

Franco-Rumanian Intervention in Russia and the *Vix Ultimatum*: Background to Hungary's Loss of Transylvania.

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On March 21, 1919, the democratic Hungarian government of Mihály Károlyi collapsed and gave way to the Hungarian Soviet Republic. In that year of the "Red Scare" the rise of the Béla Kun regime strengthened the spectre of world revolution.

With the fall of the Károlyi regime, Hungary's first democratic experience met an untimely death. The direct cause of the government's collapse was the renowned *Vix Ultimatum*, a French-inspired memorandum from the Paris Peace Conference. The note, delivered to the Hungarians on March 20, 1919, by the head of the French Military Mission in Hungary, Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel Ferdinand Vix, seemed to legitimize Rumanian occupation of Transylvania. The crisis this development provoked in Hungary made some contemporary observers, among them the American General Tasker H. Bliss and the South African General Jan Smuts, believe that Rumanian occupation of Transylvania was a scheme of the Allied Supreme Commander, Marshal Ferdinand Foch, whose plan for an Allied attack on Russia required the placation of Rumania.¹ Historians of this period came to accept this view.²

Since the *Vix Ultimatum* was delivered almost one month after its issuance in Paris, the selection of the date of its presentation has remained a mystery.³ Recent publications have offered various explanations why the French chose March 20 as the date to hand over the fateful document. In Hungary, Professor Sándor Vadász has suggested that Colonel Vix was ordered by his superiors to transmit the memorandum on that date because French military preparations to enforce it had by then been completed.⁴ Tibor Hajdu, the best known authority on the Hungarian revolutions of 1918-1919, believes that the date was chosen because the Paris Peace Conference was ready then to reopen the discussion of the invasion of Russia. According to this thesis, the French military leaders were preparing the ground for such an invasion by handing the ultimatum to the Hungarians.⁵ In the United States, the present author has concluded that the date of transmittal was an arbitrary decision of Colonel Vix to reinforce his waning authority over the Hungarians.⁶

The opening of the archives of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs for 1918 to 1929 in the summer of 1972 shed new and startling light on the affair. It is now evident that the Allied forces in eastern Europe under the command of General Louis Franchet d'Esperey were not ready to transmit the memorandum to the Hungarians in the

middle of March. It was only on the urgent orders of the French Premier and Minister of War, Georges Clemenceau, that Franchet d'Esperey had it delivered then. Clemenceau's orders were prompted by a sudden crisis in southern Russia where Allied troops under French command were being defeated by the Red Army. To obtain quick reinforcements from neighbouring Rumania, Clemenceau had to pay off the Rumanians at once with the Transylvanian territory they coveted. Thus the Allied authorisation of the occupation of Transylvania by the Rumanians, and the fall of the Károlyi regime were precipitated not by French intentions of attacking Russia but by the need to protect Allied troops already in the Ukraine.

Direct French intervention in Rumania began in the aftermath of Rumania's defeat by Germany. In October, 1918, General Henri Berthelot was ordered to bring Rumania back into the war either by persuasion or by force.⁷ Berthelot's French troops were part of the Allied Army of the Orient under the command of General Franchet d'Esperey in the Balkans. Berthelot was responsible to Franchet d'Esperey for his orders. With the approach of the armistice with Germany, which came one day after Rumania's re-entry into the war, Berthelot's responsibility was broadened. On November 2, he was appointed to command the Allied interventionist forces in southern Russia. For his activities in Russia he was directly responsible to the Minister of War and to the General Staff, but his military mission in Rumania and his troops in occupied Rumania and Transylvania, now named the Army of the Danube, remained subordinate to General Franchet d'Esperey, who was in command of the whole Balkan theater, Hungary and Rumania included.

The division of Berthelot's responsibility indicates that for the French leaders the destruction of Bolshevism in Russia was more pressing than the political and military situation in the Balkans. Berthelot's task in Russia was the progressive invasion of Russian territory, including occupation of the ports of Odessa, Nikolaev and Sevastopol on the Black Sea and of Taganrog on the Sea of Azov. Inland his advance was expected to reach the Dnieper and Donets region where Allied detachments were to give advice and material support to the anti-Communist White forces.⁹

French intervention in Russia began on December 18 with the landing of 1,800 French troops at Odessa.¹⁰ In his zeal to find allies for intervention, Clemenceau even supported Rumania's participation in the Peace Conference as a minor ally. This was a *volte-face* for the French leader, who had earlier claimed that he could not accept Rumania as an ally because it had signed a separate peace treaty with the Central Powers on May 7, 1918.¹¹ On December 29 the French foreign minister, Stephen Pichon, announced in the Chamber of

Deputies in Paris that the Rumanian army was being reorganized and ready to intervene in Russia. That a territorial bounty had to be paid for the Rumanian support was implicit in Pichon's view that the organization of the states in central Europe could not be based on self-determination. France's aim was to create strong east European allies—a stance justified as the victor's right over the vanquished. Clemenceau supported Pichon by stating that he pinned his faith on a system of alliances to preserve the peace of Europe.¹²

Pichon's public statement was preceded by instructions to the French ambassador in Bucharest to express the French government's support for Rumania's presence at the Peace Conference as an ally. The Rumanians were being told that the Secret Treaty of Bucharest had been annulled by the Peace Treaty of Bucharest of May 7, 1918. Pichon, however, had promised the Rumanians that the French would ask the Allies to support Rumanian demands based on the Secret Treaty.¹³ Still, France's rejection of Rumanian claims rooted in the Secret Treaty of Bucharest was significant, for the Rumanians were in the process of advancing into western Transylvania, an area promised them in the Secret Treaty. The Belgrade Military Convention of November 13, 1918, between Franchet d'Esperey and the Hungarians, however, had clearly stated that it was for Hungary to administer the area unless the Peace Conference decided the fate of Transylvania otherwise.¹⁴ Rumania's advance was supported by General Berthelot, much to the despair of Colonel Vix in Budapest, whose role was to oversee Hungarian observance of the terms of the Belgrade convention. General Berthelot, who was in Budapest in January, informed Vix that he considered the Belgrade convention arbitrary and voiced his support for Rumanian expansion. To Vix and his superiors, Berthelot's behaviour seemed insubordinate.¹⁵ On January 13, 1919, Franchet d'Esperey lodged a complaint that Berthelot seemed to be disregarding Clemenceau's orders and acting on his own rather than under his (Franchet d'Esperey's) command.¹⁶ Franchet d'Esperey buttressed his complaint by claiming that Berthelot's actions were weakening central authority in Hungary and would facilitate the progress of Bolshevism there.¹⁷

General Berthelot, who was aware of the assailability of his attitude, tried to gain Clemenceau's support by arguing that Rumania must be treated generously because of her proximity to Russia. Berthelot called the Hungarians the enemies of France and asked for a Transylvanian boundary unfavorable to Hungary which would also make Rumania pro-French and a virtual French colony. He also reminded Clemenceau that the Rumanians had re-entered the war: by doing so they had fulfilled France's wishes and, as a result, deserved to be treated as old allies.¹⁸ What Berthelot was really seeking was Clemenceau's explicit support of the Secret Treaty of Bucharest.

The French leader's reply was not long in coming. He expressed the view that the Rumanian Peace Treaty with the Central Powers annulled original Allied commitments to Rumania. She had also co-operated with the enemy with her annexation of Russian Bessarabia. Thus, he concluded, Rumania was treated very fairly when it was invited to the Peace Conference as a minor ally. As for the boundaries drawn by the Belgrade convention, Clemenceau upheld them as a military demarcation line. In support of General Franchet d'Esperey he called on General Berthelot not to act as a broker for Rumania, and either to obey his orders or request his own recall.¹⁹ When Count August Saint-Aulaire, the French Ambassador to Bucharest, came to Berthelot's defense, the angry premier accused the general of sounding like a Rumanian statesman rather than an impartial judge of the Rumanian situation.²⁰

Clemenceau's heated messages indicate that in January, when French intervention in southern Russia was proceeding smoothly, even without Rumanian help, he took Franchet d'Esperey's warning seriously. The threat of Bolshevism and anarchy in Hungary forced Clemenceau to retreat from his previous stand on Rumania which was now seen as causing rather than stopping the spread of communism. Even Berthelot's strange reference to French colonial opportunities seemed to have little impact, but perhaps this was due to a general assumption that the Balkans would fall into the French sphere of influence anyhow.²¹

The complaint about Berthelot's behaviour forced Clemenceau to reinstate his earlier orders delineating the areas of responsibility of Franchet d'Esperey and Berthelot. The former was in charge of supervising all armistices in eastern Europe, and was also ordered to see to it that the territorial status quo was not disturbed in Transylvania or elsewhere in Hungary. This explicit order was necessary since, despite the Belgrade convention, frontier changes were being made in Slovakia on Czechoslovak government initiative.²²

Clemenceau confirmed that Berthelot was chief of the French Army of the Danube in Rumania, subordinate to Franchet d'Esperey, and in charge of troops in southern Russia, where he had three French, one Italian and three Greek divisions under him. The Rumanians were to contribute as many troops there as Berthelot deemed necessary. As before, Berthelot was directly responsible to Clemenceau and Foch for his activities in Russia, but his supplies in Russia were in the hands of Franchet d'Esperey, who therefore also had some influence over his activities there.²³

Clemenceau's critical attitude toward Rumanian expansion did not really jeopardize French influence in Rumania, for the other great powers regarded Rumania's aggrandizement by force of arms with far greater disapproval. On January 25, the Peace Conference adopted

President Wilson's resolution against the use of armed force "to gain possession of territory, the rightful claim to which the Peace Conference is to be asked to determine."²⁴ Next, the Supreme Council referred Rumania's territorial claims to a "Commission for the Study of Territorial Questions Relating to Rumania." The eight-member panel of French, British, Italian and American experts was to examine Rumania's claims on its four neighbours—Russia, Serbia, Bulgaria and Hungary.

But the Rumanians disregarded both Wilson's call for peace and the new commission; they continued to advance into Hungarian territory. By February 14 they had pushed their front to the line of Máramarosziget (Sighet) through Zilah (Zălău), Csucsă (Cuca) and Nagysebes (Sebeş) to the Szamos (Someşul) river. According to Franchet d'Esperey, their ultimate aim was to occupy lands southeast of the Tisza accorded to them by the Secret Treaty of Bucharest. Thus he saw war between the Rumanians and Hungarians as being near. The Hungarians fielded 5,000 troops to repel any further advance in the area of Csucsă (Cuca). To prevent a bloody imbroglio, the general requested his superiors to draw a demarcation line that would separate the two belligerents by a zone occupied by French troops. This was necessary, he argued, as the Rumanians' past, uncontested advances had whetted their appetite and they were now regarded by the Hungarians as deliberately violating the Belgrade convention.²⁵

The Supreme Council's Rumanian commission, which began to work out a frontier between Hungary and Rumania on February 11,²⁶ received Franchet d'Esperey's urgent appeal the following day.²⁷ It realized that in order to avoid conflict a neutral zone would have to be set up. The experts of the commission proposed the establishment of a zone which would put the Hungarians behind a line running ten kilometers west of Vásárosnamény, the junction of the Kis Kőrös and Nagy Kőrös rivers, Algyő and north of Szeged. The Rumanians were to halt their troops ten kilometers east of Szatmárnémeti (Satu-Mare) Nagyvárad (Oradea) and Arad.

When the Supreme Military Council took up the recommendation, the military leaders in Versailles suggested certain changes. On February 19, 1919, General Alby, Chief of the French General Staff, spoke of the military aspects of the zone. He said that in the light of the need to re-establish order, it would be wise to renounce the military convention of Belgrade and to draw a new demarcation line between Rumania and Hungary. He argued that the lines proposed by the Rumanian commission left in the neutral zone such important rail centers as Nagyvárad (Oradea), Nagykároly (Carei) and Szatmárnémeti (Satu-Mare)—cities that controlled Transylvania's lifeline. If the Rumanians were to fight against Bolshevism in Transylvania, it was illogical to deny them these communication centers. He also claimed

that, since French troops were to occupy Arad, they could not occupy the other cities because Berthelot would have to send his troops to southern Russia. Rumanian occupation of the rail centers would therefore be necessary.²⁸

It has been argued that the French military view of the shape of the neutral zone was an organic part of the military plans of the Allied Supreme Commander, Marshal Foch, who was intent on destroying Bolshevism in Russia. Indeed, by February 17, the French General Staff had circulated a seven-page "Plan of Action in Russia." The first step in this project was to encircle Russia. In the north, this was to be done by organizing a Polish army strengthened by the return of Polish troops from France. In the south, an allied force made up of three French, three Greek, one English, one Italian and two Rumanian divisions would occupy the Ukraine and reconquer the Donets basin from the Bolsheviks. The second step included the organization of a Russian army from the prisoners of war in Germany and from Russian troops in France, Algeria and Macedonia. The last step was to be a general offensive that would enable the White Russian troops to destroy the Red Army before the winter of 1919-1920. The plan concluded with the observation that it was necessary to know how much support the Allied states were willing to give to the venture.²⁹ It seems that concessions to Rumania were motivated by Foch's wish to transfer the Danubian Army to the offensive against the Bolsheviks and to encourage the Rumanians to follow suite by catering to their designs on Transylvania.

The question of the neutral zone was put on the agenda of the Council of Ten on February 21, 1919. In the absence of the leaders of the Big Four, the Allied representatives accepted the arguments of the military specialists in Versailles and requested them to work out the final details of the military plan.³⁰

According to the Supreme Military Council in Versailles, the neutral zone was to be policed by troops of two-battalion strength with some cavalry regiments to maintain order. The limits of the Hungarian withdrawal were a line "leaving the Tisza five kilometers northwest of Vásárosnamény, passing five kilometers to the west of Debrecen to three kilometers west of Dévaványa and continuing west of Gyoma, five kilometers west of Hódmezővásárhely and Szeged, rejoining the old frontier south of Szeged." In this area the cities of Szeged and Arad were to be under French occupation.³¹

The Rumanians were to have an eastern demarcation line that followed the main road from Arad to Nagyszalonta (Salonta) and the Nagyvárad (Oradea)—Nagykároly (Carei)—Szatmárnémeti (Satu-Mare) railway line. The three rail centers were excluded from Rumanian occupation but "were available for the use of Rumanian troops and Rumanians living in the areas controlled by the Allies, for

economic purposes." The northern limits of the demarcation line followed the river Szamos (Someşul). The Peace Conference adopted the final version of the plan on February 26.³²

Since the establishment of the neutral zone was a military matter, the decision of the Peace Conference was transmitted by Clemenceau to Franchet d'Esperey on March 1, 1919, for execution.³³ On March 5, the Allied Commander in the Orient informed Berthelot of the decision. Berthelot was to pass it on to the Rumanians but it was to be kept from the Hungarians. Franchet d'Esperey also requested Berthelot to ask the Rumanians not to act prematurely and to wait for Franchet d'Esperey to give them the date to move forward. Berthelot was to supply Franchet d'Esperey with information on the disposition of the Rumanian troops that would move into Transylvania so that he (Franchet d'Esperey) could plan a date for the Hungarian withdrawals to begin. Franchet d'Esperey also saw the need to inform Paris of the date of execution of the Allied plan.

Franchet d'Esperey, who was weary of Berthelot's tendency to disregard his orders, told him that immediate responsibility for the French troops in Hungary was with General de Lobit in Belgrade, the commander of the French Army of Hungary. It was he who was empowered to handle the final details of executing the plan, which was to be supervised by an officer appointed by Franchet d'Esperey. With this in mind, Franchet d'Esperey warned Berthelot not to send to Hungary any missions that would duplicate the tasks of General de Lobit.³⁴

Franchet d'Esperey seemed to have been disappointed by the generous temporary demarcation line accorded the Rumanians. It appears that he had expected the approval of his proposed neutral zone, pushing the Rumanians back to their old line between Nagybánya (Baia-Mare) and Kolozsvár (Cluj). After all, he did not believe in the Rumanian bogey of Bolshevism in Transylvania and had been opposed to French intervention in Russia from the start.³⁵

Having seen Rumania's unauthorized advances legitimized in Paris, Franchet d'Esperey began to assume that the memorandum of February 26 would lead to the permanent award of Transylvania to the Rumanian ally. He also believed that such a development would lead to war between Rumania and Hungary, therefore Rumania had to continue to mobilize to war. He felt that the Rumanians should organize eight divisions to face the six divisions that were allowed to Hungary under the armistice arrangements. Franchet d'Esperey warned Berthelot to make sure that the Rumanians did not withdraw troops from Bessarabia and Dobruja, leaving those areas vulnerable to attack.³⁶

General Franchet d'Esperey's concern about Rumania's preparedness in Bessarabia was occasioned by a sudden turn in the fortunes of

the antibolshevik coalition in southern Russia. On March 1, Franchet D'Esperey had informed Clemenceau and Foch that contingents of the Ninth Red Army under Colonel A.I. Yegorov were advancing on a front stretching from Troiskaya to Pekatchevo. According to intelligence reports, they were to be reinforced by the 20,000 men of the First Army supported by artillery.³⁷ Thus at a time when Marshal Foch was looking to Rumanian intervention in southern Russia, the Red Army was threatening to carry the war into Rumania and recapture Bessarabia.

The change of circumstances in Russia also brought a change in Clemenceau's attitude. When on March 1 General Berthelot formally requested his recall from Rumania, Clemenceau's reply lacked the acerbity of his communications in January. He told Berthelot that the situation in the east had become more delicate and for this reason he could not terminate Berthelot's mission. Rather, he suggested that Berthelot should come to Paris at a convenient time for an interview.³⁸

Clemenceau's temperate response to Berthelot must have upset Franchet d'Esperey, for he went out of his way to discredit Berthelot by blaming the crisis in Russia on him. He reported that, at a time when no reinforcements were arriving from France and the power of the Allied forces was being reduced by attrition, Berthelot encouraged Rumania's expansion in Transylvania. As a result, there was a shortage of troops in Bessarabia at this critical juncture.³⁹

By the time Franchet d'Esperey had filed his new attack on Berthelot, the situation in southern Russia had deteriorated further. In February the Allied troops had occupied Tiraspol, Kherson and Nikolaev. On March 10 the pro-Bolshevik forces of Ataman Grigoriev retook Kherson, and by March 14 Nikolaev had fallen. Soon the Reds were advancing on Odessa.⁴⁰

General Franchet d'Esperey proposed to his superiors in Paris a new line of Bessarabian defense along the Dniester river. He saw the need to put the Rumanian army and the Allied forces under a unified command and proposed General Berthelot for the job so that Berthelot himself might try to undo the errors he had committed. If Berthelot still failed, Franchet d'Esperey nominated General Degoutte to head a single general staff that would include the Rumanian army under its command.⁴¹

On March 12, Franchet d'Esperey sped another telegram to Clemenceau about the Russian situation. He said he was aware that Berthelot was directly responsible to Clemenceau for Russia but, according to his orders of January 28, he was in charge of operations in the east and they were being threatened by the developments in Russia. The Allied commander stated that it was no longer a question of marauding bands of Bolsheviks but of well-organized and well-

disciplined troops under strong command who were imposing order on the chaotic situation in southern Russia. He added that local xenophobia was eroding the morale of the Allied troops. The indigenous population was hostile to them and had shot many in the back in Kherson as the Red Army was approaching. He warned that repetition of such incidents in Odessa, a city of 900,000, could have dangerous consequences.⁴²

Clemenceau's reply came the following day. He ordered Berthelot to deploy Rumanian troops in defense of the Tiraspol-Razdelnaya-Odessa railway line, which was considered a vital link in Odessa's defense, and promised to send several battalions of French infantry to reinforce the city.⁴³ On March 14, new directives cancelled Berthelot's visit to Paris. Apparently Clemenceau also became convinced that Berthelot's powers should be limited. Thus using the excuse of Berthelot's complaint that direct communications between Bucharest and Paris were poor, Clemenceau relieved him of his Russian command. Provisionally, Clemenceau appointed Franchet d'Esperey to command the Allied forces in southern Russia.⁴⁴ The contest between Berthelot and Franchet d'Esperey thus ended in victory for the latter. For the first time, all the Allied forces in eastern Europe were truly under the command of one man.

The new emergency in Russia gave the Rumanians a fresh opportunity to pressure the French for concessions over Hungary. The same day Berthelot lost his Russian command a member of the Rumanian delegation to the Peace Conference, Victor Antonescu, sent a memorandum to Clemenceau stressing the obvious—the possibility of an attack on the Rumanians by the Bolsheviks. He asserted that, according to Rumanian intelligence reports, the Hungarians had reached an accord with the Bolsheviks in the Ukraine and were about to launch their own offensive against Rumania. This claim was completely baseless, but it provided the grounds to argue that Rumania was now encircled and had become the last bastion against Bolshevism. Antonescu therefore requested stronger Allied support for Rumania.

Having identified the Hungarians as allies of the Reds, Antonescu's memorandum went on to complain of Franchet d'Esperey's slow handling of the Peace Conference's decision of February 26. He claimed that, while Franchet d'Esperey was looking for a suitable French officer to supervise the Peace Conference's order, the Hungarians were stripping Transylvania and spreading Bolshevik agitation. These charges were also baseless, but they bolstered his request for immediate action to stop the Hungarians. Antonescu said that, since the Reds in the Ukraine and Hungarians were allies, a commander was needed to take charge of the Ukraine, Transylvania and Hungary. He suggested Bucharest for headquarters.⁴⁵

There is little doubt that Antonescu's candidate for the job was General Berthelot whose headquarters were in Bucharest and whose Hungarophobia was well known. What Antonescu had not anticipated, however, was that Berthelot would be relieved of his duties in the Ukraine on the self-same day he delivered his memorandum to Clemenceau. Nevertheless, in the atmosphere of antibolshevik hysteria in Paris, Antonescu's unfounded accusations had their effect. That very day Clemenceau sent new orders to Franchet d'Esperey about the Peace Conference's February 26 decision. Using almost exactly the same words as Antonescu's memorandum, Clemenceau's new orders referred to the Hungarian's scorched-earth policy in Transylvania and urged Franchet d'Esperey to put the Peace Conference's decision into effect without further delay. Clemenceau also proposed to organize a mixed commission of French, Hungarian and Rumanian members to see that his orders were executed.⁴⁶

The reason for Clemenceau's sudden support for Rumania's appeal for the swift implementation of the February 26 decision is clear. In the light of Franchet d'Esperey's reports, it is unlikely that Clemenceau was taken in by the invention of a Hungarian-Bolshevik alliance. Rather, the French leader wanted to make sure that the Rumanians were rewarded for their intended support of the troubled Allies in southern Russia. The price for Rumania's loyalty was the speedy occupation of areas accorded to them by the Peace Conference.

Franchet d'Esperey's first act as the new commander of the Allied forces in Russia was to ask Clemenceau to recall General Berthelot from Rumania. He claimed that Berthelot was fatigued and discouraged and should be replaced by General Degoutte. He again requested that the Rumanian army be put under his own command. He argued that only the Commander in Chief of the Allied Army of the Orient was able to oversee the whole eastern theater and could deploy the Rumanian troops in such way that the Transylvanian operation would not hurt the situation in Russia.⁴⁷

While Franchet d'Esperey was awaiting a reply from Clemenceau that would remove his nemesis from Bucharest, he went about fulfilling the order regarding Hungary. On March 19 Franchet d'Esperey ordered General de Lobit in Belgrade to transmit the February 26 decision to the Hungarians. At the same time, he appointed General de Gondrecourt to deliver the Allied *démarche* to President Mihály Károlyi.

The boundaries of the neutral zone troubled Franchet d'Esperey as they troubled de Lobit, who as early as March 7 had proposed extending the zone to the Hungarian frontier in the Carpathians. Their reason was to prevent a Rumanian-Hungarian clash in Ruthenia, above the neutral zone designated by the Peace Conference. Franchet

d'Esperey therefore ordered de Lobit to expand the neutral zone all the way to Galicia,⁴⁸ including the city of Munkács (Mukachevo), an area claimed by Edvard Beneš for the Czechoslovaks.

Franchet d'Esperey's order enlarging the neutral zone should have been cleared by the Peace Conference first, but there was no time for that. Clemenceau's order brooked no delay. So Franchet d'Esperey asked Clemenceau to have the change in the neutral zone approved by the Peace Conference *ex post facto*, and make it appear to the Hungarians that it was part of the original Allied demand.⁴⁹ In his eagerness to execute Clemenceau's wishes and to ensure that Rumanian troops would be available to fight the Russians and not the Hungarians, he wanted Clemenceau to present the Allies with a *fait accompli*. This way it would be the task of the Allies, rather than French troops, to coerce Hungary into accepting the ultimatum.⁵⁰

Once the order had been issued for General de Lobit to begin putting the provisions of the memorandum into effect, General Franchet d'Esperey embarked on an inspection tour of Odessa on March 19.⁵¹ But the order hit a snag, for General de Gondrecourt was not in Budapest to hand the memorandum to the Hungarians. For General de Lobit, time was pressing, especially since new complications had been reported by Colonel Vix: the head of the French military mission in Budapest had sent news of the visit to the Hungarian capital by the American military attache to Bucharest, Colonel Yates, and had warned de Lobit that this visit could have serious complications for the French.

The American officer had met Károlyi on March 15 and the Hungarian President had complained to him about the unilateral French orders changing the Belgrade demarcation lines in Slovakia in favour of the Czechoslovaks. He also described the Rumanian advances in Transylvania. Yates had told Károlyi that the Peace Conference had granted Slovakia to the Czechoslovaks and that it might also take a decision in favour of the Rumanians. The Hungarians, who had heard only rumors of the February 26 decision, thus had in effect been forewarned by an Allied representative what they could expect next.

In conversation with Colonel Vix, Yates said that the embittered Hungarians would rather fight the Rumanians than accept the terms of the February 26 decision. He believed that in a conflict the Hungarians would defeat the Rumanians. He told Vix that for this reason he intended to ask Paris to suspend the Peace Conference's resolution until the Rumanians were strong enough to enforce it. Vix was rather upset at what he considered to be the American's meddling in affairs that were a French responsibility.

When General de Lobit received his orders on March 19 to transmit the memorandum to the Hungarians, he told Franchet

d'Esperey that Yates' talks with the Hungarians could inspire them to military resistance.⁵²

It is likely that it was de Lobit's fear of losing precious time that made him order Vix to deliver the memorandum rather than await de Gondrecourt's return to Budapest. Subsequently, Franchet d'Esperey approved de Lobit's change in the procedure as he (Franchet d'Esperey) reported to Clemenceau that the American might have given the Hungarians advance notice.⁵³ It was undesirable to postpone the delivery of the February 26 decision when Clemenceau had ordered Franchet d'Esperey to transmit it as soon as possible. Swift execution of the memorandum was to protect French interests in Russia; the American's proposal could have had the opposite effect.

When de Lobit ordered Vix to hand the memorandum to the Hungarians, another order of General Franchet d'Esperey was overlooked. Franchet d'Esperey had told de Lobit to extend the neutral zone into Ruthenia, but de Lobit told Vix to deliver a memorandum that defined the neutral zone as it had originally been decided upon in Paris.⁵⁴ Vix was told to present the memorandum on March 20, giving the Hungarians forty-eight hours to reply.⁵⁵ He was also informed that if the Hungarians refused to accept the decision of the Peace Conference, no immediate measures would be taken against them.⁵⁶

Upon receipt of his orders, Vix contacted the representatives of the other Allied great powers and called them together for the morning of the twentieth. To keep the operation secret, he did not inform them of the purpose of the meeting. When they arrived at the French mission they were told that they were going to the Hungarian president's office to present the memorandum. When Károlyi read the document, he asked if he could call in his minister of defense, Vilmos Böhm, as the order seemed to be of a military nature. Vix suggested that the Prime Minister, Dénes Berinkey, should also be called in.⁵⁷

Vix's suggestion to call in Berinkey apparently reinforced the Hungarian's suspicion that the memorandum was imposing new political boundaries on Hungary in the guise of military expedience.⁵⁸ Hungarian fears about the political character of the new demarcation lines were reinforced by the omission of Franchet d'Esperey's proposal to extend the neutral zone to the Galician border. Károlyi therefore accused the peace conference in Paris of allowing the Rumanians and the Czechoslovaks to expand across Ruthenia to establish a common frontier. Berinkey added that the lack of a buffer zone in northern Hungary between the Rumanians and Hungarians gave the Rumanians the green light to do just that.⁵⁹

Apparently Vix was unaware that it was precisely Berinkey's argument that Franchet d'Esperey had used in his request to Clemenceau to extend the neutral zone to the Carpathians. Had

Franchet d'Esperey had more time to work out detailed military plans for the neutral zone, the likelihood of the Czechs and the Rumanians permanently linking forces in northeastern Hungary would have been reduced, the fears of the Hungarians allayed and the collapse of Károlyi's regime prevented. It is ironic that Clemenceau's desire to prevent a Bolshevik victory in the Ukraine led to the triumph of Bolshevism in Hungary.

Whether Colonel Vix had deliberately encouraged the Hungarians to believe that the new demarcation lines were political, thereby creating a crisis that led to the rise to power of the Bolsheviks in Hungary is an open question in Hungarian history. Károlyi and Bohm claimed that he did. Nicholas Roosevelt, the American present at the encounter, saw it differently. Captain Roosevelt, whose task in Hungary was to gather information for the American plenipotentiaries in Paris, claimed that Vix gave no such indication.⁶⁰ Soon after the collapse of the Károlyi government, Vix denied the Hungarians' assertion in a letter published in a Budapest paper. In response, Károlyi refuted Vix.⁶¹ In a recent article Dr. Hajdu claims that Vix implied that the Hungarians were right in assuming that the new military frontiers were in fact political in nature.⁶²

Vix's report of the encounter with Károlyi and the Hungarians, which he submitted right after the meeting, belies the Hungarian claim. He considered the Hungarians' view of the political nature of the new demarcation line a Hungarian attempt to debate the issue and to stall implementation of the memorandum.⁶³ He suspected the Hungarians of trying to force a delay while Vix sought new instructions. But Vix was against any delay. Rather than giving the Hungarians more time, he demanded their response within thirty, instead of forty-eight hours.⁶⁴ The memorandum came to be known as the *Vix Ultimatum*.

From Captain Roosevelt's report it is evident that Vix assumed that the Hungarian government would yield to French pressure as it had in the case of the Slovak borders. According to Vix's instructions from his superiors, rejection of the ultimatum would not have occasioned immediate reprisal. Yet Vix went on to threaten the Hungarians that in case of rejection he would be packing his bags.⁶⁵ This warning from the supervisor of the armistice was taken as tantamount to a resumption of warfare. Unbeknown to the Hungarians, Franchet d'Esperey's orders had made Vix's threat a bluff.

The Hungarian statement that no responsible government could accept an ultimatum that truncated the country simply seemed to Vix another ploy. In the months before the delivery of the ultimatum, when the Czechoslovak frontiers seemed to be the burning issue, Prime Minister Károlyi resigned only to be made President. The new prime minister, Berinkey, followed a policy no different from his pre-

decessor's. Following the cabinet crisis of mid-January, Berinkey often threatened to resign in protest against compromises of Hungarian interests. When on March 21 the Hungarian government rejected the ultimatum and resigned,⁶⁶ Vix merely assumed that the new crisis would be solved by the formation of a new cabinet. The former minister of war, Vilmos Böhm, encouraged Vix's assumption.⁶⁷

Böhm, however, failed to inform Vix that the Hungarian leaders had a different solution for this crisis. Now they were working for a social-communist fusion government that was to seek an alliance with Trotsky's powerful Red Army. This coalition was expected to defend Hungary's integrity by force if necessary.⁶⁸ In the evening of March 21 a new "Revolutionary Governing Council" was created with Sándor Garbai as its chairman. Real power, however, was in the hands of the Commissar of Foreign Affairs, Béla Kun, who as a communist leader was expected to attract Bolshevik support for the newly proclaimed Hungarian Soviet Republic.

Hungary therefore sought to retain Transylvania with the help of that army which Clemenceau wanted to defeat with Rumanian support. The *Vix Ultimatum* was to deliver Transylvania to the Rumanians as the prize for their promised support of the threatened French forces in southern Russia. In this imbroglio neither Hungarian nor French hopes were fulfilled. The Red Army was strong enough to defend Bolshevism in Russia but not strong enough to aid and save the Communist revolution in Hungary. The sole victor was Rumania, which was allowed to keep Transylvania under the Trianon Treaty.

NOTES

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2. Arno Mayer, *Politics and Diplomacy of Peacemaking: Containment and Counterrevolution at Versailles, 1918-1919* (New York, 1967), p. 545; Tibor Hajdu, *Az 1918-as magyarországi pártgári demokratikus forradalom* [The 1918 Hungarian Bourgeois-Democratic Revolution] (Budapest, 1968), p. 353; Sherman D. Spector, *Rumania at the Paris Peace Conference: A Study of the Diplomacy of Ioan I.C. Bratianu* (New York, 1962), p. 105; Alfred D. Low, *The Soviet Hungarian Republic and the Paris Peace Conference* (Philadelphia, 1963), p. 46, n. 177; Marcel Berger et Paul Allard, *Les dessous de Traité de Versailles* (Paris, 1933), pp. 117-118.
3. Mayer, *Politics and Diplomacy*, p. 545.
4. Sándor Vadasz, "Vix és Károlyi" [Vix and Károlyi], *Hadtörténelmi Közlemények* [Military History Reports], XVI, No. 2 (1969), 259.
5. Tibor Hajdu, "Adatok a Tanácsköztársaság kikiáltásának történetéhez" [Contributions to the History of the Proclamation of the Soviet Republic], *Párttörténeti Közlemények* [Party History Reports], XVIII, No. 3 (1972), 140-141.
6. Peter Pastor, "The Vix Mission in Hungary, 1918-1919: A Re-examination," *Slavic Review*, XXIX, No. 3 (1970), 496.

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8. Ministère de la Guerre, Etat-Major de l'Armée, Archives historiques, Campagne Contre Allemagne (1914-1918), Clemenceau to Berthelot, Dec. 31, 1918, 20 N 731 (hereafter cited as CCA).
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10. Bradley, *Intervention in Russia*, p. 142.
11. Comte de Saint-Aulaire, *Confessions d'un vieux diplomate* (Paris, 1953), p. 484; Jules Laroche, *Au Quai d'Orsay avec Briand et Poincaré* (Paris, 1957), p. 73; Raymond Poincaré, *Au service de la France*, Vol. X, *Victoire et Armistice 1918* (Paris, 1933), p. 457.
12. *Le Temps*, Dec. 31, 1918.
13. Pichon to Saint-Aulaire, Dec. 30, 1918, CAP, Roumanie, fasc. 32.
14. Bogdan Krizman, "The Belgrade Armistic of November 1918," *Slavonic and East European Review*, LXVIII, No. 110 (1970), 86.
15. Pastor, "The Vix Mission in Hungary," p. 490.
16. Franchet d'Esperey to Clemenceau and Foch, Jan. 13, 1919, CAP, Hongrie, fasc. 44.
17. Franchet d'Esperey to Clemenceau and Foch, Jan. 15, 1919, CAP, Roumanie, fasc. 47.
18. General Berthelot to Clemenceau, Jan. 9, 1919, CAP, Roumanie, fasc. 32.
19. Clemenceau to Berthelot, Jan. 15, 1919, CAP, Roumanie, fasc. 32.
20. Clemenceau to Berthelot, Jan 24, 1919, CAP, Roumanie, fasc. 32; also in Roumanie, fasc. 42.
21. "Raport fait au ministre. Analyse," March 23, 1919, CAP, Serbie, fasc. 25.
22. Pastor, "The Vix Mission in Hungary," pp. 486-489.
23. Instructions pour les Generaux Franchet d'Esperey et Berthelot," Jan. 21, 1919, CAP, Roumanie, fasc. 19.
24. As quoted in Spector, *Rumania at the Paris Peace Conference*, p. 80.
25. Franchet d'Esperey to Clemenceau and Foch, February 13, 1919, CAP, Roumanie, fasc. 47.
26. Spector, *Rumania at the Paris Peace Conference*, p. 103.
27. Rumanian Commission to Allied Supreme Council, Feb. 15, 1919, CAP, Roumanie, fasc. 47.
28. "Note lue par le General Alby devant le Commission des Affaires Roumanies," Feb. 19, 1919, CAP, Roumanie, fasc. 47.
29. "Plan d'action en Russie," Feb. 17, 1919, *The Sonnino Papers*, on microfilm at Harvard University Library, Reel 50.
30. Spector, *Rumania at the Paris Peace Conference*, p. 106.
31. "Rapport sur la creation d'une zone neutre entre Hongrois et Roumains on Transylvanie," Feb. 26, 1919, CCA, 20 N 729, Carton 42; United States Department of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, Paris Peace Conference, 1919*, 13 vols. (Washington, 1942-1947), IV, 157-158 (hereinafter cited as *FRUS-PPC*).
32. *Ibid.*
33. Clemenceau to Franchet d'Esperey, March 1, 1919, CAP, Roumanie, fasc. 47.
34. Franchet d'Esperey to Berthelot, March 5, 1919, CCA, 20 N 732.
35. Bradley, *Allied Intervention in Russia*, p. 137; Paul Azan, *Franchet d'Esperey* (Paris, 1949), p. 240; Jean Charbonneau, ed., *Franchet d'Esperey maréchal de France* (Paris, 1956), p. 150.
36. Franchet d'Esperey to Berthelot, March 6, 1919, CCA, 20 N 732.
37. Franchet d'Esperey to Clemenceau and Foch, March 1, 1919, CAP, Russie, fasc. 33.

38. Clemenceau to Berthelot, March 7, 1919, CCA, 20 N 732.
39. Franchet d'Esperey to Clemenceau and Foch, March 11, 1919, CAP, Russie, fasc. 227.
40. William Henry Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution* (New York, 1965), II, p. 166.
41. Franchet d'Esperey to Clemenceau and Foch, March 12, 1919, CAP, Russie, fasc. 227.
42. *Ibid.*
43. Clemenceau to Franchet d'Esperey and Berthelot, March 13, 1919, CAP, Russie, fasc. 227.
44. Clemenceau to Franchet d'Esperey and Berthelot, March 14, 1919, CAP, Russie, fasc. 227.
45. "Note remanee par M. Antonescu a M. Clemenceau," March 14, 1919, CAP, Roumanie, fasc. 47; for a discussion on Rumania's exploitation of the "Red scare," see Spector, *Rumania at the Paris Peace Conference*, p. 107.
46. Clemenceau to Franchet d'Esperey, March 14, 1919, CAP, Roumanie, fasc. 47; Gondrecourt to Ambassador G. Barrere, March 26, 1919, CAP, Hongrie fasc. 27.
47. Franchet d'Esperey to Clemenceau, March 16, 1919, CAP, Russie, fasc. 228.
48. Franchet d'Esperey to Berthelot, March 19, 1919, CCA, 20 N 731; Franchet d'Esperey to de Lobit, March 20, 1919, CCA, 27 N 89.
49. Franchet d'Esperey to Clemenceau and Foch, March 20, 1919, CAP, Roumanie, fasc. 47.
50. *Ibid.*
51. Franchet d'Esperey to Clemenceau and Foch, March 19, 1919, CAP, Russie, fasc. 228; Azan, *Franchet d'Esperey*, p. 247.
52. Pastor, "The Vix Mission in Hungary," pp. 495-496.
53. Franchet d'Esperey to Clemenceau, March 23, 1919, CAP, Roumanie, fasc. 47.
54. De Lobit to Károlyi, March 19, 1919, CCA, 20 N 732; lacking the documents now available, the author previously assumed that Vix had an open choice when to hand the memorandum to the Hungarians. Pastor, "The Vix Mission in Hungary," n. 45 and p. 496.
55. De Lobit de Gondrecourt, March 19, 1919, CCA, 26 N 89.
56. "Rectification a l'instruction 129 relative a l'organisation zone neutre en Hongrie," March 19, 1919, CCA, 20 N 732; for the original order no. 129 sent to Vix on March 15, see CCA, 26 N 89.
57. *FRUS-PPC*, XII, 414-416.
58. Vilmos Böhm, *Két forradalom tűzében* [In the Fire of Two Revolutions] (Budapest, 1946), pp. 189-191; Michael Károlyi, *Memoirs: Faith Without Illusion* (New York, 1957), p. 152.
59. *FRUS-PPC*, XII, 415-416.
60. *FRUS-PPC*, XII, 415; Nicholas Roosevelt, *A Front Row Seat* (Norman, 1953), p. 109.
61. "Károlyi Vix leveléről" [Károlyi about the Letter of Vix], *Vörös Újság* [Red News], No. 40, March 27, 1919; also in Mihály Károlyi, *Az Új Magyarországról* [For the New Hungary] (Budapest, 1968), pp. 304-305.
62. Hajdu, "Adatok," p. 142; a similar claim was made by Vadász, "Vix és Károlyi," pp. 260-261.
63. Vix to de Lobit, March 20, 1919, CCA, 26 N 89.
64. *Ibid.*
65. *FRUS-PPC*, XII, p. 416.
66. For the text of Károlyi's note see, Francis Deák, *Hungary at the Paris Peace Conference: The Diplomatic History of the Treaty of Trianon* (New York, 1942), pp. 409-410; Reference to Károlyi note is made in CAP, Hongrie, fasc. 27. It was filed in Serie A Carton 1055, Dossier 8, which according to the archive's catalogue, was destroyed during World War II.
67. Vix to de Lobit, March 21, 1919, CCA, 26 N 89.
68. Károlyi, *Memoirs*, pp. 154-155; Böhm, *Két forradalom tűzében*, pp. 195-205.

Nikolaus Lenau and Germanic Literary Interest in Hungary during the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*

Ágnes Huszár Várdy

The importance and utilization of exotic themes in the works of German and Austrian poets and writers became quite fashionable and widespread during the first half of the nineteenth century. This phenomenon was part of a broad intellectual and cultural movement in the Western (especially German-speaking) world, which was manifested in a growing interest in the culture and folklore of the East Central European nations and other foreign countries. This movement had its roots in the eighteenth century in the "noble savage" concept of Rousseau and more specifically in the philosophy of the many-sided Johann Gottfried Herder. Herder's philosophy was a mixture of romantic and nationalist ideas, at the heart of which stood the glorified people, the *Volk*, which in his view were the sole possessors and carriers of the national genius. Herder believed that the national genius manifested itself in indigenous native cultures, especially as expressed through the medium of the mother tongue. He was therefore attracted by the folk songs, ballads and artistic expressions of all nations, especially those which had remained unspoiled by the new cosmopolitan culture and enlightened values of the West—the so-called *Naturvölker*.¹

The majority of the East Central European nations, including the Hungarians, could accordingly be said to fall into this category. The vicissitudes of their history had prevented them from reaching the level of material plenty and political peace necessary for the development and wider diffusion of cosmopolitan sophistication save among their upper classes. At the same time, however, their unspoiled indigenous cultural and ethical values stimulated a nostalgic longing among the peoples of the West, who lived amidst greater material and intellectual abundance. This interest was further enhanced by the Romantic Movement of the early nineteenth century which, besides drawing inspiration from the past, was also intrigued by the uncommon, the exotic and the unusual. One of the results of this search for the exotic was the renewed orientation toward America, where many a culturally and politically disillusioned European hoped to find Utopia; another was the famed "ex oriente lux" movement, resulting in the importation of Oriental themes. These movements directed the attention of Austrian and German poets to the East

* This study is part of a larger monograph on Lenau which is to appear in the near future.