and more obviously, would fall to the Soviet Union to decide on and not the United States or Great Britain.⁷

It was in December of 1941, on the occasion of Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden's visit to Moscow, that Stalin first informed his Western allies that one of the Soviet Union's goals is to restore the borders agreed in the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, in short, to reannex certain parts of Finland, the Baltic States, Eastern Poland, and Bessarabia. Stalin also mentioned that he regards Eastern Europe and the western half of Central Europe as likewise of immediate interest to the Soviet Union, and that it might be best to divide Europe in British and Soviet spheres of influence.⁸ The British and the Americans refused to sign a secret agreement as to the postwar territorial division of spoils, and publicly insisted that territorial disputes will be settled after the cessation of hostilities by a peace conference more fair-minded than the one of 1919-1920 had been. At the strictly confidential sittings of the

various peace preparatory committees, however, they were already discussing what of Stalin's demands might be acceptable.

By the end of 1943, U.S. diplomacy had more or less officially agreed to let Stalin have his way in Eastern Europe. In Teheran, Roosevelt agreed to have Poland "pushed" west, and agreed to the 1941 borders in the north and south as well. Somewhat earlier, Cordell Hull had told a fellow diplomat that he could, of course, go to Moscow to discuss the Baltic States and Poland's eastern borders, but in that case "he ought to take some of the U.S. Army and Navy with him".⁹ An expedition of this kind, however, was something that neither Hull nor Roosevelt, nor any other American political force of consequence wanted to see. For though the United States had its own version of the postwar Eastern Europe that would be desirable, it was not in its interest to use military force to achieve it. This conviction was clearly reflected in all the statements made by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Department of Defense in 1943-44. Repeatedly, these communiqués emphasized that the U.S. was not to get involved "in the area of the Balkans, including Austria", and that "the Balkans and their troubles were beyond the sphere of proper United States action".¹⁰

In the course of the Moscow and Teheran conferences, it became an accepted fact that Central and Eastern Europe were particularly significant from the point of view of Soviet security, and that this gave Moscow certain privileges. The question, as of the end of 1943, therefore, was not whether or not Europe would be divided, but how divided it would be, and where the line of demarcation would lie. This latter set of questions, however, was the wellspring of much animated debate in Washington throughout 1944.

The controversy produced two camps, the "cooperationists" and the "confrontationists". Walter Lippman, an influential political theorist was one leading spokesman of the cooperationists. As Lippman saw it, the time was past when the small states could feign independence, seesawing between sets of great powers all the while. The postwar world would consist of three, perhaps four, spheres of influence, and the small nations would have no choice but voluntarily submit to the directives of the dominant great power allotted them by geopolitics. In view of the fact that the Atlantic Charter nations had very little direct economic or strategic interest in Central and Eastern Europe, the countries of that region, much as they might deplore this on historical, cultural and psychological grounds, would have to accommodate to the Soviet Union.¹¹

The confrontationist point of view, shared by Roosevelt's successor, Harry Truman, was formulated by Sumner Welles, who had resigned from government in the fall of 1943. Though Welles, too recognized the 1941 borders, and somewhat hypocritically assumed that "... the peoples of the Baltic States

desire to form an integral part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics", he was determined to put a stop to further Soviet expansion. As late as 1944, Welles stood firm by the need for independent states in East Central Europe, joined together in some kind of federation.¹²

The Advisory Committee itself, specifically a new subcommittee headed by Armstrong dealing with the reorganization of Europe, finally took a stand on the matter of the future of Eastern Europe. That the region east of Danzig (Gdansk)–Sudetenland–Trieste line would belong to the Soviet sphere of influence they took for granted. It was a *fait accompli*. American policy, they argued, would depend on how the Soviets interpreted the concept of sphere of influence. If they meant by it something akin to what the U.S. meant by the *Monroe Doctrine*, and, on the pattern of the Soviet-Czechoslovak agreement of 1943, made treaties of friendship and cooperation with the various countries, thus obliging them to an amicable foreign policy without interfering in their domestic governments or their trade relations with any other nation, then this was something the Americans could hardly take exception to. If, on the other hand, the Soviet aim was the "annexation" or "subjugation" of the states of Eastern Europe, this had to be thwarted as unacceptable. On the basis of testimony heard from Charles E. Bohlen, First Secretary at the Moscow embassy, and subsequently U.S. ambassador to Moscow, the subcommittee more or less assumed that the war will have exhausted the Soviet Union, especially its economy so thoroughly as to make it impossible for it to aim at more than a "minimal program" akin to that embodied in the *Monroe Doctrine*.¹³

Proceeding on this assumption, Armstrong's subcommittee still did not completely give up on the planned regional federation, or at least cooperation. It was clear, however, that this cooperation, if it came about at all, would be a far cry from what the Advisory Committee envisaged in the spring and summer of 1942. That official Washington had more and more reservations in connection with the original proposal is indicated also by the change in terminology. Instead of the terms "East-European Union", "confederation" or "federation", the 1944 documents, for the most part, contain the expression "regional groupings." A memo in connection with "a Democratic Danubian or East European Federation," dated January 22, 1944 notes: "At the present such regional units are viewed with disfavor in official quarters."¹⁴

3. Hungary's borders

Both President Roosevelt and his Wilsonian Secretary of State believed that the most important guarantee of lasting peace in the postwar world was the

creation of an international organization which—unlike the League of Nations—was strong enough, if it saw fit, to defend the status quo in the face of any aggression anywhere in the world. At the same time, they were only too aware of the fact that the only status quo that could be preserved in the long run was one which did away with the territorial injustices conserved—or created—by the previous postwar settlement. A great deal of the Advisory Committee's efforts therefore, were focused on identifying the various territorial disputes the world over, and coming up with proposals for their solution. It was specifically the job of the Territorial Subcommittee to do so.

The members of the Territorial Subcommittee did not aim at a radical revision of territorial boundaries. Though their chief goal was ethnic fairness, at the very first sessions they introduced the "Principle of Minimum Change", and this was to be the guideline in decisions involving both borders and population exchanges. In practice, this meant that they wanted to change the borders established in the wake of the First World War only to the extent absolutely necessary on ethnic, strategic, or economic grounds. Accordingly, they decided to look into not borders as such, but only the most disputed segments of each country's frontier.¹⁵

Besides the principles of ethnic fairness and of minimum change, the matter of which side the given country was on in the war also entered into the Territorial Subcommittee's deliberations. We must note, however, that the idea of "punishment" of "retribution" was never a dominant consideration, not even in the case of Germany or Japan. In the case of "satellite countries" such as Finland, Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary, it was a very minor consideration indeed. Roosevelt and his Secretary of State, as is known, considered these countries "victims", not aggressors, and did not take seriously their declarations of war. Most members of the Territorial Subcommittee shared their view. Thus, as we shall see in a moment, the Subcommittee not only strove for ethnic fairness in the case of two enemy countries, but, in the case of an allied and an enemy country, was capable of deciding in favor of the latter.¹⁶

Of the over fifty areas of tension identified and examined by the Territorial Subcommittee, thirty-four were in Europe, and of these, twenty-four in Eastern Europe (cf. Map 1). Except for where Hungary bordered on Austria, every section of the Hungarian border—the Yugoslav–Hungarian, the Slovak–Hungarian, and the Romanian–Hungarian stretches of the frontier—was included among the areas in dispute. A fourth area of territorial tension with an impact on Hungary's future, and one separately listed and treated, was the Kárpátalja (Subcarpathian Ruthenia), a region that had belonged to Hungary until 1920, was part of Czechoslovakia between 1920 and

1939, and was reannexed to Hungary in 1939. (The Soviet Union annexed it in 1945, and it would remain part of the USSR until its recent break up.)

The Subcommittee first dealt with the Slovak-Hungarian border in the summer of 1942. By that time, Mosely and his research staff had prepared a number of background studies on the ethnic composition of the region, on Slovakia's development between 1919 and 1938, and on the findings of the American peace delegation of 1919-20. Though their report included the relevant data of the Hungarian census of 1910, because of the alleged distortions in the Hungarian count, and because the Czech figures were more recent, they took the 1930 Czechoslovak census as the more reliable. On this basis, the ethnic Hungarian population of Slovakia—without Ruthenia—was not 650,000 (as the more impartial figures of the 1921 Czechoslovak census also showed), but only 571,000.¹⁷ Even so, it was clear that the Slovak-Hungarian border drawn in 1920 considerably farther south than the ethnic frontier, and that it would be neither fair, nor expedient—unless one wanted to feed Hungarian irredentist feeling—to restore the 1920 demarcation line. Since they were dealing with two enemy nations, Mrs. McCormick suggested that they might leave the 1938-39 borders well enough alone. The majority on the Subcommittee, however, rejected this proposal. In the course of the debate, Mosely pointed out that the First Vienna Award had been based on the Hungarian census of 1910, and was, thus, prejudicial to the Slovak population. He noted, moreover, that the 1939 reannexation of Ruthenia had absolutely nothing to do with the ethnic composition of the population. It had been a strategic decision bolstered with historical arguments. Thus, rather than keeping the 1938-39 borders or restoring those imposed by the Treaty of Trianon, he recommended a compromise solution which, in effect, split the difference between the two boundary lines. The new border would involve no real hardship for Czechoslovakia's transportation system on economy, and was maximally fair from the ethnic point of view. The Czechoslovak census of 1930 had shown that Hungarians comprised the absolute majority of the population in ten border districts: six of them in the Csallóköz (Grosse Schuett), three in Central Slovakia, and one in Eastern Slovakia. It was this area of 2,355 square miles, with a population of 396,000, seventy-eight percent (309,000) of which was Hungarian, that Mosely wanted to see returned to Hungary. He also thought it desirable that the southern parts of the fifteen districts north of the border districts—areas of mixed population, with the Hungarian comprising the largest single group (for instance, the areas around Galánta and Érsekújvár—Nové Zámky)—also belong, wholly as in part, to Hungary. On this proposal, the size of the pre-1938 Czechoslovak region—excluding Kárpátalja—that would have remained in Hungarian hands

was a minimum of 2,700 square miles, and a maximum of 4,500 square miles, with populations of 484,000 and 854,000 respectively. Redrawing the borders along the above lines would have decreased the ratio of ethnic Hungarians within the whole population of the area to 64 percent in the first scenario, and the 59 percent on the second (cf. Map 2). It was to improve these ratios somewhat that Mosely recommended that some measure of population exchange take place as well.¹⁸

The Territorial Subcommittee had Mosely's proposal on its agenda on five separate occasions. The main, and only serious opposition to it came from Hamilton Fish Armstrong, who adduced every possible argument in the effort to leave Hungary with as little of the disputed territory as possible. The vehemence of Armstrong's arguments was not something that other members of the Subcommittee could match, nor, probably, did they really want to. For while they did not agree with him on every detail, they did not really try to refuse his arguments. The vote on September 4 rejected Mosely's proposal, and recommended that Hungary be allowed to keep only the above six southwestern districts—an area of 1,400 square miles, with a population of 275,000, 79 percent of which was ethnic Hungarian (cf. Map 2, Table 2). By way of a compromise, they left open the matter of where the three central and the one eastern district along the border would belong. The Subcommittee recommended that further research and discussion precede any decision on this issue.¹⁹

Transylvania—which had been part of Hungary prior to 1920, was part of Romania between 1920 and 1940, and was split between the two by the Second Vienna Award, i.e. between 1940 and 1944—was discussed by the Territorial Subcommittee on three consecutive occasions in February of 1943. The rapporteur was John C. Campbell, a thirty-two year old assistant professor of history. Campbell outlined four possible solutions, of which he deemed none to be particularly satisfactory. Restoration of the borders determined at Trianon was undesirable because even the 1930 Romanian census figures showed Trianon to have placed a million and a half ethnic Hungarians under Romanian rule. "It would", as Campbell put it, "perpetuate a difficult minority situation". Restoration of the pre-Trianon status quo, i.e. returning all of Transylvania to Hungary, was even worse: it would create a minority of three million Romanians, and was difficult to reconcile with the Principle of Minimum Change. The third possibility presented for consideration was to keep the borders drawn by the 1940 partition. Economic and infrastructural considerations argued against that solution, as well as the fact that the partition had annexed to Hungary not only the purely ethnic Hungarian easternmost region, the Székelyföld (Szeklerland), and the western regions with their predominantly ethnic Hungarian populations, but also the million

Romanians living in the ethnically mixed regions. The fourth possibility was that of an independent Transylvania. "The idea of an autonomous Transylvania held certain attractions but it was hard to say how it would work since it would not be a satisfactory solution either to Hungary or to Rumania or to the local Magyar and Rumanian population." Though Campbell conceded that there might indeed be such a thing as sense of Transylvanian identity, he thought it probable that both ethnic groups would want to see an independent Transylvania become a part of the "mother country": the Romanians, of Romania; the ethnic Hungarians, of Hungary.

Like Campbell, the members of the Subcommittee, too, found themselves in a quandary. The only point they all agreed on was that Transylvania would have to come under the supervision of Allied or United Nations forces for the first few postwar years to ward off the danger of armed conflict between its Hungarian and Romanian population. Deputy Secretary of State Berle, who had raised this possibility, expressed his hope that such a transitional period would provide time for tempers to cool, enough, perhaps, for the two ethnic groups to themselves agree on some kind of long-term solution, without interference from the great powers.²⁰

The next session, on February 12, likewise closed without a resolution. Campbell and Mosely gave a detailed account of Transylvania's ethnic composition, with the conclusion that the matters of the Székelyföld (Szeklerland) had to be distinguished from that of the predominantly ethnic-Hungarian strip along the border, and different solutions be found for each. To this, Adolf Berle made a quite unexpected counter-proposal:

"It might be a more fruitful approach to the Transylvanian problem to abandon all efforts to disentangle the population and to start from the theory of constructing a state. By that method one would concentrate on what would appear to be the most powerful element in the population, the one most likely to maintain itself as a group, and turn over to that group a territory included within the frontier most likely to lead to its stability. This would mean either enlarging Hungary as far as the Carpathians or the recreation of Versailles' Rumania."²¹

At the third session on Transylvania, the Subcommittee again reviewed all the possible approaches to the problem. Cavendish W. Cannon, head of the State Department's Southeastern European Department, advocated that they opt for an independent Transylvania, or rather, for a trialistic solution—a loose federation of Romania, Transylvania and Hungary—reminiscent of an old idea of a former prime minister of Hungary, Count István Bethlen. Bowman, Mosely and Campbell were inclined to have the border strip go to Hungary, with the Székelyföld to enjoy autonomy within

Romania. Armstrong continued to oppose the idea of an independent Transylvania, and wanted to see the whole go to Romania, except for a narrow border strip. Finally, John MacMurray, an adviser to Cordell Hull, took a stand for restoring the Trianon borders on the grounds that it was impossible to come to a fair decision in the matter of the Hungarian–Romanian territorial dispute. With no consensus forthcoming, Bowman adjourned the meeting, with hopes that those present would continue to study the matter and arrive at a resolution at the next session.²²

Bowman's intentions notwithstanding, the Territorial Subcommittee never again returned to the question of Transylvania. What was taken to be its recommendation was the minutes of the March 2, 1943 meeting, which summarized the proposals that had been made in a way that gave preference to two of them. Most highly preferred was the idea that Transylvania should belong to Romania, with the Székelyföld enjoying wide-ranging autonomy, and the Romanian–Hungarian border revised to coincide with the linguistic border, or to lie just a little to the east of it. In second place was the notion of an independent state of Transylvania, which was to be a member of the proposed East-European Union, or a condominium of Romania and Hungary.²³

The matter of the Yugoslav–Hungarian border was discussed on February 12, at the Subcommittee's second session on Transylvania. The rapporteur in this case was Cyril Edwin Black, an assistant professor at Princeton. Based on his background research, Black distinguished five separate areas where the borders were open to dispute. Along the southwestern frontier established at Trianon, there were twenty-eight predominantly ethnic Hungarian communities in an area of Wend Settlement; these he recommended that the postwar adjustment recognize as belonging to Hungary. The greater part of the Prekomurje, however, which was inhabited by Wends, and the predominantly Croatian Medjumurje, Hungarian territories since the spring of 1941, Black considered to be parts of Yugoslavia on ethnic grounds. Along the southern border, in Baranja, Bačka, and in the Banat, he recommended a compromise solution reminiscent of the American proposal of 1919, and one that followed linguistic borders to the extent possible. The compromise would have left about as many Hungarians (150,000) under Yugoslav rule as there would have been Yugoslavs under Hungarian rule (174,000) if the recommended northern districts were returned to Hungary. This northern tract, an area of 2,476 square miles, had a population of 486,000, whose ethnic distribution, according to the 1921 Yugoslav census, was the following: ethnic Hungarians, forty-seven percent; South Slavs, thirty-six percent, and German speakers, sixteen percent (cf. Map 4).

Black's consistent attempt to implement the principle of ethnic fairness was, however, taken exception to in this case by Berle and Cannon, the very people who had been inclined to side with Hungary in the matter of its borders with Romania. Yugoslavia was an ally, and they took its side, more precisely, Serbia's side. Clearly there was no guarantee that the Yugoslav federation could be restored after the war. But Hungary, noted Berle "had broken its word and had behaved badly" in breaking its 1940 treaty of perpetual friendship with Yugoslavia, and in having joined in Germany's 1941 aggression against it. Certainly, this was not the kind of conduct that they wanted to see rewarded at Yugoslavia's expense. The issue was decided by Pasvolsky. The head of the Advisory Committee found no reason for the United States to recommend changes to the pre-1941 Yugoslav-Hungarian border, and the Subcommittee voted unanimously for the *status quo ante bellum*.²⁴

On Subcarpathian Ruthenia, the research staff completed its report in late October of 1943. Of the possible options, Harry N. Howard considered the reunification of Czechoslovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia "the best possible solution". He did not recommend either the creation of an autonomous Carpatho-Ukraine nor the region's autonomy within whether the Ukraine, or the Soviet Union, or Poland, or Hungary. He did, however, have his reservations about the proposed solution. "Simple restoration, however, might not solve the problem, since it might leave open the door for new revisionism on the part of Hungary, or possibly on the part of the Soviet Union." By way of a preventive measure, Howard thought that certain border adjustments might perhaps be made in favor of Hungary in the southwestern corner of the region, where even the Czechoslovak census of 1930 had put the ratio of Hungarians in excess of fifty percent. What argued against such change, on the other hand, was the layout of the transportation and communication network, particularly of the railway system. To leave with Hungary an area even approximating the one it had regained by the First Vienna Award, argued Howard, would cut the entire region off from Czechoslovakia, and would make communication between the various settlements of the region very difficult.²⁵

Howard's report was distributed to the members of the Subcommittee on November 12, 1943, with the purpose of putting it on the agenda for debate in the near future. In fact, it never was put on the agenda. For the remainder of the year, the Subcommittee dealt exclusively with Asian affairs. Its last session was on December 17, 1943, for the Subcommittee as such was dissolved as part of the Advisory Committee's reorganization.

For, by summer of 1943, the Advisory Committee had accomplished a great deal of what it had been set up to do, while the series of Allied victories raised hopes that the war was rapidly drawing to a conclusion. It was this hope that

led Secretary of State Hull to reorganize the peace preparatory committee. Though certain of its subcommittees, for instance, the Territorial Subcommittee, continued to sit for the rest of the year, the emphasis shifted from debate to summaries which, as Hull put it, "can serve as a basis of more specific considerations of policies and proposals." The task of recapitulating the debates and whatever proposals had emerged fell to the research staff, restructured as the Division of Political Studies already in January of 1943.²⁶

The summaries dealing with Hungary were prepared by the research staff between summer of 1943 and January of 1944. They presented a detailed account of the debates up to that time, including the Subcommittee's proposals. Still, reading them, one cannot help detecting small shifts of emphasis, and perhaps a selective grouping of arguments and counter-arguments. The purpose, one feels, is to make the original expert recommendations—based, as far as possible, on the principle of ethnic fairness—seem far more attractive than the Subcommittee's subsequent suggestions, motivated, without a doubt, by more partial considerations. We might, thus, with some exaggeration, see these documents as the circumspect "rebellion" of the disinterested young staff of experts against the political motives of the older generation, and the strategic considerations of the pragmatic career diplomats.

The summary dealing with the Slovak—Hungarian border, for instance, presents as the first of the proposed solutions the Subcommittee's resolution that Hungary be allowed the six districts of the Csallóköz. Very fairly, it notes, further, that "the Territorial Subcommittee did not favor suggesting wider territorial concessions to Hungary." It goes on, however, to present as an equally possible alternative solution one that Mosely had held to be optimal, but which Armstrong had repudiated in the strongest terms: namely, that the ten southern districts where ethnic Hungarians formed an absolute majority, as well as the southern parts of the adjacent six northern districts be ceded to Hungary. Altogether, this would have meant an area of 2,740 square miles, with a population of 484,000, sixty-four percent of which was ethnic Hungarian (cf. Map 2, Table 3).²⁷

We see much the same story repeated in the case of the Yugoslav—Hungarian border. Black briefly stated the Territorial Subcommittee's advice that the entire disputed border region be given to Yugoslavia on political grounds, and that there had been no support for carving up the area by ethnic groupings. He then went on to describe his own proposal—the one the Subcommittee had more or less rejected—as a possible compromise. "This solution has not been discussed by any of the subcommittees," he noted, bending the truth somewhat, to put it mildly. The only change his "compromise proposal" contained over the one he had presented in February was that

the line of demarcation to run through Bačka and the Banat had been refined. The population of the area he proposed to be granted to Hungary fell from 486,000 to 435,000, with the figures for the South Slavic minorities dropping from 174,000 to 148,000. The number of ethnic Hungarians left in Yugoslavia by the new variant, on the other hand, rose from 150,000 to 160,000.²⁸ (cf. Map 4, Tables 3 and 4, Adjusted line.)

The summary most closely reflecting the Territorial Subcommittee's stand was the one dealing with Transylvania. The Subcommittee, as will be recalled, in the absence of a consensus, had postponed making a clear-cut recommendation for a later session never in fact held. As compared to the earlier documents treating of Transylvania's future, Campbell's August 1943 summary was a forward step in that it specified the size of the strip of land along the western border to be returned to Hungary: an area of 3,475 square miles, shown by the 1930 Romanian statistics to have a population of 591,000, fifty percent of which was ethnic Hungarian. The alternative recommendation, less closely based on ethnic boundaries, involved leaving Hungary in possession of 5,600 square miles of post-Trianon Romanian territory, with a population of 1,980,000, only thirty-six percent of which was ethnic Hungarian (cf. Map 3, the two top tables). For his part, Campbell unequivocally supported this latter solution. The first of his two reasons was that the Arad-Nagyvárad railway would, in that case, run all the way on Hungarian soil, instead of criss-crossing the border at several points. The second was that, not counting the Székelyföld, this latter solution would leave roughly equal numbers—about half a million each—of Romanians and ethnic Hungarians under foreign rule, and the exchange of these populations, as Campbell saw it, would be relatively easy to effect.²⁹

The abstract dealing with Subcarpathian Ruthenia differed from the Subcommittee presentation of late 1943 primarily in being much more constructive. For one thing, Howard specified the possible forms that the southwestern strip to be ceded to Hungary might take. He presented three options: recognition of the borders established in 1938 by the First Vienna Award; the purely token gesture of returning 125 square miles of the area to Hungary; and a "compromise solution" between the two extremes, which would leave Hungary with 535 square miles of the 731 square miles reannexed in 1938. Of the population of 90,000 involved, the 1930 Czechoslovak census specified fifty-nine percent as ethnic Hungarian, as compared to the 1910 Hungarian census figures also given by Howard, which put their ratio at eighty-eight percent (cf. Map 5).³⁰

The above-outlined summaries prepared by the research staff became the basis of "more specific considerations of policies and proposals", even as Hull

had intended them to be. The groups that were to "consider" them were the Inter-Divisional Country and Area Committees set up in late summer of 1943, which set to work immediately, and continued to study the reports all of the first half of 1944. These Committees consisted of members of the research staff, and of the officials of the Department of State involved with the countries and areas in question. Bowman, Armstrong, and other prestigious members of the Subcommittees, though called in for consultation, were not involved directly in this work either.³¹

The first of the Inter-Divisional Country and Area Committees to be set up, on August 12, 1943, was the Inter-Divisional Balkan and Danube Region Committee. Harry N. Howard was appointed chairman. By the spring of 1944, the Committee had submitted its recommendations regarding Hungary's borders in reports of a page or a little more. As compared to the research staff's summaries of 1943, these were both more concrete and more unambiguous, containing, for the most part, only the recommended solutions. For all that, they did leave room for some flexibility. In the case of the Slovak—Hungarian border, for instance, the Committee recommended the cession to Hungary of only the six districts of the Csallóköz, on the grounds that Czechoslovakia's postwar government would not be willing to agree to more. It did not, however, rule out the possibility of supporting "a more just solution on a purely ethnic basis", i.e. the cession of ten entire districts, and parts of another six, "if later circumstances should be favorable to its adoption". In view of the military situation, and of the Soviet Union's expansionist plans, the Committee suggested alternative solutions in the case of Subcarpathian Ruthenia as well. If the postwar settlement was such that the region was returned to Czechoslovakia—the alternative the Committee preferred—they wanted to see the borders revised in a way "which would leave predominantly Magyar districts in Hungary" without, however, disrupting railway communications toward Slovakia. Should Subcarpathian Ruthenia end up as part of the Soviet Union, however, they wanted to see the borders redrawn to coincide with ethnic boundaries, independently of any other consideration.³²

For the Yugoslav—Hungarian border, the Committee supported Black's compromise proposal. This meant that, as opposed to the Territorial Subcommittee's stand, this higher-ranking Committee was for Hungary's keeping the northern parts of the Baranja-Bačka-Banat region.³³

No pithy recommendation was ever made concerning Transylvania, due, perhaps, to the significance of the matter, or perhaps to its basic insolvability. The Committee accepted the research staff's 1943 summary; the only change it made was to mark some of the solutions as "recommended" solutions. As a temporary measure in the immediate postwar period, it suggested keeping the

1940 borders, i.e. the ones established by the Second Vienna Award. As a long-term solution, it recommended that the strip stretching from Arad to Szatmár—an area of 5,600 square miles, with a population of 1,098,000—be ceded to Hungary, with the Székelyföld to enjoy autonomy within Romania. The idea of an independent Transylvania, until this phase a preferred solution, was listed as one of the possible, but not recommended solutions in this document of April 20, 1944. The reason for this is probably that the idea of an East-European federation of which an independent Transylvania was to be a part was coming to appear more and more chimerical in the light of the Soviet Union's ever more evident expansionist plans, especially given the advances being made by the Soviet army.³⁴ We shall see in what follows how far the Committee's plans in connection with Hungary's borders were influenced by this very real political consideration.

The Committee's recommendations with regard to Hungary were outlined in a fourteen page document, dated May 1, 1944, and headed: "The Treatment of Enemy States: Hungary." The paragraphs on the Czechoslovak—Hungarian, Yugoslav—Hungarian, and Austro—Hungarian borders were verbatim transcripts of the respective April précis on the subject. The paragraphs treating Transylvania, however, were very different. There was no reference to an intermediate, postwar phase, nor to U.N. peace keeping contingent. There was no talk of autonomy for the Székelyföld within Romania. Of all the recommendations made to redress Romanian—Hungarian territorial grievances, all that remained was the suggestion that the "small strip" between Arad and Szatmár be ceded to Hungary. The idea of an independent Transylvania, on the other hand, crapped up again, as something which, despite the problems it involved, "should not be excluded from consideration."³⁵

The recommendations of the Country and Area Committees were presented to a high-level select committee set up by the Department of State in early 1944, the Committee on Post War Programs. Its chairman was Cordell Hull, and its deputy chairman the new Undersecretary of State, Edward R. Stettinius; members included the Deputy Secretaries of State, department heads, Pasvolksy, who had headed the 1942–43 Advisory Committee, the chairmen of the various Subcommittees, for instance Bowman, as well as the leading members of the research staff, such as Notter, Mosely, and Howard. The fourteen page proposal on Hungary was discussed and accepted at the May 26 session. In his commentary, Mosely emphasized that the most difficult of the territorial problems, and one that was hardly likely to receive a satisfactory solution, was the issue of Transylvania, or rather, the matter of the Szeklers of the Székelyföld. His comment, however, was received in silence. The little debate there was, centered on the tone of the proposal.³⁶

Like the idea of an East-European Union, the real value of all this painstaking study of Hungary's disputed border regions depended on how far these recommendations would be put into practice. Initially, the members of the Advisory Committee were optimistic on this score. Their optimism was based on "assuming a complete victory for the United States and a free hand in reconstruction." A corollary of this assumption was Bowman's belief that "larger countries like the United States could exert influence without any direct intervention."³⁷

Besides their exaggerated notion of the position of strength in which the United States would find itself after the war, the Department of State was encouraged also by the fact that the emigré politicians of the countries concerned did not reject offhand the idea of a settlement that was perhaps less advantageous from their own point of view, but was, on the other hand, more fair. As Beneš, the ex-president of the Czechoslovak Republic, declared in July of 1940: "Nothing that has been imposed upon us since Munich do we consider to be valid in law... This does not mean that we desire as our war aim a mere return to the status quo of September, 1938. ... We wish to agree on our frontiers with our neighbours in a friendly fashion... Changes in detail are possible..."³⁸ An article of his of 1942 contained much the same message.³⁹ Similar statements were made by other members of the Czechoslovak government-in-exile as well, for instance Finance Minister Ladislav Feierabend speaking to several members of the Advisory Committee on April 12, 1943, and Foreign Minister Jan Masaryk in an interview conducted by Ferenc Göndör on November 13, 1943, and in an other statement on April 4, 1944.⁴⁰

The Yugoslav government in-exile made no such promises. Their communiqué of May 20, 1942, stated no more than their determination to restore the Yugoslavia of before 1941.⁴¹ Since, however, neither the American nor the British government would guarantee this—any more than they would the Czechoslovak borders drawn at Trianon—in 1942–43 it was still quite conceivable that the matter of the Yugoslav—Hungarian border, as of the Slovak—Hungarian border, would be decided by bilateral negotiations. The American experts working on the peace proposals thought this all the more likely as they had no very clear-cut notion of Yugoslavia's future. While, with small adjustments of its borders, they supported the restoration of pre-1938 Czechoslovakia, repudiating the idea of both an independent Slovakia and of an independent Subcarpathian Ruthenia, they were not at all convinced of the expediency of restoring pre-1941 Yugoslavia. Roosevelt was as uncertain on this score as anyone else. Twice in 1943, in the course of this discussions with leading members of the Advisory Committee, he spoke of Yugoslavia's restoration as improbable, and of an independent Serbia and an autonomous

Croatia as possibilities.⁴² As late as September of 1944, Otto Habsburg recalls him saying that "Yugoslavia is, in his view, an unnatural state. It should be transformed into a federation."⁴³

The "third party" with an immediate interest in Hungary's borders was the Soviet Union. In the first phase of the war, as is common knowledge, Moscow repeatedly reassured Budapest that the Soviet Union had no territorial claims against Hungary, and that the Soviet leadership considered Hungary's claim against Romania to be well founded, and one that would enjoy Soviet support when it came up at the postwar peace conference.⁴⁴ After the summer of 1941, however, when Hungary joined in Germany's attack on the Soviet Union, the Soviet stand changed. Thenceforward, the Soviet Union called into question the legitimacy of Hungary's revised borders with Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia alike, as well as of the Second Vienna Award. The first indications to this effect reached Washington in early 1942. Ambassador Winant reported from London that Sir Anthony Eden had information that Stalin meant to compensate Romania for the loss of Bessarabia with "territory now occupied by Hungary", i.e. with Transylvania. The information was confirmed by Molotov's memorandum of June 1943, which, among other things, noted that the Soviet Union did not "consider as fully justified the so-called arbitration award carried out at the dictate of Germany in Vienna on 30th August 1940 which gave Northern Transylvania to Hungary."⁴⁵ It was at this point, as we have noted, that the members of the Advisory Committee, recognized the contingent nature of all their planning, and shifted from comprehensive reorganization proposals toward a solution as far as possible in keeping with the Principle of Minimum Change. For all that, they continued to strongly oppose the *en bloc* restoration of the 1920 borders.

The United States first came up against the Soviet Union's alternate plans for Transylvania directly in the spring of 1944, at the time that the Romanian armistice was negotiated. The Department of State wanted to see the settlement of territorial disputes postponed until the peace conference, and wanted an armistice agreement that contained absolutely no reference at all to borders. The Soviet Union, however, wanted an armistice agreement to contain guarantees that it would get back Bessarabia—which had been annexed to Romania after the First World War—and was, thus, willing to include in it the compensatory condition that after the war, "Transylvania or the greater part thereof" would be returned to Romania. The conflict was finally settled in a compromise. At Churchill's insistence, the American side agreed to the Soviet formula against its better judgement; while the Soviet Union, for its part, agreed to have appended to the sentence on Transylvania a qualifying clause: "subject to confirmation at the peace settlement".⁴⁶

Washington had no real way of knowing the Soviet stand on Subcarpathian Ruthenia. The Advisory Committees reports, thus, took account of two possibilities. Though the preferred solution was to have the region returned to Czechoslovakia, they were prepared to see Subcarpathian Ruthenia become part of the Soviet Union.⁴⁷

4. Views on Hungary's postwar government

Interwar American opinion on Hungary was typically Janus-faced. There were scores of diplomatic reports, travelogues, press reports and memoirs that spoke of the 1920 Treaty of Trianon as an outrage, and pointed with approval at the modernization the country had achieved in spite of the crippling blow the treaty had dealt the Hungarian economy. On the alternative, no less schematic view, the postwar disintegration was no more and no less than the inevitable catching up with multinational Hungary: the country's difficulties were rooted not in the terms of the peace settlement, but in the selfish and narrow-minded policies of the still ruling "feudal" aristocracy, which clung to the system of great estates, had suspended the secret ballot, in short, lorded it over a country that enjoyed not even a modicum of social and political democracy. Which of these two pictures someone presented depended as much on his political predilections and prejudices, as on who had served as his guide as he strove to discover Hungary. Classic examples of how far this was true are the two U.S. ambassadors to Hungary in the '30s: Nicholas Roosevelt, who served from 1930 to 1933, and John F. Montgomery whose tenure lasted from 1933 to 1941. Reading their memoranda, one has the feeling that they are speaking of two different countries. As Roosevelt saw it, the "survival of feudalism" was the country's salient feature. "Most of the Hungarian peasants were living under conditions but little removed from those of the serfs in Russia of the nineteenth century."⁴⁸ In Montgomery's view, on the other hand, the "stories about feudal Hungary" were stories and no more, told "in order to calm the world's conscience, which was a little troubled by the fact that in the name of national self-determination, more than three million Magyars had been put under Czech, Rumanian and Serbian rule." In reality, Hungary was well on the way to modernization, and though the conditions of the agricultural workers fell somewhat short, the condition of the industrial working class was on a par with that of American workers.⁴⁹

Each one of the two pictures had its appeal to certain groups within the American business, political and scholarly communities. Among "official" Hungary's known supporters were Professor Archibald Coolidge, the founder

of *Foreign Affairs*, whose sympathy for the "Hungarian case" dated back to his 1919 travels in Central Europe (he had been a decided opponent at the time of the new border arrangements being planned for Hungary);⁵⁰ General Bandholtz, the American member of the Allied mission to Budapest in 1919–1920, the man who had protected the Hungarian National Museum's collection from the Romanian armies, and who was on friendly terms with Count Albert Apponyi, among others;⁵¹ Jeremiah Smith, the Boston lawyer stationed in Budapest between 1924 and 1927 as the commercial representative of the League of Nations; and most importantly Senator William E. Borah, Wilson's opponent and chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee to 1940, perhaps the most influential of all the Americans urging the revision of the Treaty of Trianon.⁵²

There is some indication that President Roosevelt, too, was pro-Hungarian in sentiment. His personal sympathy was said to be based partly on his having bicycled through certain parts of the Monarchy during his student years, Transylvania being one of these parts. The experience, so the story goes, had a positive and lasting impact on him. The second impression was just as personal, and dated back to his years in the navy during the First World War. While in Rome on one occasion, he found that the Italians spoke with great admiration of a "daring" Hungarian admiral of the Austro-Hungarian navy, Miklós Horthy—the man who was elected Regent of Hungary in 1920. That this episode was something Roosevelt was fond of recalling is indicated by the message he had Montgomery convey to Horthy in 1937, which made reference to their shared naval past. In September of 1943, the President is reputed to have told Queen Zita, Otto Habsburg's mother, that "he liked Hungary... more than any other country in Europe", and that "he wanted to save the country."⁵³ Be that as it may, Roosevelt's sympathy was certainly not unconditional, and did not keep him from being critical of many aspects of Hungarian policy. For instance, he believed the system of land tenure to be quite obsolete, and we know from a letter of Montgomery's that when they spoke in the summer of 1937, he "expressed considerable interest in the subject of dividing up estates in Hungary."⁵⁴

The other picture, that of a deplorably feudal Hungary, was most efficiently kept in the limelight by Hamilton Fish Armstrong. Armstrong essentially subscribed to the views of Mihály Károlyi, Oszkár Jászi, Rusztem Vámbéry and Seton-Watson, and criticized Hungary's interwar political status quo from their democratic point of view.⁵⁵ Like Armstrong and Nicholas Roosevelt, Sumner Welles, too, was highly critical of the Hungarian domestic political scene, relying—over and above the official sources—primarily on Beneš for his information. Armstrong and Welles, however, different on one essential

point when it came to Hungary. Armstrong considered the Trianon borders to be basically acceptable, and thought the problem to lie only in the successor states' ungenerous treatment of the minority nationalities; Welles, on the other hand, believed that readjustment of Hungary's borders was a *sine qua non* of a just peace in the Danube region, and wanted particularly to find a satisfactory solution to the problem of Transylvania.⁵⁶

The Advisory Committee, as well as the members of the research staff dealing with the future of postwar Hungary—Mosely, Howard, Power and Bradshaw—were as critical of interwar Hungary as Armstrong and Welles. Textual analysis as well as personal contacts point to the influence of Rusztem Vámbéry on their thinking. It followed that they saw absolutely no chance of the Horthy regime's surviving the war, and expected that defeat would bring in its wake Hungary's radical democratization.

Land reform was the issue that they gave most attention to. In late 1943 and early 1944, thoroughgoing studies examined the state of Hungarian agriculture, and the history of post-1918 reform legislation.⁵⁷ Two further studies in the spring of 1944 contained concrete proposals for postwar land reform. The radical redistribution of holdings was specified in both documents as "a prerequisite for the establishment of a more democratic Hungary." Thoroughgoing land reform—argued the author, probably Power—"... would open the way for peaceful development of social and political democracy and would eliminate the control of a reactionary minority which has monopolized political power at home and threatened the peace and security of the Danubian region through its cooperation with an aggressive Germany." For all that, though he did not rule out the possibility of an indiscriminate and wholesale land grab, the social discontent among the peasantry being as pervasive as it was, this was not something that he would have liked to see. What they would have preferred was "a rationally planned reform under the guidance of competent agronomists and with proper physical and financial implementation." In concrete terms, this would have meant nationalizing estates of over fifty-eight acres (a hundred *hold*), and parcelling them out as farms of between eight to fifty acres in size. The five thousand landowners thus deprived of their lands were to receive no compensation, but would have got some form of financial aid to help them set up a new livelihood. Those who wanted to stay in agriculture would have been allowed to keep "peasant-sized farms". The entire process was envisioned as requiring about ten years.⁵⁸

The other problem studied in depth was the matter of the postwar political system, and the desirable composition of the future government. The studies prepared in early 1944 distinguished and reviewed the possibilities of five different kinds of political organization: authoritarian, soviet, centralized

democratic republican and decentralized democratic republican (the distinction is Vámbéry's), as well as the constitutional monarchic system. The preferred possibility was "a democratic government in either a monarchical or republican form." The studies expressed strong reservations in connection with both the authoritarian and the soviet systems, and thought it highly unlikely that the Hungarian people would opt for either of these.⁵⁹

For the leaders of any democratic government, they looked to a popular-front-type coalition of Social Democrats, Smallholders and Liberals, to Károlyi and the democratic émigrés he headed, as well as to certain intellectual groupings within Hungary. Of the latter, specific reference was made to the populist writers, as well as the younger generation grouped around the bourgeois radical *Századunk*, the Catholic *Jelenkor*, and the *Ország Útja*.

The research staff thought it impossible for the political élite of the Horthy government to remain in power, and particularly for the Regent himself to do so. "The Russians have expressed their objection to the retention of the Regency and of the regime of the landlords." What was more, the old guard's remaining in power "would mean the continuation of an authoritarian regime. In all probability Hungary would again be a factor of instability in the Balkan—Danubian region." Their objection went beyond the person of Horthy himself, and extended, naturally enough, to the far rightist Arrow-Cross Party and the government party, and even to "conservative-liberal" opposition figures like István Bethlen, and to "pseudo-Smallholders" of the likes of Tibor Eckhardt, who spent the last years of the war in the U.S.⁶⁰

The research staff did not rule out the possibility that the new democratic Hungary would be a monarchy. This, however, was by no means tantamount to their supporting Ottó Habsburg's claim to power. There is no denying, of course, that Ottó's name came up frequently in their discussions. But only as a possible option, never as the solution recommended, or desirable from the U.S. point of view. This was so in spite of the fact that Ottó had confidentially reassured the Department of State that he would assume the Hungarian throne only subsequent to being confirmed in his claim by a plebiscite.⁶¹

In general, there were two weighty reasons given against Otto's kingship. One was that there was no trace in his writings of his favoring land reform, and that his ties to the aristocracy were too strong. In short, he was not enough of a democrat. The other reason was that the putative postwar leaders of the neighboring successor states would not have him. In the light of this, on January 27, 1944, the Inter-Divisional Balkan and Danube Region Committee, like the preliminary studies and committees, rejected the notion of "the restoration of the Habsburgs to the throne of Hungary."⁶²

Unlike the Advisory Committee's suggestions for an East-European Union and for border readjustments, the above program for Hungary's postwar political reform appeared to be realistic even in the last phases of the war. This, in spite of the growing fears in the course of 1943–44 that the Soviet Union would not be content to interpret the notion of sphere of influence in the limited sense of the *Monroe Doctrine*, but would aim at the sovietization of East-Central Europe. The "Declaration on Liberated Europe," however, signed at the Yalta Conference, which reiterated the right of all peoples to free and democratic self-determination, laid these concerns to rest. The only cause for anxiety subsequently was Roosevelt's compromise—probably made in the interest of having the Soviet Union join in the war on Japan—not to insist on the high-level four-power commission, whose job it would have been to make sure that the terms of the Yalta Declaration were observed, though the Department of State had ascribed as much importance to the commission as to the Declaration itself.⁶³ Those who, like Charles E. Bohlen, knew something of the Soviet mentality—"the Soviet leaders attached less weight to general principles than did the leaders of the western powers"—saw this as a bad omen.⁶⁴ In 1945, however, they formed a minority. The rest of those in the Department of State thought with their own heads, and naively believed that people were bound by their written and spoken word.

5. The game is up

The idealistic plans formulated between 1942 and 1944 behind the padded doors of the Department of State disintegrated during the last year of the war, and in the course of 1946–47. That they did so was due not to some conceptual void in American diplomacy, as some have suggested, nor to Roosevelt's illness, but to the Soviets establishing their dominance in the region, and to the Americans having no material interest in challenging this predominance. In what follows, we shall examine some of the major steps in this process.

Basically, Washington had no objections to the new Hungarian regime that took shape in 1944–1945. While it was obvious that both the interim government and the national assembly came into being under Soviet tutelage, the Department of State acknowledged that Béla Dálnoki Miklós's cabinet was "a well-balanced group representing the significant pro-Allied political forces", and that "it is a group of responsible personalities."⁶⁵ As opposed to the governments of Poland, Romania and Bulgaria, which it justly considered Soviet "puppet governments", Washington accepted the Hungarian leadership

as representative, and made no demand for its reorganization. Consequently, Hungary's internal affairs were not among the controversial issues at either Yalta or Potsdam, and the Hungarian government was the first of all the East European governments to be recognized by the United States, as early as September 1945, prior even to the election of the national assembly. This decision, made by James F. Byrnes, Secretary of State under the new U.S. government formed after the death of Roosevelt in 1945, was meant to underline that the United States would encourage democracies, and reject communist dictatorships.⁶⁶

During the year and a half following the election of the national assembly in November of 1945, Washington took exception to two significant events on the Hungarian domestic scene: nationalization—particularly the nationalization of the oil industry, in which American investment reached 59 million dollars, and the gradual elimination of political pluralism and of political liberty, a dictatorial tendency subsequently referred to as “salami-tactics” (i.e. the gradual whittling away of political and personal freedoms). The White House and the Department of State voiced their objections regularly at the meetings of the Committee, as well as at other bilateral and international forums. Still, as long as the Smallholders' Party held the majority of the seats in parliament, and Ferenc Nagy was the head of the coalition government, they considered the regime democratic and representative, and did not relinquish their support. There was, however, a permanent qualifier attached to this support. In the internal slang of the Department of State, it was “limited encouragement”. This meant that unlike the Mediterranean and other, economically or strategically important regions, Hungary was a place where Washington was determined to confine itself strictly to economic and political measures to maintain its influence in the country.⁶⁷

That the United States would not go beyond “limited encouragement” was amply manifest in its loans and economic aid to Hungary between 1945 and 1947, as well as in the discussions preliminary to, and during the negotiations at the 1946 Paris Peace Conference. American support for Hungary's foreign policy objectives was strong against Romania and the Soviet Union in the matter of Transylvania, but, contrary to what one might have expected from the work of the Advisory Committee, was much weaker against Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia.

The Potsdam Conference of July, 1945, was the last time that U.S. foreign policy objectives included an ethnically-based solution to the Czechoslovak–Hungarian and Yugoslav–Hungarian border disputes.⁶⁸ By the time the Allied foreign ministers met in London in September, the issue had received a new formulation. There, and from there on, the Allies were in

agreement in that "the frontier with Hungary should be, in general the frontier existing in 1938," and the only subject still in dispute was Transylvania, and the Romanian-Hungarian border.⁶⁹

Several factors contributed to the Americans' abandoning the principle of ethnic fairness, which they had considered so important at the time of the peace preparations. The most significant was that contrary to Washington's expectations, the governments in Belgrade and Prague were most adamant against any kind of frontier adjustment. The same politicians who, in 1942-43, and even in early 1944, had considered the redrawing the Hungarian-Slovak border a distinct possibility, believed, from the summer of 1944, that the only way to resolve the border dispute between the countries was to remove the Hungarian population from Czechoslovakia. The Czechoslovak government-in-exile first expressed this view to the American government on November 23, 1944, and then reiterated its position from time to time after its return to Prague, at which time it also registered its claim on five Hungarian villages in the Pozsony area.⁷⁰

Similar tendencies could be observed in Yugoslavia as well. The government in Belgrade asked for Allied permission to "exchange" forty thousand Hungarians, over and above those who had already fled to escape retaliation at the hands of the Yugoslav guerillas; it registered an official claim to a fifty square mile area of the Austro-Hungarian border region north of the river Drava; and emphasized in its propaganda the legitimacy of annexing other border-region Hungarian territories (mainly in the province of Baranja), and the necessity of preserving the "South Slavic character" of northeastern Yugoslavia.⁷¹

It is due primarily to the firmness of the United States Government that the Yugoslav claims were not satisfied, and the Czechoslovak demands were only partially met. The Department of State took exception to unilateral mass relocations even in the case of the German population. As far as the Hungarian and other East European populations were concerned, Washington strongly objected to solving territorial differences by punishing entire ethnic groups for the sufferings of the war. It took a particularly firm stand against the government in Prague, which, nevertheless, managed to get three of the five villages it had asked for, in exchange for giving up its notion of unilaterally relocating 200,000 Hungarians.⁷²

The Truman administration, however, would not go so far as to follow the recommendations of the Advisory Committee in order to eliminate the possibility of future territorial disputes between Hungary and its neighbors. The fact that these issues did not even come up at the various rounds of the peace talks had very little, I believe, to do with the roles played by these

various countries in the course of the war. In the case of the Italian–Yugoslav dispute over Istria, for instance, Washington was quite capable—on the grounds of ethnic fairness—of siding with the ex-enemy, Italy, thereby moderating somewhat the excessive Yugoslav–Soviet demands. It is probable that if Hungary had been more important strategically—if, for instance, oil from the Near East got to Western Europe not through Gibraltar, but up the Danube—and if Washington had a military presence at hand to give weight to its proposals, as indeed it did in the case of Istria, the Advisory Committee's recommendations would not have been so soon forgotten. There is yet another reason why the matter of the Czechoslovak–Hungarian and Yugoslav–Hungarian borders never came up in the course of the postwar negotiations: Britain's attitude. The British government had decided to support the restoration of the 1938 borders even before the Potsdam Conference.⁷³ All the above being as it was, it would have been a Quixotic gesture indeed for the U.S. to insist on trying to implement the Advisory Committee's suggestions.

Unlike the Csallóköz and the Baranja-Bačka-Banat issues, the status of Transylvania remained uncertain until May of 1946, with the *status quo ante bellum* being finalized only in August. Washington had been irked by the Soviet-approved restoration of Romanian local government in northern Transylvania on March 9, 1945, and questioned the government's legitimacy. Accordingly, the American delegation in Potsdam recommended that “the three principal Allies proceed in the near future with preliminary talks concerning the establishment of a definite boundary between Hungary and Romania, and that favorable consideration be given to revision of the pre-war frontier in favor of Hungary on ethnic grounds”.⁷⁴

When the preliminary talks were held at the September, 1945 meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers, the Soviet delegation made no secret of the fact that it wanted to see “the whole of Transylvania” go to Romania. The joint British-American stand, however, was for “examining the respective claims of the two States.” Secretary of State Byrnes noted in the course of the debate that “the change which he had in mind would not affect more than 3,000 square miles.” This was about five hundred square miles less than the minimum area recommended by the Advisory Committee in 1943–44, and there is no knowing how exactly Byrnes arrived at the figure. It is possible that he simply rounded down the original figure of 3,475 square miles. No decision was taken on the matter at the London session, and the Council agreed to adjourn the debate.⁷⁵

The next time Transylvania was discussed was at the April, 1946 meeting of the deputy foreign ministers, likewise held in London. The Soviet government—which a few days earlier had the highlevel Hungarian delegation visiting

Moscow believe that Hungary's raising the matter of its territorial claims against Romania was something the Soviets considered to be justified—⁷⁶ insisted in London that the Trianon borders be restored. With Britain and France refusing to support it, the United States was not in a position to press its own revisionist plans, but did suggest that “provision be made to leave the way open for direct negotiations between the Governments of Rumania and Hungary with a view to adjusting the frontier so as to reduce the number of persons living under alien rule.” The Russians, however, refused to agree to even this.⁷⁷

With no consensus forthcoming, the deputy foreign ministers submitted two—a Soviet and an American—recommendations to the May session of the Council of Foreign Ministers. Had he had British and French support, and Roosevelt to back him, it is possible that Byrnes would have insisted on at least a token compromise. Alone as he was, however, he judged the matter to be a lost cause, and did not want to further test Soviet—American relations, which were strained enough as it was, with insistence on having his way in a “third-rate” issue of this sort. In return for a trivial Soviet concession, he thus withdrew the American motion, and accepted the Soviet plan.⁷⁸

Byrnes came in for a great deal of criticism for his permissiveness not only in this, but in other matters as well. Sumner Welles, a number of the senior members of the Department of State, and later even President Truman expressed dissatisfaction with his conduct of affairs. This gave some credibility to the American efforts to reassure the dejected Smallholder Government—which had been misled in Moscow and now felt itself abandoned by Washington—that the game was not yet up, that what they had agreed on was only a draft of the peace treaty, and that the conference itself would be the place to effect changes in it. This was the gist of what Philip Mosely told the Hungarian delegates to Paris on May 17, 1946, and this was the assumption that guided Arthur Schoenfeld, the American ambassador to Budapest, in his activities.⁷⁹

Trusting that Mosely and Schoenfeld would turn out to be right, at the August 14 session of the peace conference the Hungarian Foreign Minister, János Gyöngyösi, asked that Romania surrender to Hungary an area of 22,000 square kilometers, and a population of two million people. A few days later, on American advice, he modified his demand to 4,000 square kilometers, with a population of less than half a million.⁸⁰

The American support he had counted on, however, was not forthcoming. At the September 5 session of the Romanian territorial and political committee, where Hungary's demand was reviewed again for the last time, the U.S. delegate, William Averell Harriman, made the following statement about the

draft peace treaty: "The United States had not been a strong supporter of the proposed text but wished to make it clear that he would vote for it since it had been agreed by the Council."⁸¹ With this, the issue of Transylvania—which Sumner Welles had called one of Europe's most pressing problems in his book published in 1945—was taken off the agenda, much to the dismay of the circle of American experts who realized that ignoring the problem would by no means make it disappear. "How can it be imagined", asked Welles, "that the cession of this entire region... to either Rumania or Hungary can ever result in anything but new conflicts, new complaints, new oppressions and a festering sore in the body politic of Europe?"⁸² John C. Campbell, secretary to the American delegation, and the Advisory Committee's Transylvanian expert, concluded his article on the territorial settlement agreed at the peace conference by noting that the compromises born "did not conform to American hopes and American principles". This being so, "it should be possible for the world's statesmen to look again at the map of Europe and to make changes which are called for by the interests of the European peoples themselves".⁸³

The defeat suffered by American diplomacy had its repercussions in Hungary, where, in June of 1947, Ferenc Nagy was forced to leave the country, and the systematic liquidation of the Smallholder Party got under way. The United States was outraged by the Hungarian Prime Minister's exile. President Truman called it a disgrace, and the Department of State spoke of it as a coup d'état. Once again, however, Washington's vehemence was soon spent. Some junior members of the Department of State did suggest that the Nagy case be brought before the United Nations, but the idea was rejected by the head of the European Department, H. F. Matthews, who did not want the matter to distract the Security Council's attention from the problem of Greece.⁸⁴

As Americans saw it, in the summer of 1947, Hungary became one of the communist states of Eastern Europe. The country's short-lived democracy was commemorated by John F. Montgomery in a book published in 1947, probably with the State Department's approval. "For a second time within a decade, a small European country, Hungary, is being turned into a satellite of an overwhelmingly strong neighbor."⁸⁵

Interestingly enough, American diplomacy never quite gave up on Hungary, nor on the rest of Eastern Europe. For over forty years, with but slight shifts of emphasis, it had on its agenda a goal first formulated in 1948: "The gradual retraction of undue Russian power and influence from the present satellite area and the emergence of the respective eastern-European countries as independent factors on the international scene."⁸⁶

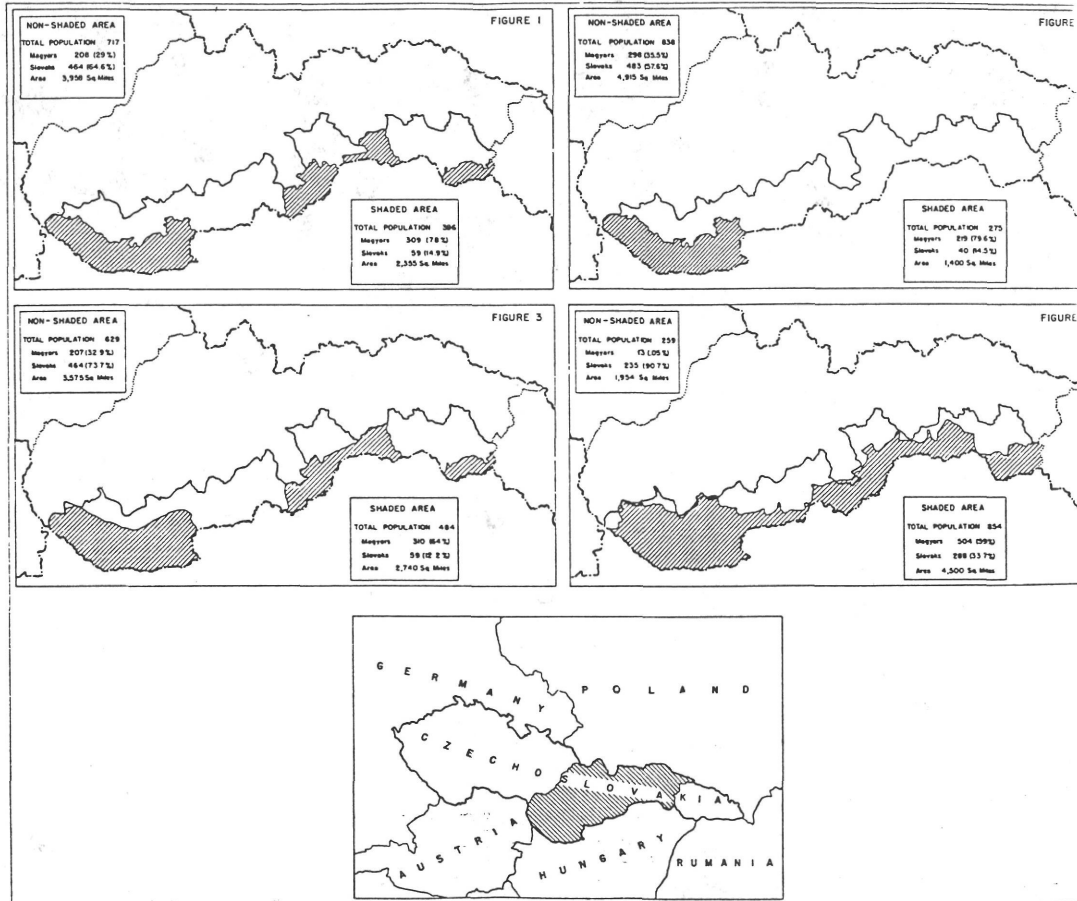
Far from being up, perhaps the game is just starting.

Notes

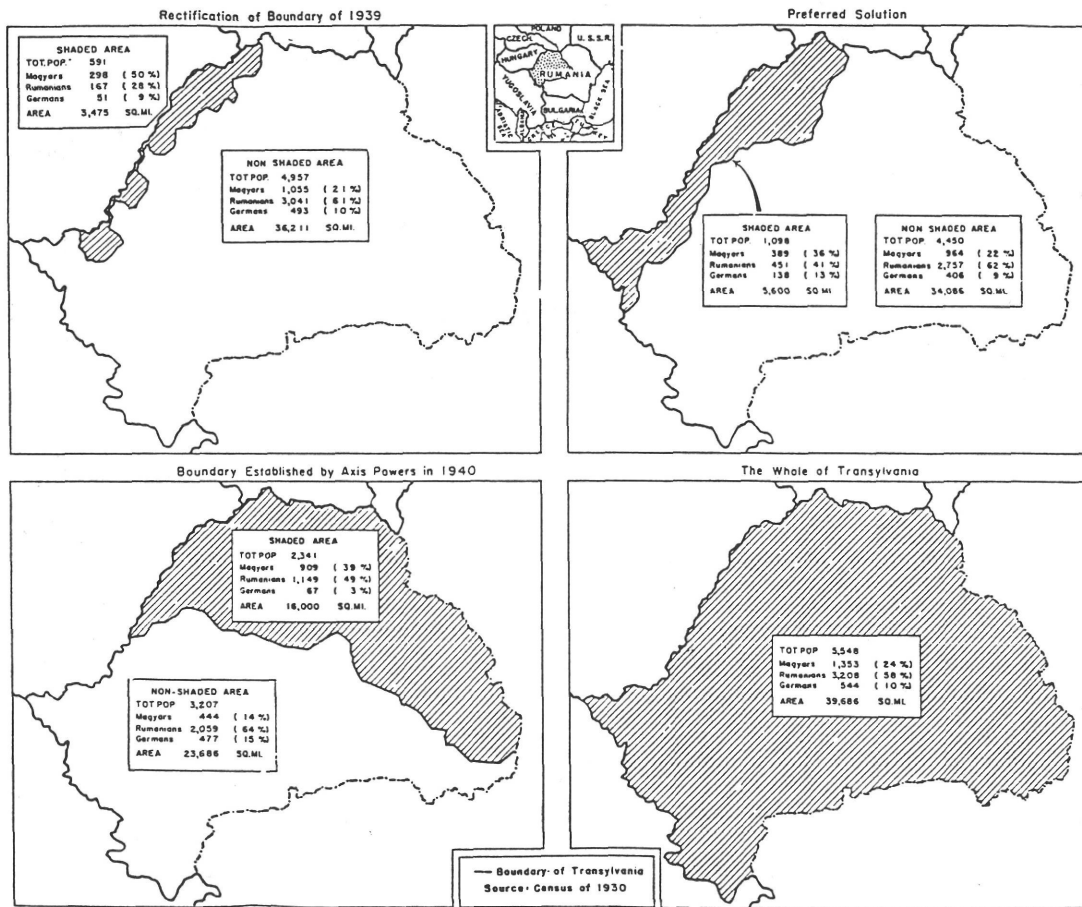
1. Harley Notter, *Postwar Foreign Policy Preparation 1939–1945* (Washington, 1949), 3–82; and *Post World War II. Foreign Policy Planning, State Department Records of Harley A. Notter, 1939–1945*. Ed. by Dr. Eduard Mark (Congressional Information Service, 1987), IX–XII.
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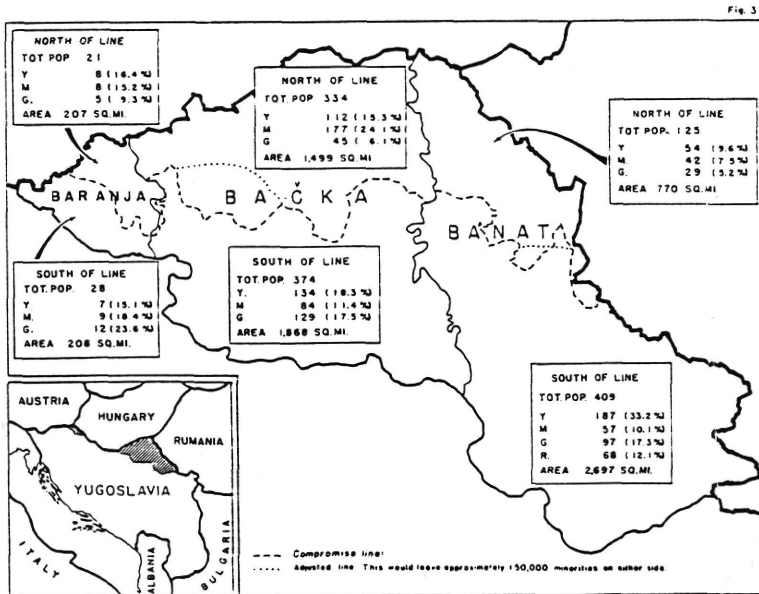
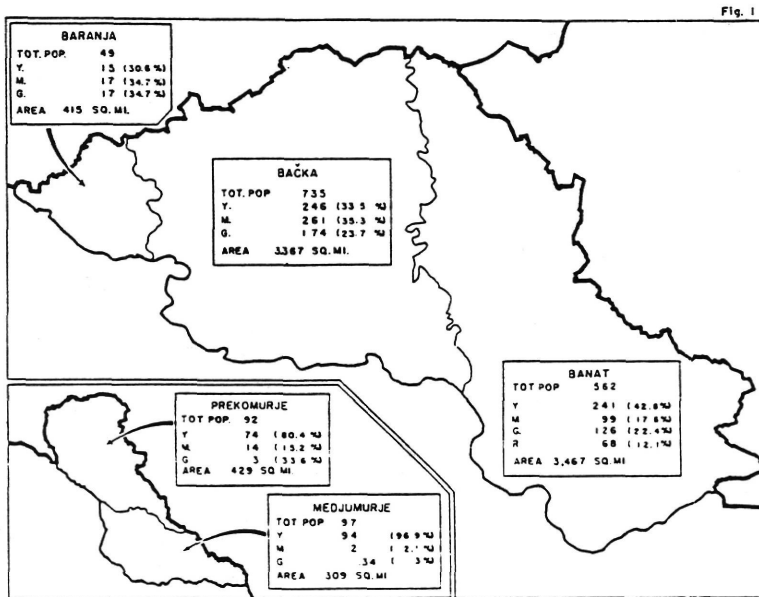
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Map 2. Slovak-Hungarian frontier
Population in thousands



Map 3. Transylvania
Population in thousands



Map 4. Yugoslav-Hungarian frontier
 Population in thousands
 Mother tongue

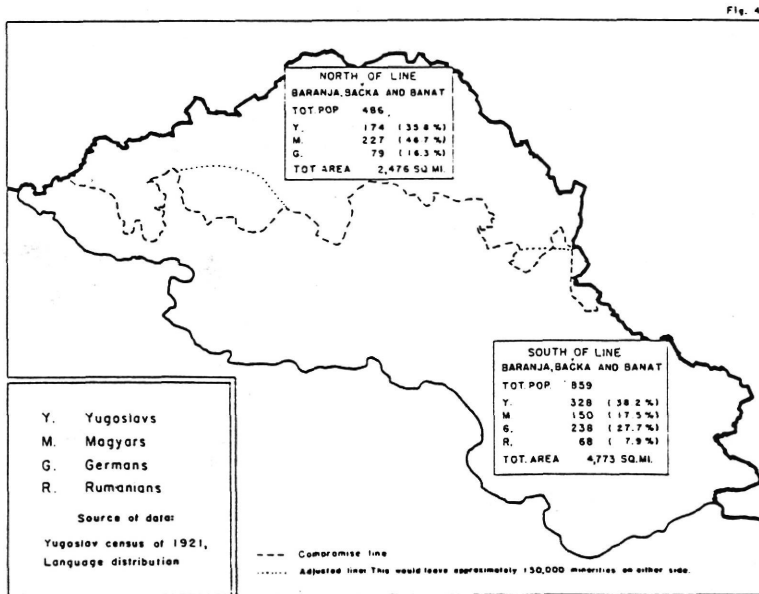
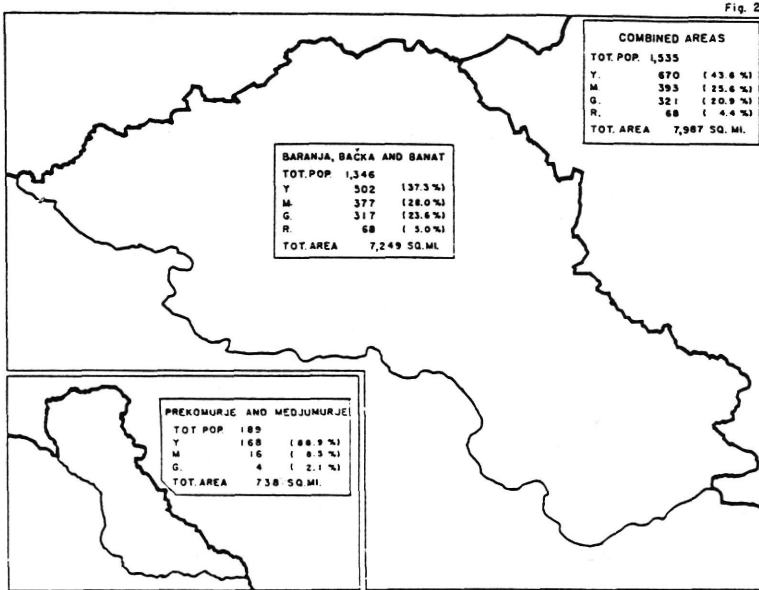


Figure 1
PRE-MUNICH FRONTIERS

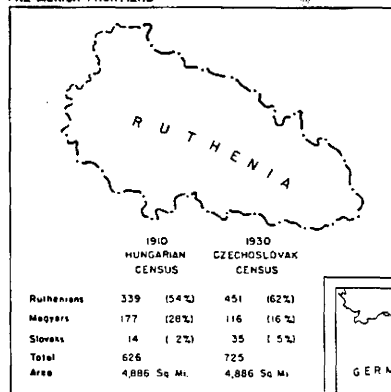
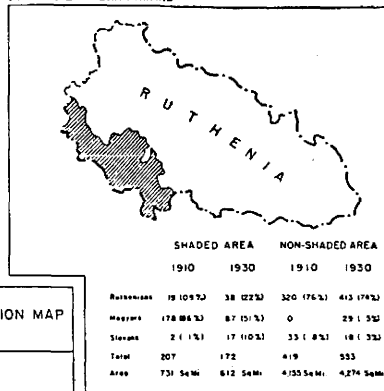


Figure 2
CESSION BY VIENNA AWARD



	SHADED AREA		NON-SHADED AREA	
	1910	1930	1910	1930
Ruthenians	9 (10%)	30 (33%)	330 (82%)	421 (65%)
Magyars	78 (86%)	55 (59%)	99 (18%)	63 (10%)
Slovaks	0	4 (4%)	14 (3%)	31 (5%)
Total	89	90	537	635
Area	535 Sq. Mi.		4,331 Sq. Mi.	



Figure 3



	SHADED AREA		NON-SHADED AREA	
	1910	1930	1910	1930
Ruthenians	11 (5%)	4 (8%)	338 (86%)	447 (63%)
Magyars	17 (80%)	15 (17%)	163 (26%)	111 (16%)
Slovaks	0	2 (10%)	14 (2%)	35 (5%)
Total	19	21	607	704
Area	125 Sq. Mi.		4,781 Sq. Mi.	



Figure 4

Map 5. Subcarpathian-Ruthenian-Hungarian frontier
Population in thousands