

## István Bethlen and Hungarian Foreign Policy, 1921-1931

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Of all those who helped shape Hungary's foreign and domestic policies after the political turmoil of 1918-20, Count István Bethlen was undoubtedly among the most influential. Prime Minister from 1921 to 1931 and throughout the 1920s a trusted advisor of the Hungarian head of state, Regent Miklós Horthy, Bethlen was in the position to establish guidelines in the formation of foreign policy that would have a lasting impact. His imprint is thus to be found not only on Hungary's foreign policy in the "Bethlen era," from 1921 to 1931, but also in the later years up to and including World War II.

A member of one of the great aristocratic families of Transylvania, Count Bethlen seemed destined to play an important role in public affairs.<sup>1</sup> As a member of the Hungarian Parliament before World War I, he gravitated to the political camp hostile to the *Ausgleich* with Austria. In the revolutionary events after the war he assumed direction of a counterrevolutionary Hungarian group in Vienna called the Anti-Bolshevik Committee. In this position he made vigorous efforts to bring Hungary's plight to the attention of Entente representatives,<sup>2</sup> an activity he continued as a member of the Hungarian peace delegation at Paris. Finally, after several short-lived governments, Regent Horthy appointed Bethlen prime minister in April, 1921. This post he held for over a decade, more than sufficient time to mold Hungarian political life along the lines of his conservative political philosophy.

Bethlen brought a considerable reservoir of experience and intelligence to the task. Having entered Parliament in 1901 at the age of twenty-seven, he had had the opportunity to observe the possibilities and limitations of that historic body. Extensive travel through Europe had added a touch of cosmopolitanism. Above all, Bethlen was a most effective representative and interpreter of traditional Hungarian conservative thought. Highly suspicious of the notions of social and political democracy that the French Revolution and the upheavals of the nineteenth century had produced, and confirmed in this suspicion by the results of Mihály Károlyi's republic of 1919, he sought, as did other

Hungarians of his social and political background, to return to pre-war conditions. On only one major point was he amenable to change. The breaking of the bond joining Hungary to Austria he regarded as irreversible and desirable. Other changes, particularly those involving broadening of the franchise or land reform, he accepted only with utmost reluctance and trepidation. Yet it was one of the characteristics of his successful career that he invariably sensed when changed conditions made a certain position untenable. When this occurred, he would work with consummate skill to minimize the ground that had to be conceded.<sup>3</sup>

The long-term program envisioned by Bethlen was bold in conception: the establishment of a great and powerful Hungary, with the Magyars once again in their rightful place as the dominant nation in the Danubian basin. Here he was at one with virtually all politically active Hungarians in the period between the wars. But Bethlen, in contrast to some of his colleagues on Hungary's radical right wing,<sup>4</sup> saw the true implications of Hungary's defeat in war. Surrounded by the hostile Little Entente, confronted by a powerful alignment of Great Powers supporting the status quo, and enormously weakened militarily and economically by the war and revolutions, Hungary, in Bethlen's view, was totally incapable of conducting an active, dynamic foreign policy. This was the blunt message to his countrymen in his maiden speech to the National Assembly in 1921.<sup>5</sup>

Bethlen's scheme for Hungarian recovery involved a patient, long-term effort by a united nation, and it was based on the conviction that the "prerequisite of a correct foreign policy is a correct domestic policy."<sup>6</sup> Unity — this was the concept he extolled above all in the first years of office, and it was the keystone in what he considered a "correct domestic policy." It implied, above all, the gathering of all the national energies and the rejection of extremist, disruptive movements of any kind, whether emanating from the Right or the Left. To achieve this aim Bethlen fashioned a political system of remarkable inconsistency: true liberal practices were tolerated as well as occasional terror and political oppression.<sup>7</sup> Although the political process precluded all but the "government party" from forming a majority, and the authorities were not averse to the sporadic use of telephone surveillance and electoral intimidation, there nonetheless lingered the legacy of a kind of Whig-Liberalism that allowed for the maintenance of a parliamentary system embracing parties of the Left as well as the Right. With the vital stipulation that the fundamental tenets of the counterrevolutionary regime were not to be called into question, a relatively open expression of political ideas and thought was permitted in the press and literature.<sup>8</sup>

Once order and authority could be reestablished at home, Count Bethlen was prepared to forge a foreign policy predicated on the realities of Hungary's exposed position. The goal, restoration of a large and powerful Hungary, remained constant, but the tactics were made to correspond to the extent of Hungary's recovery and changes in the European balance of power. But as early as 1921 he made it clear to his colleagues that only one approach was conceivable for Hungary: she had to cling tenaciously, if at first unobtrusively, to her demands until a more suitable European diplomatic constellation arose. Underlying this perseverance was the familiar belief, deeply embedded in the thinking of Hungarian statesmen, that the Magyars were predestined by geography to play the leading role in the Danubian region.<sup>9</sup>

This assumption naturally led Bethlen to deduce that conditions in East Central Europe were artificial and transitory. All the new countries, not only Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, but truncated Hungary and Austria as well, were incapable of prolonged life. Thus, Bethlen argued, it was senseless to seek a *rapprochement* with Hungary's new neighbors. They would use all the resources at their disposal to defend their new gains, and even in the unlikely event that minor territorial revision were offered by one or another of the Successor States, this would have to be refused, since it would make it all the more difficult for Hungary to achieve more extensive gains at some future point.<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, Bethlen rejected all schemes for a wider collaboration, such as a Danubian Confederation, which, he averred, would merely lead to Hungarian submission to Slav domination.<sup>11</sup>

Yet at the outset Bethlen saw no alternative to a "policy of fulfillment" of the Treaty of Trianon. Hungary simply could not achieve the desired financial stabilization and economic recovery without the support of Western Europe and the resumption of normal trade with the Successor States. To lure badly needed capital investment into the country, Hungary had to demonstrate to the satisfaction of Western bankers and statesmen her acceptance of the peace settlement. Disruptions, such as anti-Semitic excesses or armed band activity in the Burgenland,<sup>12</sup> could no longer be condoned. Blatant violations of the military clauses of Trianon had to be avoided, and Hungary would have to promote her political rehabilitation by gaining admission to the League of Nations. An assiduous effort along these lines by Bethlen produced fairly rapid results. In September, 1922, Hungary won admission to the League, after having been rejected in its first bid a year earlier. In early 1924 the support of Great Britain enabled Hungary to secure a badly needed loan and a moratorium on reparation payments.<sup>13</sup> In return, Hungary, at the insistence of the Little Entente, was compelled to promise "in accor-

dance with the stipulations of the Treaty of Trianon, strictly and loyally to fulfill the obligations contained in the said Treaty, and in particular the military clause, as also the other international engagements.”<sup>14</sup>

Bethlen’s strategy proved highly effective. Hungary’s currency was soon stabilized, Western capital began to flow in vigorously, and, buoyed by high world wheat prices, the economy by 1928 was flourishing.<sup>15</sup> Even Hungary’s radical right-wingers, who had opposed Bethlen’s “policy of fulfillment” as a “sell-out” of Hungarian interests, were silenced by the speedy recovery.

Bethlen’s successes were widely admired in Great Britain as well, even though most Britons, if we are to believe a popular jingle of the 1920s, preferred to

“let the hairy Magyar  
Stew in his horrid juice.”<sup>16</sup>

Sentiment in the Foreign Office was quite favorable to Bethlen, who came to enjoy a reputation as a “straightforward, honest, intensely patriotic man . . . with whom it’s easy to do business.”<sup>17</sup> A measure of his acceptance by the British political establishment was the granting of an audience with the king in 1930, thus making him the first leader of a defeated Central Power to be so honored. Bethlen carefully nurtured this image of a responsible and moderate statesman by frequently affirming his respect and admiration for England<sup>18</sup> and by giving public and private assurances that, though he regarded eventual revision of the Treaty of Trianon as essential, he would employ only peaceful methods to achieve this goal.<sup>19</sup>

The assiduous efforts of Count Bethlen to ingratiate himself with the English political and financial establishment might lead one to conclude that he believed that among the Great Powers Britain was the most likely and most important champion of Hungary’s revisionist cause. Yet the evidence would not sustain such a conclusion. It is true that Bethlen, like so many of his contemporaries of similar social and political background in Hungary, was an Anglophile and naturally would have been delighted to accept a British offer of help in redrawing the borders of Danubian Europe. Yet Bethlen was nothing if not a realist: though at one point he seems briefly to have indulged in wishful thinking about a radical change of course in London’s continental policies,<sup>20</sup> in general he harbored no illusions about the possibility of direct British support for Hungarian revisionism. It was quite clear to him that the pro-Hungarian utterances of former prime minister David Lloyd George, the newspaper magnate Lord Harold Sidney Rothermere, and a small but vigorous contingent in the House of Lords did not count for much in the

arena of international relations.

Far more significant was the fact that the British government, wedded as it was to the status quo and the concept of collective security, could not in the foreseeable future openly champion, or even acknowledge the validity of, Hungary's territorial claims. At no point in the 1920s did London ever express even limited approval of Hungary's efforts to undo the Trianon treaty. Lord George Curzon, British foreign secretary in the immediate post-war period, had enunciated in 1920 a principle that remained at the core of Britain's Danubian policy for most of the interwar period. Hungary's hope for prosperity, he had asserted, could be based only on the "abandonment of such dreams as Hungarian political parties seem freely to indulge in of recovering the position that Hungary formerly held in Central Europe."<sup>21</sup>

Of course, this "dream" of restoring Magyar hegemony in Danubian Europe was fundamental to Bethlen's foreign policy in the 1920s. That he continued to court the British government in spite of the bleak prospects for any concrete dividends reflected not only his recognition of the key role that Western capital had to play in Hungary's economic recovery but also a political pragmatism that formed part of his Transylvanian heritage. A review of Transylvania's rather successful diplomatic balancing act between the Turks and the Habsburgs in the 16th and 17th centuries may well have suggested to Bethlen that a skillful, realistic foreign policy that left open a multitude of options could bring remarkable rewards for a small and essentially weak East European state.

It was this tradition that seems to have enlightened Bethlen's policy toward France and the Anglo-Saxon powers in the 1920s. Though to many Magyars it seemed unlikely, some day in the future, in a diplomatic context that statesmen in the 1920s could hardly envision, one or more of these more remote powers might be persuaded to champion Hungary's revisionist cause, or at least to give tacit approval to territorial changes in Danubian Europe. Thus, Bethlen apparently reasoned, nothing should be done unduly or capriciously to alienate the British or French; no opportunity neglected to erode, however imperceptibly, the commitment to the status quo; no compunction be felt about offering assurances of Hungary's pacific intentions, even though secretly the use of force was far from ruled out. It was in line with this thinking that Bethlen's foreign policy retained sufficient flexibility so that there always remained a possibility of a *rapprochement* even with France, the main buttress of the peace settlement and the patron of the Little Entente.

In the mid-1920s, however, when the Allied military control in Hungary was reduced and the opportunity for Hungary to pursue an "active policy" seemed to be unfolding, Bethlen's search for allies among the Great Powers led him not to Paris or London, but to Rome and Berlin. The first tasks on the agenda, so Bethlen wrote to Horthy in 1926, were to escape from the diplomatic isolation that had been imposed on Hungary and to split the Little Entente. This would be the prelude to a liquidation of Trianon, a task that, in Bethlen's optimistic estimate, could possibly be achieved "in about four or five years."<sup>22</sup>

It was obvious to Bethlen that overt support for the program he was sketching could hardly be expected to come from France or England. Indeed, it would have been highly injudicious and self-defeating to inform the chancelleries of Western Europe of his goals. Since 1925 the French and British had been urging Hungary to follow Germany's example and join her neighbors in a kind of "Eastern Locarno" pact, whereby the countries of Danubian Europe would pledge to resolve their differences peaceably and enter into a new era of reconciliation and fruitful cooperation. In response Bethlen had stated, somewhat disingenuously, that he favored "some sort of conciliation" in Danubian Europe, although he believed that formidable obstacles impeded progress in that direction.<sup>23</sup> For the specific idea of an "Eastern Locarno" the Hungarian leader had only disparaging words. It would be wishful thinking, he asserted, to believe that Hungary might negotiate an agreement with the Little Entente similar to that which Germany had arranged with France, in which Berlin had been required to renounce revision on her western but not her eastern frontiers. Germany was a powerful country, Bethlen pointed out, and France had made an agreement with her out of fear. But Hungary's neighbors made it absolutely clear that a Locarno-type agreement in Danubian Europe was possible only if Hungary renounced forever revision of any of her frontiers. This, of course, was impossible, since "the Hungarian nation would nail to the gate any statesman who would sign a second Trianon."<sup>24</sup>

Given the assumptions and objectives of Count Bethlen's "active policy" of the late 1920s and the realities of European international relations, it was only logical that he should solicit support from those countries and political groups that were dissatisfied with the Paris peace settlement and might be willing to contribute to its disruption. Like the pragmatists in the German Foreign Ministry, Bethlen's initial thought early in the 1920s was to pave the way for Hungary's emergence from isolation by a pact with the pariah of Europe, Soviet Russia. But the stubborn anti-Bolshevism of Admiral Horthy stymied all efforts in this

direction and the less spectacular aim of undermining the Little Entente by wooing away Yugoslavia was undertaken. With Horthy's approval, negotiations began in 1925 and continued through the next year.<sup>25</sup> The unexpected result was a pact concluded in 1927 with Italy, not Yugoslavia.

Hungary's interest in a *rapprochement* with her southern neighbor had drawn the attention of Mussolini, who at the time was seeking to counter France's position of strength in Eastern Europe by staking out an Italian sphere of influence in the Balkans and along the Danube. The Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation thus admirably served the interests of both parties: Italy gained an East European ally around which an anti-French bloc might be built; Hungary, for her part, succeeded in demonstrating that, though weak and reduced to the status of a pawn, she could still play a role on the diplomatic chessboard. Though the clauses of the treaty were quite innocuous and were similar to those Italy concluded with Romania, Bulgaria, and Turkey during the 1920s, in a secret and simultaneous exchange of letters, Bethlen and Mussolini pledged to cooperate closely and consult beforehand on "all questions that might in any way touch on the present cordial relationship."<sup>26</sup> The treaty of 1927, the only bilateral agreement Hungary was to make with a Great Power until her adherence to the Anti-Comintern Pact in 1939, opened an era of intimate relations with Italy that was to extend to the final years of the next European war.

The treaty with Italy was the major diplomatic triumph of Bethlen's career. It won for Hungary the important, if somewhat boisterous, support of Mussolini for the revisionist campaign. A dutiful patron, the Duce did not fail to make ebullient references to Hungary's cause in his speeches and pronouncements. In concrete terms, the forging of close Hungarian-Italian ties greatly increased Budapest's room for maneuver in such matters as military rearmament and efforts to disrupt the Little Entente. However, there is much evidence to support the argument that though Bethlen valued the support of Italy, he doubted that the treaty of 1927 could alone serve as an adequate framework for a successful Hungarian revisionist policy. Perhaps, like many Hungarians, he could not completely overcome a fundamental distrust of Italy as an ally, a distrust stemming from what could be regarded as Italy's perfidious conduct during the Great War. More likely, Bethlen simply shared the skepticism of some other prescient European statesmen about Italy's ability in the long run to sustain the role of a Great Power in Europe.

In any case, Count Bethlen made it clear privately, though never publicly, that the natural and necessary complement to Hungary's treaty

with Italy was a similar arrangement with Germany.<sup>27</sup> Both powers were desirable allies for Hungary, he argued, since each, albeit for different reasons, was disenchanted with the status quo and desirous of certain revisions in the peace treaties. In fact, it seems most likely that of the two possible partners, Germany loomed as the more important in Bethlen's calculations. As early as 1921 he had justified his temporary "policy of fulfillment" by explaining that only a rejuvenated Germany could provide the "favorable European constellation" for a successful revision of the Trianon treaty.<sup>28</sup> Once Italy had been won over to the support of Hungary, there thus remained the pressing task of enlisting Germany's assistance as well.

Because evidence pertaining to the most secretive elements in Bethlen's foreign policy has become available only in recent years, Western historians have generally erred in their interpretation of Bethlen's policies in the 1920s, especially on the question of Hungary's relations with Italy and Germany. Bethlen himself greatly obfuscated the issue when, in later years and in a greatly changed Europe, he suggested that his pact with Italy had been aimed "even more against Germany than against the Slavs."<sup>29</sup> Such less than candid statements served to buttress the widely held notion that it was one of Bethlen's successors as Prime Minister, Gyula Gömbös, who was the author of a Hungarian foreign policy based on a Rome-Berlin "Axis." Yet, even while Gömbös was toying with this idea in an obscure Hungarian journal, Bethlen as Prime Minister was attempting to set the foundation for a Hungarian foreign policy based in part on this orientation.

In 1926 Count Bethlen told a confidant that "the axis of my policy is mediation between Italy and Germany."<sup>30</sup> Accordingly, after conclusion of the treaty with Italy the Hungarian leader worked assiduously, though in vain, to facilitate an Italian-German *rapprochement* that would set the stage for a German-Italian-Hungarian alignment. Although on several occasions in the 1920s Count Bethlen emphasized to German diplomats his belief in a "community of fate" between their two countries and the need for collaboration in a revisionist program,<sup>31</sup> a close political relationship between Berlin and Budapest proved elusive. Economic and ideological differences, as well as friction over the treatment of the German minority in Hungary, prevented the forging of intimate political ties.<sup>32</sup>

Yet Bethlen was not daunted; indeed, it seems that when he spoke of a community of interest between Magyars and Germans, Bethlen was referring not so much to those Germans who had created the Weimar Republic and remained committed to it, but rather to those, particularly of the National Right, who in spirit were hostile to the political and



social reforms enacted in Germany after the war. It is characteristic that the German with whom Bethlen seems to have maintained the most cordial relations and discussed his most secret plans was not Gustav Stresemann but General Hans von Seeckt, Chief of the Army Command until 1926. Moreover, several German political groups antagonistic to the Weimar experiment, most notably the Stahlhelm, were the beneficiaries of fairly substantial subsidies from Budapest during the Bethlen era.<sup>33</sup>

It is from the records of Bethlen's candid conversations with General von Seeckt and Mussolini (and, to a lesser extent, Ignaz Seipel, the Austrian chancellor, and Mustafa Kemal, president of Turkey) that the outlines of his ambitious revisionist program may be discerned. This evidence suggests that he believed that once the proper diplomatic constellation was formed in Central Europe (the nucleus of which would be Germany, Italy, Austria, and Hungary, with Bulgaria, Turkey, and Poland playing supportive roles, and Great Britain a neutral but benevolent observer), an opportunity would arise for the dissolution of the Little Entente and for significant territorial changes in Hungary's favor, though not necessarily a complete restoration of the Kingdom of St. Stephen as it existed before the war.

Although Count Bethlen dreamed of regaining for Hungary certain territories in each of the Little Entente countries, the necessity of a confrontation with Czechoslovakia seemed to dominate his thoughts from the start. As he graphically explained to Mussolini in 1927, "so long as the Czech frontier is thirty kilometers from Budapest, Hungary is not capable of action."<sup>34</sup> Having received the Duce's encouragement and the promise of Italian arms to prepare for a possible military conflict in Central Europe, Bethlen proceeded to consult with General von Seeckt about the logistical and organizational problems that the Hungarian army would face. Bethlen spoke bluntly, though it seems more in a theoretical than in a practical sense, of Hungary's firm resolve to attack Czechoslovakia and, if possible, destroy it. The goal, he explained, was the reannexation of Slovakia, where Czech rule had not taken strong roots.<sup>35</sup> In Bethlen's plans this revisionist triumph in the North was to be complemented by restoration of certain lost territory in the South. Bethlen reasoned that Yugoslavia, like Czechoslovakia, would eventually break up into its constituent parts, at which time the Magyars would press the Serbs back over the line formed by the Danube and Drava rivers. The Bánát would be restored to Hungary, and Croatia, though established as an independent state, would enter into close political and economic relations with Hungary.<sup>36</sup>

The future of Transylvania naturally remained a special concern of

Count Bethlen throughout the interwar period. From his private comments it can be deduced that the political solution he envisioned for Croatia would apply to Bethlen's native province as well. If possible, Hungary would reannex its former territory up to the historic frontier of Transylvania, but the province itself would survive as an independent state on the Swiss model, with complete autonomy for all minorities.<sup>37</sup> Whatever Bethlen's precise plans in this matter, he apparently felt that for the time being, at least, a *rapprochement* would have to be pursued with Romania. Indeed, in 1928 he suggested to Mussolini that Italy assist in the formation of a Central European bloc consisting of Hungary, Austria, Romania, and Italy. This diplomatic arrangement, Bethlen asserted, would disrupt the Little Entente and give Hungary a free hand to deal with her neighbors to the North and South.<sup>38</sup>

Briefly stated, then, Bethlen's program for territorial expansion and the reestablishment of Magyar hegemony in Danubian Europe seems to have been aimed at the eventual recovery of the Bánát, Slovakia, Ruthenia, and a strip of territory in Western Romania, all territories containing large, though not always preponderant, Magyar populations. Though nominally independent, Croatia and Transylvania would, in effect, become Hungarian protectorates. However, aside from his apparently hypothetical remark to von Seeckt that Hungary was intent on attacking Czechoslovakia, there are few clues to indicate what means Bethlen proposed to employ to achieve these goals.

It has been suggested that Bethlen's "active policy" after 1927 was synonymous with an "aggressive policy."<sup>39</sup> Yet there is no firm evidence, in the form of specific military plans, for example, to sustain this judgment. The only concrete steps undertaken during the Bethlen era, aside from a modest attempt at surreptitious rearming, involved clandestine financial and political support for separatists in Slovakia and Croatia, in the hope that civil order would be disrupted and Hungary could take advantage of the subsequent turmoil. This, of course, represented blatant interference in the domestic affairs of other countries and greatly contributed to the poisoning of the political atmosphere in the Danubian world. Still, it is worth noting that, though future disruptions of the status quo were intrinsic to the foreign policy plans of Bethlen and his colleagues, Hungary concluded no pacts of an aggressive nature in this period. The same could not be said of some of her neighbors, who at various times were willing to contemplate and plan for an unprovoked, preemptive attack on Hungary.<sup>40</sup>

In any case, sufficient time was not available to Bethlen to act on his ambitious goals. Unable to cope with the growing economic crisis, he

was compelled to withdraw from office in 1931. The legacy of the Bethlen era in Hungarian foreign policy was thus an ambiguous one. On the one hand, his rejection of a moderate revisionist policy limited to the recovery of territory in which Magyars were in the majority, his willingness to contemplate the use of offensive military force, and his emphasis on the need for Hungarian cooperation with a fascist Italy and a rightist Germany seemed to set the foundation for an alignment on the side of the Axis powers before and during World War II. On the other hand, Bethlen had imparted to Hungarian policy a strain of pragmatism that permeated his political thinking and strategy. In 1931 Hungary still seemed to have many options open to her; in certain conditions an alignment even with the West European powers was not precluded.

Though hostility toward Hungary was strong in the capitals of the Little Entente countries, there remained in London a reservoir of genuine, if usually muted, sympathy for the Magyars. Moreover, Hungary was a member of the League of Nations and was not tied by military pacts to any country. Indeed, the country's freedom of maneuver was sufficiently broad that, in the year after Bethlen's resignation, a distinct improvement in relations with France occurred, and in the early 1930s Bethlen himself, as a private citizen, several times met with the French Minister in Budapest and sketched a program of Hungarian territorial revision and creation of a pro-French Danubian bloc that could serve as a barrier against German expansion.<sup>41</sup> And when later in the 1930s Hungary began to move into the orbit of Nazi Germany, Count Bethlen, who remained quite influential in Hungarian political life, emerged as one of the chief opponents of a close alliance with Hitler's Germany. During the war he must have come to the bitter conclusion that the "community of fate" between Hungary and Germany that he had proclaimed in the 1920s did not imply the benefits and successes he had foreseen.

## NOTES

1. No scholarly biography of Bethlen has been written. For Bethlen's foreign policy in the late 1920s, see Dezső Nemes, *A Bethlen-kormány külpolitikája 1927-1931-ben* [The Foreign Policy of the Bethlen Government, 1927-1931] (Budapest: Kossuth, 1964). Nemes presented much new material, but operated within a severely restricted ideological framework. More recently new evidence has become available in a collection of Bethlen's papers: *Bethlen István titkos iratai* [István Bethlen's Secret Papers] eds. Miklós Szinai and László Szűcs (Budapest: Kossuth, 1972) (cited hereafter as *Bethlen Papers*).

2. Eva S. Balogh, "The Road to Isolation: Hungary, the Great Powers, and the Successor States, 1919-1920" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1974), p. 40.
3. C. A. Macartney, *October Fifteenth. A History of Modern Hungary, 1929-1945*, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1961), 1: 37.
4. A small but vigorous radical right-wing movement had developed in Hungary in the convulsive period at the end of the war. For details, see Nicholas M. Nagy-Talavera, *The Green Shirts and the Others. A History of Fascism in Hungary and Rumania* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1970), pp. 49-82.
5. István Bethlen, *Bethlen István gróf beszédei és írásai* [The Speeches and Writings of Count István Bethlen], 2 vols. (Budapest: Genius, 1933), 1: 156-68 (cited hereafter as *Bethlen Speeches*).
6. *Bethlen Speeches*, 1: 287.
7. György Ránki, "The Problem of Fascism in Hungary," in *Native Fascism in the Successor States*, ed. Peter F. Sugar (Santa Barbara: ABC-Clio, 1971), p. 68.
8. Hugh Seton-Watson, *Eastern Europe Between the Wars* (1945; reprint ed., Hamden: Archon, 1962), pp. 190-91.
9. *Bethlen Speeches*, 2: 185.
10. Gusztáv Gratz, "Ungarns Aussenpolitik seit dem Weltkriege," *Berliner Monatshefte* 19 (1941): 11.
11. *Bethlen Speeches*, 1: 231.
12. Early in 1921 armed bands were dispatched by the Hungarian government into the Burgenland with the purpose of fomenting a rebellion. For details, see Katalin Soós, *Burgenland az európai politikában (1918-1921)* [Burgenland and European Politics, 1918-1921] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1971), pp. 135-69.
13. English financial circles showed a marked sympathy for Hungary and proved most forthcoming in meeting Bethlen's requests for economic and political support. For a detailed treatment, see Ozer Carmi, *La Grande-Bretagne et la Petite Entente* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1972), pp. 88-115.
14. Macartney, *October Fifteenth*, 1: 63.
15. C. A. Macartney, *Hungary and Her Successors: The Treaty of Trianon and Its Consequences, 1919-1937* (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), pp. 465-66.
16. From a jingle by A. P. Herbert, "Foreign Policy: or, the Universal Aunt," cited by Martin Gilbert, *The Roots of Appeasement* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), p. 122.
17. Marginal note by M. W. Lampson, a Foreign Office official, on a report of March, 1924, London, Public Record Office (hereafter PRO), FO 371, C4501/21/21.
18. In 1923 Bethlen told Sir Thomas Hohler, the British Minister in Budapest, that London was the "only capital where the Hungarian question appeared to be considered purely on its own merits and without any *arrière pensée*." Hohler to Curzon, May 26, 1923, PRO, FO 371, C9296/942/21.
19. One historian characterizes Bethlen's diplomacy vis-à-vis the Western powers in this period in this way: "Bethlen's wooing of the West represents one of the cleverest public relations achievements in postwar Europe." Thomas Spira, *German-Hungarian Relations and the Swabian Problem. From Károlyi to Gömbös, 1919-1936* (Boulder: East European Quarterly, 1977), p. 121.
20. In 1924 he told Ignaz Seipel, Chancellor of Austria, that he gained the impression while visiting England that London might be preparing to organize a new European diplomatic constellation aimed at France. Seipel's memorandum of February 8, 1924, Vienna, Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv, Neues Politisches Archiv, K879/99-102 (cited hereafter as HHS).

21. Curzon to Hohler, November 27, 1920, PRO, FO 371, C11889/283/21.
22. Bethlen to Horthy, September 24, 1926, *The Confidential Papers of Admiral Horthy*, eds. Miklós Szinai and László Szűcs (Budapest: Corvina, 1965), p. 42.
23. See Bethlen's conversation with Sir Austen Chamberlain in December 1925 at Geneva, Great Britain, Foreign Office, *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939* (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1946- ), series Ia: 1: no. 137.
24. *Bethlen Speeches*, I: 198-212.
25. For the details, see Gyula Juhász, *Magyarország külpolitikája, 1919-1945* [The Foreign Policy of Hungary, 1919-1945], 2nd ed. (Budapest: Kossuth, 1975), pp. 104-06.
26. Juhász, p. 115.
27. He told the German Minister in Budapest, Hans von Schoen, that "Hungary can fulfill its future wishes only on the side of both great powers, Italy and Germany." Cited in Wulf-Dieter Schmidt-Wulfen, "Deutschland-Ungarn, 1918-1933. Eine Analyse der politischen Beziehungen" (doctoral diss., University of Vienna, 1965), pp. 408-09.
28. Minutes of a Cabinet meeting of August 1, 1921, cited in the introduction to the *Bethlen Papers*, p. 57, n. 80.
29. Macartney, *October Fifteenth*, I: 136, n. 3.
30. Extract from the diary of Miklós Kozma, as quoted in Sándor Kónya, *Gömbös kísérlete totális fasiszta diktatúra megteremtésére* [Gömbös's Attempt to Establish a Totalitarian Fascist Dictatorship] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1968), p. 125.
31. For example, he told the German Minister in 1925 that he was convinced that Hungary's resurgence could occur only in tandem with Germany. Even if the two countries for the time being could not officially become allies, nonetheless "the old 'Bundesgenossenschaft' remained firmly anchored in the heart of every Hungarian patriot." Johannes von Welczek to Austwärtiges Amt, March 6, 1925, Washington, National Archives, Germany, Foreign Ministry, Microcopy T-120, S6146/E460142.
32. For a detailed treatment of this question, see Spira, pp. 95-131.
33. For the details on this, see *Bethlen Papers*, pp. 43-4.
34. Bethlen's memorandum on his conversations with Mussolini, April 4, 1927, in *Iratok az ellenforradalom történetéhez, 1919-1945* [Papers Relating to the History of the Counterrevolution, 1919-1945], eds. Dezső Nemes and Elek Karsai (Budapest: Szikra, Kossuth, 1953- ), 4: no. 22 (cited hereafter as IET).
35. von Seeckt's diary entries for October, 1927, as cited in Hans Meier-Welcker, *Seeckt* (Frankfurt: M. Bernard U. Graefe, 1967), pp. 373-75.
36. This program Bethlen had adumbrated to his colleagues at a Cabinet meeting already in 1921. *Bethlen Papers*, p. 57, n. 80.
37. See Bethlen's memorandum of his conversation with Mustafa Kemal, November 7, 1930, IET, 4: no. 265a. For Bethlen's later thoughts on the future of Transylvania, see N. F. Dreisziger, "Count István Bethlen's Secret Plan for the Restoration of the Empire of Transylvania," *East European Quarterly* 8 (1975): 413-22.
38. Bethlen's memorandum of his conversation with Mussolini, April 2, 1928 IET, 4: no. 103.
39. Nemes, *A Bethlen-kormány külpolitikája*, p. 7.
40. For example, the June 1920 treaty between Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia was accompanied by a secret military convention in which each party promised to support the other should it launch an attack on Hungary. Magda Ádám, *Magyarország és a kisantant a harmincas években* [Hungary and the Little Entente in the 1930s] (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1968), p. 19. By 1934 the

military chiefs of the Little Entente formally agreed that if a military conflict occurred in Danubian Europe, the first order of business would be to attack and subdue Hungary, even if Budapest declared its neutrality. Rudolf Kiszling, *Die militärischen Vereinbarungen der Kleinen Entente, 1929–1937* (Munich, 1959), pp. 58–59.

41. See the reports of Louis Mathieu de Vienne on his talks with Bethlen in the period 1932–1934, in France, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, *Documents diplomatiques français, 1932–1939* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1963– ), series I: 1: no. 225; 3: no. 50; 5: no. 230.