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Resurrecting the Nation: Felvidék and the Hungarian Territorial Revisionist Project, 1938-1945

Author
Waters, Leslie

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Resurrecting the Nation:

Felvidék and the Hungarian Territorial Revisionist Project, 1938-1945

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in History

by

Leslie Marie Waters

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Resurrecting the Nation:

Felvidék and the Hungarian Territorial Revisionist Project, 1938-1945

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Leslie Marie Waters

Doctor of Philosophy in History

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Professor Ivan T. Berend, Chair

This dissertation investigates the link between contested territories, border changes, and nationalizing practices in twentieth century East-Central Europe through the case study of southern Slovakia (Felvidék) as it shifted between Czechoslovak and Hungarian sovereignty from the years 1938 to 1945. The region, claimed by Czechoslovak, Slovak, and Hungarian nationalists, had belonged to Hungary prior to the First World War, was awarded to Czechoslovakia by the Treaty of Trianon in 1920, returned to Hungary by the First Vienna Arbitration in 1938, and restored to Czechoslovakia after World War II.

This project integrates political and social history, focusing on both state and local actors in order to ascertain the everyday effects of nationalizing policy on the residents of Felvidék. Utilizing a variety of first-hand accounts from Hungary, Slovakia, and abroad, it chronicles the transfer of Felvidék to Hungary in November 1938 amid grandiose nationalist celebrations.

Through Hungarian foreign ministry documents and local reports, it also examines the burgeoning propaganda rivalry between Hungarian and Slovak irredentists for physical and ideological control of the territory. Hungarian educational policy in the region is explored with the help of textbooks and yearbooks. Court cases and interior ministry documents speak to the issues of loyalty and suspicion that became central to Felvidék's return to Hungarian sovereignty. The dissertation probes the difficulties of reintegrating Felvidék back into the Hungarian state, focusing on questions of education, minority policy, and identity politics, revealing a multiplicity of complex national identities and loyalties in the region that confounded state officials.

The dissertation of Leslie Marie Waters is approved.

John A. Agnew

Francis R. Anderson

Ivan T. Berend, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2012

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Note on Place Names

This dissertation utilizes English place names where they exist (i.e. Vienna) or their official state designation, which changes based on the date being discussed. Thus, the present-day city of Košice is referred to as such when referencing the years when the city was in Czechoslovakia or its successor state the Slovak Republic (1918-1938; 1945-present). It is called by its Hungarian name, Kassa, when discussing periods when the city was under Hungarian sovereignty (pre-1918; 1938-1945). When quoting a source, the name utilized in the original has been preserved. The first reference to a particular location is followed by alternate designations in other languages, along with the abbreviation SK for Slovak, UA for Ukrainian, RO for Romanian, or HU for Hungarian.

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progressed to such a stage that I would have been considered Hungarian by a nineteenth-century Hungarian census official.

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VITA

2003	B.A., History Summa Cum Laude University of San Francisco San Francisco, CA
2008	M.A., European History, with distinction University of California, Los Angeles Los Angeles, CA
2007-2009	Teaching Assistant University of California, Los Angeles
2009-2010	Fulbright IIE Fellowship Budapest, Hungary
2011-2012	Adjunct Instructor The College of William and Mary Williamsburg, VA

PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Waters, Leslie. "Returning Home: The Political and Historical Symbolism of the First Vienna Award in Hungary, November 1938." Paper presented at the Association for the Study of Nationalities Conference at Columbia University in New York, N.Y., April 2012.

_____. "Erasing Borders: The Reacquaintance of Trianon and Felvidék Hungarians." Paper presented at the American Hungarian Educators' Association Conference at SUNY Brooklyn in New York, N.Y., April 2012.

_____. "State and Local Authority in Contested Regions: Southern Slovakia/Felvidék 1938-1946." Paper presented at the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies Conference in Washington, D.C., November 2011.

_____. "Re-Triangulating Borderlands: Hungarians and Slovaks, Majorities and Minorities." Paper presented at Towards a Common Language on a Common Past: Methodological Workshop on the Overlapping Histories of Slovakia and Hungary at János Selye University in Komárno, Slovakia, June 2011.

_____. "The Learning and Unlearning of Nationality: Hungarian Education and

Minority Politics in Felvidék." Paper presented at the Association for the Study of Nationalities Conference at Columbia University in New York, N.Y., April 2011.

_____. Review of *Czech and Hungarian Minority Policy in Central Europe, 1918-1938*, edited by Ferenc Eiler, Dagmar Hájková, et al., *East Central Europe*, forthcoming 2012.

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Introduction

"Heart-felt greetings from Hungarian Beregszász!"[1] –Jenő Frigyesi, November 1938

On November 2, 1938, the First Vienna Arbitration awarded a strip of territory to the Kingdom of Hungary that ran along its northern border. This 12,000 square kilometer area with a population of 1.2 million people had belonged to Hungary until the end of the First World War. In 1920, the territory was included in the areas awarded to the newly established Czechoslovak Republic by the Treaty of Trianon. Now, two decades later, it was back in Hungarian hands. In the weeks that followed the First Vienna Award, the Hungarian army physically re-took control of the area. Many of the inhabitants, 85 percent of whom were of Hungarian ethnicity, welcomed these events with enthusiasm. This was the first triumph in the long campaign for "Justice for Hungary." A simple quotation from a postcard sent to Budapest in late November 1938 – "Heart-felt greetings from Hungarian Beregszász!" – encapsulates Hungarian sentiment surrounding the First Vienna Award. The adjective "Hungarian" in this context has several meanings. First, Beregszász was once again officially a Hungarian town, no longer Czechoslovak Berehovo, as it had been a fortnight earlier. It also implied something about the character of Beregszász: that the town (at that time and today majority Hungarian) retained its Hungarianness throughout twenty years in the Czechoslovak Republic. Culturally, linguistically, and ethnically, Beregszász belonged to the Hungarian nation; now, once again, it belonged to the Hungarian state.[2]

The date stamp on the postcard is also revealing. Impressively, within twenty-two days of the area being granted to Hungary, the Hungarian postal service was already fully functioning, complete with its own revisionist accouterments. The stamp read "Visszatért Beregszász" – Returned Beregszász – surrounding the outline of the Hungarian Holy Crown of St. Stephen. The

[1] Postcard, author's collection
[2] Today, the city is in Ukraine and its official name is Berehove.

crown symbolized that the natural order of the town as part of the historic Crown Lands of Hungary had been restored. The entire area awarded to Hungary by the First Vienna Award was officially known as "the Re-Annexed Upland [Felvidéki] Territories of the Hungarian Holy Crown."[3] This obtuse epithet had a very specific meaning of its own; it was used to distinguish the "re-annexed" territories in the Felvidék region from the "not yet liberated" (but claimed) areas. It served as a constant reminder that the Vienna Award was not the last word on Hungarian territorial expansion, but merely the first.

Felvidék is both a geographic and a political term with a wide variety of meanings. The literal translation of Felvidék is "Uplands" or "Highlands" and in the nineteenth century, the term referred to a geographic area that encompassed the Tatra and Fatra Mountains (in present-day northern Slovakia) and their foothills to the south, some of which lie in contemporary Hungary.[4] In the late nineteenth century, calling the region Felvidék took on more of a political meaning, emphasizing Hungarian ownership of the territory, as opposed to the alternative designation of Slovensko, which stressed rather the majority ethnic Slovak population of the area.[5] After the breakup of the historic Kingdom of Hungary at the end of the First World War and the Treaty of Trianon in 1920, to term Felvidék became to many Hungarians a synonym for the Slovak half of the Czechoslovak Republic, an articulation of revisionist desire for the area's return to Hungarian sovereignty. The First Vienna Award divided Felvidék into two: "re-annexed Felvidék," which was under Hungarian rule, and the Autonomous Region of Slovakia within the Czechoslovak Republic, after March 1939 the independent Slovak Republic.

[3] "A magyar szent koronához visszcsatolt felvidéki területek."
[4] The flatlands in western Slovakia were not considered part of Felvidék at that time.
[5] Introduction to Nándor Bárdi, Csilla Fedinec, and László Szarka eds., *Minority Hungarian Communities in the Twentieth Century* (Boulder, Colo.: Social Science Monographs, 2011), 10.

In contemporary usage, Felvidék is employed colloquially by many Hungarians to refer to Slovakia and/or the parts of southern Slovakia with large Hungarian populations. Though the term is now largely considered neutral by Hungarians, its historical association with Hungarian nationalism and revisionism has given Felvidék a strongly negative connotation for many Slovaks.[6] As a result, many historians from both Hungary and Slovakia have advocated abandoning the designation altogether.[7] But despite Felvidék's ambiguity as a term and its politically-charged past usage, it remains a valuable and, in my estimation, critical phrase for the historian of Hungarian-Slovak borderlands. First, given the unwieldy official name of the returned territories used by the Hungarian government, I shorten it to Felvidék for usability's sake. Also, re-annexed Felvidék was governed separately from the rest of the country during its brief period under Hungarian rule, making it necessary to differentiate that area from the territory of Trianon Hungary.[8] Finally, the term Felvidék is important to highlight the strong regional identity of the Hungarians living in that area. They referred to themselves as "Felvidék Hungarians" and often spoke of a "Felvidék spirit," a unique identity that developed during their exile from the Hungarian state. Thus, unless otherwise stated, I use the term Felvidék to refer to those areas given to Hungary by the First Vienna Award, recognizing that this is an imperfect solution.[9]

This dissertation investigates the reintegration of Felvidék to the Hungarian state, exploring the First Vienna Award's effect on both revisionism and nationalism and the impact of

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[6] István Kollai, "Shattered Past: Socio-Psychological Aspects of Slovak-Hungarian Relations – from the Hungarian point of view," *International Issues and Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs* XV, No. 3-4/2006, 31.
[7] Many historians now use "southern Slovakia" to refer to the territory re-annexed by Hungary in 1938. See, for example, Introduction to *Minority Hungarian Communities in the Twentieth Century,* 10. Others propose using Felföld instead of Felvidék when referring to pre-1918 periods. Kollai, "Shattered Past," 31.
[8] Details of Felvidék's administration are discussed in Chapter 5.
[9] The areas Hungary received in the First Vienna Award included parts of Ruthenia in present-day Ukraine as well.

these ideologies on everyday life. My title, "Resurrecting the Nation," refers to Hungarian irredentist appropriation of the Christian symbolism of martyrdom and redemption.[10] The Hungarian nation, crucified by the Treaty of Trianon in 1920, was to be resurrected again by regaining the former territories of the Kingdom of Hungary. As the first successful revision, the return of Felvidék was hailed as the beginning of the downtrodden nation's resurrection. The First Vienna Award was thus hailed as the beginning of a new era by revisionists. The literature on Hungarian territorial revisionism, while vast, largely focuses on the interwar period and stops short of 1938. Historians have analyzed the origins of the revisionist movement, the codification and dissemination of irredentist symbolism, Hungary's courting of international support for territorial adjustments, and the overwhelming influence of revisionist ideology on Hungarian interwar politics.[11] But this is largely a literature on revisionism without border revisions; scholarly inquiry on Hungary's four successful territorial expansions (Felvidék, 1938; Ruthenia, 1939; Northern Transylvania, 1940; Voivodina, 1941) immediately prior to and during World War II is decidedly less developed. My project asserts that a fuller understanding of Hungarian revisionism in particular and territorial ideologies in general is only possible by looking at revisionism in action – to see how and to what extent the redeemed territories were brought back into the national fold. Revisionism was the pillar of Hungarian wartime foreign policy and thus

[10] Christian narratives were a favorite of other irredentist movements as well, including the "original" irredentists, Italian nationalists. For a brief discussion of Italian irredentist reliance on Christian symbolism, see Pamela Ballinger, *History in Exile: Memory and Identity at the Borders of the Balkans* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003), 51.

[11] The literature on Hungarian revisionism is very extensive. Among the more recent additions, see Miklós Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revision in Hungary, 1920-1945* (Boulder, Colo.: East European Monographs, 2008); *A revíziós gondolat* (Budapest: Osiris, 2001); *A Magyar irredenta kultusz a két világháború között* (Budapest: Teleki László Alapítvány, 2002). Ignác Romsics, ed. *Trianon és a magyar politikai gondolkodás, 1920-1953: tanulmányok* (Budapest: Osiris, 1998). Eric Weaver, "Revisionism and its Modes: Hungary's attempts to overturn the Treaty of Trianon" (PhD Diss. Oxford University, 2008). Matthew Caples, "Et in Hungaria ego. Trianon, Revisionism and the Journal *Magyar Szemle* (1927-1944)," *Hungarian Studies* 19 (Aug. 2005). Balázs Ablonczy, *Trianon-Legendák* (Budapest: Jaffa, 2010).

integrally related to the history of the Holocaust and the country's Axis war effort. While this dissertation discusses neither topic in depth, a deeper understanding of revisionism as an ideology and territorial reintegration in practice in Felvidék textures the historiography on both.

Revisionism and irredentism are two interrelated ideologies that, together with nationalism, play a fundamental part in this project. Irredentism, coined originally by Italian nationalists hoping to unite all ethnic Italians within an Italian state, is defined by historian Miklós Zeidler as "a political endeavor by a nation-state to expand its imperium ostensibly to redeem ethnically identical 'unredeemed' (irredenta) populations" living outside the state's boundaries "on the basis of romantic or even mythical history." This reliance on the mythic often leads to irrationality, with claims that can diverge wildly from reality and practicality.[12] Revisionism, in contrast, denotes "a decidedly compromise-oriented approach," which hopes to "achieve its goals by peaceful, diplomatic means, within the framework of international law."[13] I have largely followed Zeidler's usage for these two terms, employing the label of revisionism when discussing matters of Hungarian and Slovak foreign policy focused on border changes and irredentism when referring to the grandiose territorial claims disseminated in the domestic public spheres in Hungary and Slovakia. These terms are far from mutually exclusive, however; individuals often made revisionist statements in one setting and irredentist ones in another. At times, irredentist demands influenced revisionist strategies, which, as I demonstrate in Chapter 3, was certainly the case after the First Vienna Award in Hungary.

Hungarian border revisions have received the most scholarly attention in the case of Northern Transylvania. Holly Case and Balázs Ablonczy, for example, have published works

[12] In fact, irredentists often do not even follow their own stated goals of redeeming ethnic brethren. Hungarian irredentists advocated for the return of all of historic Hungary, even those areas without ethnic Hungarian populations. Italian irredentists similarly claimed South Tyrol with its overwhelmingly German population on the basis of arguments about where the Italian peninsula begins geographically.
[13] Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revision,* 69.

centered around the Second Vienna Award and the reintegration of that region.[14] Significantly, many of the policies implemented by the Hungarian government in Northern Transylvania were first utilized in Felvidék, which was used as a testing ground for territorial reintegration. The designation "returned" or "re-annexed" was applied to Northern Transylvania just as it had been to Felvidék. Reciprocal minority policies were utilized vis-à-vis Romania in much the same way as with Slovakia.[15] Also, due in part to their experience living outside of Hungary after Trianon, Hungarians living in Felvidék and Transylvania both made claims to distinct regional identities that set them apart from Hungary proper after World War I. However, the reintegration of Felvidék differed from that of Transylvania in several important respects. The geopolitical situation in 1938, at the time of the First Vienna Award, was very different to that of 1940 and the Second Vienna Award: the Western Powers were not yet at war with Nazi Germany and they had tacitly agreed to the Czechoslovak-Hungarian border readjustment. The ethnic makeup of the two territories differed substantially as well. The territory granted to Hungary in 1938 closely followed ethnic-linguistic lines, 84.7 percent of the inhabitants being Hungarian. In Northern Transylvania, Hungarians made up only 51.8 percent of the population. Even with the mass population transfers of Hungarians from the south coming into Northern Transylvania and Romanians going in the opposite direction, 973,000 Romanians remained in the region re-

[14] Holly Case, *Between States: The Transylvanian Question and the European Idea during World War II* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2009). Balázs Ablonczy, *A visszatért Erdély: 1940-1944* (Budapest: Jaffa, 2011). Enikő Sajti has done work on the invasion and administration of Voivodina in 1941 but her work is mostly about the failed minority policy in the region. See Enikő Sajti, *Délvidék, 1941-1944: a magyar kormányok délszláv politikája* (Budapest: Kossuth, 1987).

[15] "Not yet liberated territory" was used when referring to Southern Transylvania, which remained in Romania, again the same as with Slovakia. Case, *Between States,* 111. On reciprocity in Transylvania, see ibid., 121-123.

annexed by Hungary, as opposed to 118,000 Slovaks in Felvidék.[16] Finally, Felvidék and Transylvania occupied disparate spaces in the Hungarian imagination.[17] Transylvania had a storied history as an independent principality ruled by Hungarian princes in the early modern period and many of the leading interwar Hungarian statesmen had been born in Transylvania. It was seen as a bastion of Hungarian culture, "the center of true *Hungarianness.*"[18] Felvidék, on the other hand, lacked Transylvania's tradition of autonomy, was considerably less well-represented among the Hungarian ruling elites, and Felvidék-Hungarian culture, instead of being celebrated, was often considered dangerously radical for having allegedly embraced foreign communist and democratic ideals during the period of Czechoslovak rule.

In examining Felvidék, my dissertation contributes to the growing literature on European borderlands, which puts peripheral areas at the center of discussions on state power and national identity. Jeremy King, Pieter Judson, Tara Zahra, and Chad Bryant have all demonstrated the enduring multiplicity of identities and presence of "national indifference" in East-Central Europe, focusing mainly on the Czech-German linguistic borderlands.[19] They have convincingly challenged the notion that national identities in the region had hardened by the twentieth century, giving many examples of individuals and communities who successfully morphed from one national group to another or refused to identify with any single national group. While both

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[16] Transylvanian statistics are from the 1941 Hungarian census, quoted in Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revision,* 270. Felvidék statistics are from the 1938 census conducted in the territories returned by the First Vienna Award. MOL [Magyar Országos Levéltár] K28 [Miniszterelnökség] 215/428.

[17] On Transylvania's place in Hungarian national identity, see László Kürti, *The Remote Borderland: Transylvania and the Hungarian Imagination* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 2001).

[18] Case, *Between States,* 10. Italics in original.

[19] Jeremy King, *Budweisers into Czechs and Germans: A Local History of Bohemian Politics, 1848-1948* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002); Pieter Judson, *Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006); Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2008); Chad Bryant, *Prague in Black: Nazi Rule and Czech Nationalism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007).

Czechoslovakia and Hungary have played prominently in the historical scholarship on borderlands, with Bohemia and Transylvania considered archetypes for contested territories, their shared, equally contested borderland in Felvidék has yet to receive its due attention.

My research shows that in Felvidék, a linguistic borderland of Slovak- and Hungarian-speakers up until 1938 that then morphed into a political borderland between Czechoslovakia (later the Slovak Republic) and Hungary, complex identities endured well into the 1940s, with bilingualism and ethnically mixed marriages remaining commonplace. In fact, despite the desire of the Hungarian and Slovak governments to implement broad, rigid categories like "Hungarian," "Slovak," and "Jew," the frequent border changes made national identities more complex. The designations *felvidéki* and *anyaországi* came into use to differentiate between Hungarians from Felvidék and Trianon Hungary. Hungarians that had adapted to the Czechoslovak system were sometimes mocked as *Bata cipős magyarok* (Bata shoe-wearing Hungarians), after the popular Czech brand of shoes. Slovaks could be referred to as Slovak, *Czechoslovak,* meaning they identified as belonging to a hybrid Czech-Slovak nationality, or *Magyarone,* ethnic Slovaks who were considered pro-Hungarian. In combination with the border changes, these categorizations came with consequences for the region's inhabitants. Some designations afforded priveleged status under one regime, exclusions under another. Although some locals successfully reinvented themselves to appease the ethno-linguistic, political, and social expectations of multiple states, thousands found themselves out of favor with their government and released from their jobs as civil servants each time the border shifted.

Historian Caitlin Murdock has argued that as German nationalist clamor for border revision escalated in the 1930s, the Saxon-Bohemian borderland was conceptualized as a "crisis

zone where the fates of whole states and nations were at stake"[20]; Hungarian and Slovak revisionists viewed Felvidék in similar terms. Prior to the First Vienna Award, Hungarian revisionists argued that the ethnic Hungarians of Felvidék were under attack, losing their language, culture, heritage, and livelihood, which could only be rectified through border revision. After Felvidék's re-annexation by Hungary, Slovak revisionists sounded the alarm that the assimilationist policies of the Hungarian state threatened the very existence of the Slovak nation.

One of the reasons that Felvidék has been largely left out of scholarly conversations about borderlands is the strong adherence to national paradigms in Hungarian and Slovak historiography, respectively. "The emphasis of the Eastern and Central European nationalist movements on past grievances," according to historian László Szarka, "eliminated . . . [the] interpretation of shared historical experiences. Instead, confrontations, national conflicts, the exclusive prioritization of the given ethnic space and symbol system have characterized the main trends in the interpretations of the history of Hungarian-Slovak relations of the last two or three centuries."[21] The focus of Slovak and Hungarian historiographies on rightful ownership, injustice, and victimhood has led to the parallel development of two separate bodies of national scholarship that are not in conversation with one another. This trend is only now beginning to be rectified, with scholars like Szarka, István Janek, and Miroslav Michela utilizing transnational frameworks to bridge the gap.[22] This project continues that ongoing task by placing Hungarian

[20] Caitlin Murdock, *Changing Places: Society, Culture, and Territory in the Saxon-Bohemian Borderlands, 1870-1946* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 2010), 158.
[21] László Szarka, "Cultural and Historical Representations of Upper Hungary," in *A Multiethnic Region and Nation-State in East-Central Europe: Studies in the History of Upper Hungary and Slovakia from the 1600s to the Present* edited by László Szarka (Boulder, Colo.: Social Science Monographs, 2011), 12.
[22] Miroslav Michela, "Collective Memory and Political Change: The Hungarians and the Slovaks in the former half of the Twentieth Century," *International Issues and Slovak Foreign Policy Affairs* 15 (2006/3-4) 15-26; "Közös szlovák-magyar történelem a magyarországi tankönyvekben szlovák

and Slovak irredentism and minority policy in comparative perspective and analyzing the complexity of identity in multi-ethnic Felvidék.

Chapter one provides the historical background for the project. I discuss the centrality of territory to Hungarian nationalism prior to World War I, which served as a way to justify the inclusion of large minority populations in the Hungarian nation and state. After the Treaty of Trianon and Hungary's truncation, territory became a veritable obsession in Hungary and the loss of two-thirds of the country's former lands became the culprit for all of the state's woes. Economic problems, the situation of the Hungarian diaspora, and Hungary's loss of geopolitical clout were all easily blamed on the breakup of the old Kingdom. Territorial revisionism became the central doctrine of Hungarian foreign policy, defining Hungary's relationship with its neighbors as well as the larger international community.

The second chapter discusses the lead-up to the First Vienna Arbitration and the reception of the Vienna Award in Hungary and Felvidék. It chronicles the re-entry of Hungarian troops in November 1938 and dissects the symbolism utilized in the celebrations for the return of Felvidék to Hungarian sovereignty. I argue that along with the physical re-annexation of the area, Hungarian organizers and participants alike sought to culturally re-annex Felvidék, constructing a narrative of national rebirth and rejuvenation that emphasized the region's Hungarian past and future. National discourse claimed that Felvidék's return was the harbinger of an even greater triumph to come: the resurrection of historic Hungary.

In chapter three, I consider the interplay between revisionist ideology and geopolitics, tracing the development of Hungarian and Slovak territorial revisionism in light of the dynamic changes in East-Central European regional politics in the late 1930s and early 1940s. I assert that

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szempontból," *Új Pedagógiai Szemle* 10 (2008), 86-100; István Janek, "A Magyarországgal szemben szlovák propaganda és revíziós elképzelések 1939-1941 között," *Limes* (2010/1), 25-40.

March 1939 was a critical turning point for Hungarian revisionists, as after the establishment of the independent Slovak state there was a rival revisionist ideology to contend with, which had designs on Hungarian territory. Agitation for the immediate incorporation of the remainder of Slovakia, which was common in Hungarian revisionist propaganda after the Vienna Award, was abandoned in favor of a longer-term policy of waiting for Slovak leaders to see the economic necessity of union with Hungary and choose that course for themselves. The chapter also investigates the charged nature of Hungarian-Slovak relations during the Second World War period, particularly their trading of abuses in treatment of their minority populations.

Chapter four examines nation-building in Felvidék through education and the role of revisionism in schools. It explores the Czechoslovak educational legacy in Felvidék and both the Hungarian- and minority-language schooling implemented by the Hungarian government. I employ language-use statistics collected in secondary schools to illustrate the substantial impact of the regime change on daily language practices. Geography and History textbooks give a sense of the centrality of territorial revisionism to Hungarian pedagogy during the time period.

I take up questions of identity and belonging in chapter five by looking at the idea of the "Felvidék spirit" and government policies designed to ascertain the political and national loyalties of the residents of Felvidék. While Felvidék Hungarians believed their past minority experience in Czechoslovakia had produced a more egalitarian brand of Hungarianness that would revitalize the nation, government officials worried that this deviation from the national norm could prove destructive for a united Hungary. Members of the Slovak minority, meanwhile, were often suspected of conspiring with the Slovak Republic to undermine the Hungarian state. Perhaps surprisingly, however, my evidence reveals that ethnicity was not the primary marker of loyalty in Felvidék. Indeed, the Hungarian government was welcoming of

apolitical self-identified Slovaks and most frustrated by ethnically ambiguous individuals or those they labeled "Hungarians" who failed to display adequate Hungarianness. Aided by locals who readily denounced their neighbors, the administration closely observed all anti-Hungarian and anti-government discourse and punished those they believed represented dangers to the state.

The conclusion discusses the end of Hungarian rule in Felvidék and the territory's reattachment to Czechoslovakia after the Second World War. Hungary's alliance with Nazi Germany, partially a product of the country's territorial aspirations, cost Hungary all the areas it had gained since 1938. This reversal of fortunes for the Hungarian revisionist project, like previous border changes, had dire consequences for the inhabitants. 1946, however, did not simply bring about a return to the status quo before the Vienna Award. The ethnographic landscape changed significantly: Hundreds of thousands of Jews in Hungary and Slovakia had been deported and killed during the war. Many Felvidék Hungarians fled to Hungary, were sent to Hungary as part of the Slovak-Hungarian population exchange, or were forcibly relocated to other parts of Czechoslovakia. Ruthenia, including "Hungarian Beregszász," was restored not to Czechoslovakia but incorporated into the Soviet Union. This seven-year period of revisionism in action ceded to nearly a half-century of hibernation under communist internationalism. Nevertheless, the succession of territorial changes in the Felvidék borderland and their effects on the populace remain poignant in the region to this day.

Chapter 1

Hungarian Nationalism and Territorial Revisionism, 1867-1941

"Rump Hungary is no country – Greater Hungary is heaven!"[1] – Interwar revisionist slogan

Introduction

The political landscape in Hungary that Felvidék entered in 1938 was defined by revisionism and increasingly radical right-wing nationalism. Felvidék's re-annexation must be understood in light of Hungary's long history of territorial nationalism and its more recent history of territorial loss. To appreciate why revisionists saw the First Vienna Award as the inaugural step in Hungary's complete resurrection as a historic empire, it is necessary to chronicle its so-called crucifixion after World War I and the political consequences of its disintegration. The borders of "rump Hungary" bred widespread dissatisfaction, suffering, and increasingly radical political ideologies, not unlike in Germany. This bitter prelude to the First Vienna Award sets the stage for Felvidék's reentry to the national scene and the state of revisionist ideology on the eve of territorial expansion. While the reacquisition of Felvidék and other lost territories from 1938 to 1941 were all hailed as triumphs of the resurrection process, none of the border adjustments fulfilled irredentist demands for the restoration of Hungary's pre-World War I borders. Revisionism as an ideology had to weather the tumultuous conditions of Hungarian domestic, regional, and international politics.

[1] "Csonka Magyarország nem ország – egész Magyarország mennyország!" This is phrase is translated also as "Rump Hungary is no country, heaven's our old Hungary," in Miklós Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revision in Hungary, 1920-1945* (Boulder, Colo.: East European Monographs, 2008), 185.

Hungarian Nationalism Before Trianon

Even before the losses Hungary endured after World War I, territory was in many ways the bedrock of Hungarian nationalism. In the nineteenth century, this nationalism closely resembled the classic western model of nationhood, best exemplified by England and France, which linked nationality to the territory of the state. Hungarian liberals, the initial leaders of the national project, looked to the territory of their historic state, the Crown Lands of St. Stephen, as the foundation of a Hungarian nation-state. This position was strengthened by the Compromise of 1867, which made the Kingdom of Hungary an indivisible entity, linked to the Austrian half of the Empire by a common ruler, army, and foreign policy but nonetheless with full control over its internal affairs. This gave Hungary an advantage over most of the neighboring nationality projects in the Habsburg Empire, which, lacking this degree of territorial sovereignty, were formed "in protest against and in conflict with existing state patterns."[2] This limited sovereignty contributed to the development of a hybrid nationalism in Hungary that fiercely protected Hungarian interests against the nationalizing practices of the Austrian Habsburgs but at the same time suppressed the national movements of the minority populations living in the Hungarian Kingdom. Hungary also had an advantage over the independent states to her east and south, Romania and Serbia, both of which sought to enlarge their states to include their ethnic brethren living beyond their borders. Hungary benefited from having the entire Hungarian-speaking population united inside the state's boundaries. Yet despite these critical assets, the Hungarian Kingdom failed to evolve into a western-style territorial nation-state.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Hungarian speakers made up less than half the population of Hungary. The state was also home to large minority populations of Slovaks, Romanians,

[2] Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study in its Origins and Background* (New York: Macmillan, 1944), 329.

Serbians, Croatians, Germans, Ukrainians, and Jews. According to Hungarian nationalists, in order to "transform Hungary into a 'modern state,' following the model of the constitutional western states that was based on a nationalistic ideology equating nation, state, and territory," these minorities would need to identify in some way or another with the Hungarian nation.[3] Through linguistic assimilation and loyalty to the national project, any subject of the kingdom could become Hungarian, regardless of his or her ethnicity. The 1868 Hungarian Nationalities Law stated that "all citizens of Hungary, according to the principles of the constitution, form from a political point of view one nation, the indivisible unitary Hungarian nation . . . of which every citizen of the fatherland is a member, no matter to what nationality he belongs."[4] This seeming inclusivity, however, meant the denial of collective political rights for the minorities in Hungary.

The insistence of Hungarian statesmen that multi-ethnic Hungary was home to only one nation, the Hungarian nation, was not enough to make the country's minorities, relegated to the lower status of *nationalities*, identify as Hungarian. Likewise, the aggressive prodding of the government to make minorities into Hungarians through forced assimilation, or Magyarization, also failed. There were of course some successful national converts. One group that was particularly open to adopting Hungarian language and culture was the Jewish population. Over the latter half of the nineteenth century, the majority of Hungarian Jews assimilated, many becoming strong proponents of Hungarian nationalism.[5] The Hungarian regime encouraged these developments and saw Jewish assimilation as an important component of its nationality policies. Magyarization also had some limited success among urban middle class populations, but was

[3] Peter Sugar, "The More It Changes, the More Hungarian Nationalism Remains the Same," *Austrian History Yearbook* (2000), 135.
[4] Law XLIV/1868.
[5] Randolph Braham, *The Politics of Genocide: The Holocaust in Hungary* vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 28-29.

ineffectual in the countryside among the peasantry, the bulk of the kingdom's population. For the most part, they remained indifferent to battles being waged for their national affiliation. Magyarization also failed among the intelligentsia of the rival nationalities, who assiduously resisted the state's efforts to assimilate them and came to define their movements in opposition to the Hungarian state more and more. By the end of the First World War, these individuals sounded the demands for self-determination for Hungary's minorities. The greatest impediment to the development of a modern nation-state in the Kingdom of Hungary was thus the failure of the government to develop a truly inclusive minority policy.

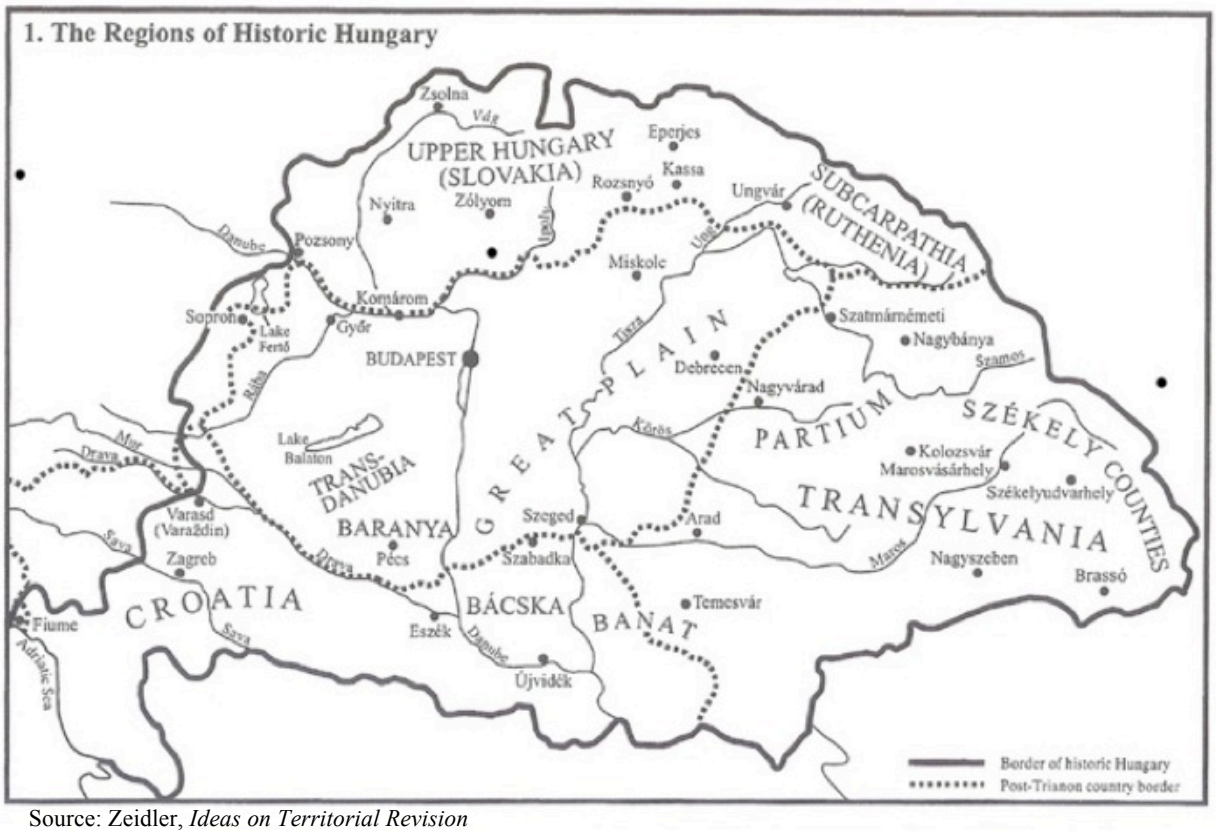
Hungarian demographic limitations (even after decades of Magyarization, Hungarians still only made up 55 percent of the population in 1910) made territorial justifications of Hungarian nationalism all the more important. The widely held belief among Hungarian nationalists that Hungarians were the only ones "capable of creating and maintaining a state in the Crown Lands of Saint Steven [sic]" supposedly empowered them "to rule the state equated with these lands."[6] The emphasis on territoriality and historical legacy is certainly not unique to Hungarian nationalism; countless nationalists have evoked historic rights to a territory to justify their demands. However, with the losses after World War I, the idea of national territory took on a more powerful dimension, and many times became the singular issue for Hungarian nationalists. It is critical to note, however, that the fixation on the territorial integrity of the Hungarian State pre-dates Trianon.

The issue of territory plays prominently in the literature on theoretical nationalism. In fact, many basic definitions give primacy to territorial concerns. Sociologist Ernest Gellner saw nationalism in spatial terms, defining it as "a political principle which holds that the political and

[6] Sugar, "The More It Changes, the More Hungarian Nationalism Remains the Same," 129-30.

the national unit should be congruent."[7] Anthony Smith likewise asserts that the nation must "define a definite social space within which members must live and work, and demarcate an historic territory that locates a community in time and space."[8] However, territory does not necessarily play the same role for every nationalist movement. For instance, Hans Kohn hypothesized that territorial constructs were a critical part of the differences between the civic, inclusive nationalism he saw in Western Europe and the ethnic-based exclusive nationalism he experienced in East-Central Europe. He believed that the presence of multi-national empires in East-Central Europe, rather than more compact and comparatively ethnically homogeneous states as was the case in the West, influenced the very nature of nationalism in the area. Since the nation developed before the state in East-Central Europe, the political-territorial reality ran contrary to the idea of national sovereignty. The national territory was in many cases theoretical – often linked to the very distant past rather than present political circumstances.[9] Thus, areas that nations imagined as national territory overlapped, as each referred to the historical moment that it was largest. Hungarian political scientist István Bibó likewise noted that a "territory-centric" nationalism had developed in East-Central Europe due to "existential uncertainty and the confusing, corrupting influence of border disputes."[10] These issues became particularly acute in Hungary after the First World War.

[7] Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 1.
[8] Anthony Smith, *National Identity* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991), 16.
[9] Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism*, 330.
[10] István Bibó, "The Distress of East European Small States," in *Democracy, Revolution, Self-Determination: Selected Writings*, ed. Károly Nagy (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 42.



Source: Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revision*

Figure 1: Hungary's pre-1918 borders.

The Dissolution of Historic Hungary

The dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the settlements at the end of the First World War brought sweeping changes to the political borders of Hungary and the rest of East-Central Europe. Hungary lost significant amounts of territory to military defeat and to revolt by minorities choosing to break away from the state. These new borders, already outlined in the armistice, were then made permanent at the Versailles Peace Settlement by the terms of the Treaty of Trianon in 1920. Though self-determination and Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points were the theoretical foundations for the settlement, the treaty was particularly severe and led to legitimate grievances for the truncated Hungarian state. The principle of self-determination had only been applied selectively when redrawing the map. As a defeated state, Hungary was given

no say in how the new borders would be constructed and the victors decided when and where self-determination applied, most often to Hungary's detriment.[11] Plebiscites were rejected, except in the case of the Austrian-Hungarian border around the city of Sopron. Hungary thus became an independent state with staggering losses totaling two-thirds of the kingdom's former land and sixty percent of its former population. The multi-ethnic kingdom of Hungary, once 18 million strong, was stripped of nearly all its minorities along with three million ethnic Hungarians, hundreds of thousands of whom lived contiguous to the new border. Most of the Empire's other successor states received lands that formerly belonged to the Kingdom of Hungary. Newly independent Austria received territory in the Burgenland in Western Hungary; the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was granted Voivodina, the former southern frontier of Hungary; Romania received the largest chunk of former Hungary, the entirety of Transylvania and a strip of the Eastern Plain; Czechoslovakia acquired a strip of northern counties known as Felvidék, the territory of present-day Slovakia, and Ruthenia (now western Ukraine). The "indivisible nation" had indeed been divided.

The trauma of the territorial losses shook Hungarian nationalism, penetrating the foundations of Hungarian national identity. A nationalism previously rooted in historical territorial justifications now became obsessed with the *status quo ante* and the "integrity" of the pre-war borders of the Kingdom of Hungary. Anthony Smith speaks of nations developing a "moral geography" that provides "sacred centers, objects of spiritual and historical pilgrimage" to individuals.[12] Practically overnight the landscape of Hungary's moral geography was fundamentally altered alongside its physical geography. The lost territories took on

[11] Not all of the successor states' demands were met by the Treaty of Trianon. Some of the more outrageous requests, such as the creation of a "Slavic corridor" in Western Hungary uniting Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia were rejected.
[12] Smith, 16.

unprecedented status as home of the nation's sacred centers, such as Kassa [SK: Košice], home of Hungarian eighteenth-century Hungarian freedom fighter Ferenc Rákoczi, and Kolozsvár [RO: Cluj], birthplace of Hungary's Renaissance king, Matthias Corvinus. For Hungarian nationalists, this moral geography was the memory of historic Hungary, in its natural geographical, economic, and political completeness, which had brought order and protection to the Danube Basin for a thousand years; it had been crucified, they believed, by the arbiters in Versailles on a cross of misguided and incomplete self-determination.

Prior to the territorial losses, Hungarian nationalists envisioned Hungary as a "'great' nation fulfilling a civilizing mission in its historical habitat."[13] After Trianon, they identified as the humiliated victims of greedy national minorities and the carelessness of the great powers. The dissolution of historic Hungary made Hungarians unable to fulfill their national civilizing mission, putting not only the Hungarian nation but all of Europe in peril. The Crown Lands of St. Stephen took on a mythic quality – the numerous territorial gains and losses since the founding of Hungary in 896 were shrouded in a nationalist rhetoric that lamented the loss of the state's "thousand-year-old" borders.

Though territory continued to play a large role in Hungarian nationalism, after Trianon the old definition of the Hungarian nation as the political nation of the Crown Lands of St. Stephen was no longer valid. A new conception was needed, but this was no easy task. A political-territorial definition based on the new Hungarian state was out of the question, as it would exclude the three million ethnic Hungarians living outside of "rump" Hungary.[14] A solely ethnic definition was also problematic for it could question the validity of Hungarian territorial claims to the entirety of historic Hungary. The questions "what is Hungarian?" and "who is

[13] László Kontler, *A History of Hungary* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 292.
[14] "Csonkamagyarország." This terminology was commonly used to describe the post-Trianon Hungarian state.

Hungarian?" preoccupied nationalism theorists looking for a set of criteria to determine Hungarian nationality.[15] The old standards of language and culture still appealed to the conservative elite, but the up-and-coming radical right looked increasingly to Nazi conceptions of the nation based on race. The "significant slippage between invocations of the Hungarian nation as a race (*magyar faj*), as a people (*magyar nemzet* or *nép*), and as a geographic place (*haza*),"[16] according to historian Paul Hanebrink, lent ambiguity to the Hungarian nationalism of the interwar period and speaks to the general crisis of identity the territorial losses imparted. All of the new national conceptions turned toward more exclusionary definitions of the Hungarian nation, but maintained the goal of rebuilding the multi-ethnic, pre-Trianon Hungarian empire.

The Theory of Integral Revisionism and its Symbolism

Calls for revision of the Treaty of Trianon had begun even before the final version was signed. Hungary sent a delegation to the peace treaty negotiations in France to present their case against the breakup of the country. The delegation was led by Count Albert Apponyi, who presented an argument for the preservation of historic Hungary that became a cornerstone of revisionist ideology, especially among the conservative elite. Apponyi's address to the Peace Conference's Supreme Council pleaded for the immediate return of areas with a Hungarian majority and plebiscites in the other territories that would be affected by the Treaty of Trianon. He then presented a series of arguments for maintaining the "integrity" of the Kingdom of Hungary. Apponyi claimed that Hungary brought stability to East-Central Europe and that without a unified Hungary peace could not be maintained in the Danube region. He also spoke of

[15] János Gyurgyák, *Ezzé lett magyar hazátok: A Magyar nemzeteszme és nacionalizmus története* (Budapest: Osiris, 2007), 315. The classic volume dedicated to these identity questions is Gyula Szekfű ed., *Mi a Magyar?* (Budapest: Magyar Szemle Társaság, 1939).
[16] Paul Hanebrink, *In Defense of Christian Hungary: Religion, Nationalism, and Antisemitism, 1890-1944* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 85.

Hungary as a natural economic and geographic unit, claiming that "Hungary was in possession of every condition of organic unity with the exception of one: racial unity."[17] He further noted that the states created by the peace treaty would also not be ethnically homogeneous units, and that the "consequence would be the transference of national hegemony to races at present mostly occupying a lower grade of culture."[18] With this speech, Apponyi laid out the basic tenets of integral revisionism, which became the leading revisionist ideology of the interwar period. It mixed the notion of Hungarians' superiority among the nations of the region with the idea of the thousand-year-old kingdom as an organic unit vital to the stability of Central Europe.

Historian Miklós Zeidler, the current authority on Hungarian revisionism, divides the arguments for integral revisionism into three strains: geographic-economic, strategic-security, and historical-civilizational.[19] The geographic-economic arguments emphasized, as Apponyi had in his appeal, the organic geographical unity of historic Hungary. The mountain ranges surrounding the Carpathian Basin made for a natural defense barrier; the man-made and natural communication and transportation networks interconnected the territory; the diversity of mountainous uplands rich in natural resources and fertile agricultural plains made for a complete economic unit, providing a livelihood for the inhabitants. The strategic-security arguments spoke to unified Hungary's geopolitical potential as a defense against Bolshevik Russia and a check on German expansion, which could provide stability to Europe much more effectively than the successor states the Great Powers currently put their trust in. Finally, the historical-civilizational arguments emphasized Hungary's past sacrifices for European civilization, the presumed cultural

[17] "Address of the President of the Hungarian Peace Delegation, Count Apponyi, to the Supreme Council, January 16, 1920," reprinted in Francis Deák, *Hungary at the Paris Peace Conference* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942), 546.
[18] Ibid., 541.
[19] Miklós Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revision in Hungary, 1920-1945*, trans. Thomas DeKornfeld and Helen DeKornfeld (Boulder, Colo.: Social Science Monographs, 2007), 71.

superiority of Hungarians over other East-Central European ethnicities, and the historic rights to the Carpathian Basin inherited from the area's conquest by the Hungarians in 896, the establishment of a Christian Hungarian Kingdom in 1000, and the alleged continuity of the Hungarian state from that time to the present.

Integral revisionism was explicitly cultivated by the government, which saw it as "the only legitimate force capable of creating a national consensus."[20] It appealed to the trauma of the territorial losses and the injustice perceived by the collective Hungarian consciousness. Revisionism therefore enjoyed a prominent place in Hungarian public life. As such, the movement developed a rich vocabulary and set of symbols to convey its message. Historical parallels with past defeats of the Hungarian nation by outside forces were a common approach to vocalizing the tragedy of Trianon. The Hungarian defeat at Mohács in 1526 by the Turks and the failed revolution of 1848-49 were particularly popular analogies. In 1526, according to nationalist historical interpretations, the Hungarian nation sacrificed itself to protect Christian Europe from the Turkish menace, but despite Hungarian valor they succumbed on the battlefield and their kingdom was broken apart. This dismemberment of the Crown Lands of St. Stephen and 150 years of Ottoman domination thus had clear parallels to the current crisis. The cultural destruction perpetrated by the Turks and the depopulation that arose out of their harsh rule caused irreparable harm to the Hungarian nation. In fact, many revisionists lamented, it was the main cause of Hungary's later nationality problems, as other ethnic groups were brought in to settle sparsely populated areas by the Habsburgs in the eighteenth century. Despite its moral high ground, the story went, Hungary was left to suffer under a dubious foreign power. A similar interpretation existed for the 1848-49 revolution. The revolutionaries fought for lofty ideals while the world looked on offering moral support for a Hungarian victory but little else. The

[20] Ibid., 246.

Hungarian patriots were tragically defeated, again by corrupt foreign powers, this time at the hands of the Austrian Habsburgs and their Russian allies. Trianon was presented in a similar light. Once again, Hungarians were suffering, despite being on the side of right. The desire to maintain the thousand-year-old Hungarian Kingdom was morally equated with their stance to defend Christian Europe in 1526 and fight Habsburg despotism in 1848. In the Trianon parable, France became the foreign oppressor for insisting on such harsh peace terms at Versailles and propping up the illegitimate and culturally inferior Czechoslovak, Romanian, and Yugoslav states. Despite the gloomy outlook, however, there was also hope in these historical parallels. Revisionists predicted that, as it had in the past after the defeats at Mohács and during the revolution, the Hungarian nation would overcome its current disaster. The Crown Lands of St. Stephen would unite again.[21]

Hungarian revisionists employed the motifs of crucifixion and resurrection to depict Hungary's present and future. According to the irredentist narrative, Hungary was crucified at Trianon and the pain and trauma suffered by the Hungarian nation was akin to Christ's suffering on the cross. Hungary's resurrection awaited, in the form of the restoration of her former territory. This symbolism was so pervasive that even the democrat Oszkár Jászi, who dedicated his energies to establishing a federation in East-Central Europe, titled his work on the breakup of Hungary *Hungarian Calvary, Hungarian Resurrection*.[22] This highly emotive metaphor elevated territorial revision above the status of a political goal to that of a sacred mission. The crucifixion allegory was hardly original; in the nineteenth century, Polish poet Adam Mickiewicz described Poland as the "Christ of Nations," which had been crucified by the European Powers but would

[21] For an example of this optimistic outlook, see Bálint Hóman, *A magyarság megtelepülése* (Budapest: Szabad Lyceum Kiadványai, 1920), reprinted in Bálint Hóman, *Magyar középkor* (Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1938), 111-127.
[22] Oszkár Jászi, *Magyar Kálvária, Magyar feltámadás* (Vienna: Bécsi Magyar Kiadó, 1920).

arise to emancipate all of Europe from slavery. [23] Interestingly, Poland's "resurrection" as a nation-state coincided with Hungary's dismemberment, allowing Hungary to inherit the metaphor in 1920. The resurrection symbolism strengthened as Hungary reincorporated territories after 1938. The First Vienna Award and Hungarian occupation of Felvidék was often described as a "resurrection" of the territory and its people.[24] Just one example is József Fodor's *Feltámadtunk!* [*We Have Resurrected!*], published in 1940 in Kassa, the largest city in the territory returned from Czechoslovakia.[25] When Transylvania was awarded back to Hungary from Romania in the same year, this too was hailed as a resurrection. A poster celebrating the territory's return featured an angel and beam of light shining down from heaven on the city of Kolozsvár, reinforcing the Christian imagery.

The emotional appeals associated with revisionism, as powerful as they could be, were also fraught with dangers. The skewed version of history and "false analogies" that were so ingrained in the rhetoric of the revisionist movement encouraged lofty expectations on the part of the public, which could make trouble for political leaders. Hard-line revisionists were inclined toward excess and radicalism and they occasionally turned on the government, accusing it of being too cautious in pursuing Hungarian demands. Furthermore, solutions could not be found in emotion alone. Zeidler describes "an irrational conviction" that plagued the revisionist movement.[26] Its emphasis on Hungarian suffering, its lack of critical self-assessment, and its dearth of actual proposed solutions made Hungarian revisionism more of a domestic coping

[23] Norman Davies, "Polish National Mythologies," in *Myths and Nationhood* ed. Geoffrey Hosking and György Schöpflin (New York: Routledge, 1997), 141-157.
[24] The Hungarian term, *feltámadás* was commonly evoked to describe the return of Felvidék to Hungary, though *felszabadulás*, liberation, was also used.
[25] József Fodor, *Feltámadtunk!* (Kassa: Wikó, 1940).
[26] Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revision*, 177.

mechanism than an effective international political tool.[27] The revisionist movement's trademark catchphrases – "No, no, never" and "Everything back" – resounded with audiences at home but for the most part fell on deaf ears abroad.

The historical and religious symbolism employed by the revisionist movement had both immediate and long-term consequences for the development of Hungary's national memory. Zeidler notes that the revisionist view of history "prevented the study of the real reasons for the dissolution of historic Hungary and thus kept whole generations from performing this necessary task."[28] In his survey of interwar Hungarian historiography, Stephen Bela Vardy found that Trianon figured so prominently in the major historical trends of the period that nearly every Hungarian historian produced a "Trianon book."[29] Professional historians dedicated much of their work to explaining the injustice of the country's current hardships, exploring such themes as the historical rights of Hungary to the Carpathian Basin and the ethno-history of the former Hungarian lands.[30] Though some historical works of high quality were produced during the interwar period, the majority of what was disseminated to the greater public engaged in superficial historicizing. This trend "led to a serious distortion of the historical knowledge and national self-knowledge of the active part of Hungarian society and to their lack of reasonable future expectations."[31]

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[27] For the idea of Trianon as a national trauma, also referred to as the Trianon Syndrome, see Kristian Gerner, "Open Wounds? Trianon, the Holocaust, and the Hungarian Trauma," in Conny Mithrander, John Sundholm, and Maria Holmgren Troy, ed., *Collective Traumas: Memories of War and Conflict in Twentieth Century Europe* (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2007), 79-110.
[28] Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revision*, 187.
[29] Stephen Bela Vardy, "Trianon in Hungarian Historiography," in Béla Király, Peter Pastor, and Ivan Sanders, Eds., *War and Society in East Central Europe Vol. VI: Essays on World War I: Total War and Peacemaking, A Case Study of Trianon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 363.
[30] Vardy, "Trianon in Hungarian Historiography," 368-379.
[31] Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revision*, 187.

Politics in Interwar Hungary

Hungarian nationalism's shift to the right mirrored an overall trend in Hungarian politics.[32] Prior to the First World War, liberalism was the dominant political ideology in Hungary and after the war the Left briefly took control of the government. During the counter-revolution (1919-1921), a nationalist right-wing government led by former Austro-Hungarian admiral Miklós Horthy came to power and monopolized politics in Hungary up until the end of the Second World War. The Left was largely discredited after the Bolshevik Revolution and as a result interwar Hungarian politics became a competition between rival right-wing ideologies. Historians generally identify three "Rights" in Hungary during the interwar period: the old conservative Right, the new radical Right, and the Arrow Cross fascist Right.[33] The conservative Right retained political power throughout the interwar period and favored a semi-authoritarian government led by Hungary's regent, Miklós Horthy, which reinforced the country's traditional social order of rule by aristocratic elites. During the 1920s, their greatest political competition came from the radical Right, whose leadership derived from the counter-revolutionary officers, the so-called "Szeged Group." Their experiences in the counter-revolution against the Hungarian Bolsheviks were the foundation of a platform of extreme militarism, racism, anti-Semitism, and anti-Communism. The radical Right formed a number of organizations and parties, most notably the paramilitary Hungarian National Defense Association [*Magyar Országos Véderő Egyesület*] and the Race Protecting Party [*Fajvédő Párt*]. Support for these groups came mainly from the radicalized civil servants and military officers—remnants of the gentry class that, though

[32] Immediately after the war, Hungary became a liberal democratic republic led by Mihály Károlyi. This regime then gave way to Béla Kun's Bolshevik revolution.
[33] See Margit Szöllösi-Janze, *Die Pfeilkreuzlerbewegung in Ungarn: Historischer Kontext, Entwicklung und Herrschaft*, (Munich: Oldenbourg Verlag, 1989). Stanley Payne likewise uses the conservative-radical-fascist distinction in his comparative work, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945* (Madison, Wisc.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 101.

obsolete in modern society, were able to preserve their privileged noble status by taking on government positions.[34] They wanted to revolutionize government but did not advocate for social change, nor did they appeal to the Hungarian masses. The radical Right's political base was small and once the conservatives consolidated the government and stabilized the economy, they were unable to mount a serious challenge throughout the 1920s.

The ruling conservative elite's national ideals are best categorized by the term "Christian nationalism." This concept was based on the conservative idea that leftist politics, ranging from liberalism to communism, were "alien to Hungarian national traditions" and had brought about all of the calamities Hungary experienced after the First World War.[35] It also strongly implied a rejection of Jews and atheist Communists from the national community. For Christian nationalists, "Christianity represented an antidemocratic moral vision" as much as religiosity.[36] The radical right provided the alternative national idea from the conservatives after the First World War. This group called for the establishment of a new political elite that would bring about a "renewal of the country's true soul" and a "national and racial renaissance."[37] They looked primarily to race as the basis for nationality. The racial concepts were largely based on romantic myths about the origin of the Hungarians, producing wild theories that nonetheless enjoyed a great deal of popularity and even political influence.[38] The radical right also borrowed heavily from Nazism for their racial ideology and as German influence on Hungary grew during the 1930s, so did racist nationalism.

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[34] Nicholas Nagy-Talavera, *The Green Shirts and Others: A History of Fascism in Hungary and Romania* (Oxford: The Center for Romanian Studies, 2001), 78.
[35] Hanebrink, *In Defense of Christian Hungary,* 54.
[36] Ibid., 59.
[37] Gyurgyák, *Ezzé lett magyar hazátok*, 217.
[38] The classic example of far-fetched Hungarian racial theory is Turanianism which, disregarding all historical and linguistic evidence, claimed that Hungarians were part of a large, powerful racial group, along with other historically nomadic groups such as the Turks. Hungarians' true roots had been obscured by foreign cultures. Racial redemption required a return to the Turanian heritage.

As was the case throughout Europe, the Great Depression was a turning point for Hungarian politics. The dire economic situation hurt the conservative regime's popularity, prompting their shift further to the right to retain power. This is reflected in the Regent's decision to appoint Gyula Gömbös, a former leader of the Szeged group, Prime Minister in 1932. He represented the extremist wing of the ruling elite. Gömbös saw himself as the eventual "leader" of the Hungarian nation, along the lines of Benito Mussolini in Italy, but his radical aspirations were reigned in by his association with Horthy and the conservative ministers that surrounded him. Gömbös did have some impact, strengthening the country's already substantial ties with Italy, advocating for corporatism, and calling for a "national regeneration." After 1933, he also forged a strong connection with Nazi Germany. Gömbös died in 1936, leaving his goal of turning Hungary into a fascist state unfulfilled. However, Hungarian politics continued to shift to the right, and around this time, the first national socialist movements began to appear on the political fringes.[39] With poverty and economic hardship still rampant in Hungary, by the end of the decade fascism became a major political force behind the national socialist mass party, the Arrow Cross.

The Arrow Cross was second only to the German Nazi Party in terms of electoral success among European fascist political parties. During the 1939 parliamentary election, the Arrow Cross gained 750,000 of the two million votes cast, and became the second largest party in parliament behind the conservative government party.[40] This made the party a major player in Hungarian politics and the most significant challenger to the ruling party during the Second World War. The Arrow Cross was unique in the history of fascist movements as it was largely a

[39] Miklós Lackó, "The Social Roots of Hungarian Fascism: The Arrow Cross," in *Who Were the Fascists: The Social Roots of European Fascism*, eds. Stein Ugelvik Larsen, Bernt Hagtvet, and Jan Petter Myklebust (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 395.
[40] István Deák, "Hungary," in *The European Right: A Historical Profile*, eds. Hans Rogger and Eugen Weber (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 392.

worker-based party.[41] The party's leader, Ferenc Szálasi, formulated a fascist ideology called "Hungarism," which called for the establishment of a fascist state with a single leader and party, a planned economy along the corporatist model, further restrictions on Jews, and the creation of the "United Lands of Hungaria."[42] These lands would be organized racially and consist of Magyar Land, Slovak Land, Ruthenian Land, Transylvanian Land, Croat-Slavonian Land, and the Western Preserve. [43] In this way, Szálasi's irredentist platform for the Arrow Cross deviated from mainstream revisionism by emphasizing racial difference and pursuing "the reestablishment of 'Saint Stephen's realm' . . . on the basis of ethnic communities" rather the unified historic Crown lands.[44] Despite the Arrow Cross Party's electoral success and mass appeal, Szálasi's brand of irredentism never became dominant and his party assumed control only late in the war. The conservative-led government party was able to remain in power until October 1944, when German occupying authorities forced Horthy to resign as regent and authorized the Arrow Cross to form a government. This inaugurated a six-month reign of terror, particularly against the remnants of the Hungarian Jewish community in Budapest that had escaped the Nazi deportations prior to that point. By then, Hungary's territorial gains had been largely rolled back through losses on the battlefield, primarily to the Soviet Union.

Revisionism in Hungarian Foreign Policy

Early historiography often claimed integral revisionism to be the official foreign policy of

[41] This has been attributed to the fact that the Communist Party was outlawed in Hungary, so the workers gravitated to the group that was advocating for their rights, the national socialists.
[42] "Aims and Demands," Ferenc Szálasi, February 10, 1938 in Dispatch no. 964: Nazi Activity in Hungary, p. 31-35, (National Archives Microfilm Publication [NARA] M1208, roll 1); Records of the Department of State Relating to Internal Affairs of Hungary 1930-1944, Record Group 59, National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Zeidler, *Ideas on Hungarian Territorial Revision,* 76.

the Hungarian interwar governments, mistakenly equating the irredentist slogans of Hungarian popular opinion with diplomatic efforts abroad.[45] But recent scholarship has identified a variety of competing revisionist strategies and much more flexibility in the government's position. On the opposite end of the ideological spectrum from integral revisionism, the concept of ethnic revisionism called for limited territorial revision to bring as many ethnic Hungarians as possible back into the state. Around 1.5 million Hungarians lived contiguous to the Hungarian borders and the most reasonable and potentially realistic plans for revision concentrated on these areas.[46] However, ethnic revisionism did not have the same resonance with the Hungarian public that integral revisionism did and most Hungarian politicians considered openly advocating for a limited revisionism to be political suicide.

Hungary's professional diplomats for the most part recognized that a compromise solution was the most likely scenario for territorial revision and shied away from making aggressive arguments for the immediate restoration of historic Hungary in diplomatic circles. By the late 1920s, this evolved into a semi-official position for the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, outlined in a 1929 circular sent to all Hungarian missions abroad:

> Concerning territorial questions the Hungarian government accepts the principles declared by President Wilson in his Fourteen Points. According to these, the territories populated by a Magyar majority along the frontiers of present-day Hungary should naturally be unified with the mother country while the reattachment of the rest of the former Hungarian lands populated by non-Magyar-speaking nationalities should be subject to the free will and the plebiscite of the inhabitants themselves.[47]

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[45] Ibid., 70. As examples of this trend, he cites Erzsébet Andics, *Nemzetiség és nemzet* (Budapest: Szikra, 1945), *Ellenforradalom és bethleni konszolidáció* (Budapest: Szikra, 1946), and *Nemzetiség kérdés, nemzetiségi politika* (Budapest: Szikra, 1946); Dezső Nemes, *Az ellenforradalom története Magyarországon 1919-1921* (Budapest: Magyar Történelmi Társulat, 1962) and *A Bethlen-kormány külpolitikája 1927-1931-ben : az "aktiv külpolitika" kifejlődése és kudarca* (Budapest: Kossuth, 1964); József Galántai, "Trianon és a Magyar revíziós propaganda," in *A Magyar nacionalizmus kialakulása és tortenete* (Budapest: Kossuth, 1964).

[46] Ibid., 74.

[47] Circular of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to all Hungarian missions abroad, May 2, 1929, quoted in Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revision*, 78.

This policy was designed to give the Hungarian government a degree of flexibility in its revisionist strategies. By advocating for plebiscites for the non-Hungarian areas it left open the possibility for the complete restoration of historic Hungary, but it did not demand it. It could thus be palatable to domestic audiences because it did not reject integral revisionism. However, it also fell short of explicitly demand for the return of all former Hungarian territory and therefore the policy allowed for the possibility of diplomatic negotiations.

Throughout the 1920s and '30s, revisionism remained the foremost foreign policy goal of the Hungarian government and was a prevalent part of Hungarian national life. However, it was international political circumstances that largely dictated the course of Hungarian revisionist strategies abroad. 1918 to 1921 saw a blitz of revisionist rhetoric, in an attempt to strike while the iron was hot—before the consolidation of the new international system. One notable Hungarian victory came in December 1921, when a local plebiscite was held in Sopron, an area originally awarded to Austria at Versailles, which voted to rejoin Hungary. However, the establishment of the Little Entente that same year signaled an end to any further chance for a quick revision of Trianon. It created a formal alliance between Czechoslovakia, Romania, and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes for common defense against Hungarian territorial aspirations, which was strongly backed by the French government. This development made it clear that border revision was not on the European political agenda. The conservative leadership of Hungary, led by Prime Minister István Bethlen, toned down the revisionist propaganda machine accordingly.

Circumstances began to change in 1927 when Hungary signed a treaty of friendship with Italy, a state openly critical of the Versailles system. In the same year, a British newspaper magnate, Harold Harmsworth, the Viscount Rothermere, published an article in the *Daily Mail*

entitled "Hungary's Place in the Sun," calling for a revision of Hungary's borders along ethnic lines. Following this lead, leading Hungarian revisionists created the Hungarian Frontier Readjustment League (HFRL) [*Magyar Revíziós Liga*], a partially state-funded organization, to oversee a coordinated revisionist campaign both domestically and abroad.[48] The emergence on the international scene of Nazi Germany in 1933 indicated that another powerful European state was committed to overturning the status quo, and clamors for border revision only grew louder. Prime Minister Gömbös, the first foreign head of government to visit Adolf Hitler as Chancellor, cultivated strong ties with Nazi Germany, a trend that continued even after his death. This shift in European politics made revisionism seem more and more likely. In 1936, Rothermere noted that an alliance of the major revisionist powers could give the Hungarians the support then needed to overturn Trianon. "If [Hungary] cleaves to her German and Italian friends she will before long be in a position to insist upon the redrafting of her frontiers."[49]

Even in the changing atmosphere of European politics, the Hungarian government still recognized that insistence on integral revision was unlikely to bear fruit. Gömbös, a staunch integral revisionist when addressing domestic audiences, submitted a surprisingly modest plan to Mussolini in 1934 in which ethnically Hungarian areas would be returned, along with limited territories needed for geographic and economic reasons.[50] This pick-and-choose diplomacy has led some historians to employ the term "optimal revisionism" for discussing Hungarian territorial

[48] For more on the connection between Rothermere and the revisionist league, see Eric Weaver, "Revisionism and its Modes: Hungary's attempts to overturn the Treaty of Trianon" (PhD Diss. Oxford University, 2008), 26-28 and Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revision*, 117-118. Works on the impact of Rothermere's article inside Hungary include Ignác Romsics, "Hungary's Place in the Sun: A British Newspaper Article and its Hungarian Repercussions," in *British-Hungarian Relations Since 1848,* eds. László Péter and Martyn Rady (London: Hungarian Cultural Centre, 2004), 193-204.
[49] Viscount Rothermere, "Hungary's Joy-Bells Will Ring Again!", *Daily Mail*, April 22, 1936. Quoted in Weaver, "Revisionism and its Modes," 271.
[50] See Miklós Zeidler ed., *Trianon* (Budapest: Osiris, 2003), 568-8 for the text and accompanying map of Gömbös' plan.

aims, meaning that Hungarian politicians aimed to get back as much territory as possible based on geopolitical circumstance, employing a variety of strategies to do so.[51] The arena of international diplomacy, especially for a small state, would naturally lead to such an optimizing strategy. Thus, there is some truth in the designation of optimal revisionism. However, the actual revisionist strategies that the Hungarian government employed after 1938 leave the distinct impression that anything short of the full restoration of former Hungarian territory would be met with further calls for border revision. Optimal revisionism was more a product of external politics than internal conviction, simply the strategy employed to eventually reach integral revision. The Hungarian government's piecemeal approach should not be understood as surrendering demands to its former territory, but rather a means to a greater end. Ideologically, integral revisionism remained the long-term goal for most Hungarian revisionists; like Trianon, the compromise acquisitions were seen as temporary.

Revisionism in Regional Politics

Among the greatest obstacles to Hungary's territorial aspirations were the members of the Little Entente, first and foremost Czechoslovakia. The alliance had been designed to provide coordinated protection to each member state against Hungarian encroachment. As such, a major goal of interwar Hungarian foreign policy was to delegitimize the member states and divide the alliance in order to make border revision more likely. One of the strategies the Hungarian government employed to discredit the Little Entente states was to play up the grievances of the Hungarian minorities living in Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia as a way of bringing international attention to the Hungarian revisionist cause. Indeed, there was legitimate cause for

[51] Matthew Caples, "Et Hungaria Ego: Trianon, Revisionism, and the Journal *Magyar Szemle* (1927-1944)," in *Hungarian Studies* Vol. 19 No. 1, 2005, 61. He mentions Mária Ormos and Ignac Romsic as others who use the term.

complaint as the Hungarian minority in the successor states suffered discrimination in the form of confiscation of property for land reform, inadequate minority language education, and suppression of the minority press and political and cultural organizations. The Hungarian government's policy in regard to the Hungarian minorities in Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia "was determined by the desire for frontier revision and *a revisionist view of the future*."[52] Thus, the Hungarian government approached the situation with an eye on maintaining the status of the Hungarian minorities so they could be used to justify territorial revision in the future. The goal was to uphold Hungarian "cultural integrity" by supporting "Hungarian demographic, economic, and cultural positions" in the successor states.[53] Hungary's foreign minister, Kálmán Kánya, remarked to Mussolini in 1934 that "Hungarian revisionism in its entirety rests on the possibilities created by the keeping of ethnic minorities in the neighbouring states."[54] While still favoring an integral solution, Kánya acknowledged that the international community would be more amenable to revising borders if there was an ethnographic argument to be made.

In order to support the Hungarian minorities and bring international attention to their situation, complaints were brought forth to the League of Nations citing violations of the minority clause of the Treaty of Trianon, often with the help of the Hungarian government, which "assisted in the drafting of texts, provided financial assistance, monitored the progress of a

[52] Nándor Bárdi, "The strategies and institutional framework employed by Hungarian governments to promote the 'Hungarian minorities policy' between 1918 and 1938," in *Czech and Hungarian Minority Policy in Central Europe 1918-1938* ed. Ferenc Eiler and Dagmar Hájková (Prague: Masarykuv ústav a Archiv AV ČR, 2009), 44. Italics in the original.
[53] Ibid.
[54] Weaver, "Revisionism and its Modes," 150. Report on the conversation between Kánya and Mussolini of 20 Oct. 1934, György Réti ed., *Palazzo Chigi és Magyarország: Olsaz diplomáciai dokumentumok Magyarországról* (Budapest: Italing BT, 2003), i. 222-223.

petition, and smoothed its path."[55] However, these petitions did little to actually improve the situation of the Hungarian minorities or settle disputes. Rather, both Hungary and the successor states used the forum of the League of Nations to "discredit the other party and destroy it both morally and legally" in the eyes of international public opinion.[56]

The rivalry between Hungary and the Little Entente took other forms as well, as heated propaganda wars played out between the two sides. Many Hungarians suspected that the breakup of their state was due to the shrewd wartime propaganda of future Czechoslovak leaders Tomáš Masaryk and Edvard Beneš, which turned the Allies against Hungary. Their suspicions were not entirely unfounded.[57] In his 1917 book *Bohemia's Case for Independence*, Beneš characterized the Hungarians as "a most cruel and unscrupulous oppressor. They have emancipated themselves from Vienna to become the executioners of the Slovaks, Serbs, Croats, and Rumanians, not to mention the Ruthenes."[58] He urged that "not only Austria . . . be dismembered, but also, and above all, Hungary, according to the principle of nationality."[59] The reflections of the secretary of the British delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, Harold Nicolson, demonstrated that propaganda had indeed played a pivotal role in deciding Hungary's future. Nicolson admitted that he and other members of the delegation had been "overwhelmingly imbued" with the doctrines put for by R.W. Seton-Watson, Masaryk's close friend and Czechoslovakia's most influential advocate. This gave Nicolson the "fervent aspiration to create and fortify the new

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[55] Around ninety such petitions were filed with the League of Nations between 1920 and 1939. Miklós Zeidler, "The League of Nations and Hungarian Minority Petitions," in *Czech and Hungarian Minority Policy in Central Europe 1918-1938,* ed. Ferenc Eiler and Dagmar Hájková (Prague: Masarykuv ústav a Archiv AV ČR, 2009), 111.
[56] Ibid., 98.
[57] On the role of Czechoslovak propaganda at the Versailles Peace Negotiations, see Stephen Borsody, "Hungary's Rode to Trianon: Peacemaking and Propaganda," in Béla Király, Peter Pastors, and Ivan Sanders eds., *War and Society in East Central Europe Vol. VI: Essays on World War I: Total War and Peacemaking, A Case Study of Trianon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 23-38.
[58] Edvard Benes, *Bohemia's Case for Independence* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1917), 41.
[59] Ibid., 44.

nations whom we regarded, with maternal instinct, as the justification of our sufferings and of our victory."[60] In an oft-quoted passage, Nicolson also revealed the prejudices he held against Hungary during the peace proceedings: "I confess that I regarded, and still regard, that Turanian tribe with acute distaste. Like their cousins the Turks, they had destroyed much and created nothing. . . . For centuries the Magyars had oppressed their subject nationalities. The hour of liberation and of retribution was at hand."[61] Even after the Trianon Treaty, Czechoslovak propaganda continued to frustrate Hungarian leaders. In 1921, Beneš was instrumental in galvanizing international opinion against the attempts at Habsburg restoration in Hungary. The Hungarian government regarded Beneš' actions as interference in the domestic affairs of Hungary and relations between the two states became even more strained than before.[62]

The success of anti-Hungarian Czech propaganda made Czechoslovakia the favored target of Hungarian revisionists. In the interwar period, Hungarian propagandists alleged that "false propaganda and the falsification of statistics and maps by no means signify state-building capacities" and accused Prague of oppressing not only its Hungarian minority but Slovaks, Ruthenians, and Germans as well.[63] Both Hungarian and Czechoslovak leaders went to great lengths to bolster the perception of their states abroad during the 1920s and 1930s. The Hungarian and Czechoslovak foreign offices competed for the good graces of western statesmen through a war of cultural diplomacy. The Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs created its own publishing house, Orbis, designed to "persuade the world . . . of the moral and strategic

[60] Harold Nicolson, *Peacemaking 1919* (London: Constable, 1933), 33.
[61] Ibid., 34.
[62] Magda Ádám, *The Little Entente and Europe, 1920-1929* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1993), 121.
[63] Ödön Tarján, *Hungarians, Slovaks and Ruthenians in the Danube Valley* (Budapest: Hornyánszky, 1938), 7.

necessity of Czechoslovakia's continued existence."[64] Hungarians countered through such organizations as the aforementioned Hungarian Frontier Readjustment League, which also partook in the publishing business. Both sides tended to overestimate the successes of their rivals. Rothermere's newspaper article even prompted a trip to London by Benes to ascertain the story's impact in Britain.[65] But the Viscount's political influence was decidedly mixed. His newspapers were widely read but, as a British diplomat friendly to the Hungarian cause noted, Rothermere was "not a persona grata in English political or diplomatic circles, nor indeed in any milieu which really possesses influence."[66] Seton-Watson, the Czechs' own British benefactor, visited Czechoslovakia in 1928, which was seen as an attempt to "offset the Rothermere campaign."[67] Hungarian officials feared the possible effects of Seton-Watson's work on behalf of Czechoslovakia, though his influence too had decreased, as British foreign officers charged that he was "deaf to any criticism of the Czechs," undermining the credibility of his judgments.[68] In reality, both sides had exhausted the good graces of the British Foreign Office. In this light, the propaganda war during the 1920s and '30s between Czechoslovakia and Hungary can be considered a draw.

Hungarian animosity towards Czechs spread beyond the field of cultural diplomacy. In terms of political philosophy, the autocratic Hungarian state had much more in common with the other members of the Little Entente – Romania and Yugoslavia – than democratic Czechoslovakia. Hungary's ruling conservative elite looked upon Czech politicians with deep

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[64] Andrea Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle: The Myth of Czechoslovakia in Europe, 1914-1948* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 4.
[65] Ibid., 156.
[66] Qtd. in Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revision*, 111.
[67] E. Crowe, June 6, 1928, in Gábor Bátonyi, *Britain and Central Europe, 1918-1933* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 212.
[68] Headlam-Morely to Seton-Watson, July 11, 1928, Headlam-Morley Papers, Churchill College, Cambridge, Box no. 41, in Bátonyi, *Britain and Central Europe*, 212.

distrust, suspicious of alleged Bolshevik elements in their government. Furthermore, Czechoslovakia "was widely understood to symbolize the postwar order in Central Europe," the order that Hungarian revisionists were so desperate to undo.[69] These hostilities all played a role in Hungary's decision to pursue territorial revision first in areas under Czechoslovak rule in 1938, as opposed to one of the other members of the Little Entente.

The single greatest factor, however, in determining the course of Hungarian revisionism at this stage was German foreign policy. The German annexation of Austria [Anschluss] in 1938, the first major border change since the postwar plebiscites, was predicated on the right to self-determination for the German people. The move was met with a mixture of trepidation and excitement in Hungary. Many of Hungary's conservative elites were wary of sharing a border with the Third Reich, and some wondered if Germany might have designs on Hungarian territory, with its half a million ethnic Germans. The Anschluss also caused problems in the revisionist movement. Some staunch integral revisionists had deluded themselves into believing that Germany would relinquish the Burgenland and its overwhelmingly majority German population on the basis of the area's historical inclusion in the Hungarian Kingdom. When this failed to materialize, there was widespread disappointment among integral revisionists.[70] Others, however, realized that the Anschluss had opened the possibility for more territorial changes in East-Central Europe. Hungary became the first state to recognize the annexation of Austria in 1938.[71] After the Anschluss, it was clear to many in the Hungarian Foreign Ministry and the government in general that the key to peacefully enlarging Hungary's borders was to utilize the idea of national self-determination as the Germans had.

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[69] Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle*, 142.
[70] Weaver, "Revisionism and its Modes," 275-278. Carlile Aylmer Macartney, *October Fifteenth: A History of Modern Hungary 1929-1945* vol. 1 (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, 1956), 217.
[71] Kánya to Vienna, 19 March 1938, in Lajos Kerekes ed*., A Berlin-Roma tengely kialakulása Ausztria annexiója 1936-1938*, 671.

Revisionism's Successes, 1938-1941

The Hungarian government followed Nazi Germany's blueprint for successfully expanding borders without immediately provoking war. The annexation of Austria and the absorption of the Sudetenland into the Third Reich in 1938 were reluctantly accepted by the Western Powers as matters of German self-determination. The Hungarian government, in turn, argued that Germans were not the only unhappy minority in Czechoslovakia and sought to bring the Hungarians living in southern Slovakia back into their ethnic homeland.

Over the next four years, Hungary underwent four substantial border expansions. The First Vienna Award (1938) and the occupation of Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia (1939) led to territorial enlargement in the north to the detriment of Czechoslovakia, the Second Vienna Award (1940) revised the Hungarian-Romanian frontier in the east, and the invasion of Yugoslavia (1941) brought back lands in the south. The territorial revisions were widely popular and fortified Horthy's conservative regime, providing further justification for aligning with Germany. Though the geopolitical circumstances behind these border revisions varied substantially, all four did have important commonalities. Each border revision brought Hungary closer to Nazi Germany, challenged the theoretical foundations of Hungarian revisionism, and brought minority populations into the country.

The first factor that was present in all four of Hungary's territorial revisions was the explicit consent of Germany for the actions. In the case of the two Vienna Awards, Nazi Germany was the main determiner of the territorial revisions, and Hitler used this fact to his advantage to pull Hungary more tightly into the German sphere of influence. For example, a stipulation of the Second Vienna Award was for the creation of the Volksbund as the official party of the German minority in Hungary. The Nazis controlled the Volksbund to a large extent,

and it enabled them to exert pressure on the Hungarian government from the inside. Hungary also joined the Tripartite Pact shortly after the Second Vienna Award, in November 1940.[72] The other two territorial revisions – the occupation of Ruthenia and the invasion of Yugoslavia – directly served German interests. The Hungarian government was initially rebuked by Germany over its planned occupation of Ruthenia.[73] Hitler only consented to the action when it benefited him, allowing for a Hungarian invasion concurrent with his own march into the Czech lands in March 1939 for the complete disintegration of Czechoslovakia.[74] The case of the invasion of Yugoslavia is even more clear-cut, as the Germans offered the area of northern Yugoslavia that had formerly belonged to Hungary in return for participation in the German offensive.[75] Thus, although Hungary was successful in fulfilling many of its revisionist demands, it did so only with Germany's consent and on Germany's terms. As the country's borders expanded, its sovereignty and independence were sacrificed up to the cause of revisionism.

Another commonality of the four territorial revisions was that each diverged from the leading revisionist ideology, integral revisionism. This ideology was untenable because the Historical Hungarian Kingdom did not have a place in Hitler's new European order. After all, though the term *Third Reich* does reference historic kingdoms, Hitler's revisionism was strongly based on ethnic considerations and did not purport to recreate old borders but rather to construct entirely new state formations. Unlike Nazi Germany's incorporation of Austria and its Germans, the population in areas claimed by Hungary were often mixed in such a way that simply redrawing borders could not build ethnically homogenous states. Following the ethnic principle was largely straight-forward in Felvidék, where the Hungarians made up 85 percent of the

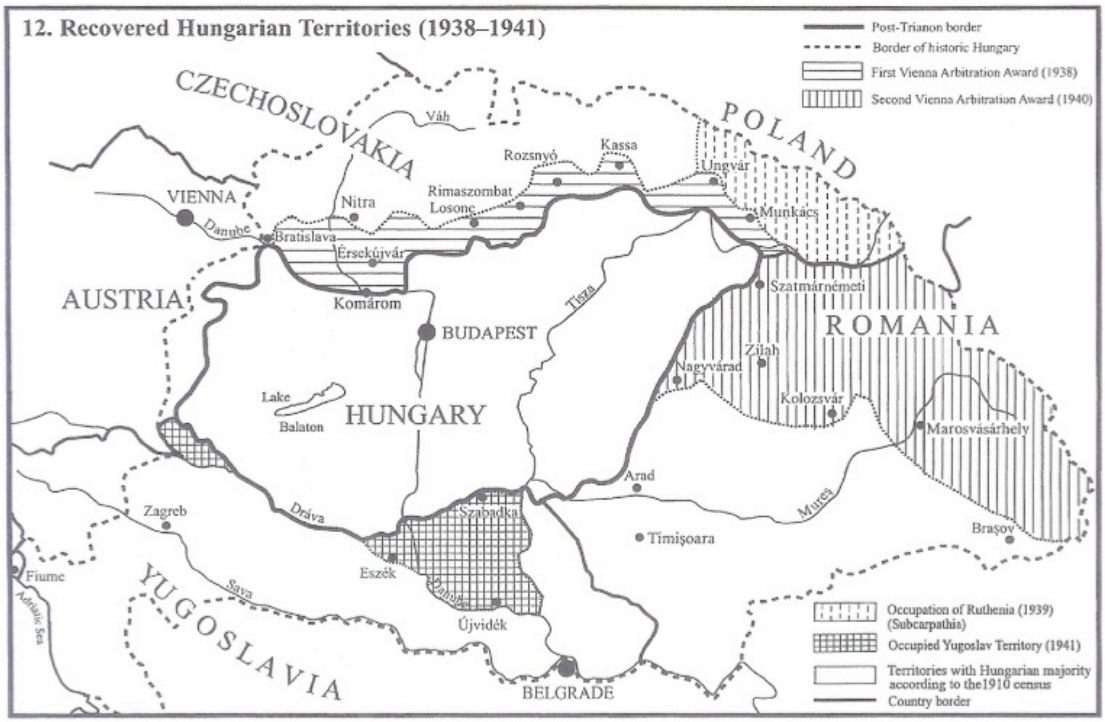
[72] Juhász, *Hungarian Foreign Policy*, 175.
[73] Ibid., 147.
[74] Richard J. Evans, *The Third Reich in Power* (London: Allen Laine, 2005), 683.
[75] Juhász, *Hungarian Foreign Policy*, 183.

inhabitants and lived contiguous to the Hungarian border, but much more complicated in the Second Vienna Award, pertaining to Northern Transylvania, where Hungarian settlements were much more geographically diffuse and amounted to a narrow majority of the population. In the case of Ruthenia, the region had only a minority of Hungarians and was re-annexed based on geopolitical opportunism, rather than integral arguments. The invasion of Yugoslavia was the singular instance where an integral revisionist argument was proclaimed, though the outcome did not reflect the stated intentions. At the start of the invasion, Horthy called for the Hungarian troops to march toward the "thousand-year-old southern border."[76] In actuality, Hungary only recovered part of the former territories, as the Germans took control of the Banat in the northeast of Yugoslavia and Croatia formed an independent state in the west. Both areas belonged to the Kingdom of Hungary prior to the First World War.[77] Thus, none of Hungary's border revisions satisfied the ideology of integral revisionism.

The final key aspect of Hungary's border revisions was that, along with the reincorporated Hungarian population, each territorial expansion brought non-Hungarians into the country as well. After 1941, the enlarged state included significant Slovak, Ruthenian, Romanian, and Serbian minorities. It also expanded the number of Germans and Jews, the main national minorities in Trianon Hungary. Though revisionist propaganda often emphasized the mistreatment of the Hungarians living in the successor states and vowed that a reconstituted multi-national Hungary would much more effectively protect minority rights, the non-Hungarian ethnicities rightly feared that in practice, this would not be the case. Felvidék provided the first test case for the Hungarian government's minority policy. The Hungarian army's annexation of

[76] "Horthy Miklós kormanyzó kiáltványa és hadparancsa a délvidéki bevonulásról, Budapest, April 10, 1941." In Zeidler, *Trianon*, 320.
[77] It is unlikely that Bárdossy included Croatia in his revisionist plans because Croatia's declaration of independence from Yugoslavia was used as a pretext to legitimize the Hungarian invasion of Yugoslavia.

the territory provided the first contact between minority populations in Felvidék and the new regime.



Source: Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revision*

Figure 2: Hungary's territorial gains, 1938-1941.

Chapter 2

Restoring St. Stephen's Realm

> Not even three months have passed since parliament paid homage to the memory of St. Stephen in Székesfehérvár. When we prepared that ceremony, we spent a long time deliberating on how to present an enduring veneration to the memory of St. Stephen . . . that would be worthy of the loftiness of the 900-year jubilee [of his death]. But we felt that the poor means of this bounded country could not do justice to his exalted memory. . . . Alas, in the year of St. Stephen . . . the long-awaited miracle has come to pass: Hungary's territory has peacefully been enlarged. –Béla Imrédy, Prime Minister[1]

The Road to Vienna

The political upheaval of the year 1938, precipitated by German successes in Austria and the Sudetenland, created a frenzied atmosphere throughout Europe. In Hungary, fear of war and German domination mingled with excitement at the possibility of finally righting the injustices the country had endured for the past twenty years. It was also the 900th anniversary of the death of St. Stephen; the year 1938 was an opportune moment for rebuilding his kingdom. By the end of the year, the First Vienna Award had returned southern Felvidék to the Hungarian state and the area was already under Hungarian civil jurisdiction.

Historiography on the First Vienna Award focuses heavily on diplomatic history. Moreover, this history generally emphasizes the relationship between the Great Powers and the Hungarian and Czechoslovak governments, respectively. [2] Detailed accounts of what Hitler

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[1] "Imrédy Béla miniszterelnök benyújtja és ismerteti a Felvidék visszacsatolásáról szóló törvényjavaslatot," *Budapesti Hirlap,* November 9, 1938, 2. "Negyedéve sincs annak, hogy *Székesfehérvárott Szent István* emlékének hódolt az *Országgyűlés*. Mikor azt a hódolást előkészítettük, sokáig gondolkoztunk és tünödtünk azon, miképpen lehetne *Szent István* emlékének maradandó, . . . amely ennek a 900 éves jubileumnak magasztosságához méltó volna. De úgy éreztük, hogy ez a szegény eszközeiben korlátozott ország méltó emléket ilyen módon nem állithat. . . . *De gondoskodott arról, hogy Szent István évében megnagyobbodjék az a föld, amelyet a Szent Jobb markol és fog össze immár 900 esztendeje és megtörtént a várvavárt csoda* megtörtént *Szent István* áldó jobbjának új csodája: Magyarország területének békes eszközökkel való megnagyobbodása."

[2] See the general diplomatic history works of Gyula Juhász, *Hungarian Foreign Policy, 1919-1945* (Budapest: Akadémiai kiadó, 1979); Magda Ádám, *The Versailles System and Central Europe*

promised Czech, Slovak, and Hungarian leaders before and after the Vienna Award and how those individuals interpreted these promises composes the bulk of the materials written on the Czechoslovak-Hungarian territorial revisions. Decidedly less scholarship is available on direct relations between the two states. The little that has been written focuses on the bilateral talks between Czechoslovak and Hungarian officials in Komárno in October 1938 and the escalating small acts of military aggression, such as troop mobilizations, executed by both sides during the crisis.[3] Though a brief account of this diplomatic history is necessary, this chapter is more concerned with processes in play outside of the negotiating room—the reception of the Vienna Award, the return of the Hungarian minorities, and the memorialization of the Grand Re-entry of Hungary troops.

During the crisis months leading up to the territorial changes in Munich and Vienna, the Hungarian government and the leaders of the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia attempted to link their cause to that of the German minority in the Sudetenland. *Prágai Magyar Hirlap*, the largest Hungarian-language newspaper in Czechoslovakia, published an open letter to Lord Runciman, the British envoy sent to Prague to negotiate a settlement between the German minority and the Czechoslovak government. The letter asked Ruciman not to forget the Hungarian minorities in Czechoslovakia and to provide "equal conditions and equal possibility

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(Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004); Mária Ormos, *Hungary in the Age of the Two World Wars: 1914-1945* (Boulder, Colo.: Social Science Monographs, 2007); and Stephen Kertész, *Diplomacy in a Whirlpool: Hungary between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1953). For works focusing specifically on the First Vienna agreement, see Gergely Sallai, *Az első bécsi döntés* (Budapest: Osiris kiadó, 2002); Ladislav Deák, *Viedenska Arbitraž: Mníchov pre Slovensko* (Bratislava: Nadácia Korene, 1998); and Edward Chászár, *Decision in Vienna: The Czechoslovak-Hungarian Border Dispute of 1938* (Hamilton, Ont.: Hunyadi MMK, 1991).

[3] The two monographs by Gergely Sallai, *Az első bécsi döntés* and *A határ megindul: a csehszlovákiai magyar kisebbség és Magyarország kapcsolatai az 1938-1939 évi államhatár-változások tükrében* (Pozsony: Kalligram, 2009) provide more social background to the territorial revisions, as does Attila Simon, *Egy rövid esztendő kronikája: a szlovákiai magyarok 1938-ban* (Somorja: Fórum Kisebbségkutató Intézet, 2010).

of development to every nation."[4] Members of the conservative United Hungarian Party and the Hungarian Social Democrats did meet with Runciman during his time in Prague, but his final report to the British government did not mention the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia.[5] Sudeten Germans and Felvidék Hungarians differed in the radicalism of their demands. The leader of the Sudeten Germans, Konrad Henlein, was committed by 1938 to the Sudetenland's incorporation into Germany and vowed to "always demand so much [from Prague] that we cannot be satisfied."[6] János Eszterházy, leader of the United Hungarian Party and the face of the Hungarian minority, chose to work within the framework of the Czechoslovak state during the crisis. He asked the party's leaders not to resort to illegal tactics. "Do not organize unrest in any city or region, and explain to our brothers that we can only show the validity of Hungarian minority rights in democratic and parliamentary ways," Eszterházy implored.[7]

On the diplomatic front, the Hungarian minister in London lobbied for a guarantee on the part of the British government that the other minorities within Czechoslovakia would receive the same concessions as the German minority.[8] In addition, the semi-official Hungarian Frontier Readjustment League sent memoranda and books outlining the Hungarian viewpoint to Runciman, Prime Minister Chamberlain, and Foreign Minister Halifax, as well as organs of

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[4] "A Hungarian Welcome to Lord Runciman," *Prágai Magyar Hirlap*, August 4, 1938, 1, in Charles Wojatsek, *From Trianon to the First Vienna Award: the Hungarian Minority in the First Czechoslovak Republic, 1918-1938* (Montreal: Institute of Comparative Civilizations, 1981), 200.
[5] Paul Vyšný, *The Runciman Mission to Czechoslovakia, 1938: Prelude to Munich* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 157 and 310-315.
[6] Qtd. in Mark Cornwall, "The Czechoslovak Sphinx: 'Moderate and Reasonable' Konrad Henlein," in *In the Shadow of Hitler: Personalities of the Right in Central and Eastern Europe* Rebecca Haynes and Martyn Rady, ed. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 217.
[7] Qtd. in Imre Molnár, *Esterházy János élete és mártírhalála* (Debrecen: Méry Ratio Kiadó, 2010), 109. "Sem a városban, sem a vidéken ne szervezzenek semmilyen tüntetést, és magyarázzák meg barátainknak, hogy csakis demokratikus és parlamentáris úton érvényesíthetjük a magyar kisebbség jogait."
[8] *Documents on British Foreign Policy 3rd Series, 1919-1938 Vol. 3,* (London: Foreign Office, 1946-1984), 1-2.

public opinion.[9] As diplomatic negotiations unfolded, however, it became clear that Hungarian demands were not part of the discussion. Imrédy informed both Hitler and the British Ambassador in Budapest that the Hungarian government would not accept any solution to the crisis that did not grant the Hungarian minority the same treatment as the German minority, and "would struggle against it by every possible means in her power."[10] Ultimately, the Munich Agreement only directly addressed Germany's demands on Czechoslovakia.

Though Hungarian claims remained unresolved in Munich, they were not wholly ignored. An addendum to the agreement stated that "the problems of the Hungarian and Polish minorities in Czechoslovakia, if not settled within three months by agreement between the respective Governments, shall form the subject of another meeting of the Heads of the Governments of the four Powers here present."[11] This provided hope for the cause of Hungarian revisionism, but it was far from satisfying. The language of the addendum was purposefully vague—what exactly did solving the "problems of the Polish and Hungarian minorities" entail? It certainly was not a guarantee that Hungary would receive the same treatment as Germany; it was not even a guarantee of a territorial solution. The only certainty the addendum provided for was bilateral negotiations with the Czechoslovak government.

Throughout 1938, the Hungarian government searched for an appropriate diplomatic strategy. Meanwhile, in Budapest revisionists took to the streets. In April, two major rallies were held in Budapest demonstrating for territorial revisions. On April 7, a student-led demonstration demanded the return of Slovakia, distributing leaflets saying "Destroy Czechoslovakia, ally of

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[9] MOL K63 [Külügyminisztérium, Politikai osztály] 38/1, p. 20.
[10] *DBFP*, Series 3, Vol. 3, 4. For Imrédy's letter to Hitler, see György Ránki et al. ed., *A Wilhelmstrasse és Magyarország: Német diplomaciai iratok Magyarországról 1933-1944* (Budapest: Kossuth kiadó, 1968), 296.
[11] "Munich Agreement, September 29, 1939," in Charles Wojatsek, *From Trianon to the First Vienna Award: the Hungarian Minority in the First Czechoslovak Republic, 1918-1938* (Montreal: Institute of Comparative Civilizations, 1981), 206.

the Soviets." Some of the students attempted to protest in front of the Czech Legation, which prompted police intervention to break up the rally.[12] A few weeks later, on April 24, the Hungarian Frontier Readjustment League held a rally attended by 60,000 people, demanding the return of the Hungarian-majority areas of Slovakia.[13] These activities started up once again in September as the crisis escalated further. Several days before the announcement of the Munich agreement, on September 21, the Hungarian Frontier Readjustment League held another gathering at Hero's Square in Budapest, drawing a crowd of 40,000 who demonstrated to bring back Slovakia and Ruthenia.[14]

Poland's claims against Czechoslovakia were small compared to those of the Hungarians and were settled in a matter of days. The Polish government issued an ultimatum to the Czechoslovak government, demanding the surrender of Cieszyn [Cz: Těšín]. On October 1, 1938, the day after the Munich Agreement, the Czechoslovak government agreed to begin negotiations and prepare for the relinquishment of the disputed territory.[15] The Polish army moved into Cieszyn the following day.[16] Given the Hungarian government's greater demands and relatively weak military position, however, it could hardly emulate Poland's aggressive stance and simply issue an ultimatum.

The Hungarian government immediately requested a meeting with the Czechoslovak government based on the Munich Agreement addendum, and on October 9, 1938 negotiations began in Komárno [HU: Komárom], a Hungarian-majority town in southern Czech-Slovakia.

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[12] "Return of Slovakia Demanded in Hungary: Student Demonstrations End Stormily as Police Act," *New York Times*, April 8, 1938, 11.
[13] Miklós Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revision in Hungary*, trans. Thomas DeKornfeld and Alice DeKornfeld (Boulder, Colo.: Social Science Monographs, 2007), 173.
[14] MOL K63 38/1, p. 18.
[15] Ádám, *The Versailles System and Central Europe,* 339.
[16] Carlile Aylmer Macartney, *October Fifteenth, a History of Modern Hungary 1929-1945* vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1957), 276.

Representatives of the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia were noticeably absent from the negotiating table. Esterházy was in Komárno during the meetings but was not allowed to take part in the talks.[17] The Hungarian delegation, led by then-Education Minister Pál Teleki and Foreign Minister Kálmán Kánya, submitted claims to territories where the Hungarian population exceeded fifty percent according to the 1910 census, and requested a plebiscite for the Slovak- and Ruthenian-majority areas that had belonged to Hungary prior to 1918.[18] On the other side of the negotiating table, the Czechoslovak delegation was led by Jozef Tiso and made up entirely of Slovaks.[19] This development heartened the Hungarians, who believed that "the Slovak delegates would prove less intransigent than the Czechs in the matter of territorial concessions."[20] Such optimism quickly vanished, however, when the Slovak delegation countered the Hungarian offer with autonomy for the Hungarian-majority areas instead of a territorial solution to the conflict, signifying a gaping divide between Hungarian and Slovak positions. Nor did the negotiations progress in a matter necessary to achieve consensus. "It was not a real discussion and there was no dialogue," recalled Hungarian diplomat Aladár Szegedy-Maszák, "there were only some meetings, rather characterized by monologues."[21] The chances for reaching an agreement were thus handicapped from the start.

Over the course of negotiations the Hungarian and Slovak delegates did move closer to a solution, but several major disagreements remained. First, the Slovak delegation refused to

[17] Molnár, *Esterházy János élete és mártírhalála,* 110.
[18] Ádám, *The Versailles System and Central Europe,* 340-343.
[19] Jozef Tiso was the Prime Minister of the autonomous Slovak government within Czechoslovakia (formed three days before the opening of the Komárno negotiations) and after March 1939, Prime Minister of the independent Slovak Republic. For a recent biography of Tiso, see James Ward, "No Saint: Jozef Tiso, 1887-1947" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2008).
[20] Carlile Aylmer Macartney, "Hungary and Czechoslovakia" *Contemporary Review* 154 (July/Dec 1938), 681.
[21] Aladár Szegedy-Maszák and László Csorba, *Az ember ősszel visszanéz... egy volt magyar diplomata emlékirataiból* vol. 1 (Budapest: Európa História, 1996), 217. "Igazi tárgyalás és dialogús nem volt, csak néhány ülés, inkább monológok jegyében."

consider a referendum for non-Hungarian majority areas, thus taking the possibility of an integral solution off the table.[22] Second, each delegation believed a different set of ethnographic statistics should be the basis for determining ethnic distribution. The Hungarians favored the 1910 census data (1,090,000 inhabitants, 78 percent Hungarian, 13.5 percent Slovak) and justified their position by noting that the Munich Agreement had been based on 1910 statistics.[23] The Slovaks, on the other hand, wanted to use the most recent statistics, the 1930 census data (1,136,000 inhabitants, 48 percent Hungarian, 38 percent Slovak).[24] The two sides also took opposing standpoints on the question of population exchange. At multiple points in the Komárno negotiations, Slovak delegates brought up the idea of moving Slovaks living in southeastern Hungary (primarily Békés County) to Slovakia, and in exchange relocating Slovak Hungarians to Hungary.[25] The Hungarians strongly opposed such a resolution. After four days of halting progress, the Hungarian delegation called off the discussions.

There were, however, some significant developments during the Komárno negotiations. The Slovak delegation agreed to give back two overwhelmingly Hungarian border settlements, Ipolyság [SK: Šahy] and the northern half of Sátoraljaújhely [SK: Nové Mesto pod Šiatrom], a town that had been split in two by the border after Trianon. On October 15, the Hungarian army took possession of these two towns. In Ipolyság, the locals took an aggressive, nationalist tone in

[22] Sallai, *A határ megindul*, 123.
[23] Sallai, *Az első bécsi döntés*, 88.
[24] Sallai, *A határ megindul*, 118 and Ladislav Deák, *The Slovaks in Hungarian Politics in the Years 1918-1938* (Bratislava: Kubko Goral, 1997), 83. The radically different statistics led to accusations of falsification of data on both sides. While both sets of statistics were manipulated to some degree, much of the discrepancy can be logically explained. A report produced by the Research Department of the British Foreign Office from 1944 noted, "when the Czechoslovak and Hungarian census show, as they do, big differences in the estimated ethnic composition of the inter-frontier zone, this is due in part to the existence of [a] nationally ambiguous element, in part to their different methods of computation (the Czechoslovak by 'nationality,' the Hungarian by 'mother-tongue'…), partly to real differences in the ethnic composition of the area at different periods" [PRO FO [Foreign Office] 404/30, 213].
[25] Sallai, *A határ megindul*, 122-123.

speeches celebrating the transfer of sovereignty. Local Hungarian United Party leader Jenő Salkovszky accused Czechs of colonizing Ipolyság and building Czech schools so that "the new generation [of Hungarians] would . . . feel Czech."[26] A young girl, Ágnes Hornyák, who spoke on behalf of the youth of Felvidék, vowed, "we would rather perish by the sword than live again in foreign captivity!"[27] Such hostility was perhaps their way of expressing frustration that the Komárno negotiations had failed to provide an adequate solution to the Hungarian minority problem in Czechoslovakia.

Another impediment to progress during the conference was the series of minor military skirmishes that broke out in eastern Czechoslovakia between Hungarian irregular troops known as the "Ragged Guard" and the Czechoslovak Army. These Hungarian fighters had covertly crossed into Czechoslovakia under Hungarian government instruction and attempted to foment uprisings among the local populace in Slovakia and Ruthenia.[28] The Ragged Guard proved rather inept, and many of them were soon captured by the Czechoslovak Army. The Hungarian government denied responsibility, but under interrogation several of the captured men admitted to being trained by officers of the Hungarian Army:

> One after another the prisoners gave their names, addresses and troop formations in Hungary. They admitted that they were serving as soldiers in the regular Hungarian Army or as reserve officers and had never set foot in Ruthenia before being sent on these expeditions. . . . On Oct. 10 they were told to turn in their uniforms. They then received civilian clothes and were taken by guides through secret mountain paths into Ruthenia.[29]

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[26] Lajos Marschalkó, "Ipolyság," in *Felvidékünk-Honvédségünk: Trianontól-Kassáig: történelmi eseménysorozat képekkel*, (Budapest: A Vitézi Rend Zrínyi Csoport, 1939), 77. "Cseheket telepítettek be Ipolyságra, cseh iskolákat is állítottak fel, hogy az új nemzedék csak nylevében legyen magyar, de érzéseiben cseh."

[27] Ibid., 77. "Megfogadja, hogy inkább elvész egy szálig, de soha többé nem akar és nem fog idegen rabságban élni!"

[28] Macartney, *October Fifteenth*, 279.

[29] G. E. R. Gedye, "Hungary Ordered Rioters' Invasion," *New York Times,* November 1, 1938, 16. See also Alexander Henderson, *Eyewitness in Czechoslovakia* (London: George Harrap, 1939), 246-255. Henderson claims Czechoslovak troops captured between 700 and 800 members of the Ragged Guard.

Simultaneously, revisionists from within Hungary proper initiated an aggressive propaganda campaign to mobilize "all Hungarians and the nationalities belonging to the thousand-year-old homeland."[30] Pamphlets snuck across the border targeted Slovaks, inciting them to "destroy the railways and post-offices, set fire to shops, desert from the army."[31] Hungarians were likewise urged to take up arms:

> Hungarians of Felvidék! Brothers! To arms! Our patience has run out! The hour of reckoning has arrived! The twenty-year long Czech villainy cries for vengeance! We Hungarian rebels have begun the great reckoning! . . . Chase out the worthless traitors! Long live liberated Felvidék! Long live Hungary![32]

Such overt attempts to undermine Czechoslovak internal stability only added to the difficulties of reaching a solution in Komárno. The greatest impediment, however, was that both governments could only lose by reaching an agreement in Komárno. Tiso and the newly autonomous Slovak government (which was formed just three days before the negotiations began) could hardly agree to the relinquishment of territory as their first major official act. On the other hand, the Hungarian government was already well aware that anything short of an integral solution in the territorial dispute with Czechoslovakia would be met with harsh criticism by the radical Right and disappointment among the populace. However, should the new border be decided by international arbitration, blame and dissatisfaction could be shifted onto the deciding powers. Thus, both sides had compelling reasons to sabotage the Komárno negotiations and seek counsel from outside.

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[30] Móricz Béla Técsói, "Újjászületik a m. kir. honvédség," in *Felvidékünk-Honvédségünk: Trianontól-Kassáig: történelmi eseménysorozat képekkel* (Budapest: A Vitézi Rend Zrínyi Csoport, 1939), 124. "Megmozdult az egész magyarság és megmozdultak az ezeréves hazához tartozó nemzetiségek is."

[31] Henderson, *Eyewitness in Czechoslovakia,* 250.

[32] Técsói, "Újjászületik a m. kir. honvédség," 124-125. "Felvidéki magyarok! Testvérek! Fegyverbe! Türelmünk elfogyott! A leszámolás órája ütött! A csehek húsz évi gazsága bosszúért kiált! Mi magyar felkelők megkezdtük a nagy leszámolást! Megfizetünk húsz év minden szenvedéséért! Kergessétek ki a hitvány árulót! Éljen a felszabadult Felvidék! Éljen Magyarország!"

Outside Komárno City Hall, the site of the bilateral meetings, the Hungarian inhabitants of the town made their preference known with patriotic displays on the opening day of negotiations. "There were Hungarian flags, cockades, and pins, girls dressed in Hungarian clothes . . . everywhere and in every direction." The protesters chanted "everything back!" at the Hungarian delegation on their way to and from the negotiations.[33] "The reception in 'Czech' Komárom was a shocking experience," Szegedy-Maszák remembered. "Practically the entire city was out in the street and welcomed the Hungarian auto caravan with raving enthusiasm."[34] A reporter for the *New York Times* estimated that the number of demonstrators was in the thousands. The next morning, the scene was decidedly different, however. Overnight, Czechoslovak authorities had removed all the Hungarian flags.[35] Regardless, the previous day's displays of public support for reunification with Hungary certainly lent credence to the Hungarian cause at an opportune moment, with the international press covering the proceedings.

The failure to resolve border disputes in both Munich and Komárno led to increased tensions in Hungary. "Hungarian Nazis have strongly criticized their government," the *New York Times* reported, "for its failure to act with greater speed and determination when Germany and Poland marched in and occupied their respective minority districts in the Sudetenland and Silesia."[36] This prompted street demonstrations in Budapest and rumors of a planned uprising against the government by the radical Right.[37] According to one account, even liberal democrats

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[33] Rező Kapy, "Komárom," in *Felvidékünk-Honvédségünk: Trianontól-Kassáig: történelmi eseménysorozat képekkel* (Budapest: A Vitézi Rend Zrínyi Csoport, 1939), 67-68. "Mindenütt mindenfelé magyar zászlók, magyar kokárdák, magyar jelvények, magyarruhás lányok."
[34] Szegedy-Maszák, *Az ember ősszel visszanéz,* 215. "Megrendítő élmény volt a fogadtatás 'cseh' Komáromban: jóformán az egész város kint volt az utcán és tomboló lelkesedéssel fogadta a magyar autókaravánt."
[35] "Hungary Mobilizes 200,000 in Dispute," *New York Times*, October 15, 1938, 4.
[36] "Hungary Rejects Czech Proposals; Army May March," *New York Times,* October 24, 1938, 1.
[37] Macartney, *October Fifteenth*, 286.

pushed for a military rather than an uncertain diplomatic solution.[38] Many Hungarians feared that the perceived passivity and weakness of the government, reluctant to back their conceptions of right with might, would leave the country with nothing.

In the Hungarian press, the old illusion of Slovak solidarity with the Hungarian cause kept resurfacing, even as the Slovak delegation in Komárno obstinately opposed the Hungarian government's proposals. A *New York Times* correspondent observed that "Official Hungarian propaganda has been publishing reports from Slovakia indicating that a majority of Slovaks demand separation from the Czechoslovak Republic, thus creating an impression in Hungary that the sole obstacle to the reunion is the Czech Government's opposition."[39] The Hungarian periodical *A Reggel'*s coverage of the Komárno meetings claimed that "many soldiers dressed in Czech uniforms, both Hungarian and Slovak, watched the unforgettably beautiful picture" of Hungarian crowds rallying in Komárno "with smiles," emphasizing the shared sentiments of the Hungarian and Slovak soldiers.[40]

Even the Slovak minority living in Békéscsaba, in southeastern Hungary, was mobilized for the cause of Hungarian revisionism. At a rally described as "spontaneous" and "attended by ten thousand" by *Budapesti Hirlap* on October 15, the "Slovak-speaking Hungarians" attempted to refute the Czech radio's "slander campaign" against Hungary.[41] Participants spoke of their freedom to speak their language and practice their religion, of their economic opportunities, and of their devotion to the Hungarian homeland. "I am Slovak, but my heart beats Hungarian,"

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[38] "A magyar kormány jegyzékei Prágában," in *Felvidékünk-Honvédségünk: Trianontól-Kassáig: történelmi eseménysorozat képekkel* (Budapest: A Vitézi Rend Zrínyi Csoport, 1939), 61.
[39] "Hungary to Press Claims," *New York Times*, September 30, 1938, 9.
[40] "Pozsonyt vissza! Kassát vissza!" *A Reggel,* October 10, 1938, 1. "Sok cseh egyenruhában levő katona is mosolyogva nézte a felejthetetlenül szép képet: vagy magyarok vagy szlovákok lehettek."
[41] "A szlovákajku magyarok Békéscsabán hitvallást tettek magyar hazájuk mellett," *Budapesti Hirlap*, October 16, 1938, 1. "A spontán lelkesedésből megszületett gyülésre mintegy tizezerfőnyi hallgatóság jelent meg, a cseh rádiónak rágalomhadjárata adott okot, azok a hazug hirek, amelyek terjesztésével a cseh rádió elhomályosítani igyekszik a magyarság ügyet."

proclaimed one speaker. Another assured the Slovaks living in Czechoslovakia that "here in Hungary, there is no persecution of Slovaks whatsoever."[42]

Finally, rally organizers urged Slovaks living outside of Hungary to "come back into the Christian, true thousand-year-old borders."[43] The domestic press thus continued to give their readership hope that an integral solution to the border dispute with Czechoslovakia was a possibility, despite all evidence to the contrary. Any lingering hopes on the part of the Hungarian government that the Slovak leadership would willingly join Hungary had been put to rest by the icy reception Hungarian demands received in Komárno. The negotiations showed that the Slovak leadership strongly rejected incorporation into Hungary, and that they "denied with . . . vigour that they were 'Slovak-speaking Hungarians,'" a fact, C.A. Macartney noted, which "must have been very painful for the Hungarians."[44] Perhaps this was painful for the Hungarian delegates in Komárno, but such sentiments remained hidden to the Hungarian populace. Revisionists claimed that again the Czechs were to blame. "The happenings at Komárom were a very characteristic manifestation of the petty, sly and underhanded diplomacy of the [Czechs]," HFRL President Ferenc Herczeg claimed. "The honest, Christian spirit of the Slovak people has nothing in common with this."[45] Thus, many continued to hold out hope that Hungary and Slovakia would be reunited yet.

After the failure of bilateral talks between Czechoslovakia and Hungary, the Hungarian government requested German and Italian arbitration in the dispute. Although the Munich Agreement addendum stated that failure of direct negotiation would result in another conference

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[42] Ibid. "Itt nálunk, Magyarországon nincs semmiféle szlovák üldözés."
[43] Ibid. "Szlovák vagyok, de a szivem magyarul dobog ... Jöjjetek vissza a boldog keresztény, igaz ezeréves határok közé."
[44] Macartney, "Hungary and Czechoslovakia," 681.
[45] Ferenc Herczeg, "The Clay-Footed Dwarf," *Danubian Review* Vol. VI. (Oct-Nov. 1938), 12.

of the Four Powers, Britain and France willingly agreed to German-Italian arbitration; neither government was keen to be further involved in East-Central European affairs and the dismantling of Czechoslovakia.[46] Thus, Germany and Italy became the sole arbiters in the conflict. Backdoor negotiations between German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop, Italian Foreign Minister Galeazzo Ciano, and Czechoslovak and Hungarian government representatives ensured that the outcome would not be a surprise. The arbitration took place on November 2 in the Belvedere Palace in Vienna.

That afternoon, the German and Italian foreign ministers announced their decision. The new demarcation line revealed that Hungary had received a narrow strip of territory along its northern border of approximately 12,000 square kilometers, which roughly followed the ethno-linguistic boundaries of the region. Examining the new map was an emotional experience for the Hungarian delegates and journalists present in Vienna. One reporter, Lajos Lukácsovich, described his alternating feelings of joy, agony, and jubilance as the "blood-red" line marking the new border rose north and dipped south:

> Pozsony is not ours! Good God, what will become of us? . . . The line curves north and I feel the blood rushing to my face. . . . We did not get Nyitra, and our hearts seize; my God, what if we lose Kassa as well? . . . I see that the line curve up toward Rozsnyó. . . . Now, now, God do not leave me! . . . Kassa, Kassa is again ours![47]

In addition to Rozsynó [SK: Rožňava] and Kassa, the territory included most of the major urban centers and market towns in southern Slovakia: Komárom, Galánta [SK: Galanta], Érsekújvár [SK: Nové Zámky], Léva [SK: Levice], Losonc [SK: Lučenec], and Rimaszombat [SK: Rimavská Sobota]. In addition, Hungary also received Beregszász, Munkács [SK: Mukačevo; UA: Mukachevo], and Ungvár [SK: Užhorod; UA: Uzhhorod], the largest cities in Ruthenia.

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[46] Ádám, *The Versailles System and Central Europe,* 346.

[47] Lajos Lukácsovich, "A bécsi döntés," in *Felvidékünk-Honvédségünk: Trianontól-Kassáig: történelmi eseménysorozat képekkel* (Budapest: A Vitézi Rend Zrínyi Csoport, 1939), 107-108.

Only two of the cities the Hungarian delegation had demanded during negotiations, Bratislava [HU: Pozsony] (later to become the Slovak capital) and Nitra [HU: Nyitra], remained in Czechoslovakia. No reliable population statistics existed for the returned areas at the time of the award.[48] The census conducted by Hungarian officials in December 1938 put the regained territory's total population at 1,026,304, which was 84.7 percent Hungarian and 11.6 percent Slovak; the remaining 3.7 percent was made up mostly of Ruthenian and German speakers.[49] These gains more or less fulfilled the demands the Hungarian negotiators had made for ethnically-based revision in the previous weeks. "Although in Vienna complete justice for Hungary had not prevailed," Lukácsovich concluded, "thanks be to God, without bloodshed we got back a million of our Hungarian brothers."[50] News quickly spread of the arbiters' decision and the crowds assembled outside the Belvedere Palace cheered the decision.[51]

The award stipulated that the Czechoslovak evacuation and Hungarian occupation of territory would take place between November 5 and 10. Otherwise, the German and Italian arbiters left all other details, including the issue of minority protection, to be settled by a joint Hungarian-Czechoslovak commission.[52]

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[48] The New York Times reported a total population of 860,000, 84 percent of whom were Hungarian."Axis Arbiters Give Hungary Most of the Czech Lands Asked," *New York Times*, November 3, 1938. The statistics compiled by the British Legation in Budapest, relying on Hungarian estimates, gave the number 1,060,000 total inhabitants made up of 78 percent Hungarians. (*DBFP* Series 3, Vol. 3, 225-226) The British Legation in Prague, using Czechoslovak census figures, came up with a total population of 1,041,000, just 57 percent of whom were Hungarian. (ibid., 238).

[49] MOL K28 [Miniszterelnökség] 215/428. These figures are based on "mother tongue," meaning that apart from 3,000 Yiddish speakers, the Jewish population of the territory is counted as Hungarian in these figures.

[50] Lukácsovich, "A bécsi döntés," 108. "Rohantunk a telefonhoz, jelenteni . . . hogy Bécsben, ha nem is érvényesült Magyarország teljes igazsága, de a Gondviselés kegyelme megadta nekünk, hogy vér nélkül visszakaptuk egymillío magyar testvérünket."

[51] Otto D. Tolischus, "'Axis' Arbiters Give Hungary Most of the Czech Lands Asked," *New York Times*, November 3, 1938, 1.

[52] "First Vienna Arbitral Award, 1938," in Wojatsek, *From Trianon to the First Vienna Award,* 207-208.

Just after 9pm, Hungarian Prime Minister Imrédy gave a radio address announcing the dictates of the Vienna Award. Miklós Kozma, former Interior Minister and a member of Horthy's inner circle, captured the celebratory air in Budapest in his diary: "[All of] Budapest rushed out into the street. The young . . . marched in closed ranks with cadenced steps, the streets were blackened by the crowd. Huge crowds convened in front of the Italian, German, and Polish embassies."[53] A procession through the streets of the city marched to the Buda Castle, where an estimated 80,000 people gathered. Though the masses largely celebrated the return of Felvidék, notes of dissatisfaction already rang out in the crowd. Amidst the chants of "Long Live Horthy," one could also hear cries of "Pozsony back, Everything back!"[54] In front of the royal palace, a student leader addressed Imrédy, complaining that "full justice had not yet been rendered to Hungary and that all hoped this was only the first step toward full justice."[55] In reply, the Prime Minister responded that he too was unsatisfied but that he had chosen the path of diplomacy because "I am responsible not only for Hungarian justice but also for the precious Hungarian blood, of which there is so little."[56] Imrédy thus acknowledged what many of a more radical persuasion had lost sight of in the frenetic weeks when the borders were being diplomatically negotiated: that Hungary lacked the most basic necessity – manpower – to take back territory by force.

The words of the Prime Minister conveyed gratitude for the territorial gains but also emphasized that they were not yet satisfied, a sentiment shared and expressed by other officials

[53] MOL K429 [Kozma Miklós Iratai] 28/21/1, p. 109. "Mikor befejezte, Budapest kitódult az utcára. A fiatalság … zárt alakulásokban ütemes lépésekkel vonultak fel, az utcák feketéllettek a tömegtől. Az olasz, német és a lengyel követségek előtt tömegek gyülekeztek."
[54] MOL K429 28/21/1, p. 110.
[55] Tolischus, "Axis Arbiters Give Hungary Most of the Czech Lands Asked," 1.
[56] "Megértük a feltámadás napját," in *Felvidékünk-Honvédségünk: Trianontól-Kassáig: történelmi eseménysorozat képekkel* (Budapest: A Vitézi Rend Zrínyi Csoport, 1939), 111. "Tudtam, hogy felelős vagyok nemcsak a magyar igazságért, hanem a drága magyar vérért is, amelyből olyan kevés van."

as well. Regent Horthy looked to the future, and encouraged the people in the assembled crowd to "go home and dream of something even sweeter than what was fulfilled today." He cautioned, however, that any action of protest against the shortcomings of the day's decision would not be tolerated. Although the task of revisionism was incomplete, Horthy expected gratitude to his government for the work accomplished so far. "I don't believe that from today on," he said, "anybody would dare to raise a dissonant sound on the streets of Pest."[57] On the very day of the Vienna Award's announcement, a difficult balancing act was emerging for the government: how to control revisionist sentiment while simultaneously profiting from the public's enthusiasm for territorial enlargement.

All in all, Imrédy considered the initial Award a success. "Twenty years ago in Szeged you lifted high the banner of Hungarian resurrection," he told Regent Horthy. "This cause has now come to victory and we thank you for it."[58] With the reacquisition of Felvidék complete, focus turned toward the reincorporation of the territory.

The Grand Re-Entry into Felvidék

The celebrations of November 2 in Budapest set the tone for what was to follow during the Grand Re-Entry of Hungarian troops.[59] On November 5 the reoccupation of Felvidék began in earnest. The military order issued by Horthy and Defense Minister Jenő Rátz to the occupying army stated, "Soldiers! After twenty difficult years of waiting under the shackles of Trianon, our liberated and re-born armed forces will cross the border that we have always considered

[57] Ibid., 112. "Most pedit térjetek haza és álmodjunk még szebbeket, mint amilyen álom most beteljesedett."
[58] Ibid., 111. "Húsz évvel ezelőtt Szegeden magasra tartotta a magyar feltámadás lobogóját. Ez a lobogó jutott most diadalra."
[59] "Bevonulás" was the term used in Hungarian, which means "entry" and is also utilized for a military draft. Despite the neutral connotation, I have chosen to translate it as "Grand Re-Entry" because the occupation was portrayed in a triumphal, celebratory manner in contemporary Hungarian accounts.

temporary. A million of our brothers await you over there!"[60] Four separate army divisions, each accompanied by a group of foreign and Hungarian journalists, were deployed for the reoccupation and they advanced slowly over the course of six days toward the demarcation line.[61] The Second Army occupied the western-most region, which included most of the settlements along the Danube and two major cities, Komárom and Érsekújvár. The First Army took possession of a long, narrow strip of territory directly east of that, stretching from Párkány [SK: Štúrovo] to Rimaszombat. The Seventh Army Division was responsible for establishing Hungarian rule in largest returned city, Kassa, and its hinterland. Finally, the Sixth Army occupied the region with the most minority inhabitants, the small piece of Ruthenia granted to Hungary and its two urban centers, Ungvár and Munkács.

In most cases, the Czechoslovak army departed shortly before Hungarian troops arrived in a given locale. A small Czechoslovak delegation would remain behind to officially hand over the territory to deputies from the Hungarian army who advanced ahead of the main group. The transfer of power seems to have gone remarkably smoothly in most areas. One foreign observer remarked that he had witnessed "the surrender of territories by one State to another without the least ill-will on either side."[62]

As Czechoslovak deputies and regiments retreated, Hungarian military authorities and the population at large quickly eradicated the leftover traces of Czechoslovak rule. Along the former Czechoslovak-Hungarian frontier, jackhammers made quick work of the concrete barriers as the

[60] "Hadparancs," in *Felvidékünk-Honvédségünk: Trianontól-Kassáig: történelmi eseménysorozat képekkel* (Budapest: A Vitézi Rend Zrínyi Csoport, 1939), 128. "Honvédek! A trianon bilincsei alól felszabadult és újjászletett honvédségünk 20 esztendei nehéz várakozás után átlépi azt a határt, amelyet mindenkor indeiglenesnek tekintettünk. Egymillió testvérünk vár Reátok odaát!"
[61] "Elindultak az ujságírók," *Pesti Napló,* November 5, 1938.
[62] G. E. R. Gedye, "Hungarians Begin Czech Occupation," *New York Times,* November 6, 1938, 1.

new authorities attempted to erase all evidence that the former border had ever existed.[63] Locals in Kassa painted over Czech advertisements with black paint.[64] In Léva, residents pulled down the Czechoslovak coat of arms from city hall and replaced it with a Hungarian flag.[65] The withdrawing Czechoslovak authorities actually aided in this task. The negotiating room in Komárom City Hall, once adorned with photos of Masaryk and Benes, was stripped of all Czechoslovak vestiges, carried off by evacuating troops before Hungarian forces arrived.[66]

The majority of citizens welcomed the Hungarian troops as a liberating, rather than an occupying, army. Residents lined the roadsides wearing traditional folk costumes, giving a festival-like atmosphere to the reoccupation. The soldiers entered the towns and villages of Felvidék under makeshift arches that had been decorated in Hungarian national colors, displaying irredentist slogans such as "Long Live Greater Hungary" and "Everything Back!" They handed out bread to impoverished Hungarian villagers.[67] "All the Hungarian population seemed to be on the street to cheer everything Hungarian," noted the *New York Times* correspondent traveling with the Second Army Division.[68] A Hungarian journalist recalled later, "Never have I felt Hungarians so united as in those days, when among flowers and flags, the feet of Hungarian soldiers first stepped on the returned land; when men cried together with women and children."[69] Impromptu celebrations took place all over Felvidék during the re-entry. The

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[63] *Észak felé: a felvidéki országrészek visszaszerzésének történelmi filmje* (Budapest: A magyar királyi honvédelmi minisztérium és a magyar film iroda, 1939), film.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Lajos Marschalkó, "Léva, Losonc: a magyar zászlo és magyar kenyér Párkányba," in *Felvidékünk-Honvédségünk: Trianontól-Kassáig: történelmi eseménysorozat képekkel* (Budapest: A Vitézi Rend Zrínyi Csoport, 1939), 155.
[66] Kapy, "Komárom," 68.
[67] Marschalkó, "Léva, Losonc," 145.
[68] G. E. R. Gedye "Horthy is in Tears in Reclaimed City," *New York Times* Nov. 7, 1938, 1.
[69] Gyula Zathureczky, "Beregszász, Munkács, Ungvár," in *Felvidékünk-Honvédségünk: Trianontól-Kassáig: történelmi eseménysorozat képekkel* (Budapest: A Vitézi Rend Zrínyi Csoport, 1939), 169. "Soha nem éreztem olyan bonthatatlanul egynek és egyetemesnek a magyarságot, mint azokon a

two largest cities, Komárom and Kassa, held official ceremonies attended by Hungarian and foreign dignitaries and crowds numbering in the tens of thousands. The highlight of both events was the entry of the Regent into the city on a white horse at the head of the Hungarian army.

Witness descriptions of the re-occupation of Felvidék ranged from joyous to reflective. Letters sent from Felvidék to relatives in the mother country expressed delight for the region's return to Hungary. "With warmest regards," one letter began, "I happily write [to you] from liberated Kassa!"[70] In another letter, "Jozsi" inquires if his family in Vác (in Hungary proper) could listen to the re-entry celebration in Léva on the radio.[71] In the small town of Fülek [SK: Fiľakovo], residents welcomed the entering troops with a particularly spirited celebration. They adorned the castle ruins that overlooked the town with a large Hungarian coat of arms, flags, and a giant outline of historic Hungary, flanked by the irredentist adage, "Everything Back!"[72] In the boisterous crowd, revelers held up anti-Czech placards of Hungarian archers slaying Czech dragons.[73] One onlooker recalled a "wild, unrestrained celebration of freedom" in Fülek:

> Girls, full of life and dressed in Hungarian clothes, . . . sang and danced to patriotic hymns. They danced around the hussars and cock-feathered gendarmes. We had not heard chants of "Long Live the Hungarian Army!" with such fresh youthful enthusiasm anywhere else. But neither had we seen such burning hatred as when they shouted "Death to Prague!"[74]

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napokon, amikor virágos, zászlós magyar katonák lába először dobbant a visszaszerzett földön, amikor férfiak együtt sírtak az asszonyokkal és gyermekekkel."

[70] Author's Collection. "Legmélyebb tisztelettel boldogan írok a felszabadult Kassáról!"

[71] Author's Collection.

[72] János Gyurgyák, ed., *Magyarország története képekben II. A két világháború között* (Budapest: Osiris, 2008), 126.

[73] *Észak-felé.*

[74] Marschalkó, "Léva, Losonc," 150. "Szilaj, féktelen, boldog szabadságünnep. . . . Csupa lelkes fiatalember, csupa magyarruhás lány és rengeteg gyerek. És micsoda lányok! Szépek, frissek, tűzről pattantak. Táncolva éneklik a hazafias dalokat. Körültáncolják a huszárokat, a kasastollas komoly csendőröket. Ilyen friss, fiatal örömmel sehol sem hallottuk még, hogy, 'Éljen a magyar hadsereg.' De ennél forróbb gyűlölettel sem tudják kiáltani máshol, hogy 'Vesszen Prága!'

Elsewhere, the mood was more introspective than jovial. Lajos Marschalkó, traveling with the First Army Division, encountered an old man in Párkány who had hurried out to see the entering troops. "I am already very old," the man said, " I could die any minute. But I wanted to see Horthy's soldiers at least once in my life!"[75] The recollections of the prolific novelist and journalist Sándor Márai, a native of Kassa, upon entering Felvidék for the first time after his long exile struck a pensive chord:

> The cold wind waves the flags and in these moments the unforgettable encounter begins, the hidden meaning of which only us Hungarian eyewitnesses can fathom: the border is on the move, the country will be enlarged and take a more just shape. In these moments, only we, who after twenty years cross over the Trianon border without a passport, can understand this mysterious feeling.[76]

Márai's words read more like a sigh of relief than an outburst of joy—relief that with the reincorporation of Felvidék into Hungary, his displacement, and that of many others, had come to an end. The relief and joy displayed during these first days would soon be tempered, however, by the daunting task of administratively reintegrating Felvidék into the Hungarian state and its people into the Hungarian citizenry.

[75] Marschalkó, "Léva, Lonsonc," 145. "Nagyon öreg vagyok már, minden percben meghalhatok. És az életben legalább egyszer látni akartam még Horthy katonáit."
[76] Sándor Márai, *Ajándék a végzettől: a Felvidék és Erdély visszacsatolása* (Budapest: Helikon, 2004), 116. "A hideg szél lobogtatja a zászlókat, s e pillanatokban elkezdődik ez a felejthetetlen és megrázó találkozás, melynek titkos értelmét csak mi, a magyar szemtanúk értjük: a határ megindul, az ország nagyobb lesz, az ország igazibb alakját ölti fel. Ennek a pillanatnak titokzatos értelmét csak mi értjük, akik húsz év után először, átlépünk, útlevél nékül, a trianoni magyar határon."

Source: *Felvidékünk-Honvédségünk*

Figure 3: Girls in folk costume greet Hungarian soldiers in a Felvidék village, November 1938.

Striving for Cultural and Political Legitimacy

The decision in Vienna indicated that Hungary's efforts to convince the international community of its right to rule over the Hungarian-majority areas of Czechoslovakia had been at least partially successful. During the reoccupation, the regime attempted to further convince both the outside world and the residents of Felvidék of Hungary's rightful ownership of the region. The emphasis on the Hungarian historical legacy of Felvidék, perceptible in ceremonies celebrating the return to Hungarian sovereignty, provided a sense of continuity meant to impart legitimacy on Hungarian rule.

Felvidék's return to the Crown Lands of St. Stephen, its home for a millennium, was hailed as both a "resurrection" and a "homecoming." *Pesti Napló,* reporting the outcome of the Vienna Arbitration, exclaimed that the inhabitants of Felvidék had "once again become members of Hungarian Crown Lands of St. Stephen" and that "from today we are ten million living in the Hungarian homeland."[77] That this first successful territorial revision had occurred in 1938, the jubilee year of the death of St. Stephen, was proof for revisionists that the restoration of historic Hungary, and with it the resurrection of the nation, was part of God's plan. In Kassa, Horthy remarked, "for the year of St. Stephen, Hungarian justice rains down in victory with its first achievement," while Imrédy called the reunion of Felvidék and Hungary "a gift for the year of St. Stephen."[78] This sentiment was reiterated by Miklós Pajor, a former senator and resident of Kassa, who proclaimed, "we proudly and courageously go back to St. Stephen's country, to our sweet Hungarian homeland."[79] Furthermore, a visual reminder of Kassa's place within the historic Hungarian realm, a large illuminated depiction of the Holy Crown of St. Stephen, stood in the city's central square.[80] Thus, the irredentist myth of the thousand-year-old Hungarian state and the sacrality of St. Stephen's realm easily and effectively transferred onto the rhetoric surrounding Felvidék's return to Hungary. Due to their "steadfast belief in the resurrection," the

[77] "A magyar Felvidék visszatért!" *Pesti Napló,* November 3, 1938, 1. "Újra a magyar Szentkorona tagja lett. … Mától kezdve tízmilióan élünk a magyar hazában."
[78] Ferenc Felkai, "Rozsnyó, Kassa," in *Felvidékünk-Honvédségünk: Trianontól-Kassáig: történelmi eseménysorozat képekkel* (Budapest: A Vitézi Rend Zrínyi Csoport, 1939), 166. "A Szent István évére esik a magyar igazság győzelmének első eredménye." 164, "A Gondviselés Szent István-évi ajándékáért."
[79] "Horthy Miklós kormányzó diadalmas bevonulása Kassára," *Budapesti Hirlap*, November 12, 1938, 3. "Bűskén és bátrán megyünk vissza Szent István országához a mi édes magyar hazánkhoz."
[80] *Észak-felé.*

people of Felvidék were now free to re-join Hungary and reconnect with their historical Hungarian roots.[81]

The reacquisition of Felvidék was a project of "restorative nostalgia," an opportunity to finally confront the "loss and displacement" brought on by Trianon.[82] The Vienna Award gave Hungary back some of the sacred sites lost after the country's dismemberment, and the re-entry became a chance to reflect on the meaning of these places for the Hungarian nation and rejoice that these sites of "Hungarianness" once again belonged to the state. Komárom was remembered for its role in the revolution of 1848-49, when it was the last city to surrender to Austria under famed Hungarian General György Klapka. Horthy, in his speech in Komárom on November 6, thanked the citizens of that "city so blessed in the Hungarian memory" for "keeping alive the tradition of Klapka's soldiers."[83] The idyllic fourteenth century castle, Krasznahorka, the regained territory's "most beautiful historical relic," served as a reminder of the region's past as the center of seventeenth and eighteenth century Hungarian insurrections against Habsburg rule. Hungarians celebrated the castle's recovery as a chance to reconnect with that heroic past. Here, "quietly and reverently, a group of men once again speaks Hungarian: we feel the aura of history, the meeting of the Hungarian past and present."[84] Personal nostalgia among the locals also contributed to the sense of historical continuity during the days of Hungarian reoccupation. One journalist expressed surprise at the sight of "a Hungarian railroad worker in a brand-new uniform

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[81] Alajos Mécs, "Magyarország kormányzója a honvédség élén bevonul Komárom ősi városába," in *Felvidékünk-Honvédségünk: Trianontól-Kassáig: történelmi eseménysorozat képekkel* (Budapest: A Vitézi Rend Zrínyi Csoport, 1939), 137. "A Felvidék . . . a feltámadásba vetett rendíthetetlen hitét."
[82] Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), xiii, 41-48.
[83] Mécs, "Magyarország kormányzója a honvédség élén bevonul Komárom ősi városába," 137. "Köszöntöm Komáromot, ezt a magyar emlékektől megszentelt várost, amelynek falai az ellenséggel dacoló Klapka Honvédeinek hagyományait őrzik."
[84] Márai, *Ajándék a végzettől,* 125. "Krasznahorka: ahogy ott állunk a megnagyobbodott Magyarország legszebb történelmi műemlékének. . . . Halkan és áhítatosan, megint magyarul beszél egy csapat ember: a történelem leheletét érezzük, a magyar múlt és jelen találkozását."

with a red flag in his hand" who had arrived ahead of the advancing army and was manning the rail lines even though trains were still not running. The man had worked for the Hungarian Railway before 1918, and upon hearing that the Czechs were evacuating the area, "he put on his old uniform and manned his old post."[85] The reincorporation of Felvidék was thus centered upon idealized moments of the past. Great events in the collective memory and personal experiences from the distant past alike became justification for the territory's return to Hungary, as a "return to origins."[86]

By far the most sacred place returned to Hungary in 1938 was the city of Kassa. The loss of the city, first established in the thirteenth century, was especially mourned after Trianon. Kassa's immense gothic cathedral, St. Elizabeth's, along with its historical heritage as the center of Ferenc Rákoczi's War of Independence against the Habsburgs, made the city a revered site and focal point in the moral geography of the irredentist movement. Furthermore, Márai had kept the city in the public's consciousness through his numerous melancholic essays on the fate of his hometown. During the reoccupation, the press highlighted the historical legacy of Kassa, referring to it as "the Prince's [Rákoczi's] City."[87] The message was a simple one: history affirmed Kassa's Hungarian roots, which made Hungarian ownership of Kassa legitimate, just, and natural.

Kassa, the "jewel of Felvidék," the greatest prize won in Vienna, hosted the grandest celebration of the five-day reoccupation. On November 10, Horthy led Hungarian troops in a ceremonial re-entry of the city. A large contingent from the government, including Imrédy, Kánya, István Bethlen, and members of the Hungarian Parliament traveled from Budapest by

[85] Mécs, "Magyarország kormányzója a honvédség élén bevonul Komárom ősi városába," 141-42.
[86] Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 41.
[87] "Horthy Miklós kormányzó diadalmas bevonulása Kassára," 3. "Horthy Miklós kormányzó honvédseregek élén bevonult a nagy fejedelem városa," *Nemzeti Újság*, November 12, 1938, 1. "A fejedelem városa."

train to attend. They were joined by political leaders of the Hungarian minority during the Czechoslovak period: Andor Jaross, János Esterházy, and Géza Szüllő. A number of foreign representatives were also present—Italian and German emissaries and Lord Rothermere, who had been invited to attend the celebration.[88] Overnight, the townspeople built a parade arch over a story tall, removed all the Czech street signs, and replaced them with temporary ones bearing the old Hungarian street names.[89] The city was decorated in "red, white, and green for Hungary" and "thronged with people" hoping to catch a glimpse of the regent.[90] The people of Kassa "waited tensely . . . at windows, on roof-tops, precariously poised on swaying trees, even more precariously clustered about chimney-stacks and every possible point of vantage. The streets of the twisted old walled town were one mass of waiting citizenry."[91] These onlookers were treated to a grand display of pageantry, fit to commemorate the triumphant return to of Felvidék to Hungarian sovereignty.

[88] Felkai, "Rozsnyó, Kassa," 164. Márai, *Ajándék a végzettől,* 133.
[89] Márai, *Ajándék a végzettől,* 130.
[90] "Eleventh Hour, Day, and Month: New Significance in Hungary," *London Times,* November 12, 1938, 11.
[91] Harold Sidney Harmsworth, Viscount Rothermere, *My Campaign for Hungary* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1939), 196.

Figure 4: Horthy enters Kassa at the head of the Hungarian army.

Source: *Felvidékünk-Honvédségünk*

Horthy, "a trim, upright man in a blue uniform," headed the procession down Kassa's wide main boulevard "riding a white horse, and leading a winding column of khaki-clad troops."[92] The Regent's entry mounted atop a white horse had deep symbolic meaning. It hearkened back to the original Magyar conquest of the Carpathian Basin in the ninth century. Árpád, leader of the Magyar tribes, is traditionally depicted on a white horse at the head of the invading warriors.[93] This symbolism was not lost on Márai, who described the scene in Kassa as "a small-scale version of the Magyar conquest."[94] Perhaps even more importantly for the ruling elite, the symbolism of the white horse directly linked the re-acquisition of territory to the counter-revolution of 1919, when Horthy likewise rode ceremonially into Budapest on a white horse, a key moment in the consolidation of the regime. For the past two decades, argued historian Gyula Juhász, the government had used revisionism as "a means which was intended to secure the internal bearings of the regime."[95] Equating the reacquisition of territory with the counter-revolution signaled that the political elite would attempt to use the country's enlargement for the same purpose.

Finally, there was the symbol of Horthy himself. The cult surrounding the Regent had been carefully crafted since the days of the counter-revolution. He was portrayed as a war hero, father to the Hungarian nation, rebuilder of the country after the Bolshevik Revolution, and God-appointed leader of the Hungarian Christian nationalist order.[96] During the celebrations in Felvidék, the cult of Horthy was on full display. People in the crowd carried photos of the

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[92] Ibid.
[93] Perhaps the most famous artistic depiction of the Hungarian Conquest is Árpád Feszty's (incidentally a native of Felvidék) *Arrival of the Hungarians*, a panorama painted for the millennial celebrations in 1896.
[94] Márai, *Ajándék a végzettől,* 129. "Mind éreztük, hogy ez az út kissé honfoglalás."
[95] Juhász, *Hungarian Foreign Policy,* 191.
[96] For a detailed look at the formation of the Horthy cult, see Dávid Turbucz, "A Horthy-kultusz kezdetei" *Múltunk* 54 (2009/4), 156-199.

Regent and cried, "Long Live Horthy!"; in Léva, they chanted "Miklós Horthy is our dear father, his wife our dear mother!"[97] In Érsekújvár, the town erected a statue of him even before the army entered; in many towns, Miklós Horthy squares or avenues replaced quickly forgotten Czech designations.[98] A poster produced by the Association for the University and College Students of Felvidék with the words, "They Have Come Home," showed Horthy with outstretched arms. Felvidék Hungarians were depicted rushing towards him.[99] In Komárom, Imrédy's speech emphasized that Horthy was the man responsible for the enlargement of Hungary's borders because he had "taught the Hungarians to believe, to have faith, to want" justice. And after twenty years, his mission had been fulfilled. "Out of Miklós Horthy, the protector of the state, came our nation-builder and deliverer! . . . The Lord has blessed the Regent with both of His hands," one reporter proclaimed.[100]

In Kassa, Lord Rothermere similarly interpreted Horthy's procession. "By his entry into the streets of the old Cathedral town of Kassa, the Regent was symbolising to the whole world that one million Hungarians were again free to enjoy the rights and privileges of their own nationality, and that the twenty-year-long night of oppression was over."[101] Márai noted that when the people chanted Horthy's name, they were "greeting their liberator" as they had once done for Rákoczi.[102] "Today, Hungary's Regent will meet the Prince [Rákoczi] in Kassa's Cathedral," commented Béla Zsolt in the Budapest daily, *Ujság*.[103] Horthy's official visit to

[97] Marschalkó, "Léva, Losonc," 149. "Horthy Miklós édesapánk, Felesége édesanyánk."
[98] Mécs, "Magyarország kormányzója a honvédség élén bevonul Komárom ősi városába," 140.
[99] Hoover Institution Political Poster Database, HU 401. Felvidéki Egyetemi és Főiskolai Hallgatók Egyesülete, "Hazatértek."
[100] Mécs, "Magyarország kormányzója a honvédség élén bevonul Komárom ősi városába," 136-137.
[101] Rothermere, *My Campaign for Hungary*, 196.
[102] Márai, *Ajándék a végzettől,* 135. "Ez a pillanat, amikor egy nép üdvözli szabadítóját, s utoljára így talán csak Rákoczi Ferencet üdvözölte Kassa és Felső-Magyarország népe az utcákon."
[103] Béla Zsolt, "Rákoczi," *Újság,* November 10, 1938, 1. "Magyarország kormányzója a kassai dómban ma találkozik a Fejedelemmel."

Rákoczi's grave further cemented the historical parallels between them. By virtue of these ceremonial processions, Horthy, more than any other individual, became the face of Hungary's successful revisionism. The territorial gains elevated the Regent's popularity and cult of personality to new levels, and made him the embodiment of revisionism's symbolic, historical, and political significance.

Source: Holocaust Memorial Center, Budapest, Hungary

Figure 5: Residents in Bodrogszerdahely [SK: Streda nad Bodrogom] celebrate their return to Hungary with commemorative posters of their "leader," Regent Horthy.

Horthy was not the only leader celebrated during the re-entry festivities. Crowds also gave thanks to Mussolini and Hitler as the leaders of the two states that arbitrated the Vienna Award. The locomotive engine of the train that transported government officials from Budapest to Kassa was adorned with photos of Mussolini and Hitler alongside Horthy.[104] During the celebration in Kassa, people in the crowd waved both Hungarian tricolor and Nazi flags.[105] In Budapest, the government renamed a prominent square on Andrássy út, the city's grandest boulevard, "Adolf Hitler Place."[106] The presence of Fascist and Nazi symbols during the re-entry served multiple purposes. Certainly it showed Hungarian gratitude toward the Italians and Germans for the territorial award and was part of the continuous efforts to curry favor from the two totalitarian governments in order to receive more territory in the future. But it also fulfilled a legitimizing function by showing that Hungary had powerful benefactors that supported its rule in this disputed territory.

In the process of legitimizing their own rule, Hungarian officials also sought to delegitimize the Czechoslovak rule of the previous twenty years. Accusations of Czech terror during the transfer of power became evidence of the illegitimacy of Czechoslovak rule. In Fülek, Czech soldiers were accused of harassing residents and thwarting their preparations to organize a celebration for the entering Hungarian army.[107] The periodical *Kis Újság* reported on "Kassa's sorrowful memories" of vandalized post offices and radio stations, destroyed by Czechoslovak officials as they evacuated the city.[108] Such incidents were used as proof of the moral depravity

[104] Tamás Féner ed., *Kór-képek 1938-1945* (Budapest: Magyar Távirati Iroda, 2005), 64.
[105] *Észak-felé.*
[106] Otto D. Tolischus, "Reich Aims to Balk Polish Ambitions," *New York Times*, November 4, 1938, 1. Today the square is called Kodály körönd.
[107] Marschalkó, "Léva, Losonc," 150.
[108] "Szomoru kassai emléke," *Kis Újság,* November 23, 1938, 3.

of Czechoslovak rule. "The Czechs always talked about culture. Here you see the truth—plundered hospitals, gutted houses, siege conditions," a film chronicling the army's march into Felvidék proclaimed.[109] In one village, a Hungarian reporter lamented, "There are no chickens or pigs, there are no eggs, and there is no wine. The Czechs took everything."[110] Hungarian authorities and the media both depicted Felvidék as an area of destitution, forced poverty, "hunger and misery."[111]

Reflections on the Czechslovak period emphasized that it had been dangerous to be Hungarian and forbidden to display one's Hungarian patriotism. In Beregszász, a reporter traveling with the Sixth Army Division encountered "Hungarian children who just yesterday had to learn the Hungarian anthem in secret."[112] Rothermere recollected seeing "beautiful girls in their folk dress" handed down in secret from grandmother to granddaughter "during the twenty years when the dress was forbidden."[113] These accusations, exaggerated as they were, played into the idea that Czechoslovak rule over Hungarians was intolerant and unjust. It also supposed that a program of re-Hungarianization would be necessary for the people of Felvidék. In Kassa, Horthy made reference to this, noting that while "twenty years is a fleeting moment in the life of a nation" it is an eternity "for that generation which labored through it." Thus, he conceded, some rehabilitation would be necessary: "it is easy to burn down a house, but difficult to build it again."[114]

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[109] *Észak-felé.*
[110] Zathureczky, "Beregszász, Munkács, Ungvár," 174. "Nincsen csirke és malac, nincsen tojás és nincsen bor. A csehek mindent elvittek."
[111] "A magyar kormány jegyzékei prágában," 62. *Észak-felé.*
[112] Zathureczky, "Beregszász, Munkács, Ungvár," 170. "Magyar gyermekek, akik csak tegnap tanulhatták meg titokban a Himnuszt."
[113] Rothermere, *My Campaign for Hungary*, 197.
[114] Felkai, "Rozsnyó, Kassa," 166. "Húsz év múló pillanat egy nemzet életében, de annak a nemzedéknek, amely azt végigszenvedte, egy örökkévalóságot jelentett. . . . A házat ugyanis felgyujtani könnyű, de nehéz azt újra felépíteni."

There was some discrepancy, however, when it came to presenting Hungarian hardship and cultural dilution under Czechoslovak rule. It was important to show that Felvidék was still essentially Hungarian in character. Descriptions of the people of Felvidék displayed a marked tendency to emphasize their pure Hungarianness. Surveying the isolated village of Ógyalla [SK: Hurbanovo], one reporter noted that he encountered no signs of Czechization—the absence of outside settlers and Czech intrusions had enabled residents to remain just as Hungarian as they had been when the village was part of Hungary.[115] Likewise, in the village of Bény [SK: Bíňa], Alajos Mécs happily reported that "after twenty years of Czech rule, this village and its people did not need to be shaped into Hungarians. They had been Hungarians and Hungarians they remained, as virgin and clean as if they lived on the Great Hungarian Plain."[116] This was not merely the observation of outsiders. Locals were eager to show that they had maintained their Hungarianness during the period of Czechoslovak rule and, in doing so, had remained loyal to the Hungarian nation. In the village of Csata [SK: Čata], local schoolteacher Tivadar Dedinszky greeted arriving troops by remarking, "I humbly say that the inhabitants of this village have faithfully remained Hungarian."[117] Likewise, János Tost, mayor of Kassa, told the regent that the citizens of Kassa "were Hungarian, are Hungarian, and will remain Hungarian."[118] Márai corroborated Tost's assertion. "Kassa had not been unfaithful: it was exactly how I saw it in my memories and in my dreams, just as I had imagined it."[119]

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[115] Mécs, "Magyarország kormányzója a honvédség élén bevonul Komárom ősi városába," 139.
[116] Marschalkó, "Léva, Losonc," 147. "Húsz éves cseh uralom után ennek a falunak és népnek nem kellett ismét magyarrá alakulnia. Magyar volt és magyar maradt olyan szűzen és tisztán mintha mindvégig ott élt volna lent az Alföldön."
[117] Marschalkó, "Léva, Losonc," 148. "Alázatosan jelentem, hogy a község lakossága hűséggel megmaradt magyarnak!"
[118] Felkai, "Rozsnyó, Kassa," 165. "Mi magyarok voltunk, magyarok vagyunk és magyarok is maradunk."
[119] Márai, *Ajándék a végzettől,* 127. "Kassa nem csalt meg: egészen olyan, mint ahogy emlékeimben és álmaimban láttam, olyan, ahogy elképzeltem."

Restoration, continuity, and homecoming were all critical messages during the reoccupation. But the reacquisition of Felvidék also represented a beginning—the dawning of a new era, an opportunity for the re-birth of the Hungarian nation. Some explained this as the springboard to the full restoration of the Crown Lands of St. Stephen. Mrs. Béla Pausz, who spoke at the Kassa celebration in the name of all the women of Felvidék, prayed that the events of November 1938 would be only the start of something greater:

> Lord, support the Regent of Hungary, that he who . . . started the rebuilding of Trianon Hungary, can finish it. That after the liberation of [Kassa], rule over Pozsony will also no longer be foreign, that our dear Tátra Mountains can be embraced again, . . . that Kolozsvár, the Szekler Lands, and the bountiful lands of the Banat will also no longer be in foreign hands.[120]

Others took a less irredentist, more cerebral point of view of what this new beginning meant. Márai speculated that as Hungarian troops entered Felvidék, "the new Hungarian way of life was beginning to take shape."[121] The enlargement of the country, many believed, would add a new vitality to the Hungarian nation. "Everywhere the people feel in their hearts that a new youth of a new country has arrived here under the red, white, and green flags."[122] This widespread sentiment would ensure a better future for the Hungarian nation, all a result of the heroic struggle and noble success of territorial revision. "I knew with certainty, and with all my faith I believed

[120] "Horthy Miklós kormányzó diadalmas bevonulása Kassára," 3. Kolozsvár, the Szekler Lands, and the Banat had all belonged to historic Hungary. After 1918 Kolozsvár [RO: Cluj-Napoca] and the Szekler Lands became part of Romania, and the Banat was split between Romania and Yugoslavia. "Isten, tartsd meg Magyarország kormányzóját, hogy ő, aki … megkezdte a trianoni Magyarország újjáépítését, be is fejezhesse azt, hogy a nagy kuruc város felszabadulása után Pozsony felett se legyen többé idegen az úr, hogy a mi drága Tátránk ismét ölelkezhessék … hogy ne legyen többé idegen kézen kincses Kolozsvár, a Székélyföld s a Bánát bőségesen termő földje."

[121] Márai, *Ajándék a végzettől,* 137. "Ez a mondat a magyar lapokban, az a 'csapataink ma bevonultak' mindenütt azt jelenti, hogy a magyarság új életformája kezd kialakulni."

[122] Marschalkó, "Léva, Losonc," 148. "Ahol megjelennek, mindenütt megérzi az emberek szíve, hogy egy új ország új ifjúsága érkezett ide a piros-fehér-zöld lobogók alatt."

that in these hours something new was beginning in the lives of all Hungarians and this new Hungarian life could only be a more beautiful, more humane, more just life," reflected Márai.[123]

Complications and Challenges to Reacquisition

The optimism and enthusiasm that characterized the re-entry celebrations overshadowed some of the complications the Hungarian government faced during the days of re-annexation. For the first month Felvidék was ruled by Hungary, the territory was put under military jurisdiction, which was replaced by a civilian government in December 1938. One immediate disappointment for the residents of Felvidék was that travel to the rest of the country remained highly restricted. "The welcoming back into the motherland of which so much was said remains so far purely theoretical," commented a *New York Times* reporter covering the re-annexation of Komárom. "Military guards . . . prevented 'liberated Hungarians' from visiting the kingdom and the Hungarians on the 'old side' from visiting the new lands. For the common citizen the Danube still remains a barrier."[124] The travel restrictions were indeed a major letdown for Felvidék Hungarians. Gyula Zathureczky, a reporter traveling with the Sixth Army Division, described the importance of the destruction of the old border for locals in Beregszász and their excitement at being able to connect with relatives in Hungary proper:

> How good would it be to know how Uncle Feri is doing in Hajdúsámson, Aunt Tercsi in Nyiregyháza or little Jancsi who twenty years ago left ahead of the Czech arrival and is now the father of three children in Mohács. I understood these simple people, who

[123] Márai, *Ajándék a végzettől,* 129. "Biztosan tudtam, és minden hitemmel hittem, hogy ez órákban az egész magyarság életében újra kezdődik valami, s ez az új magyar élet csak szebb, csak emberibb, csak igazibb élet lehet."

[124] Gedye, "Horthy is in Tears in Reclaimed City," 1.

> believed that the Hungarian army brought everything with them—freedom, happiness and news from Feri, Tercsi, and Jancsi.[125]

Such hopes were doubtlessly disappointed by Hungarian orders to restrict movement in and out of the newly acquired territory. Permission had to be obtained from the army to travel to or from Felvidék, reinforcing the divisions that the Vienna Award was meant to eliminate. Exceptions did occur, however. On the first day of occupation, Hungarian troops in Medve [SK: Medveďov] helped organize ferry rides for locals across the Danube, which the day before had been the international border. Upon reaching the southern bank, one of the passengers knelt to the ground and exclaimed "I am now for the first time on Hungarian soil!"[126] But this individual was very much the exception; apart from those few spontaneous moments, travel in and out of Felvidék was, for the time being, reserved for press, government, and military officials only.

Though most of Felvidék's residents were restricted from traveling, others were instead encouraged to leave. The government expelled Czech and Slovak colonists who had settled in Hungarian areas after 1918, charging that the Czechoslovak government had deliberately changed the ethnic composition of the population.[127] The *New York Times* reported that 2,500 colonists were expelled in the first days of Hungarian occupation.[128] Others fled, fearing persecution at the hands of the new state. "Tens of thousands of Czech officials, Slovaks, Jews, and those politically compromised are leaving their homes with bundles of their possessions in search of new opportunities in the already overcrowded rump State," the *New York Times*

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[125] Zathureczky, "Beregszász, Munkács, Ungvár," 175. "Jó is lenne tudni, hogy mit csinál Feri bácsi Hajdúsámsonban, Tercsi néni Nyiregyházán, vagy éppen a Jancsi gyerek, aki húsz évvel ezelőtt megugrott a csehek elől és most már három gyermek édesapja Mohácson. Merértettem ezeket az egyszerű embereket, akik azt hiték, hogy a magyar honvédek mindent magukkal hoznak, szabadságot, boldogságot és hírt a Feri bácsiról, Tercsi néniről és a Jancsi gyerekről is."
[126] Técsói, "Újjászületik a m. kir. honvédség," 113.
[127] Deák, *The Slovaks in Hungarian Politics*, 92.
[128] G. E. R. Gedye, "Reich Acts to Get New Slovak Area," *New York Times* November 17, 1938, 5.

noted.[129] There was ample reason for Czechoslovak civil servants to be alarmed; most of their jobs were immediately eliminated and the new administration viewed them as subversive elements that had no place in their system. In Kassa, the *New York Times* reported, "twenty-eight Czechoslovak school teachers were placed in trucks and dumped across the frontier by the Hungarians, so the Slovak minority children are now without their own teachers."[130]

The number of Czechs and Slovaks deported at the hands of the Hungarian military during the first days of re-annexation are highly disputed among scholars. Some Slovak historians give estimates of between 50,000 and 100,000 Czechs and Slovaks who left forcibly or voluntarily.[131] Relying on statistics compiled by Czechoslovak authorities in December 1938, Hungarian historian Gergely Sallai estimates that the Hungarian army deported 2,000 Czech and Slovak families.[132] The Czechoslovak colonists and bureaucrats were the new government's primary targets, but there was no mass population transfer like that which occurred two years later in Transylvania and no mass resettlement campaign like in areas of Voivodina in 1941. Most of Felvidék's inhabitants, Hungarians and minorities alike, stayed in their homes.

The social upheaval that the new borders created for the Czechoslovak state reminded some of the Hungarian experience twenty years earlier. "We [Hungarians] know what it means when a dismembered country is obliged to support thousands of exiled public officials, obligated to give bread and shelter to our innocent expelled relatives," Márai reflected. "We did it because that was our duty when hundreds of thousands of Hungarians came home to the truncated

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[129] "New Refugee Tide Sweeps in on Czechs," *New York Times,* November 5, 1938, 3.
[130] G. E. R. Gedye, "Disorders Occur on Czech Borders." *New York Times,* November 21, 1938, 6.
[131] Deák, *The Slovaks in Hungarian Politics,* 92. 100,000 people left either forcibly or voluntarily. See also Ladislav Deák, *Viedenská arbitraž*, 44. Martin Vietor says 170,000 Czechs and Slovaks were expelled under Hungarian rule, 45,000 of whom were brutally deported in the winter of 1938. Martin Vietor, *Dejiny okupácie južného Slovenska 1938-1945* (Bratislava: Slovenská akadémia vied, 1968), 42.
[132] Sallai, *Az első bécsi döntés*, 167. Sallai hypothesizes that Slovak numbers are artificially high because communist-era historians purposely included those who left voluntarily among the numbers of expelled individuals.

country." Sympathy for the Czech plight, however, was lacking. Márai cynically noted that just as the Hungarians had no choice but to accept their hopeless situation after Trianon, "now the Czechs also must learn to live this life because there is a different order in the world."[133]

By far the greatest challenge during Felvidék's reoccupation was how to approach the tenuous minority situation. During the re-entry of Hungarian troops, most of the minority population maintained a low profile, though there were reports of anti-Hungarian demonstrations by some of the Slovak inhabitants of Kassa.[134] The Hungarian government made official statements aimed at keeping order and pacifying ethnic tension, especially among the estimated 119,000 newly re-incorporated Slovaks.[135] Horthy and Defense Minister Rátz's military order implored soldiers to "treat all the inhabitants of this ancient Hungarian land the same, our Hungarian, Slovak, Ruthenian, and German brothers alike."[136] The celebration in Kassa, the city with the highest concentration of Slovaks, likewise struck a conciliatory note. The local radio station broadcast the Slovak and Hungarian anthems together.[137] At the ceremony, both János Esterházy, who pledged on behalf of the Felvidék Hungarians "to give a hand to our Slovak brothers and together work for a better future," and the Regent made overtures of friendship to

[133] Sándor Márai, "Végre egyedül!" in *Jaj, hol a múltunk: A Trianon jelenség,* ed. Miklós György Száraz and Zoltán Tóth (Budapest: Helikon, 2005), 133. "Mi tudjuk, mit jelent az, mikor egy megcsonkított ország kénytelen eltartani menekült közhivatalnokok ezreit, kénytelen helyet és kenyeret adni elüldözött, ártalan rokonainak. Megtettük, mert ez volt a kötelességünk, mikor Trianon a csonka országba hazakergette a magyarok százezreit. … Most a csehek is megtanulják ezt az életet, mert ilyen különös rend van a világban."
[134] Szegedy-Maszák, *Az ember ősszel visszanéz,* 231.
[135] As per 1938 Hungarian census estimates. MOL K28 215/428.
[136] Técsói, "Újjászületik a m. kir. honvédség," 128. "A visszanyert ősi magyar fold minden egyes lakóját, magyarokat, szlovák, ruszin és német testvéreinket egyaránt."
[137] Gergely Sallai, "'A határ megindul, az ország nagyobb lesz:' A cseszlovákiai magyar kisebbség és Magyarország kapcsolatainak diplomacia-, politika-, és társadalomtörténeti vizsgálata az 1938 évi csehszlovákiai válságtól Kárpátalja Magyarország csatolásáig" (PhD diss., Pázmány Péter Katholikus Egyetem, 2008), 153.

the new national minorities.[138] Speaking in Slovak, Horthy "welcomed home" the city's Slovak inhabitants:

> I greet you, who have returned to your home of a thousand years, with warmth and affection. Together you not only worked on, you also protected the land that gives you bread. Be sure that in addition to ensuring you a higher standard of living the entire Hungarian nation will also assure, with understanding love, complete freedom for the Slovak language and culture.[139]

Although it is natural to approach Horthy's statement with some cynicism and consider it an empty promise, it should not be underestimated. If nothing else, his words convey the recognition that Slovak minority rights could not be ignored as they had been before Trianon. It is difficult to imagine any pre-war Hungarian politician delivering a speech in a minority language promising to protect their rights. In these first days of Hungarian rule, however, it remained unclear how dedicated the government was to these sentiments.

In most places, lashing out at minorities was rare during the reoccupation and the army easily maintained public order. However, scattered incidents of Slovak abuse at the hands of both the Hungarian army and the public at large occurred. In the Slovak colony of Švehlovo [HU: Nagyfodemes], "the [Hungarian] civilian population, in the presence of Hungarian troops, . . . stole grain and drove away about seventy cattle." Some of the Slovak colonists were allegedly beaten during the raid.[140] These reports prompted an official visit to Budapest by the Justice Minister of the Autonomous Slovak Government, Ferdinand Ďurčanský, on November 13, 1938. The Hungarian government promised him that Slovak rights would be protected and that the culprits would be subject to punishment. Esterházy likewise personally asked both Horthy and

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[138] Molnár, *Esterházy János élete és mártírhalála,* 114. "Mi, itt maradt magyarok ígérjük, hogy kezet adunk az itt élő szlovák testvéreinknek és velük együtt dolgozunk egy szebb jövőért."
[139] Felkai, "Rozsnyó, Kassa," 166. "Meleg szeretettel üdvözöllek benneteket, akik e mai napon visszatértek ezeréves hazátokba. Kenyertadó földjét nemcsak együtt munkáltátok, de együtt védtétek is. Legyetek meggyőződve, hogy az egész magyar nemzet megértő szeretete biztosítani fogja részetekre életszínvonalatok emelésén kívül a szlovák nyelv és kultúra teljes szbadságát is."
[140] Deák, *The Slovaks in Hungarian Politics*, 93.

Imrédy to put a stop the abuses taking place at the hands of the Hungarian army.[141] Outwardly, most individuals showed no aggression toward the Slovak minority. While it is difficult to gauge public opinion on the minority question, privately some Felvidék Hungarians expressed resentment toward the Slovaks who had until recently enjoyed the dominant social position. In his memoirs, diplomat Szegedy-Maszák described a meal he shared with two elderly Hungarian women from Kassa. "They very bitterly, even belligerently, spoke about their Slovak brothers," he recalled.[142]

Anti-Semitism was a more open and widespread issue. The Vienna Award added approximately 68,000 Jews living in Felvidék to the Hungarian state.[143] Many of them identified as Hungarian, but regardless of their personal identities or political loyalties, they had few allies. "Whatever side the Jews take in the political struggle, . . . they are wrong," noted a *New York Times* journalist. "The Slovaks accuse them of having supported Czech centralism and at the same time of being pro-Hungarian and using the Hungarian language, [and] the Hungarians charge them with betraying Hungary."[144] Indeed, even Hungarian journalists commented, "everywhere in Felvidék . . . with the greatest bitterness, they talk[ed] about traitors," and accused Jews of feigning loyalty to Hungary. "By name they noted . . . those rich Jews who had two weeks earlier given thousands and millions to the cause of protecting the Czech nation. But now they put the biggest Hungarian flags on their houses."[145] According to historian C.A.

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[141] Sallai, "A határ megindul, az ország nagyobb lesz," 160.
[142] Szegedy-Maszák, *Az ember ősszel visszanéz,* 231. "Egy ebédmeghívás is kijutott nekünk két finom, kedves idős hölgyhöz. Kassai bennszülöttek voltak, akik nagyon keserűen, sőt ellenséges hangon emlegették a szlovák testvéreket."
[143] Randolph Braham, *The Politics of Genocide: The Holocaust in Hungary,* vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 135.
[144] Gedye, "Hungarians Begin Czech Occupation," 1.
[145] Marschalkó, "Léva, Losonc," 151. "Az egész Felvidéken . . . a legnagyobb elkeseredéssel besélnek az árulókról. Név szerint feljegyezték . . . azokat a gazdag zsidókat, akik még két héttel ezelőtt is százezreket

Macartney, the return of Felvidék helped reignite the parliamentary debate in Hungary about anti-Semitic laws. He noted that the Jewish Question in Felvidék "was even more acute than in inner Hungary" and that the arrival of deputies from Felvidék in the Hungarian parliament coincided with "the first references to renewed anti-Semitic legislation."[146] At his trial after the war, Imrédy insinuated that the increase in the proportion of Hungary's Jews had justified new anti-Semitic laws.

Reflections in the Motherland

Hungarians living inside the old borders could join one of the many public celebrations held during the days of reoccupation. As the Hungarian delegation returned from Vienna after the arbitration, thousands greeted them at the railway station.[147] On November 6, a large celebration was held in Szabadság [Freedom] Square in Budapest. The announcement for the rally read, "Hungarians! Brothers! The most Hungarian part of Felvidék is again ours! Our homeland has been enlarged!" It called on the citizens of Budapest to attend the rally, noting "every good Hungarian will be there."[148] Four days later, on November 10, the HFRL and the National Veterans' Alliance [Országos Frontharcos Szövetsége] held an even larger gathering in Szabadság Square, attended by an estimated 100,000 people, including Lord Rothermere.[149] He had been invited by the government "to be their official guest on the occasion of the national

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és milliókat adtak a cseh nemzetvédelmi alapnak. Most pedig ők tűzték ki házukra a leghosszabb magyar zászlót."

[146] Macartney, *October Fifteenth*, 308.

[147] Tolischus, "Reich Aims to Balk Polish Ambitions," 1.

[148] Hoover Institution Political Poster Database, HU 411. "Magyarok! Testvérek! A Felvidék legmagyarabb része ujra a miénk! Hazánk megnagyobodott! Minden jó magyar legyen ott."

[149] Hoover Institution Political Poster Database, HU 413. Rothermere, *My Campaign for Hungary*, 194. (The figure of 100,000 is Rothermere's own estimate).

rejoicings at the restoration of the Northern Territories."[150] Rothermere was paraded around to various events where he was greeted by huge crowds and hailed as the "Father of Hungarian Restoration" for his newspaper campaign calling for border revision.[151]

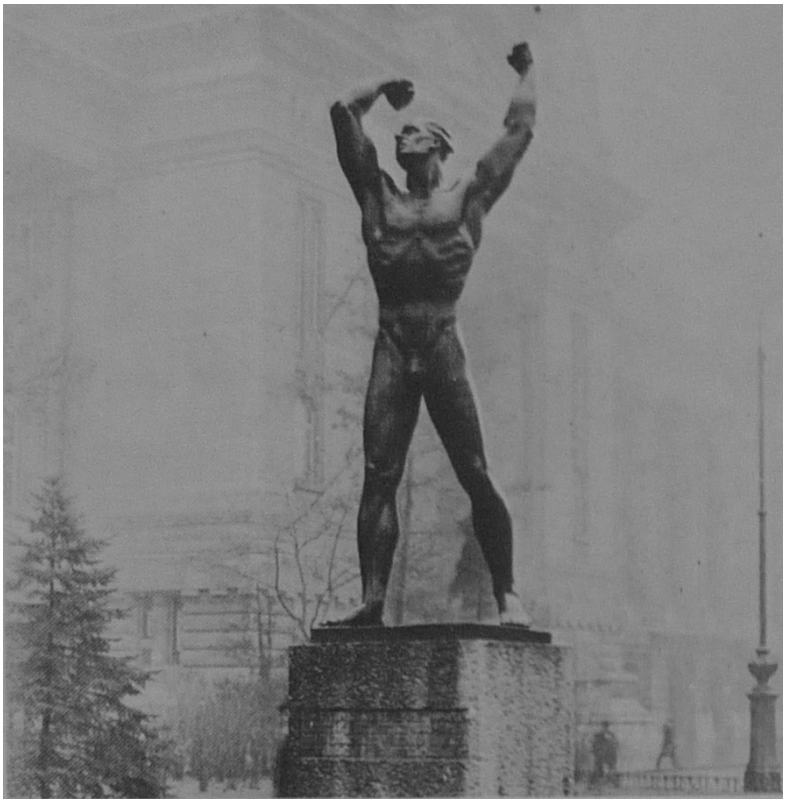
During the interwar years, revisionists created a symbolic center for the cult of irredentism in Szabadság Square. The irredentist symbolism utilized by Hungarian revisionists in the square's monuments was overt and unmistakable. Four statues, each one a personification of a lost territory – to the north, south, east, and west – stood in the square. The *North* statue, which represented Felvidék, was created by Zsigmond Kisfaludi Strobl and dedicated on January 16, 1921. It depicted a Slovak boy clinging to a wounded woman, representing crucified Hungary. Both were protected by a third figure, a freedom fighter from Rákoczi's army.[152] The Slovak boy in the statue represented the irredentist belief that Slovaks mourned the loss of their Hungarian protectors and were eager to return to St. Stephen's realm. The centerpiece of Szabadság Square, erected a few years later, was a monument referred to as the "National Banner with Relics."[153] In 1932, the Hungarian Frontier Readjustment League dedicated another statue, *Hungarian Suffering*, of a naked woman crying in despair for her "lost children," the lost territories.[154] The country's dismemberment was evident everywhere—from the geographical references on the *Irredentist Statues* to the clumps of dirt taken from Hungary's historic counties and housed in the pulpit-style reliquary underneath the National Banner. The nation's suffering was expressed explicitly in that the banner perpetually flew at half-mast.

[150] Rothermere, *My Campaign for Hungary*, 180.
[151] Ibid., 184.
[152] Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revision*, 190.
[153] On Szabadság Square's importance to Hungarian irredentism, see ibid., 189-195.
[154] Ibid., 193.

Source: Holocaust Memorial Center, Budapest, Hungary

Figure 6: Rally for the return of Felvidék in front of the "North" statue in Szabadság Square, 1938.

Figure 7: *Statue of Hungarian Resurrection* in Szabadság Square. The statue was relocated to Kassa in 1940 to commemorate the city's return to Hungary.



Source: *Budapest köztéri szobrai*

In 1936 the *Statue of Hungarian Resurrection*, placed opposite to *Hungarian Suffering*, brought a new tone to the symbolism of injustice and loss that predominated the statues in the square. *Hungarian Resurrection* depicted a naked man with arms raised above his head, as if he were breaking out of his chains and re-discovering his physical strength.[155] This was a symbol of optimism, for negotiations for the return of Felvidék were still years in the future. After the First Vienna Award, Szabadság Square's "irredentist pantheon" evolved to match the new realities of Hungarian revisionism and celebrate the movement's first triumph.[156] In 1939, the *Felvidék Memorial Cross* was erected to commemorate the territory's return to the Hungarian state.[157] The *Statue of Hungarian Resurrection* was relocated to Kassa in 1940, replaced by the *New Edifice to the Martyr's Memorial* [Az újépület vértanúinak emlékműve], a bronze chalice atop a concrete pillar. A tablet stood in front of the pillar, which read: "Here stood the *Statue of Hungarian Resurrection* which, in remembrance of the dawning of the Hungarian resurrection, proclaims henceforth our belief in truth and resurrection on the sacred land of Kassa, which has always been Hungarian."[158] The relocation of *Hungarian Resurrection* to Kassa not only signified that Felvidék had returned to the Hungarian kingdom, but also illustrated that the returned territory would play a critical role in realizing Hungary's greater territorial goals.

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[155] *Budapest köztéri szobrai, 1692-1945: 1987. április 14-május 24 Budapest Galéria Kiállítóháza* (Budapest: Budapest Galéria, 1987), 146. "A magyar feltámadás szobra," Szoborlap, accessed November 12, 2011. http://www.szoborlap.hu/11376_a_magyar_feltamadas_szobra_budapest_dozsa_farkas_andras_1936.html

[156] Zeidler uses the term "irredentist pantheon," *Ideas on Territorial Revision*, 195.

[157] Information on this particular statue is scant. See Miklós Zeidler *Az irredenta kultusz a két világháború között* (Budapest: Teleki László Alapítvány, 2002), 23 and János Potó, *Emlékművek, politika, közgondolkodás: Budapest köztéri emlékművei, 1945-1949: így épült a Sztálin-szobor, 1949-1953* (Budapst: Magyar Tudományos Akadémia Történettudományi Intézet, 1989).

[158] *Budapest kötéri szobrai, 1692-1945*, 163. "Itt állott a magyar feltámadás szobra, mely a magyar feltámadás hajnalhasadtának emlékére a mindig magyar Kassa megszentelt földjén hírdeti ezentúl hitünket az igazságban és feltámadásban." "Az Újépület vértanúinak emlékműve," Szoborlap, accessed November 12, 2011. http://www.szoborlap.hu/2727_az_ujepuleti_vertanuk_emleke_budapest_dozsa_farkas_andras_1934.html

The most ambitious undertaking in Szabadság Square to celebrate Hungary's territorial enlargement was the construction of a Reformed church on the southeast corner of the square. The city of Budapest gave the site to the Reformed Parish of Budapest Districts V-VI in 1938.[159] In commemoration of the regained territories, church leaders decided to name the building the "Church of the Homecoming" [Hazatérés temploma].[160] The foundation stone was placed on November 12, 1939 and the church was consecrated on September 15, 1940.[161] It was built in the international Bauhaus aesthetic with no outer ornamentation, only a short angular clock tower in the center of the symmetrical frontispiece. There was little in the church's façade to indicate an association with irredentism. Inside, however, the church was designed in the interwar "Hungarian style," utilizing traditional folk motifs and ornamentation made from woodcarvings. Stained-glass windows that displayed the coats of arms of Hungarian cities returned by the First and Second Vienna Awards (the latter of which had taken place during construction) gave added definition to the church's "homecoming" designation.[162] The Church of Homecoming in Szabadság Square provided further proof that the cult of irredentism was entering a new phase: the spiritual focus of irredentism was shifting from crucifixion towards resurrection.

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[159] Ferenc Matits and Gábor Barka, *Protestáns Templomok* (Budapest: Budapest Főváros Önkormányzata, 2003), 53.

[160] According to the Church's website, the inscription "Church of Homecoming" was removed from the church façade in 1949, but replaced in 1999. Accessed November 8, 2011. http://www.szabteriref.hu/start.html. The church still functions today, and its association with irredentism is even stronger now than it was when it was built. The Church of Homecoming often serves as the place of congregation for right-wing demonstrations. It displays a variety of irredentist motifs ranging from the coats of arms of all 71 historic Hungarian counties (only added in 2001) to a chapel dedicated to Miklós Horthy.

[161] Matits and Barka, *Protestáns templomok*, 54.

[162] Judith Koós, *Református templomok Budapesten: két évszázad kulturtörténete és művészete, 1785-1995* (Budapest: Bíró, 1996), 74.

Source: Author's Collection

Figure 8: Church of the Homecoming, Szabadság Square

Celebrations for the return of Felvidék extended beyond the confines of the capital city. In Szikszó, which had become the seat of Abaújtorna County after the loss of Kassa, county leaders rejoiced at the return of their old provincial capital. The Deputy Lieutenant of Abaújtorna sent letters of thanks to the leaders responsible for the decision in Vienna. Horthy, Mussolini, Hitler, Polish Foreign Minister Józef Beck, Imrédy, Kánya, and Teleki each received one. The Deputy Lieutenant thanked them for their contribution to the "victory of Hungarian justice" and

the northern part of the county's "liberation from its Trianon captivity."[163] The General Assembly, meanwhile, gathered to celebrate the return of the county seat. "Our hearts are overflowing with joy," Árpád Vitéz commented in his speech to the assembly, "for every city, every village, hut, furrow, and tree, that we got back. But we citizens of Abaújtorna are most thankful . . . for Kassa."[164] Vitéz's excitement was tempered, however, by his conviction that the First Vienna Award was not the answer to the nation's territorial woes:

> But we must appeal this decision to history, because the recovered borders are not the borders of St. Stephen's state. . . . In these delightfully intoxicating times, we cannot forget, because it will mean new heavy sacrifices, that we must win back, not just receive [territory]. Either with iron or with intellect or with both, we must win it back.[165]

Such rekindled revisionist sentiment was also found among Hungarian-Americans who held their own celebrations for Hungary's territorial gains. At a gathering of various Hungarian-American associations in New York City, "John Kiss, a New Jersey manufacturer, extolled the 'great victory' Hungary had won in regaining her former territory from Czechoslovakia, but declared that the victory would not be complete until other territory had been taken back from Rumania, Germany, and Yugoslavia."[166] Hungarians from Budapest to New York City thus celebrated the re-annexation of Felvidék as the first step of a larger process of national renewal.

Those in Hungary proper could follow the re-entry through popular media outlets. Newspapers, radio, and film allowed domestic audiences who had been inundated with irredentist propaganda in the months leading up to the Vienna Award to experience the joyous

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[163] Štátny archív v Košiciach (Kosice State Archives) [SAK], AT 16-I 100. "A magyar igazság győzelmének első eredményeként a magyar felvidék és vármegyénk ősi székhelyének Kassának a trianon rabságból történt felszabadulása."
[164] Ibid. "Örömtől csordultig telt szivvel hála . . . minden városért, minden faluért, kunyhóért, barázdáért és minden akácfáért amit visszakaptunk, de mi abaujiak a leghálásabbak vagyunk … Kassáért."
[165] Ibid. "De ezt a döntést egy ujabb történelem elé fellebbezzük, mert a visszanyert határok nem Szent István országának határai. … Ebben az örömmároros időben sem szabad elfelednünk azt, hogy azokat a hagárokat vissza kell szereznünk - nem visszakapnunk, mert ujabb suljos áldozatokat jelentene, -hanem vassal, vagy ésszel, vagy mind a kettővel vissza kell szereznünk."
[166] "Hungary's Land Gains are Celebrated Here," *New York Times*, November 14, 1938, 11.

atmosphere of the celebrations and, in a small way, to participate in the renewal of the nation. Each day, national newspapers covered the procession through Felvidék in detail. Stories ran aimed at reacquainting the readership with the returned territory. Radio stations broadcasted the ceremonies so that those in Hungary could follow along. "Through Standard Radio, those who cannot travel to Felvidék can rejoice at home," advertised one station.[167] Another exclaimed, "We are with you! During the celebration of the Hungarian resurrection, radio brings into our homes the jubilation of our freed brothers in Felvidék and the historical moments of the re-entry. Listen to this on Hungarian radio: Orion Radio."[168] Finally, people could go to movie houses to see footage of Hungarian soldiers marching into Felvidék and the crowds that awaited them. Already by November 9 theaters were running films with scenes from the re-entry.[169]

Figure 9: "We are with you" advertisement for Orion Radio's broadcasts of the entry of Hungarian troops into Felvidék.

Source: *Függetlenség,* Nov. 6, 1938.

[167] *Nemzeti Újság*, November 12, 1938, 3. "Aki még nem utazhat a felvidékre a Standard Rádió mellett otthon is együtt örvendhet az ünneplő felvidékkel."
[168] *Függetlenség*, November 6, 1938, 3. "Velük vagyünk! A magyar feltámadás örömünnepén, a rádió otthonunkba hozza felszabadult felvidéki testvérünk örömújjongását és a bevonulás történelmi óráit. Hallgassuk meg ezeket a magyar rádión: Orion rádión."
[169] *Esti Újság*, November 9, 1938, 2.

A larger cinematic undertaking chronicling the return of Felvidék premiered in the following weeks. *Észak felé*, a Hungarian Defense Ministry and Hungarian Film Bureau production, premiered on November 23 in Budapest. Horthy, Jaross, and other members of government were in attendance. The film, partly informative, partly celebratory in nature, opens with a short description of the geopolitical events that led up to the Vienna agreement. It then follows the path of the army as they reoccupied the region so that audiences in Hungary could feel camaraderie with their fellow Hungarians in Felvidék. "There are no stars nor artistic characters in this film," noted the reviewer for *Nemzeti Újság*. "The characters and the stars are everyone in the film, who are equally dear to every Hungarian heart: the one million returned Hungarian brothers and . . . the Hungarian army."[170] According to Márai, who reviewed *Észak felé* for *Pesti Hírlap*, the film allowed audiences to experience the triumph of revisionism for themselves. "The zeal that filled the people of Komárom and Kassa when the Regent appeared in those ancient cities in front of the victory arch was renewed in the Pest movie theater." He saw the film's potential to inform the outer world of the justice of Hungary's cause. "In these pictures, a people bear witness to the whole world that they are happy because they could come home."[171] Future Hungarians, too, would benefit from watching *Észak felé*, as a record of their nation's victory over injustice. "Decades from now school children will sit in a Budapest theater, watch this film, and know how it all started."[172] The *Nemzeti Újság* reviewer echoed Márai's

[170] "Észak felé: A bevonulás történelmi filmje," *Nemzeti Újság*, November 20, 1938, 4. "Ennek a filmnek nincsenek sztárjai, nincsenek művészi szereplői. Szereplője és egyben sztárja is mindenki, aki a filmen látható és aki minden magyar szivnek egyaránt kedves: a visszatérő egy millió magyar testvér és a virágesőben lépkedő magyar honvéd. Film shows that a magyar feltámadás ideje érkezett."
[171] Márai, *Ajándék a végzettől,* 149. "A pesti moziban megüjult a lelkesedés, mely eltöltötte Komárom és Kassa népét, mikor a Kormányzó megjelent az ősi városok diadalkapuja előtt. . . . Egy nép tanúskodik e képeken az egész világnak, hogy boldog, mert hazatérthetett."
[172] Márai, *Ajándék a végzettől,* 148. "Évtizedek múlva iskolás gyermekek ülnek egy budapesti moziban, nézik e filmet, és megtudják, hogyan kezdődött."

sentiment, noting that *Észak felé* chronicled the fact that "the time of the Hungarian resurrection has begun."[173]

The Hungarian Post Office played a large role both in facilitating communication between Felvidék and the rest of Hungary and producing the official government memorialization of Felvidék's return. A reporter on the scene in Párkány noted that even before the celebration was over, postal service was up and running, with residents lining up to send postcards and telegrams to their loved ones, now at domestic rates.[174] Letters sent from the reoccupied territory during the first month were all marked by a commemorative stamper featuring a rendition of the Hungarian crown and "Kassa Returned, 1938," with variations for each returned city.[175] As a particularly conspicuous part of the civil service sector, Hungarian post offices, postal workers, and symbols served as a visible, daily reminder that this was now Hungarian territory.

The post office issued special postage stamps shortly after the Vienna Award to commemorate the return of Felvidék. One postage stamp depicted St. Stephen being crowned by angels and says "Homecoming 1938," tying together imagery of territorial return with the year-long remembrance of the anniversary of St. Stephen's death. Another contained this same phrase, but with Stephen's crown as the illustration. Both images quite obviously invoke the myth of the sacredness of St. Stephen's kingdom and the divine and historical legitimacy of Felvidék's return. The post office also released special fundraising stamps for the Magyar a Magyarért [Hungarians for Hungarians] campaign, proceeds of which went to social programs for the residents of Felvidék. Some of the Magyar a Magyarért stamps showed scenes from the re-

[173] "Észak felé: A bevonulás történelmi filmje," 4. "A magyar feltámadás ideje elérketzett."
[174] Marschalkó, "Léva, Losonc," 146.
[175] István Hampel, "Felvidéki emlékbélyegzők," in *Felvidékünk-Honvédségünk: Trianontól-Kassáig: történelmi eseménysorozat képekkel* (Budapest: A Vitézi Rend Zrínyi Csoport, 1939), 187.

entry—Horthy atop a white horse as he leads the Hungarian army into Komárom and young girls in folk costume presenting flowers to Hungarian troops. Another stamp contained an image of the *North* statue that stood in Szabadság Square. The final two stamps were renditions of places in Felvidék, the St. Elizabeth Cathedral in Kassa and the Munkács Castle, two buildings historically associated with Hungarians that had now returned to the Hungarian state. The commemorative stamps thus contained all the legitimizing elements that had become so commonplace during the re-entry: the historical continuity of Hungarian places, the proud and beloved Hungarian army, and the regent as the leader adored by his people.

Source: Author's Collection

Figure 10: Hungarians for Hungarians Movement commemorative stamp.

Though travel between Hungary proper and Felvidék was initially limited, tourist opportunities for Hungarians to reacquaint themselves with the returned territories were quickly organized. Historians of tourism emphasize that governments used tourist sites to stimulate regional economies while at the same time instilling a stronger sense of national identity in their citizens.[176] Tourism was a particularly attractive nation-building tool for Felvidék because tourist revenue could help integrate the region into the Hungarian state economically. Even more importantly, tourism facilitated cultural contact between residents in Felvidék and Hungarians living in the pre-1938 borders, instilling a sense of belonging to the nation. The German government employed a similar strategy in the Third Reich after the annexation of Austria and the Sudetenland.[177] *Pesti Hírlap* advertised a two-day bus tour from Budapest to Kassa, Krasznahorka, Rozsnyó, Rimaszombat, and Losonc on December 10-11, 1938. The ad noted that passengers needed to bring photo identification in order to take part in the excursion, a reminder that the territory's reintegration was still in an early stage.[178] Guidebooks soon followed, encouraging Hungarians to travel to Felvidék and reconnect with those who had been left outside the country for the last twenty years. The authors of *Felvidék utikalauz* [Felvidék Tourguide] attempted to introduce Felvidék to those who "without regard to expense, worked hard to spend summers abroad and can recite from memory all the monuments in little Italian, Swiss, or

[176] See Shelley Baranowski, *Strength Through Joy: Consumerism and Mass Tourism in the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 118-161, the introduction in Shelley Baranowski and Ellen Furlough, *Being Elsewhere: Tourism, Consumer Culture, and Identity in Modern Europe and North America* (Ann Arbor and London: University of Michigan Press, 2001), 11-17, and the introduction in Ellen Gorsuch and Diane Koenker, ed., *Turizm: The Russian and East European Tourist under Capitalism and Socialism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 1-14.
[177] Baranowski, *Strength Through Joy*, 128.
[178] "Az Est autobuszkirándulása a Felvidékre," *Pesti Napló,* December 7, 1938, 9. Kassa, Rozsnyó, Rimaszombat, and Losonc were the largest urban areas in central and eastern Felvidék, and Krasznahorka's castle was Felvidék's best site for cultural tourism.

Scandinavian villages . . . but have never seen Kassa's cathedral or Krasznahorka's proud castle." They also wanted to introduce the "many natural beauties and splendid tourism opportunities" of the area to the younger generation, "born during the twenty years of separation."[179] Not surprisingly, the guidebook emphasized the Hungarianness of Felvidék. The authors promised potential guests "true Hungarian hospitality" during their visit.[180] This not only fell in line with the rhetoric of reincorporation, but also with the larger nativist trend in Hungarian tourism, best illustrated by the National Hungarian Tourist Federation's slogan, "Let's travel in our native land!"[181] Hungarians had a history of using tourism to promote a nationalist cause. In 1906, the periodical *Turista Közlöny* noted that "in our country tourism is not just a sport but a national duty and a mark of patriotism."[182] In 1938, tourists could once again be mobilized to help facilitate the new national agenda of reincorporating Felvidék into the Hungarian nation.

Tourism brought with it some difficulties beyond the travel restrictions between Hungary proper and Felvidék. An article from *Nemzeti Ujság* alludes to dissatisfaction among tourists at the limitations of the First Vienna Award. "Many people are of the opinion that from a tourism

[179] *Felvidék utikalauz* (Kassa: Wikó, 193[9]), 3. "Különösképen figyelmébe kell ajánlanunk a Felvidéket azoknak, akik költséget nem kimelve, külföldön igyekeztek a nyarat eltölteni az egész olasz, svájci, vagy skandináv kis falvak műemlékeit fejből sorolják fel, tudják hogy melyik kis kápolnát kinek a freskói diszítették, de még nem látták a kassai dómot, Krasznahorka büszke várát. . . . Küldjük e kis konyvecskét azoknak, akik az elszakitás 20 esztendeje alatt születtek, hogy ők is ismerjék meg azt a sok természeti szépséget és azt a sok pompás turisztikai alkalmat, melyet a Felvidék nyujt."
[180] Ibid. "igaz magyar vendégszeret."
[181] Qtd. in Balázs Ablonczy, "Promoting Tourism: Hungarian Nation-Building Policies in Northern Transylvania, 1940-1944," *Hungarian Studies Review* 37 (2009), 42. "Országos Magyar Vendégforgalmi Szövetség."
[182] Aladár Vágó, "A turistaság és a magyarság," *Turista Közlöny* 13, no. 1 (1906), 3-4. Qtd. in Alexander Vari, "From Friends of Nature to Tourist-Soldiers: Nation Building and Tourism in Hungary, 1873-1913," in Anne Gorsuch and Diane Koenker ed., *Turizm: The Russian and East European Tourist under Capitalism and Socialism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 75.

standpoint we got back very little."[183] Indeed, the main prize for tourists, the Tatra Mountains (birthplace of Hungary's first tourist association, the Carpathian Association of Hungary in 1873), remained outside of enlarged Hungary.[184] Tourists lamented the lack of "serious mountains" in the returned areas.[185] "If, however, the person does not judge the beautiful new tourist locales based on the height of the mountains," the *Nemzeti Ujság* article noted, "he will gladly find that territories have returned to us that can bring a new prosperity to the life of Hungarian tourism."[186] Tourism, for all its nation-building potential in Felvidék, could also be a source of irredentist frustration for Hungarians. It served as a reminder for some of the perceived continued injustice within the first triumph of Hungarian revisionism.

The country's territorial augmentation found a place in everyday life, much as irredentism had in the 1920s.[187] Businesses used the return of Felvidék in marketing campaigns, hoping that the country's revisionist euphoria would translate into consumer spending. A cigarette add for Nikotex showed several packs of cigarettes arranged so that they resembled a train, headed toward a banner reading "Kassa," while a train conductor saluted it.[188] Gerő clothing store in Budapest advertised a sale "out of joy for the liberation of Felvidék."[189] Other businesses decided to cater to the Hungarians in Felvidék, as the country's newest citizens were potentially new customers. In the local paper *Felvidéki Magyar Hírlap*, Telefunken Radio ran an

[183] "Új touristalehetőségek a visszakapott Felvidéken," *Nemzeti Ujság*, November 20, 1938, 4. "Sokan ugyan az állásponton vannak, hogy turistaszempontból, vajmi keveset kaptunk vissza."
[184] On the Carpathian Association of Hungary and the importance of the Tatra Mountains to nineteenth century Hungarian tourism, see Vari, "From Friends of Nature to Tourist-Soldiers," 64-81.
[185] "Új touristalehetőségek a visszakapott Felvidéken," 4. "Komoly hegység."
[186] Ibid. "Ha azonban az ember nem a hegyek magassága szerint birálja el a gyönyörű új turisztikai terepeket, örömmel megállapíthatja, hogy olyan területek kerültek vissza hozzánk, amelyek révén a magyar turistaélet ujabb felvirágzás elé tekinthet."
[187] For a description of irredentist consumption, see Miklós Zeidler, *A magyar irredenta kultusz a két világháború között* (Budapest: Teleki László Alapítvány, 2002) and Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revisionism,* 217-254.
[188] *Magyarság*, November 13, 1938, 5.
[189] *Pesti Hirlap*, November 13, 1938, 6. "A felvidéki felszabadulásának örömére már most hirdetem meg felhalmozott dus raktáram karácsony előtti olcsó árait: Gerő a nagy divat maradék és divatháza."

ad notifying their "Felvidék brothers" that they could already receive their Hungarian radio station. In the same paper, Pannonia Hotel in Budapest advertised that they were waiting "with brotherly love" for guests to come back to their establishment, which in the past had been a "cherished home for the people of Felvidék."[190]

Consumers could also purchase memorabilia to commemorate the return of Felvidék. Pins with Rákoczi's image and the words "Kassa Returned!" memorialized the city's November 10 re-entry celebration. Likewise, commemorative flags were produced to immortalize the moment.[191] A postcard produced by the Association for the University and College Students of Felvidék featured a child broken free from his chains, kneeling and raising his arms towards a stylized version of the traditional symbol of Felvidék, the double cross and three mountain peaks. The words, "Justice Has Prevailed" appeared in the backdrop.[192]

These products often expressed continued irredentist sentiment, pairing the expression of joy for what had been achieved with demands for what still eluded the revisionist movement. A "Fülek returned!" ash tray pictured the enlarged border of Hungary superimposed on the classical outline of historic Hungary. A cigarette holder with a map showing the areas of Felvidék returned in November 1938 within the larger historic borders of Felvidék likewise depicted both the accomplished and unfulfilled territorial demands.[193] The irredentist board game "Let's Get Back Historic Hungary!," manufactured throughout the interwar period, got an update in 1939 to reflect the country's territorial enlargement. The object of the game was to re-conquer all the lost territories. "When the last lost territory has been returned," noted the game's instructions, "the National Banner on the enclosed metal flagpole, flown at half-mast, must now

[190] *Felvidéki Magyar Hírlap*, December 8, 1938, 5. "Testvéri szeretettel várja vissza vendégeit Budapesten a Pannonia szálló amély a békevilágban is kedvelt otthona volt a Felvidékieknek."
[191] For an image of the pin and flags, see Száraz and Tóth, *Jaj, hol a múltunk,* n.p.
[192] Hoover Institution Archives [HIA] Political Poster Database, HU 434.
[193] For images of these products, see Száraz and Tóth, *Jaj, hol a múltunk,* n.p.

be raised to its proper position."[194] In the 1939 version, the map of Hungary proper was expanded to include territory gained by way of the First Vienna Award and the occupation of Ruthenia.[195] The political significance of purchasing such items was unmistakable. As Zeidler noted in his analysis of earlier irredentist products, "by buying irredentist objects the buyers not only acquired useful items but also demonstrated their patriotism and lived up to the socio-political expectations."[196]

Source: *Jaj, hol a múltunk?*

Figure 11: Ashtray commemorating the return of Fülek.

[194] Qtd. in Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revision*, 243.
[195] Ibid., illustration no. 38.
[196] Ibid., 241-242.

Apart from attending rallies, listening to their radios, and buying commemorative products, Hungarians could do their part by contributing to the national revival in the form of charitable giving to help the people of Felvidék. The wives of the regent and the prime minister, Magda Horthy and Irén Imrédy, started the Magyar a Magyarért Mozgalom [Hungarians for Hungarians Movement] in September 1938 to coordinate fundraising efforts and provide services for the new territory upon Hungarian re-annexation.[197] The government, concerned with other aspects of the reintegration process, needed the help of an outside agency to facilitate aid relief. "The program had to follow a social path," Magyar a Magyarért coordinators explained, because "the state could not undertake such a multi-faceted project."[198] Though not part of the state apparatus, Magyar a Magyarért did receive state funding, in the form of 1.5 million pengő of government commodities credit to purchase foodstuffs for the people living in the reutrned territory.[199] Hungarians could contribute to the charity in a variety of ways—by buying the official Magyar a Magyarért stamps at the Post Office, donating used clothing, or contributing agricultural products.[200] Those who donated received a pin in the shape of a heart with the text "For Felvidék" or a portrait of Magda Horthy as a memento.[201] In the organization's 1939 report, Irén Imrédy declared the fundraising campaign a success because of the generosity with which Hungarians gave. "Our movement," she explained, "is an excellent manifestation of national togetherness and brotherly love without parallel in Hungarian history."[202]

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[197] *Magyar a magyarért: Beszámoló* (Budapest: Magyar a magyaerért munkabizottsága, 1939), 16.
[198] Ibid., 7. "Az állam ezernyi gondja és terhe közepette nem vállalkozhatott egy ilyen sokoldalú segélyakció lebonyolítására. Ennek a mozgalomnak társadalmi úton kellett megindulnia."
[199] Ibid., 8.
[200] Ibid., 17.
[201] "A felvidékért" pin, author's collection. On the portrait of Mrs. Horthy, see *Magyar a magyarért*, 26.
[202] Mrs. Béla Imrédy, "Introduction," *Magyar a magyarért*, i. "A mozgalmunk a nemzeti összetartozásnak és a testvéri szeretetnek a magyar történelemben szinte páratlan, nagyszerű megnyilvánulása."

Releif workers for Magyar a Magyarért traveled into Felvidék with the Hungarian army between November 5 and 10. In these first days they concentrated their efforts on providing food for the hungry and medical attention for the sick.[203] They worked with religious leaders and members of the United Hungarian Party, the Hungarian political party in Felvidék, to distrubte goods to the people.[204] In the weeks and months that followed, Magyar a Magyarért undertook more expansive projects such as road-building and establishing orphanages. Like many of those involved with the reintegration of the northern counties, the Magyar a Magyarért movement connected its efforts there to future revisionist successes. The organization's effort to "protect the people of the returned territory" would hopefully be called upon again in Transylvania and Voivodina. "We hope that in the not-so-distant future, our Hungarian homeland will gain new territories," concluded Irén Imrédy, "when we must once again without delay look after the nation's returned peoples."[205]

Conclusion

The Hungarian reacquisition of Felvidék in November 1938 was a moment of triumph for the Hungarian government and the revisionist movement. The First Vienna Award, as it came to be called, was a significant, bloodless expansion of Hungary's borders. Furthermore, this territorial enlargement had the approval all the European powers, from the Germans and Italians who arbitrated the settlement to the British and French who passively accepted the outcome. Horthy's personal popularity soared after his ceremonial re-entry into Felvidék; the returning population was mostly receptive to their reincorporation into Hungary; and there is even

[203] *Magyar a magyarért*, 45-47.
[204] Ibid., 38.
[205] Ibid., 104. "Reméljük, hogy nem is oly távoli időben, újabb területekkel gyarapszik magyar Hazánk, amikor ismét haladéktalanul kell gondoskodni a nemzethez visszatérő nép hathatós gondozásáról."

anecdotal evidence that the euphoric mood of the country led to a dramatic drop in suicide rates in 1939.[206]

However, the euphoria of these first days proved ephemeral. Within weeks, Kálmán Kánya, the foreign minister that had led the Komárno talks and helped negotiate the award, was forced to resign. Prime Minster Imrédy himself would be out of office three months later. The first taste of justice for Hungary did not sate the country's hunger for territorial revision. If anything, it intensified the revisionist program both domestically and abroad. As László Bárdossy, Hungary's Prime Minister in 1941-1942, stated in his trial for war crimes in 1945, the months following the First Vienna Award "was the first time that a rift appeared in Hungarian revisionist policies in the sense that one group wanted everything or at least considerably more, while another group was willing to settle for what we had received."[207] The success of 1938 represented a new chapter in Hungarian revisionism, but the movement continued to be the defining factor in domestic and international politics. Where revisionism had been largely a unifying force for the past twenty years, after the First Vienna Award it increasingly became a divisive one, featuring fierce political clashes. What is more, as of 1939 with the establishment of an independent Slovak state, Hungary's northern neighbor had a territorial revisionist program of its own.

[206] Ignác Romsics, *Magyarország története a XX században* (Budapest: Osiris, 2010), 248. Romsics notes that suicides dropped from 29.3 per hundred thousand to 23.6 per hundred thousand from 1938 to 1939. He claims it is the most dramatic yearly drop in national suicide rates in world history.
[207] László Bárdossy, "The speech of László Bárdossy before the People's Court by his right, as defendant, to the last word," 2 November 1945, in Pál Pritz, *The War Crimes Trial of Hungarian Prime Minister László Bárdossy*, trans. Thomas DeKornfeld and H. D. Hiltabidle (Boulder, Colo: Social Science Monographs, 2004), 128.

Chapter 3

Revisionism and Reciprocity: Slovak-Hungarian Relations After the Vienna Award

"We have lost everything. . . . Nothing will stop us from notifying the whole world that the Slovak nation has suffered a tragic wrong."[1]

–Josef Tiso, President of the Slovak Republic

"[The Vienna Award] means a great triumph for the idea of revision, but it does not mean a satisfaction of all for which the Hungarian nation has struggled and for which it will continue to struggle. It means Hungary has been accorded some slight compensation for the wrongs and injustices done to her, but it does not mean full reparation. . . . Neither the Hungarian Frontier Re-adjustment League nor Hungarian public opinion consider that the question [of Hungary's northern border] has been settled definitely and beyond hope of revision."[2]

–Elemér Szudy, Editor-in-Chief of *Danubian Review* and member of the Hungarian Frontier Readjustment League

Introduction

The lasting impression left by the First Vienna Award, for both the perceived winners in Hungary and the losers in Slovakia, was dissatisfaction. Slovak politicians, who had just gained autonomous status within Czechoslovakia a month before the award, resented the territorial losses imposed by the arbiters. In Hungary, meanwhile, a public that had imbibed integral revisionism for the last twenty years found it difficult to accept such minimal gains. In January 1939, Elemér Szudy informed his readers in *Danubian Review* that "it is indubitable that Hungarian public opinion noted with satisfaction that to a certain extent the country's historical claims against Czecho-Slovakia had been enforced. The fact must however be established that the award of the Vienna Court of Arbitration caused disappointment."[3] This small taste of success, along with the disappointment the modest territorial gains inspired, galvanized the revisionist movement, which looked to use the Vienna Award as a springboard to regain more

[1] Quoted in Gergely Sallai, *Az első bécsi döntés* (Budapest: Osiris 2002), 147.
[2] Elemér Szudy, "The Course of Hungary's Just Cause," *Danubian Review* VI (Oct-Nov. 1938), 6-8.
[3] Elemér Szudy, "A Strong independenet Hungary a Pledge of Peace," *Danubian Review* VI. (Jan. 1939), 2.

land. Hungarian revisionists focused their efforts on lobbying for the rest of Slovakia and Ruthenia, the remaining territories of Czechoslovakia that had been part of the Crown Lands of St. Stephen. In March 1939, the geopolitical situation changed once again, forcing revisionist strategy to adjust accordingly. Hungary successfully occupied Ruthenia with Germany's blessing, but Slovakia became an independent country that had revisionist aspirations of its own, against Hungary no less. From that point forward, Slovak revisionism put Hungary, usually on the offensive, in the new position of having to defend disputed territory and combat revisionist tactics by Slovaks. At the same time, Slovakia had to contend with Hungary's continued designs on Slovak territory, making the two neighbors simultaneously competitors as well as reluctant allies in the Axis war effort. Both faced the problem of being home to large minority populations of conationals of the rival state, making minority policy the primary battleground for competition between enlarged Hungary and independent Slovakia.

Geopolitical Gambles, Domestic Consequences

After the Hungarian-majority areas in Felvidék were returned in early November 1938, Hungarian revisionists focused not on the area that had been returned, but rather on those territories yet to be redeemed, with the long-term goal of restoring the historic borders of the Kingdom of St. Stephen. While many scholars have argued that Hungary abandoned its desire for integral revision, settling for ethnically Hungarian areas, Hungarian officials often intended these as temporary concessions to geopolitical necessity. The ultimate prize remained "everything back!" In the aftermath of the Vienna Award, Czechoslovakia was still Hungary's

primary target for the time being, particularly Ruthenia, home to 62,000 Hungarians and, to a lesser extent, northern Slovakia.[4]

Miklós Kozma, who was intimately involved in both public dissemination of revisionist propaganda and covert military maneuvers designed to expand Hungary's borders, noted in his diary on November 2, the day the First Vienna Award was announced, that "now our real work has begun." His personal goal, shared by many revisionists, was the reincorporation of Ruthenia into the Hungarian state. "I have an unshakable belief that Ruthenia will come home," he wrote optimistically, "that we will bring it back, that we will reach the border of the Carpathians. . . . If this is successful, I will be truly happy."[5] Ruthenia was close to Kozma's heart for a number of reasons. It was his birthplace, which he had not returned to since the territory was lost to Hungary in 1918. But more importantly, Ruthenia bordered Poland and regaining it would give Hungary a common frontier with its staunchest ally in Central Europe. This would enable the formation of a "North-South Axis" consisting of Poland, Hungary, Yugoslavia, and Italy that could serve as a foil to the expanding power and influence of the German Empire.[6] Kozma noted that the Vienna Award had accomplished nothing other than having "enlarged our Trianon cage" by a few thousand kilometers and from nine to ten million Hungarians. Ruthenia, on the other hand, would enable Hungary to pursue policies independent of Berlin. "The common Hungarian-

[4] Hungarians made up only 9.2 percent of the population of Ruthenia, per the July 1939 census conducted by Hungarian authorities. See Miklós Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revision in Hungary, 1920-1945*, trans. Thomas DeKornfeld and Helen DeKornfeld (Boulder, Colo.: Social Science Monographs, 2007), 264.

[5] MOL K428 [Kozma Miklós iratai] 28/21/1, p. 57. "A mi igazi munkánk csak most kezdődik. . . . Törhetetlenül hiszek abban, hogy Ruszinszkó visszakerül, vissza fogjuk hozni, elérjük a Kárpáthatárt. . . . Ha az sikerült, akkor leszek igazán boldog."

[6] Carlile Aylmer Macartney, *October Fifteenth, a History of Modern Hungary 1929-1945* vol.1 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1957), 330.

Polish border means more," Kozma told Prime Minister Imrédy, "than the many returned cities" awarded in Vienna.[7]

Much of the disappointment at the terms handed down in Vienna was focused on the award's arbiter, Germany, and Hungarian governmental officials' handling of German-Hungarian relations.

> [Though] officially fêted and thanked as the Restorer of the Felvidék, [Germany] appeared to the popular eye, bleared with emotion, as the villain of the whole story. . . . Germany had thwarted the return of Pozsony and Nyitra; had even appropriated for herself an area of sacred Hungarian soil. Most important of all, Germany had thwarted the return of Ruthenia to Hungary and the establishment of the direct frontier with Poland.[8]

Kozma noted in his diary that young people gathered in front of the Polish embassy in Budapest to demand a Polish-Hungarian frontier once the new border was announced.[9] In political circles, radical right-wing politicians criticized the government for not moving futher into Germany's camp and thus costing the country a chance to enlarge its borders further. Diplomat Antal Ullein-Reviczky noted that members of the radical right "explained that the Vienna award showed Hitler's dissatisfaction," claiming that "if Hitler were better satisfied (in the future), the reward would be soon to come. Thus," Ullein-Reviczky explained, "the Vienna award, indirectly – true – became one of the favourite arguments of pro-German propaganda, not because Hitler had once been so kind to Hungary, but because he had not been kind enough."[10]

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[7] MOL K428 28/21/1, p. 125. "Mentem Imrédyhez, hogy a trianoni életünk szempontjából mindegy, hogy ketrecünk megnagyobbodott s hogy a ketrecben kilencmillió magyar helyett tizmillió él s hogy a közös magyar-lengyel határ többet jelent, mint sok visszakapott város. Most sem mondhatok mást."
[8] Macartney, *October Fifteenth,* 310. The Munich Agreement gave Germany a small piece of territory near Bratislava called Engerau [HU: Pozsonyligetfalu; SK: Petržalka], which had been part of historic Hungary.
[9] MOL K428 28/21/1, p. 110.
[10] Quoted in Eric Weaver, "Revisionism and its Modes: Hungary's attempts to overturn the Treaty of Trianon" (PhD Diss. Oxford University, 2008), 306.

The government's proposed solution to Hungary's predicament was to annex Ruthenia independently and establish the common border with Poland through military force. The army was mobilized and given orders to invade the territory on November 20.[11] The outcome of the action, it was hoped, would be twofold. First, of course, it would result in the establishment of a common frontier with Poland. Second, the success would repair some of the damage done to Imrédy's image, which suffered as a result of the disappointment with the Vienna Award and his increasingly dictatorial aspirations. He had proposed a major reform program that borrowed heavily from national socialist ideology, advocating to ammend the Hungarian constitution, implement new anti-Jewish legislation, and "form a great national right-wing movement" just days earlier.[12] Conservatives in the government were alarmed by his apparent about-face, former Prime Minister István Bethlen noting that "Hungarian parliamentary history knows no other about-turn as bedazzling as the one Béla Imrédy carried out at the zenith of his political career in front of a flabbergasted public."[13] Imrédy thus needed a positive outcome from the Ruthenian campaign to ensure support for his reforms. However, on the eve of the invasion, German Foreign Minister Ribbentrop informed the Hungarian government that Germany opposed Hungary's plan. The German government, Ribbentrop explained, "felt justified in expecting Hungary to abide by the terms of the Vienna Award" and would offer no help should Hungary

[11] Deborah Cornelius, *Hungary in World War II: Caught in the Cauldron* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 93.
[12] Mária Ormos, *Hungary in the Age of the Two World Wars* (Boulder, Colo.: Social Science Monographs, 2007), 299.
[13] Quoted in Cornelius, *Hungary in World War II* , 94. The question of whether or not Imrédy's adoption of radical right-wing ideology was a departure from his earlier policy is highly debated among historians. Deborah Cornelius seems to agree with Bethlen's assessment of the situation, but historian Mária Ormos shown, quite convincingly, that there was such radical change—Imrédy had always had right-leaning sympathies and simply waited a few months into his premiership to propose the reforms. See Ormos, *Hungary in the Age of the Two World Wars,* 286-290.

encounter any difficulties securing Ruthenia.[14] Hungary therefore abandoned the Ruthenia campaign at the last minute, rescinding the army's order to invade. The fallout from the botched action was substantial. Foreign Minister Kálmán Kánya was forced to resign and dissatisfaction with Imrédy increased even further.[15]

After the Ruthenia debacle, the Prime Minister was working on borrowed time. His fascist-inspired reforms had alienated a large contingent of the government party, sixty-two of whom actually left the party in protest. In February 1939, Imrédy's political enemies devised a scheme to oust the Prime Minister, presenting Regent Horthy with documents establishing Imrédy's possible Jewish ancestry. Horthy, who was also anxious to replace Imrédy, showed him the evidence and informed Imrédy that he had forty-eight hours to tender his resignation.[16] He was replaced by Pál Teleki, who conservatives believed could successfully maintain positive relations with the western countries while still pursuing Hungary's territorial aspirations. Much of the Hungarian leadership, including prominent revisionists, was eager to see the country back away from Germany. Although fostering a close relationship with Hitler and the German Reich had resulted in the reacquisition of Felvidék, many worried about the price of German-sponsored revision. Ferenc Herczeg, president of the Hungarian Frontier Readjustment League, recalled that after the First Vienna Award, "panic broke out among the leadership of the [HFRL] because they clearly perceived that since Hitler took hold of the revision with his claws of a tiger, revision fell off its high moral pedestal, ceased being a matter of justice and deteriorated into a matter of power."[17] Teleki himself was alarmed at the possible consequences of Hungarian alliance with the Third Reich. In December 1938, he asked, "what will happen to us, [Hitler's]

[14] Quoted in Macartney, *October Fifteenth,* 313.
[15] Macartney, *October Fifteenth,* 316.
[16] Ormos, *Hungary in the Age of the Two World Wars,* 303-304.
[17] Quoted in Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revision*, 174.

allies dragged into the conflict? There will be a repeat of 1920 and once again, nobody will be concerned with our national rights."[18] Such apprehension on the part of two committed revisionists reveals the difficulty of Hungary's position. Many Hungarians recognized the danger of aligning territorial revision to Hitler's new European order, but either due to insistence on the justice of the cause or the reliance on irredentist political rhetoric since 1918, nobody, not even Teleki, considered it possible to break ranks and steer the country in another direction.

Imperial Self-Determination: Hungarian Revisionist Propaganda after Vienna

Even as the Hungarian government was forced to adapt its goals to the changing geopolitical situation in Central Europe and prevailing Western rhetoric about national self-determination, the revisionist movement remained more consistent in its message of integral revision. The main task of Hungarian propaganda, then, was to reconcile for the international public what appeared to be a contradiction in terms: national self-determination and restoring the realm of St. Stephen. At first glance, Hungarian revisionists' use of the rhetoric of self-determination to pursue the imperialist goal of rebuilding the old Hungarian Kingdom, starting with Slovakia, seems at best naively hypocritical, at worst callously manipulative; but they did have a certain logic. Revisionist propagandists argued that the historic Kingdom of Hungary had successfully embodied the two political principles of respecting ethnic nations and self-determination, achieving a "symbiosis of peoples." "It would be a great mistake to believe that there is any contradiction between the enforcement of the ethnic principle and that of the principle of self-determination," stated Elemér Szudy of the Hungarian Frontier Readjustment League in January 1939. "On the contrary! . . . The fact is illustrated in a striking and eloquent

[18] Quoted in Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revision*, 171.

manner by the Hungarian Kingdom of St. Stephen."[19] According to Szudy, each ethnic nation should have the liberty to determine its own fate and history proved that, given the choice, they would willingly join forces with other nations in a peaceful, multi-ethnic Hungary. The HFRL published a number of mongraphs and flooded their English-language journal, *Danubian Review,* with articles about the continued injustice occurring in Czechoslovakia, aiming to convince international public opinion of the justice of the plan to include Slovakia and Ruthenia in Hungary.[20]

Hungary was advocating, according to Szudy, other members of the HFRL, and like-minded revisionists for self-determination for Slovaks and Ruthenians, who were still being controlled against their will by Czechs. Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky claimed that Hungarian public opinion was "depressed by the refusal to to grant the right of self-determination" in Munich and Vienna, ignoring the fate of other nations in Central Europe.[21] "Neither the Slovaks nor the Ruthenians were given the chance to decide their own future," Szudy noted, "or to tell the world that their mind has long been made up and that they wish to continue their existence as nations within the framework of the Hungarian State and not in Czecho-Slovakia."[22] Re-drawing borders based on ethnicity was not the same as granting nations the right to freely choose their sovereignty. Hungarian revisionists could argue, sometimes successfully, that a Hungarian-Slovak-Ruthenian was equally if not more plausible than a Czech-Slovak-Ruthenian one.

Ödön Tarján similarly advocated for Slovak and Ruthenian self-determination in *Hungarians, Slovaks, and Ruthenians in the Danube-Valley*, published by the HFRL. "The Slovaks and Ruthenians will decide their own future," he declared. "Hungary's role will be

[19] Szudy, "A Strong independenet Hungary a Pledge of Peace," 3.
[20] MOL K30 [Miniszterelnökség] 7, 23-25.
[21] Andrew [Endre] Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, "Reconstruction in the Danube Valley?" *Danubian Review* VI (Feb. 1939), 19.
[22] Szudy, "The Course of Hungary's Just Cause," 8.

confined to supporting them in their efforts to protect their own well-understood interests."[23] Tarján believed that the Slovaks and Ruthenians were "too weak in number to found separate independent states" and that the only way their "social, cultural and economic development . . . can be insured is through self-government established in the spirit of St. Stephen's ideas." Thus, Slovaks and Ruthenians could only survive through unification with Hungary, and it was the path that they themselves would choose. Tarján, Szudy, and others that promulgated the HFRL's point of view believed that the logical conclusion of Slovak and Ruthenian self-determination would be nearly identical in form to the pre-World War I geopolitical situation in East-Central Europe: a strong, multi-ethnic Hungarian empire, which "owing to her geographical situation and state-building ability . . . she was destined to be: the nucleus of a union of the Danubian peoples."[24]

Hungarian revisionsits insisted that Slovaks and Ruthenians desperately wanted to be reunited with Hungary, but these ideas, not surprisingly, received a cold reception among Slovak leaders. Hungarian revisionists explained away this lack of enthusiasm by claiming that the Slovak leadership had been unduly influenced by the Czechs, tying the villians from the previous twenty years to their current enemies. Szudy contended that the Slovaks had not been allowed to decide their own fate "freely and without any external influence being brought to bear on them."[25] This, he argued, was all that was keeping the Slovaks from willingly coming home to Hungary. Another article in the *Danubian Review* attacked the Tiso government for following a "mandate from Prague" rather than acting "as trustees of the Slovak people." That fact explained

[23] Ödön Tarján, *Hungarians, Slovaks and Ruthenians in the Danube Valley* (Budapest: Hornyánszky, 1938), 9.
[24] Ibid., 59-60.
[25] Szudy, "The Course of Hungary's Just Cause," 8.

why Tiso's government was "sacrificing those whose interests it is their duty to defend in an endeavour to maintain their power" rather than joining Hungary to the benefit of all.[26]

In tandem with the theoretical discussions of self-determination, the Hungarian revisionist movement presented a set of more practical arguments for the expansion of Hungarian territory. Hungary launched a major press campaign alleging that the Czechs were committing atrocities in Ruthenia. *Budapesti Hirlap* reported that "hunger, terror, and anarchy" reigned in Ruthenia with Czech officials cracking down on inhabitants that demanded a return to Hungary.[27] *Danubian Review* chronicled various Czech transgressions, describing suspicious deaths, torched villages, and general harassment of residents.[28] The only way to put an end to Czech terror, Hungarian revisionists argued, was to allow Ruthenia to join Hungary.

Advocates also noted that because the new border followed ethnic lines very closely, it disrupted transportation and economic networks, causing major hardships for area residents. Although Hungarian revisionists touted the government's efforts to provide economic aid to the region, such as distributing commodities and tending to "the social welfare of the inhabitants," they maintained that the new borders were causing severe hardships.[29] In December 1938, an article in the *Danubian Review* noted that "we already see that the ignoring of economic considerations has not only inflicted serious material losses" on the residents of Felvidék "but has also in many cases made it doubtful whether they will be able to maintain a standard of life ensuring merely human subsistence."[30] Local economic regions and transportation networks had factored in to the Trianon border, which was one of the reasons Czechoslovakia had justified the

[26] "Hungary's New Northern Frontiers," *Danubian Review* VI (Dec. 1938), 17.
[27] "Éheség, terror és anarchia Csonka-Kárpátalján," *Budapesti Hirlap,* November 19, 1938, 1.
[28] "Gruesome tales of atrocities committed by Czech Soldiers and Ukrainian Terrorists,"*Danubian Review* VI (Dec. 1938), 43.
[29] "Hungary's Administrative Measures in the Restored Areas," *Danubian Review* VI (Dec. 1938), 26.
[30] "Hungary's New Northern Frontiers," 17.

inclusion of Hungarian-majority areas. Hungarian revisionists had criticized that decision for twenty years, but now experienced for themselves the additional burdens that came with excluding these factors.

In an effort to prove the untenability of the new border and convince the international community to grant Hungary more territory, the Hungarian government organized tours of the newly acquired areas for international visitors ranging from journalists to politicians. *Danubian Review* reported on a trip for Hungarian and foreign journalists to Kassa that was organized "in order to prove the unfounded character" of Czech reports that Hungarians were oppressing Slovaks in returned Felvidék.[31] They toured schools and factories where Hungarians and Slovaks studied and worked together. A British M.P., Major Henry Procter, toured the returned areas in January 1939. After being shown the frontier around the city of Munkács, Procter noted that "Hungary's policy of peaceful revision will surely continue," a policy he believed was necessary given the status of the "absolutely absurd frontier, which was drawn without any idea of local conditions."[32] The Hungarian Foreign Ministry also led a multi-day tour of eastern Felvidék for international journalists and diplomats in December 1938. They took them to see the new demarcation line around the cities of Ungvár and Munkács, the two easternmost cities returned by the Vienna arbitration, which had been cut off from their hinterlands in Ruthenia. The new frontier, one British observer noted, "had brought with it general discontent and misery."[33] The revised border had made travel between Ungvár and Munkács, which had previously been connected by a modern forty-kilometer-long road, take five hours, traversing 120 kilometers of poor quality backroads the long way around through Hungarian terroritory. "All explanations" for the difficult transportation situation and poor economic conditions "were accompanied by a

[31] "Kassa the City of Magyar-Slovak Friendship," *Danubian Review* VI (Dec. 1938), 28.
[32] "British M.P.'s in Hungary," *Danubian Review* VI (Feb. 1939), 52.
[33] PRO FO [Foreign Office] 371/22379, p. 239.

tirade of condemnation and abuse against the Czechs," another British official recounted.[34] In the city of Ungvár the party was welcomed by a Hungarian general who commented that "he had a difficult task in keeping his troops from rushing forward into Ruthenia, and that his job was made all the more difficult by members of the general public who kept asking why he was hesitating, and why he had not entered Ruthenia."[35] Indeed, most of the activities were meant to convince the foreign guests that the Ruthenians themselves were demanding reincorporation into Hungary. The foreign guests were subjected to speeches and processions in which Ruthenian locals told of their joy of being back in Hungary but at the same time of their sorrow that so many of their brethren were left to suffer Czech oppression on the other side of the new border. In another encounter, the British delegates met with a Ruthenian who "spoke violently about the miserable Vienna Conference which had come to such an unfortunate decision regarding the 'demarkation [sic.] line.' . . . He said 'Hitler had freed his countrymen in the Saar, Austria and the Sudetenland, he preached self-determination for the peoples, but had ignored the fate of the Ruthenians.'"[36]

For all the Hungarians' efforts, they failed to persuade the foreign journalists of the necessity to incorporate the rest of Ruthenia into Hungary for the sake of Ruthenian self-determination. The British Press Attaché was not convinced, noting that at the welcoming procession, "the people had obviously been ordered to partake" and "lacked enthusiasm and vigour."[37] He ended his report by noting that "what we had seen had appeared to be full of contradictions."[38] The British Ambassador to Hungary further noted that "the authorities appear to be concentrating all their efforts on intensive anti-Czech propaganda aiming at further

[34] Ibid., 176.
[35] Ibid., 234.
[36] Ibid., 238.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid., 243.

territorial revision, rather than tackling the many practical problems of an urgent character which the incorporation of these territories presents."[39] The Vienna borders had created a new set of circumstances and problems, but Hungarian authorities continued to attribute the state's difficulties to Trianon. While the intention of the tour was to prove that inadequate territorial concessions had created hardship, it convinced the foreigners instead that Hungary was mistakenly prioritizing territorial, rather than practical, solutions to these challenges.

Comparative Revisionism

The arrangement of states in Central Europe created in 1938 by the Munich Agreement and First Vienna Award was short-lived. Hitler's expansionist plans in Central Europe necessitated the final destruction of the Czecho-Slovak state. He informed Jozef Tiso, Prime Minister of the autonomous region of Slovakia, that the Slovaks had a choice: they could either declare independence from Czechoslovakia and enjoy German support, or they would be left to their own devices, meaning that the territory of Slovakia would likely be divided between their hostile neighbors, Hungary and Poland.[40] Tiso opted to declare independence, doing so on March 14, 1939. Hitler used Slovakia's declaration of independence as a pretext to invade the Czech lands and the next day the German army occupied Prague, setting up the Reich Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. Simultaneously and with German approval, the Hungarian army marched on Ruthenia, quickly gaining control of the region and incorporating the area into the Hungarian state. Although Germany had technically guaranteed independent Slovakia's borders, Hungary kept pushing westward from Ruthenia, incorporating a small strip of territory in far eastern

[39] Ibid., 173.
[40] Valerián Bystrický, "Slovakia from the Munich Conference to the declaration of independence," in *Slovakia in History*, edited by Mikuláš Teich, Dušan Kováč, and Martin Brown (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 173.

Slovakia in order to secure rail lines west of the Ung River, reasoning that a definitive border between Ruthenia and Slovakia had never been established.[41] Despite this inauspicious start to relations between Hungary and the Slovak Republic, the Hungarian government became the first to recognize the new state, signaling that, at least for the time being, Hungary would not push to reincorporate all of Slovakia.[42] Slovak statehood and the reacquisition of Ruthenia necessitated a shift in Hungarian revisionist policy. Instead of openly pressing for the unification of Hungary and Slovakia, Hungarian politicians undertook a long-term strategy, waiting for Slovaks to realize the economic inviability of their state—one of the smallest in Europe at 38,000 sq. km. and 2.5 million inhabitants—and return to Hungary of their own free will. However, inclusion in the German economic sphere meant that Slovakia never did experience the otherwise inevitable economic hardships that would come with its diminutive size.[43] In this way, Hungary and Slovakia remained rivals, competing for Germany's favor in the hope of securing their incompatible territorial goals.

The government of the Slovak Republic was controlled by Hlinka's Slovak People's Party (SPP), an ideologically and organizationally fascist party, and the only legal political party other than the German and Hungarian minority parties.[44] Tiso, Chairman of the Party, became

[41] PRO FO 371/24429, p. 381.
[42] István Janek, "A Magyarországgal szembeni szlovák propaganda és revíziós elképzelések 1939-1941 között," *Limes* (2010.1), 25.
[43] According to the Treat of Protection between Germany and Slovakia, the new state was obliged to "carry on its foreign, military and economic policy 'in close agreement with the German government.'" Quoted in Ivan Kamenec, "The Slovak state, 1939-1945," in *Slovakia in History*, edited by Mikuláš Teich, Dušan Kováč, and Martin Brown (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 180.
[44] Kamenec, "The Slovak state," 178. Hlinka's Slovak People's Party is also known as the L'udáks or the Party of Slovak National Unity. The party has been described by various historians as autonomist, nationalist, fascist, and clerico-fascist. In the early years of the party, it fought for autonomy within Czechoslovakia and the recognition of a distinct Slovak nation as opposed to the idea of a Czechoslovak nation, officially espoused by the government. After 1938, however, with Slovakia's close ties to Germany, Party began to adopt fascist elements into its program. Historians debate when Hlinka's Slovak People's Party became a fully-fledged fascist party, some pointing to late 1938, others to March 1939. For a survey of Hlinka's Slovak People's Party up until 1938, see James Felak, *"At the Price of the*

President of the Republic in October 1939 and high-ranking party members filled all the other important cabinet positions. The Hlinka Guard, the paramilitary wing of the SPP, was formed in June 1938 and "became the standard bearer of Slovak nationalism."[45] The Press was strictly controlled by the government and reflected the ideology of the Party. No periodicals openly opposed to the government program were allowed to circulate in the Slovak Republic.[46]

The formation of the independent Slovak Republic in 1939 changed the nature of the territorial contest for Slovak and Hungarian revisionists; it was now a conflict between two sovereign states, rather than Hungary vying for its former possessions from a larger Czechoslovakia. Slovak irredentists demanded the unification of all Slovaks within the new state, referring in part to their ethnic brethren cut off by the First Vienna Award. One propaganda pamphlet pronounced, "we have fought for the independent Slovak state and rescued the nation from destruction . . . but one task still awaits us! Our brothers in Hungary are waiting for us!"[47] Thus, the government of the new Slovak state linked itself to territorial revision, much as the Hungarian government had after 1919. An article in the journal *Nástup* from November 1939 explicitly tied the plight of Slovaks after the Vienna Award to Hungary after World War I, stating, "the Slovaks can never forget the November 2 Vienna decision, just as the Hungarians cannot forget Trianon."[48] Hungarian revisionists, no longer able to claim that Slovaks were being kept apart from the Hungarian state against their will by the Czech government, shifted their

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Republic," Hlinka's Slovak People's Party, 1929-1938 (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1994). For a discussion of the fascist nature of the party, see Jan Havránek, "Fascism in Czechoslovakia" and Joseph Zacek, "Czechoslovak Fascisms," both in *Native Fascism in the Successor States, 1918-1945,* edited by Peter Sugar (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Clio, 1971), 47-55 and 56-62.

[45] Bystrický, "Slovakia from the Munich Conference to the declaration of independence," 162. For a description of the founding of the Hlinka Guard, see James Felak, *"At the Price of the Republic,"* 194.

[46] Bystrický, "Slovakia from the Munich Conference to the declaration of independence," 162.

[47] MOL K28 208/404. "Kiharcoltunk a független szlovák államot és megmentettük a nemzetet a pusztulástól. . . . De még egy feladat vár reánk! A magyarországi testvéreink várnak reánk!

[48] K63 [Külügyiminisztérium] 457-1939-65/7, p. 6-8. "A szlovákok sohasem feledkezhetnek meg November 2. ról –bécsi döntés – miként a magyarok nem feledhették el Trianont."

arguments to reflect the new geopolitical reality after March 1939. After successfully occupying Ruthenia, Hungarian revisionist propaganda largely shifted attention from Slovkia for the time being to its next target: Transylvania.[49] Further revision in Slovakia would have to wait.

The Hungarian government tried to normalize relations with the Slovak government, despite the often virulently anti-Hungarian attitude of many Slovak politicians. Historian and Central European specialist C. A. Macartney explained in a memorandum to the British Foreign Office that "Hungary's attitude is governed by the belief that the geographical and consequently the historic links between the two countries are so strong that they cannot be permanently separated." Thus, the Hungarian government immediately attempted to forge economic and transportation agreements with their new neighbor, pursuing a modicum of cooperation but never abandoning the long-term goal of the consensual unification of the two states. "No hurried step is allowed," Macartney noted, "nothing that would make more difficult the future conclusion of a friendly union, accomplished by the free will of both sides."[50] In March of 1940, while notifying the British Foreign Office of Hungarian territorial demands for Transylvania, Prime Minister Pál Teleki offered his insight on independent Slovakia. He declared that Hungary recognized the Free State of Slovakia, but that he had the "conviction that the two peoples" would "find again their old friendship and the common or parallel path which they have traced in history by . . . their geographic entity and their common and reciprocal interests."[51] Teleki saw union with Hungary as the natural outcome of Slovaks pursuing their best interests, given the country's precarious economic situation. "Being, as we are, heirs to the patriarchial [sic] ideas of St. Stephen and a people that has had a long history and a great political experience," he declared,

[49] Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revision*, 174.
[50] PRO FO 371/24429, p. 379.
[51] PRO FO 371/24427, p. 50.

"we consider . . . [Slovakia's] political direction of today . . . merely transitory."[52] Thus, Teleki explained, Hungary would welcome, and in certain circumstances pursue, the incorporation of Slovakia at a later date. Hungarian belief in the eventual union of Slovakia and Hungary looks naïve when compared to the aggressive anti-Hungarian discourse espoused by members of the Slovak government, who demanded the return of territories lost by the Vienna Award and expressed absolutely no interest in unification.

There was a third option for Slovakia, one that alarmed the Hungarian government much more than an independent Slovak state: reunification with the Czech lands. Immediately after the breakup of Czechoslovakia, Hungarian revisionist Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky attacked Czech politicians Jan Masaryk and Edvard Beneš for trying to win sympathy for the eventual restoration of the republic. "It would seem that the Czechs, those masters of lying propaganda," he quipped, "are not willing to admit they are beaten, and have again started a campaign of hatred against a still bleeding and dismembered Hungary."[53] Bajcsy-Zsilinszky appealed to the international community to see the absurdity of resurrecting the failed state. "Can a Czecho-Slovakia which owes its very existence to lies, which was created in the laboratory of the Peace Treaties, the most impossibly artificial country in the history of the world expect to find [support]," he asked.[54] Foreign Minister István Csáky addressed the plots of Czechoslovak propagandists in front of the Hungarian Parliament in March 1940. "The 'Czechoslovak' Committee, as it calls itself, is endeavouring to represent the re-establishment of a 'Czechoslovakia' . . . as a European interest." However, Csáky declared, "if there is a European

[52] Ibid.
[53] Andrew [Endre] Bajcsy-Zsilinszky "Czech Propaganda Hard at Work Again," *Danubian Review* VI (Mar. 1939), 27.
[54] Ibid., 31.

interest, it is that this hotch-potch state should never rise again!"[55] His statements were met with rousing applause by the Hungarian MPs. Teleki went a step further in his memorandum to the British government, vowing to intervene should Czech politicians attempt to resurrect the Czechoslovak Republic. "The Slovak people are ripe to decide for themselves, but if another country, let us say Czecho-Moravia, claims any rights on the basis of a domination of twenty years and of a linguistic affinity," he threatened, "then we too must demand our rights based on a common life and common traditions."[56] As the war progressed, propaganda for the restoration of Czechoslovakia began to appear among the Slovak inhabitants in Felvidék. Hungarian authorities intercepted a pamphlet in August 1943 calling for a Czechoslovak revival that declared, "Long live democracy! Long live the Czechoslovak Republic! Long live the will of the free nations of Europe!"[57] But while agitation for the revival of Czechoslovakia was perhaps the most frightening for the Hungarian government, it was far from the most widespread. That distinction belonged to the propaganda of Slovak irredentists, angling to append Felvidék to a permanently independent Slovak Republic.

Slovak revisionists learned many of their tactics from their Hungarian counterparts. Historian István Janek has noted that the content of Slovak irredentism was similar to the Hungarian irredentism honed over the twenty years of the interwar period. Slovak irredentists noted that they too had a historical precedent for state building, but where Hungarians upheld the

[55] PRO FO 371/24427, p. 115.
[56] Ibid., 51.

[57] MOL K28 25/65, file 29467. "Éljen a demokrácia! Éljen a Csehszlovák köztársaság! Éljen az európai nemzetek szabad akarata!"

integrity of St. Istvan's realm, Slovaks looked to the Great Moravian Empire, which was invaded and absorbed by Hungarians in the ninth century, for legitimacy for their irredentist goals.[58]

> We want that which was ours historically, what a thousand years ago was under Slovak rule! If the Hungarians can appeal to history and mislead the world with the Empire of St. Stephen, if they want a return to history then it should be one hundred percent. Not only a thousand years back but 1100 or 1200. And 1200 years ago the Hungarians were not here! Instead we were here! And we are still here! We lost everything that according to historical rights, the laws of nature, and the will of the people, is ours.[59]

By linking Slovakia's territorial aspirations to Great Moravia, Slovak nationalists could claim an even more ancient pedigree than the Hungarians; by interpreting medieval conflicts through a modern nationalist lens, they could demand an end to a millennium of oppression by uniting all Slovak territories within the Slovak Republic. The Great Moravia concept also allowed Slovak irredentists to claim territories larger than those lost in Vienna in 1938. One pamphlet demanded the lands from the Tatras to the Danube and Tisza rivers, well south of Czechoslovakia's former borders.[60] The cities of Vác, Miskolc, and Esztergom, all of which lay in Trianon Hungary and had overwhelmingly Hungarian populations, were often included in Slovak demands.[61]

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[58] Janek, "A Magyarországgal szembeni szlovák propaganda és revíziós elképzelések 1939-1941 között," 26. For a discussion of the Great Moravia myth prior to 1938, see Miroslav Michela, "Functions of the Myth of 'National Oppression' in Slovak Master Narrative 1918-1945," in *A Multiethnic Region and Nation-State in East-Central Europe: Studies in the History of Upper Hungary and Slovakia from the 1600s to the Present* edited by László Szarka (Boulder, Colo.: Social Science Monographs, 2011), 262-263.

[59] K28 25/65, file 18075. "Akarjuk azt, amint a történelemben volt, ami ezer év előtt szlovák uralom alatt volt! Ha a magyarok a történelemmel legyezgetik magukat és félrevezetik a világot Szt. István birodalmával, ha hirdetik a történelemhez való visszatérést, ugy akkor százszázalékban. Nemcsak ezer évre visszamenőleg, hanem 1100 és 1200 évre. És 1200 évvel ezelőtt a magyarok nem voltak itt! Ellenben mi itt voltunk! És mi itt is maradunk! Mi elveszünk magunknak mindent, ami nekünk ugy a történelem jogán, mint a természet törvényei és a nép akarata szerint jár."

[60] K28 25/65, file 18075.

[61] Janek, "A Magyarországgal szembeni szlovák propaganda," 26.

Source: Hungarian National Archives

Figure 12: Slovak irredentist map showing territories ceded to Hungary in 1938 as well as areas in Trianon Hungary.

Just as Hungarian revisionists asserted that their demands for revision were justified by the "sublimity of [St. Stephen's] state-building idea" and Hungary's supposed role as a civilizing force in Central Europe, Slovak revisionists argued that Great Moravia's cultural heritage legitimized their territorial claims.[62] Prime Minister Tiso laid out this argument in a speech given in July 1939. "The Slovaks were those who were first to build their own state on this territory," he stated. They also "built the first Christian church at a time when others still lived in paganism." This proved the cultural superiority of the Slovak people over Hungarians, he belived, and was also proof that the Slovak territory was a *distinct* part of St. Stephen's crown,

[62] For a good example of the Hungarian argument for cultural superiority, see Andrew [Endre] Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, "Peace by Revision," *Danubian Review* VI (May 1939), 22.

which he referred to as the "Slovak Princely Crown."[63] Such declarations startled the Hungarian government. The Hungarian consulate's report called Tiso's speech "aggressively anti-Hungarian" and charged that Tiso's statements about a Slovak Princely Crown were "falsified historical pronouncements."[64]

Slovak revisionists attacked Hungarian notions of cultural superiority not only in the distant past but in the present as well. Hungary was characterized in Slovak propaganda as a socially backward country where millions of impoverished peasants were ruled over by a handful of aristocrats, influenced by Jewish interests. "Must we free Slovaks bow in front of Jewified Hungarian magnates?" one propaganda leaflet asked; the text juxtaposed an illustration of a Hungarian count dressed in traditional costume forcing a Slovak Hlinka guardsman to kiss his riding boot.[65] Another piece announced that the Slovak national movement did not seek to deny the Hungarian people their national rights, nor did it hold them responsible for the current state of affairs between the two countries. "These are not the [sins] of the Hungarian people" the tract explained, "rather the Hungarian counts, magnates, Jewish barons and the magyarized renegades created these horrors."[66] Given Hungary's antiquated state of social affairs, Slovak critics argued, they should not be granted more territory. "There is no other state in Europe in which the social situation has been as neglected as in Hungary," a pamphlet confiscated by Hungarian

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[63] K63 457-1939-65/7, p. 62-64. "A szlovák voltak azok, akik ezen a területen elsőnek épitették fel saját államukat és épitették fel az első keresztény templomot akkor, amikor körülöttük valamennyien még pogányságban éltek. Ezzel összefüggésben kijelentette a kormányelnök: Megvolt a saját államiságunk is, amelynek látható jele volt a szlovák koronázási hercegi korona, mely alkotórésze az u.n. Szent István koronának."

[64] K63 457-1939-65/7, p. 54. "Példátlanul agresszív hangu magyarellenes beszéd. . . . A Szent Koronával kapcsolatban tett történelemhamisitó kijelentéseit módositott formában a Slovak lehozta."

[65] MOL K28 25/65, file 20882. "Ezek előtt az elzsidósodott magyar mágnások előtt kell nekünk szabad Szlovákoknak meghajolni?"

[66] K28 25/65, file 18075. "Nem a magyar népnél . . . de a magyar grófóknál, mágnásoknál, zsidóbáróknál és az elmagyarositott renegátoknál kelt ez borzadályt."

authorities in 1940 stated. “In Hungary the entire state apparatus, state power, the land, and two-thirds of the means of production are in the hands of a few thousand people. . . . And this caste would like to rule over all Central Europe.” It was for these reasons, the Slovak author contended, that “Hungary cannot organize the self-conscious nationalities of Central Europe and solve the nationality problems.”[67] Emphasizing Hungary’s dubious record on social issues and coloring the discussion with anti-Semitic discourse enabled Slovak propagandists to simultaneously target Slovak masses and German backers alike.

Source: Hungarian National Archives

Figure 13: Slovak anti-Hungarian propaganda depicting a Hungarian count forcing a Slovak Hlinka Guardsman to kiss his riding boot.

[67] MOL K28 25/65, file 19035. “Magyarország emberanyagával nem lehet megszervezni Közép-európa öntudatos nemzetiségeit és megoldani a nemzetiségi problémákat. Európában nincs olyan szociális tekintetben annyira elhanyagolt állam, mint Magyarország. Magyarországon az egész állami apparatus, az állami hatalom, a föld és a termelési eszközök kétharmada néhány ezer ember kezében van, akikkel a mostani hivatalos magyarság áll és bukik. És ez a kaszt szeretne uralkodni egész Középeurópa felett.”

Another critical similarity between Hungarian and Slovak revisionism was both movements' reliance on German support. Although Hungarian revisionists had Hitler to thanks for the return of Felvidék, as was discussed earlier, resentment lingered concerning Hungary's still unfulfilled territorial aspirations. The Slovaks, on the other hand, could easily blame the Germans for their territorial losses. But the Slovak Republic had also been created by Germany, its existence guaranteed by German military strength, and its irredentist propaganda supported by the German foreign ministry. Reports from the Hungarian consulate in Bratislava complained that "the Germans stand behind the Slovak anti-Hungarian and revisionist propaganda, and they are the ones who encourage and incite the Slovaks. . . . Foreign Minister Ribbentrop will support the Slovaks' revisionist aspirations against Hungary with full force."[68] The British Consul also noted that Germany appeared to be behind much of the anti-Hungarian propaganda disseminated in Slovakia.[69] Cultural ties strengthened between Germany and Slovakia, with German researchers traveling to Slovakia for ethnographic work and Hitler Youth groups planning summer excursions to the Tatra Mountains.[70] Slovak politicians boasted of their position of favor. Vojtech Tuka, Slovak Foreign Minister, in a July 1940 speech proudly noted that Ribbbentrop had informed him that "the Slovaks were the Führer's labor of love."[71] In April 1942, according to Hungarian intelligence, Slovak Interior Minister Alexander Mach stated during a speech in Prešov [HU: Eperjes] that "we have positive assurances from Hitler" that

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[68] MOL, 457-1939-65/7, p. 54-56. "Már előző jelentéseimben rámutattam, hogy a szlovákiai magyarellenes és reviziós propaganda mögött a németek állnak és ők azok, akik ennek terjesztésére felbiztatják és bátoritják a szlovákokat. . . . Ribbentrop külügyminiszter teljes erejével fogja támogatni a szlovákok Magyarországgal szembeni reviziós törekvéseit."
[69] PRO FO 371/23109, p. 129.
[70] MOL K28 25/65, file 19745.
[71] Quoted in Janek, "A Magyarországgal szembeni szlovák propaganda," 34.

Košice would be returned to the Slovaks along with territories lying even beyond the Trianon border. He further elaborated:

> The Hungarians will be expelled from the territory. Thus we need 3.5 million Slovaks. We believe that many among those who today consider themselves Hungarians will join us, insofar as they speak Slovak. Exactly how this territorial award will take place is still uncertain. It may simply be that the Germans will order the Hungarians out, or it may be by referendum. Our government has very seriously prepared for this latter possibility and will not shrink from any sacrifice or expense.[72]

Thus, although Germany's initial actions had favored Hungarians over Slovaks, Ribbentrop and Hitler were able to successfully manipulate territorial issues between the two states throughout the war to keep Hungarians and Slovaks in the Axis line, a practice they effectively utilized throughout East-Central Europe.[73]

Hungarian and Slovak revisionist demands did not always simply mirror each other's arguments. Mach's statement reveals that Slovak territorial conceptions of an exclusively Slovak nation-state diverged from Hungary's aspiration to rebuild its multi-ethnic empire. The Munich Agreement had established ethnography as the basis for restructuring borders in East-Central Europe, making an area's ethnic composition the determining factor for which state it should belong to. And although Hungary had reluctantly agreed to use ethnographic data to redraw the border in Felvidék, Hungarian revisionists still generally rejected the idea that states should be based solely on ethnographic factors. "For a thousand year and more we Hungarians . . . look[ed]

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[72] K28 25/65, file 18995. "Hitlertől pozitiv igéretünk van, hogy visszakapjuk Kassát, sőt a trianoni határon tulra fogunk benyomulni, s megkapjuk Abaujt, Borsod felső részével és Miskolccal. A magyarokat ki fogjuk telepiteni e területről. Ezért 3.5 millió szlovákra van szükségünk. Bizunk abban, hogy sokan azok közül, akik ma magyaroknak vallják magukat akkor majd hozzánk csatlakoznak, amenyiben beszélnek szlovákul. Hogy miképpen törtenik e terület visszaadása, ma még bizonytalan. Lehet, hogy egyszerüen kiparancsolja onnan a német a magyarokat, lehet, hogy népszavazást rendel el. Ez utóbbi lehetőségre kormányunk nagyon komolyan felkészül, s e célból nem riad vissza semmi pénzáldozattól sem."

[73] On the Hungarian-Romanian case, see Holly Case, *Between States: The Transylvanian Question and the European Idea during World War II* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2009), chapter 2.

after the interests also of our brother nations of the Danube sector which shared our destiny," explained Endre Bajcsy-Zsilinszky in an article for *Danubian Review*. "That is why we Hungarians will never accept as decisive the ethnographical principle, and why we shall never abandon the historicl principle."[74] Instead of following ethnic lines to establish sovereignty in East-Central Europe, Bajcsy-Zsilinszky argued that a multi-national Hungary in the Danubian Basin should be re-established based on Hungary's state-building abilities. Slovak revisionism, on the other hand, embraced the idea of an ethnically pure Slovakia. Tuka scoffed at Hungary's revisionist reasoning, saying "the Hungarians' historical arguments will be in vain" because they are outdated. "Today the new borders will be drawn according to the dynamic volkisch idea."[75] Slovak nationalists touted their volkisch credentials, claiming that "after the German Empire, the Slovak Republic is the first state formation which arose in the spirit of the volkisch principle."[76] Of course, in highly mixed East-Central Europe, it was impossible to simply draw borders around homogeneous ethnic groups. Thus, Slovak revisionists encouraged population transfers to create an enlarged, mononational state to unite all Slovaks inside their homeland. Already at the Komárno negotiations, as we saw in Chapter Two, Slovak representatives broached the idea of exchanging Slovaks living in southeastern Hungary with Hungarians living in Felvidék. In their plans for an enlarged Slovak homeland, revisionists envisioned the expulsion of Jews, Hungarians, Czechs, and Gypsies, replaced by ethnic Slovaks who had immigrated to the United States who would come home to create "a numerically strong, nationally homogeneous Slovak

[74] Bajcsy-Zsilinszky, "Peace by Revision," 22-23.
[75] Quoted in Janek, "A Magyarországgal szembeni szlovák propaganda," 34. "Hiába fognak a magyarok történelmi érvekkel . . . ma a dinamikus völkisch gondolat az, amely az új határokat meg fogja vonni."
[76] MOL K28 25/65, file 19745. "A nagynémet birodalom után a szlovák köztársaság az első államképződmény, amely a völkisch-elv szellemében keletkezett."

territory."[77] The Slovaks living outside of the Slovak Republic were thus critical to the greater Slovak territorial aspirations, however unlikely it was that Slovak-Americans would return to repopulate the Slovak state.

The Slovak government displayed behaviors typical of what Rogers Brubaker has called "homeland nationalism," attempting to forge strong connections with Slovaks living beyond the state borders and claiming a role as protector of those Slovaks living as national minorities. In this spirit, the Slovak government proclaimed July 5, the Catholic feast day of Saints Cyril and Methodius (upheld as the patron saints of the Slovak nation) to also be the Day of Foreign Slovaks. It was first celebrated in 1939 at Devín [HU: Dévény], a village incorporated into the Third Reich by the Munich Agreement. At this celebration, organizers proclaimed the "Devín Manifesto" in solidarity with Slovaks living abroad, near and far. The manifesto noted that nearly 2 million Slovaks lived outside of the republic. "These brethren," the manifesto lamented, "cannot participate in the construction of the new happy Slovakia, despite the fact that they always and everywhere express their devotion" to the state.[78] The proclamation then vowed to never stop fighting for those Slovaks cut off from the motherland, especially the 600,000 Slovaks closest to home in Hungary "who must laboriously fight so that they do not give in to foreign domination." Finally, the manifesto ended by saying "we believe that those brothers who were cut off from us by an unfavorable turn of the wheel of history" – the Vienna Award – "will return."[79]

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[77] Janek, "A Magyarországgal szembeni szlovák propaganda," 26. "számbelileg erős, nemzetileg homogén szlovák terület."

[78] K63 457-1939-65/7, p. 68-76. "Ezek az atyafiaink, … nem tudnak résztvenni az uj boldog Szlovákia felépitésében, annak ellenére, hogy mindig és mindenütt kinyilvánitják iránta való odaadásukat."

[79] K63 457-1939-65/7, p. 68-76. "Sohasem szünnek meg küzdeni a Magyarországon lévő több mint 600.000 szlovák nemzeti jogaiért, akiknek nehezen kell küzdeniük, hogy ne engedjenek az idegen nyomásnak. … Hiszük, hogy vissza fognak térni azok a testvéreink is, akiket elszakitott tőlünk a történelem kerekének kedvezőtlen fordulata."

Rhetorically, Slovak revisionists embraced population politics much more willingly, but both sides tried to get the upper hand in the numbers game. In late 1938, upon regaining Felvidék, the Hungarian government conducted a limited census in the returned territory. The autonomous Slovak government called its own census soon after, which was strongly criticized by Hungarians. An Interior Ministry report from January 1939 claimed that census takers warned inhabitants that they would lose out on certain opportunities should they decline to declare themselves Slovaks.[80] The *Danubian Review* even published an article that alleged that "the methods employed were detrimental to the interests of the minorities," noting that the sudden and haphazard organization of the census had resulted in the outright omission of many individuals and the manipulation of data to serve the purposes of the Slovak government.[81] Hungarian census data likewise raised questions. The full census taken in 1941 listed language use and nationality as separate categories for the first time. Individuals were asked to note the language that "you consider yours, speak best, and speak with the most pleasure," and separately to "specify the nationality that you feel and profess that you belong to, devoid of pressure and irrespective of your native language."[82] Although nationalists on both sides assumed strong links between Slovak mother tongue and Slovak nationality, the numbers did not correlate in the Hungarian census. The 1941 results in enlarged Hungary yielded 270,467 individuals who declared Slovak their mother tongue, but only 173,514 who marked Slovak as their nationality.[83] What the data fails to reveal is whether this discrepancy was the result of coercion by census

[80] K149 [Belügyminisztérium] 49-1939-2, p. 96.
[81] "Slovak Census: Illegal Methods Employed," *Danubian Review* VI (Jan. 1939), 49.
[82] János Velka, "Spectra: National and Ethnic Minorities of Hungary as Reflected by the Census," in *National and Ethnic Minorities in Hungary, 1920-2001*, edited by Ágnes Tóth (Boulder, Colo: Social Science Monographs, 2005), 6.
[83] Ibid., 22.

takers, opportunism by the inumerated, or a genuine identification with the Hungarian nation on the part of Slovak speakers.

At different points in time, Hungarians and Slovaks alike advocated for referenda elections to determine rightful ownership of the disputed territory. The Hungarian government asked for plebescites for all of Slovakia and Ruthenia during the Komárno negotions in 1938, confident that elections would reveal that both areas desired a return to the Hungarian crown lands. Dr. Stephen de Görgey, a Hungarian member of Parliament, addressed a letter to the Prime Minister of England in 1939 asking for the British to support plebescites in Eastern Slovakia. "Although belonging to four nationalities, all these indigenous inhabitants faithfully adhere to [Hungarian rule]," de Görgey explained. "It is their primary human right, and much more their genuine historical right arising from a joint past of a thousand years that they themselves may decide about their future fate."[84] Slovaks were similarly confident that if plebescites were held in areas they had lost in the Vienna arbitration, the inhabitants would opt for the Slovak Republic. The journal *Slovenská Sloboda* expressed its confidence in the people's choice in its August 1940 issue, noting that "the Slovaks believe in a better tomorrow. A referendum is the best judge for this contentious issue."[85] But referenda could also inspire unease and accusations of machinations to influence results. Hungarian intelligence reports suspected that the anti-Hungarian propaganda coming from Slovakia in 1939 was designed to inspire the people to opt for Slovak nationality. "The goal of all propaganda" the report noted, "is in part to influence the Slovak census and on the other hand to force a plebescite in the areas returned [by

[84] PRO FO 371/23109, p. 21-22.
[85] Quoted in Janek, "A Magyarországgal szembeni szlovák propaganda," 34. "A szlovákok bíznak a jobb holnapban. A népszavazás a legjobb bírája a vitás kérdéseknek."

the Vienna Award]."[86] Population politics, the Hungarian government recognized, could be dangerously fickle.

At times, residents attempted to take matters of border revision into their own hands, appealing directly to governments to request incorporation in one state or another. Villagers from Hrušov [HU: Magasmajtény] and Čelovce [HU: Csall], left just outside of Hungary after the Vienna Award, appealed to the Hungarian Prime Minister's office in December 1938 for annexation to Hungary for "emotional and economic" reasons.[87] Others sought help from Germany. The villages of Medzev [HU: Alsomecenzef], Vyšný Medzev [HU: Felsőmecenzef], and Štos [HU: Stósz] petitioned for inclusion in Hungary, sending the list of signatures directly to Hitler.[88] Several Slovak settelments awarded to Hungary protested their transfer, which prompted János Esterházy, leader of the Hungarian minority that remained in Slovakia, to recommend that Hungary give back Slovak-majority areas along the border including Nagysurány [SK: Šurany] and Tótmegyér [SK: Palárikovo].[89] But Esterházy's plan drew protests from the village of Nandrás [SK: Nandraž], which sent a memorandum to the Hungarian Prime Minister pleading to remain in Hungary because, although the larger part of the community was of Slovak nationality, they were "in heart and spirit a Hungarian community."[90] A separate letter stated that the Slovak and Hungarian inhabitants of Nandrás were against the move back to Slovakia "with every drop of their blood."[91] The Hungarian government agreed, rejecting Esterházy's plan and reasoning that "Trianon deprived Hungary of such a large territory" that

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[86] K149 49-1939-2, 52. "Az egész propaganda célja részint a szlovenszkói népszámlálás befolyásolása, másrészt a visszacsatolt területeken népszavazás kierőszakolása."
[87] K28 26/66 p. 50. "érzelmi és gazdasági kapcsolatban."
[88] "Villages of Alsomecenzef, Felsomecenzef and Stósz Appeal to Herr Hitler Asking to be Attached to Hungary," *Danubian Review* VI (Dec. 1938), 41.
[89] István Janek, "Az első bécsi döntés," *Rubicon* (2010/1), 22.
[90] MOL K28 26/66 p. 155. "egy szivvel lélekkel magyarul érző község."
[91] MOL K28 26-66, p. 215. "Nandrás község szlovák és magyar lakossága a község elszakitása ellen minden csepp vérével tiltakozik."

they could not possibly relinquish even "one centimeter from what the Vienna Award gave back."[92] In 1940, the Slovak government again asked Esterházy to take up the issue of territorial readjustments with the Hungarian government, in an attempt to get 2,400 sq. km. returned to Slovakia.[93] The Hungarian government refused once again; indeed none of the appeals to amend the new border were ever granted. The lines drawn in Vienna were somewhat arbitrary, but not to be further arbitrated.

The revisionist rhetoric and symbolism utilized by Slovaks and Hungarians alike resulted in formal complaints on the parts of both governments. In 1941, the Slovak embassy in Budapest sent a list of complaints about the dissemination of irredentist propaganda in Hungary, which included the circulation of currency with revisionist imagery, objectionable textbooks being used in schools, and the presence of irredentist monuments along the Slovak-Hungarian border.[94] The Slovak embassy charged that the geography textbooks in use in elementary schools did not include the independent Slovak Republic in its maps. The Education Ministry confirmed that this was indeed the case, but explained that the books had been published before the establishment of independent Slovakia and updated versions were not yet available. However, the Ministry had instructed elementary school teachers to include the new state formations in their lessons as a corrective.[95] The newly erected border monuments were more overtly irredentist than the now outdated textbooks. Large maps of Greater Hungary, crafted from rocks with with the words, "so it was, so it will be" and "Everything back!" stood at several locations along the border, well within view of passing trains, placed there by local Levente groups, the Hungarian paramilitary

[92] Quoted in Janek, "Az első bécsi döntés," 20. "Magyarországot Trianon oly nagy területektől fosztotta meg, hogy most aztán egyetlen centiméterről sem mondhatunk le abból, amit a bécsi döntés visszaadott."
[93] Cornelius, *Hungary in World War II*, 93.
[94] MOL K28 5/12, p. 85.
[95] MOL K28 5/12, p. 88.

youth organization.[96] The Hungarian government debated how to respond to the Slovak complaint, finally deciding that due to recent anti-Hungarian actions in Slovakia, they did not "consider it necessary to remedy the situation in a timely manner."[97] In another incident from November 1941, the Slovak ambassador complained about a Hungarian radio broadcast on the anniversary of the Vienna Award that could be heard on Slovak territory. The ambassador took issue with the broadcaster's comment that the Vienna arbitration had given Hungary back "a part of Felvidék." According to the ambassador, this meant that Hungary must have claims to the other part of Felvidék as well. Hungarian officials explained that according to Hungarian parlance, "Felvidék refers to the whole of former Upper Hungary, including what is now Slovakia." The Slovak ambassador noted that he himself understood that, but that such language offended Slovak public opinion, necessitating his objection.[98] This linguistic slippage was not easily resolved; indeed, the debate rages on the political correctness of the term Felvidék and what territory, exactly, it denotes.

Like these Slovak officials, the Hungarian government made similar appeals for the cessation of irredentist propaganda on the part of Slovaks. An irredentist map from the city of Žilina [HU: Zsolna] drew the ire of Hungarian officials, who protested to the Slovak Foreign Ministry for the map's depiction of Slovakia with its pre-1938 borders and labeling Hungarian territory as "Barbarian Country."[99] An anti-Hungarian poem entitled *Šurany*, dedicated to the Slovak victims killed by Hungarian police officers in Nagysurány in 1938, also drew a formal complaint from the Hungarian ambassador in Bratislava, who protested against the dissemination

[96] MOL K28 5/12, p. 86, 91.
[97] MOL K28 5/12, p. 97. "Tekintettel a közelmultban Szlovákiában lejátszódott magyarellenes tüntetésekre, nem tartja időszerünek ez ügy kivizsgálását, esetleg orvoslását."
[98] MOL K28 25/65, file 25929. "A magyar terminológia szerint a "Felvidék" megjelölés az egész volt Felső Magyarországra, tehát a mai Szlovákiára is használatos volt."
[99] MOL K28 25/65, file 26076. "Barbárország."

of the poem. The Slovak Foreign Ministry responded that the poem was an expression of artistic freedom and that there were "numerous examples" of similar poetic license in Hungarian irredentist literature. The Hungarian ambassador was incensed when the same poem appeared in a 1940 Hlinka Guard calendar, and complained once again. Slovak officials countered that "the poem was the echo of the Šurany tragedy."[100] Later, the author of the poem received a literary prize from the Slovak government, again to the protest of Hungarian officials.[101] Contrary to dissuading the Slovaks from further disseminating the poem, Hungarian complaints seem to have encouraged it.

The Slovak Foreign Ministry itself became the object of suspicion in one case. Ferenc Zahorák, a secretary at the Slovak Embassy in Budapest, was accused of expounding improper propaganda "for the benefit of Slovakia" and interfering with Hungarian internal affairs while serving in Hungary. He was observed speaking to the inhabitants of a Slovak village in a Budapest suburb, allegedly asking, "are you satisfied with your situation?" He then claimed that living conditions were better in Slovakia than in Hungary. "In Slovakia the people are much more esteemed than in Hungary [and conditions] are much more favorable; it is not as expensive." Hungarian officials requested that "necessary actions" be taken against Zahorák.[102] The Hungarian government also reported problems with Slovak citizens traveling through Hungarian territory via train. Because the rail lines traversed the new border, some Slovak passenger trains passed through Hungary on their way to other parts of Slovakia. In one instance from February 1939, a train traveling to Bratislava that was full of plain-clothed Hlinka Guardsmen according to Hungarian reports, began "singing Slovak irredentist songs" and

[100] MOL K28 K28 25/65, file 15977. "Ez a vers a surányi tragédia visszhangja."
[101] MOL K28 25/65, file 16881.
[102] MOL K28 25/65, file 19681. "Szlovákiában az ember egyénileg sokkal többre becsült mint Magyarországon megélhetési lehetőségei sokkal kedvezőbbek, nincsen ez a drágaság."

shouting "Košice is ours!" from the train cars. When the Hungarian foreign office brought up this issue with the Slovak government, they replied that the passengers had been provoked by irredentist Hungarian maps located in Hungarian rail cars.[103] As was so often the case, yet again complaints of irredentism from one government were simply met with counter-complaints from the other and no concrete measures were taken to rectify the offending actions. Neither side was willing to back down from the ideological battle.

Reciprocity

The significant Slovak minority populations in Hungary and Hungarian minority populations in Slovakia experienced first hand the day-to-day repercussions of the two states' antagonistic policies toward one another. Both Hungary and Slovakia functioned as nationalizing states during the war years, promoting "the language, culture, demographic position, economic flourishing, [and] political hegemony" of Hungarians in Hungary and Slovaks in Slovakia, respectively.[104] Concurrently, Hungary also functioned as an external national homeland to the Hungarian minority residing in Slovakia, while the Slovak state played the same role for the Slovak minority in Hungary. What Brubaker has described as a "triadic nexus" – the relationship between national minorities, nationalizing states, and external national homelands – thus existed simultaneously in two forms. The Hungarian government, still hopeful that Slovakia would one day return to the Hungarian state, tried to downplay conflicts that arose between the two states and maintained, at least at the rhetorical level, a desire for positive relations with the Slovak minority living in Hungary. Meanwhile, Slovak politicians took an aggressively and openly anti-

[103] MOL K28 25/65, file 20882.
[104] Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 63.

Hungarian approach, questioning the motivations of the Hungarian government and antagonizing the Hungarian minority within the country. Despite these divergences in rhetoric, however, both states struggled mightily with minority issues and discriminated against their respective minority groups.

Although the two states conceptualized their approach to the minority issue differently, many of the practices of the Slovak and Hungarian governments utilized in dealing with their minority populations mirrored each other during the war. This "mirroring" actually became the dominant policy, termed reciprocity, which attempted to make minority treatment in the two states equal. Rather than granting rights and protections, the policy was overwhelmingly used for discriminatory purposes, addressing the grievances of one group by curtailing the rights of the other. The Slovak government initiated the policy of reciprocity, making the maintenance of certain rights for the Hungarian minority contingent on Hungary granting those rights to the Slovak minority, according to the Slovak constitution.[105] The Hungarian government was less enthusiastic about such a policy. Though Hungarian officials certainly believed that there should be compensation for the wrongs suffered by Hungarians in Felvidék under the previous regime, they did not believe that the their own minority policy should be dictated by outside factors. Slovak Foreign Minister Durčansky complained to the British consul in Bratislava that "it was typical of the Hungarian mentality that they rejected [reciprocity], thus forcing the Slovaks to ask themselves what the Hungarians intended to do with the Slovaks living in Hungary."[106] Nevertheless, the Hungarian government did utilize the tactic of reciprocity in its dealings with both the Slovak and Romanian minorities during the Second World War, although it was never

[105] Árpád Popély, "Slovakia Case Study," in *Minority Hungarian Communities in the Twentieth Century* edited by Nándor Bárdi, Csilla Fedinec, and László Szarka (Boulder, Colo.: Social Sience Monographs, 2011), 262.
[106] PRO FO 371/23109, p. 150.

considered official the way it was in Slovakia.[107] In 1942, Tibor Pataky, head of the Nationalities Division of the Prime Minister's Office, acknowledged that reciprocity had played a role in the treatment of minorities in Hungary, but that the government would attempt to change course in the interest of state's minority populations.

> Our foreign political interests and the future demand that our nationality policy has a positive direction and satisfies the justified wishes of our nationalities in Hungary. . . . Consequently, the Hungarian government will not pursue any kind of retaliatory minority policy, will abandon the principle of reciprocity, and will not be influenced by the situations of the Hungarian minorities in Romania and Slovakia in its own internal measures.[108]

Even some of Hungary's most prominent revisionists believed in the necessity of a just minority policy. Ferenc Herczeg noted in May 1939 that "our old nationality policy has outlived its usefulness and has become redundant. If we were to resurrect it we would be making a catastrophic mistake." He believed that the Slovaks returned to Hungary should be treated "as brethren of the Hungarians, with all the rights and privileges that entails."[109] Acccording to the Slovak census conducted in December 1938, 57,987 Hungarians lived in the territory that would become the independent Slovak Republic.[110] 118,805 Slovaks lived in the area returned to Hungary by the First Vienna Award according to the Hungarian census conducted in the returned territories in the same year.[111] Combined with the Slovaks living in Trianon Hungary, the total

[107] For a discussion of reciprocity and its effect on Hungarian minority policy in general, see Nándor Bárdi, "The strategies and institutional framework employed by Hungarian governments to promote the 'Hungarian Minorities Policy' between 1918 and 1938," in *Czech and Hungarian Minority Policy in Central Europe 1918-1938*, edited by Ferenc Eiler and Dagmar Hájková (Prague: Masaryk Archive, 2009), 45-46. For a discussion of reciprocity vis-à-vis Romania, see Case, *Between States*, 121-123.
[108] Quoted in Ágnes Tóth, "The Hungarian State and the Nationalities," in *National and Ethnic Minorities in Hungary, 1920-2001*, edited by Ágnes Tóth (Boulder, Colo.: Social Science Monographs, 2005), 180.
[109] Quoted in Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revision*, 174.
[110] Popély, "Slovakia Case Study," 262.
[111] MOL K28 215/428.

number of Slovaks residing in the Hungarian state exceeded 250,000.[112] Thus, although the governments attempted to formulate reciprocal policies, such attempts were inherently limited because of the disproportionate numbers.

Slovak propaganda echoed the government's reciprocity policies, calling for equal treatment for the two minority populations. Exemplifying the idea of an external national homeland, one Slovak propagandist stated that "We Slovaks do not want to interfere with the work of the Hungarian nation, but it is our right and our duty to care for our brothers, and our right and our duty to appeal to our government, to finally intervene." The author then listed some of the Slovak complaints:

> While the Hungarians in Slovakia have two dailies and a further 23 periodicals, the Slovaks in Hungary have only one weekly and it has been destroyed. The Hungarians among us have their own party, cultural institutes, and schools. . . . In contrast, the Slovaks in Hungary do not have their own party, the Slovak language is slaughtered in the schools and churches, and Slovaks have been ejected from state service and work.[113]

Slovaks were indeed not allowed to have a minority party in Hungary, and their representation in the Hungarian parliament was "merely symbolic," amounting to a couple of ethnic Slovaks who were hand-picked by the Hungarian government and not considered legitimate representatives by the minority itself.[114] *Slovenská Jednota* rejected the two candidates selected as Slovak representatives to the Hungarian parliament, stating, "the leaders of Slovak national life in Hungary know nothing about them." They complained that the candidates were "degenerate

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[112] As was discussed earlier in the chapter, the Hungarian census of 1941 counted mother tongue and nationality as separate categories. Slovak authorities disputed these numbers, claiming that over 600,000 Slovaks lived in Hungary. See for example, K63 457-1939-65/7, p. 68-76.

[113] MOL K28 25/65, file 18075**. "**Mi szlovákok nem akarunk belevatkozni a magyar nemzet dolgaiba, de jogunk és kötelességünk törődni testvéreinkkel és jogunk és kötelességünk felhivni kormányunkat, hogy már végre lépjenek közbe. Mig a szlovákiai magyaroknak két napilapjuk és további 23 folyóiratuk van, addig a magyarországi szlovákoknak cask egy hetilapjuk van és még ezt is pusztitják. . . . Ellenben a magyarosrszági szlovákoknak nincsen saját pártjuk, az iskolákban és templomokban ölik a szlovák beszédet, állami szolgálatból és munkából a szlovákokat kidobálták."

[114] Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revision*, 281.

Slovaks" and that they "would rather have no representatives at all than persons who are remote from the national cause."[115] However, the political situation of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia was not much better. Although the Hungarian Party provided some legal representation for Hungarians (János Esterházy, leader of the party, was a member of Slovak Parliament), the party was not allowed to officially register until 1941, limiting its influence and organizational rights.[116] The periodical situation was likewise more complicated because the two Hungarian dailies were outlawed from time to time.[117] Both governments sought to manipulate the minority presses, either by directing them from abroad, as was the case with *Slovenská Jednota*, a Slovak minority newspaper that circulated in Hungary but was controlled by Bratislava, or by creating "loyal" minority papers within the state, such as *Naša Zastava*, the Slovak newspaper financed by the Hungarian government.[118]

The program of the Hungarian Party in Slovakia emphasized a desire for "constructive cooperation" with the Slovak government. Esterházy regarded advocacy for the Slovak minority in Hungary as part of his role as a leader of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia. He asked that the Slovak people regard him "as a friend," who would fight "for the rightful demands of their Slovak brethren living across the border." He vowed, furthermore, to be a champion for Slovak rights regardless of how the Hungarian minority faired in Slovakia. "No amount of fault-finding or ingratitude," he declared, would cause him to stray from that purpose.[119] Thus, reciprocity was not a conceptual part of the Hungarian Party in Slovakia.

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[115] PRO FO 371/23109, p. 120-122.
[116] Popély, "Slovakia Case Study," 262.
[117] See for example MOL K28 25/65, file 26076 on the banning of Hungarian dailies in 1941.
[118] On *Slovenská Jednota* see PRO FO 371/23109, p. 120-122 and on *Naša Zastava* see MOL K28 44/88, file 15484.
[119] "Programme of United Hungarian Party of Slovakia," *Danubian Review* VI (Feb. 1939), 44.

The issue of minority cultural freedoms was highly contested between the two governments. In Slovakia, the Hungarian Party was the main vehicle for Hungarian cultural life, despite the limitations imposed on it by the Slovak government. In the spring of 1939, the government banned the most important Hungarian cultural institution, the Cultural Society of Slovak Hungarians. Local cultural organizations throughout the country were shut down as well.[120] Esterházy responded with an open letter to Tiso that criticized the attacks as "groundless and arbitrary." He chastised the government for "sowing the seeds of hatred" against Hungarians and claimed that the deterioration in relations between the government and the Hungarian minority lie exclusively with Slovak political leaders.[121] The newspaper *Slovenská Pravda* rallied to the government's defense declaring, "when our unfortunate [Slovak] brothers in Hungary have the minimum requirements for their cultural development, we shall allow the Hungarians in Slovakia to have them too."[122] In Hungary, the tactics utilized by the government were different but the goal was essentially the same: to limit and control minority cultural institutions. Between October 1 and December 31, 1941, a report by the Minorities Division of the Hungarian Prime Minister's Office counted over fifty Slovak cultural programs, including Slovak musical performances, radio presentations on Slovak literature, and Slovak minority sporting events. This "proved," the government believed, "that the complaint sounded by the Slovak [government], that the cultural life of the Slovaks living in Hungary is being made difficult by the authorities, is unfounded."[123] Of course, the quality of this cultural life was open to debate. The Hungarian

[120] Popély, "Slovakia Case Study," 263-264.
[121] "Official Journal, Party Organisations and Cultural Societies of Magyars of Slovakia Placed Under an Embargo: Open Letter Adressed by Count Esterházy to Premier Tiso," *Danubian Review* VI (May 1939), 37-38.
[122] PRO FO 371/23109, p. 150.
[123] MOL K28 41/87, file 1942-P-15661. "Ez a kimutatás is bizonyitja mennyire alaptalan a szlovák részről hangoztatott az a panasz, hogy a magyarországi szlovák népcsoport kulturális életét a hatóságok megnehezitik s megakadályozzák."

government itself organized many of these Slovak cultural activities, promoting a brand of Slovak culture that emphasized its shared roots with Hungarians and Slovaks' place within the Crown of St. Stephen. For example, the government arranged nights of Slovak culture in the towns of Felvidék that included such programming as readings of Hungarian revolutionary Sándor Petőfi's poems in Slovak translation and presentations on Hungarian-Slovak economic interdependence and the medieval cult of St. Stephen. These events were rightfully prone to accusations of inauthenticity by local Slovak leaders.[124]

The principle of reciprocity was also frequently applied in the economic lives of minorities. The Hungarian Party of Slovakia and the Hungarian government protested the firing of Hungarians from private firms in Bratislava, alleging that Slovak authorities were unfairly targeting minorities for dismissal.[125] They likewise complained about the confiscation of property owned by Hungarians, which was then redistributed to Slovak farmers. The Slovak government responded that these policies were a just response to acts the Hungarian government committed against the Slovak minority in the aftermath of the Vienna Award, specifically seizing property from Slovak farmers who had been given land in the Czechoslovak land reform in 1920 and releasing Slovaks from their civil service positions.[126] The law in question was instituted to directly compensate Slovaks who had been dispossessed by the Hungarian state. The Slovak government likewise passed a law making the number of Hungarian lawyers allowed to practice in Slovakia proportional to the size of the Hungarian minority. Prime Minister Durčansky explained that this law was implemented as a matter of reciprocity. He noted that in Bratislava alone, there were thirty Hungarian lawyers whereas in all of Hungary only one or two Slovaks

[124] MOL K28 41/87, file 1940-L-17232.
[125] "Numerous Minority Employees Dismissed from Employment of Business firms in Pozsony," *Danubian Review* VI (Feb. 1939), 53.
[126] On the land redistribution, see PRO FO 371/23109, p. 149-150. The dismissal of Slovak civil servants is discussed in detail in chapter five.

practiced law.[127] The discrepancy in the number of Slovak versus Hungarian lawyers was a product of centuries of historical development in the Kingdom of Hungary rather than contemporary policies of the Hungarian government. But through the lens of reciprocity, such developments were discounted and reduced to a matter of simple arithmetic. In the process, the economic livelihood of both minority groups became inextricably linked, the hardships of one group often being imposed on the other.

Although official Hungarian discourse emphasized reconciliation with Slovakia and the desire for positive relations with the national minorities living in Hungary, the state maintained tight surveillance over the Slovak minority and sometimes resorted to force in dealing with them. Hungarian authorities feared that Hungary's Slovaks, fueled by irredentist desires and backed by their hostile home government, could function as a fifth column undermining the state from within. In the weeks after the Vienna Award, Slovak residents held protests against Hungarian rule in Komját [SK: Komjatice], Komáromcsehi [SK: Čechy], and Nagysurány, confirming some of the government's fears.[128] Authorities kept a close watch over localities heavily populated with Slovaks, noting ebbs and flows in activity that they often suspected were tied to the international situation.[129] The government was particularly fearful that the Hlinka Guard was behind the agitation, suspecting that the group was training Slovaks living in Hungary in secret. The government received reports that Slovak youth from Hungary were receiving training in anti-Hungarian agitation in the city of Prešov to incite revolts against Hungarian rule in their home villages further south.[130] Occasionally, perceived threats prompted government officials to expel prominent Slovaks they feared were working to undermine them. In July 1939, Father Imre

[127] MOL K63 1940 65/4, p. 46.
[128] Loránt Tilkovszky, *Revizió és nemzetiségpolitika Magyarországon 1938-1941* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1967), 109.
[129] See for example, MOL K149 49-1939-2, p. 97-100
[130] MOL K28 25/65, file 18358.

Kosec, a Catholic priest who had represented the Slovaks living in Hungary at the Day of Foreign Slovaks and given a speech at the celebration, was expelled along with another minority leader.[131] Although the Hungarian government's report noted that Kosec's speech was "fairly loyal in tone" and had emphasized Slovaks' desire to become "loyal citizens of their new home," he was expelled from Hungary within a fortnight of giving the speech.[132]

By far the most serious issue for the respective nationality groups was the threat of physical violence against them. The gravest instance of violence against the Slovak minority in Hungary occurred on December 25, 1938 in Nagysurány, just weeks after the Vienna Award. When Slovak worshippers began singing the Slovak national anthem after a church service, Hungarian police officers attempted to break up the crowd, opening fire on the churchgoers in the process. Several Slovaks were killed during the action, which came to be known as the "Šurany tragedy" among Slovak nationalists.[133] Another deadly incident occurred in Komját on April 10, 1939, when a shooting by Hungarian authorities resulted in the death of a pregnant Slovak woman.[134] Though the Hungarian government claimed they wanted good relations with Slovaks, their actions said otherwise. In actuality, officials were inflexible toward the Slovak minority, sometimes with extreme consequence. The Slovak government could easily point to these events as evidence of the oppression of the Slovak minority in Hungary, which they used as justification for the restrictive measures against the minority Hungarians living in their own country.

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[131] PRO FO 371/23109, 120.
[132] MOL K63 457-1939-65/7, p. 68-76. "elég loyális hangnemben. . . . A magyarországi szlovákok . . . akarnak . . . uj hazájuk loyális polgárai lenni."
[133] Ladislav Deák, *The Slovaks in Hungarian Politics in the Years 1918-1938* (Bratislava: Kubko Goral, 1997), 96.
[134] PRO FO 371/23109, 95-96.

In Slovakia, the Hungarian minority could not even count on the lip service to minority rights or cooperation that existed in Hungary. Radical elements within the Slovak ruling elite such as Hlinka Party General Secretary Josef Kirschbaum and Interior Minister Alexander Mach explicitly attacked the Hungarian minority in inflammatory speeches while the rest of the government tacitly approved of their methods. In a speech in April 1940, Kirschbaum allegedly proclaimed, "In Slovakia there are enough trees to string up the Hungarians, there is enough lead from which to make bullets and there is still enough space in the jails to house [them]." True to the fascist worldview he subscribed to, Kirschbaum believed that race separated Hungarians and Slovaks. He considered the Hungarians of inferior racial stock, noting that "The Hungarians are of a Gypsy-Jewish race that grew up on horse's milk and got the culture they have from the Slovaks."[135] Equating Hungarians and Jews was common practice in Slovak propaganda. *Slovenská Politika* ran a headline proclaiming, "Purge the Jews and there will be fewer Hungarians."[136] At an anti-Hungarian demonstration in Prešov, agitators chanted "Jews and Hungarians out of Slovakia!"[137] Slovaks deemed sympathetic to Hungary were also labeled as Jews. So-called Magyarones – ethnic Slovaks with political, cultural, or linguistic (i.e. they spoke Hungarian fluently in addition to Slovak) ties to Hungary – were deemed the "wellspring of the Jews" by a local politician in Nitra.[138] *Ludové Noviny* also emphasized this connection, claiming "where there was a Jewish nest, you will find quite surely more hostile nests, but these are disguised with different names: Bolshevism, atheism, communism, capitalism, corruption, . .

[135] MOL K28 25/65, file 1940-H-17528. "Van még Szlovákiában elég fa, amelyre fel lehet kötni a magyarokat, van elég ólom, amelyből golyót lehet készíteni részükre és van még elég hely a fegyházakban, ahova el lehet helyezni a magyarokat. A magyarok cigány zsidó fajzat, amely lótejen nőtt fel és ami kultura van bennük, azt a szlovákoktól kapták."
[136] MOL K28 25/65, file 1940-H-17528. "Kitisztitani a zsidókat és kevesebb magyar lesz."
[137] MOL K28 25/65, file 25929. "Zsidók és magyarok ki szlovákiából!"
[138] MOL K28 25/65, file 1940-H-17528. "Eszerint a Szlovák Liga nyitrai tanácskozásainak során Csanogurszky képviselő a zsidókat mondta a magyarónság kutforrásának."

. magyaronism, etc."[139] The irony in attacking Magyarones was that many in the top leadership of the Slovak government had been labeled Magyarones in the past. Vojtech Tuka, who was accused of spying for the Hungarian government in 1928, had long been considered a Magyarone by Czechoslovak politicians.[140] By tying Hungarians and conciliatory Slovaks to Jews, radical Slovak nationalists successfully identified all three groups as one and the same: enemies of the Slovak nation. In fact, Hlinka Guardists and radicals within the SPP argued that there was no room in Slovakia for any deviation from exclusive Slovak nationalism. "If still, in these momentous days, there can be anyone who considers himself more Catholic or Evangelical than Slovak, who considers himself a Czechoslovak or a Magyarone, who wants to serve the Jews or the Czechs or the Hungarians, they must be struck down!"[141]

Predictably, such rhetoric translated into physical actions against the Hungarian minority. In May 1940 in Levoča [HU: Lőcse] Slovak agitators vandalized the house of the Hungarian Party representative Miklós Fedor and covered it with anti-Hungarian leaflets.[142] In Nitra demonstrators attacked sixty houses owned by Hungarians while police looked on and forbade speaking Hungarian on the street.[143] Broken windows and graffiti became commonplace methods for intimidating local Hungarians, usually perpetrated by groups of Hlinka Guardsmen or Hlinka Youth, who clamored for an extreme solution to the "Hungarian problem." One of the largest anti-Hungarian demonstrations occurred throughout the country on the three-year anniversary of the First Vienna Award, the "Holiday of Slovak Mourning." The Hungarian consul in Bratislava

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[139] MOL K28 25/63, file 1941-P-25636. "Ahol azonban zsidó fészek volt, ott egészen biztos, hogy további ellenséges fészekeket találsz, de ezek álcázva vannak különböző nevekkel: Bolsevizmus, istentelenség, kommunizmus, kapitalizmus, korrupció, . . . magyaronság, stb."
[140] Felak, *"At the Price of the Republic,"* 36-37; 55-58.
[141] MOL K28 25/65, file 18075. "Ha még a mostani nagyjelentőségü napokban is akadna valaki, ki nagyobb katolikusnak vagy evangelikusnak tartan magát, mint szlováknak, ki csehszlováknak vagy magyarónnak tartan magát, ki zsdónak, csehnek, vagy magyarnak akarna szolgálni, azt le kell ütni!"
[142] MOL K28 25/65, file 1940-L-17775.
[143] MOL K28 25/65, file 1940-P-17339.

reported anti-Hungarian protests in Kremnica [HU: Körmöcbánya], Zvolen [HU: Zólyom], Trnava [HU: Nagyszombat], Nitra, Žilina, Martin [HU: Turócszentmárton], and Bratislava. In the capital, one report put the number of demonstrators between four and five thousand people. One of the speakers at the rally, a Catholic priest, incited the crowd to a "holy war" against Hungary, according to the consular report, demanding that they no longer tolerate that their Slovak brethren across the border "suffer under the Hungarian yoke."[144] After the rally, torch-lit processions winded along the streets of Bratislava, with some of the more zealous participants smashing windows and damaging the Hungarian consulate building. These anti-Hungarian demonstrations served a nation-building function, explicitly defining the Slovak nation and state in opposition to "our only historical enemy," Hungary.[145]

Conclusion

Minority policy in Hungary and Slovakia, conceived out of the two countries' distinct territorial revisionist ideologies, had real consequences for the inhabitants of both countries. The minority populations of Slovaks in Hungary and Hungarians in Slovakia alike became the victims of coercive nation-building programs, designed in some cases to assimilate them into, in others to exclude them from, the nationalizing state. The expansion of the Hungarian state into Felvidék precipitated other types of nation-building as well. In education, administration, and nearly all other official dealings in the re-annexed territory, the Hungarian government strived to make Felvidék as Hungarian as possible. The mixed outcome of these nation-building efforts

[144] MOL K28 25/65, file 1941-P-25929. "Keresztes hadjáratra hivta fel a szlovákságot ellenünk azzal, hogy nem türhetik továbbra azt, hogy "drága szlovák véreik" továbbra is magyar iga alatt szenvedjenek."
[145] MOL K28 25/65, file 1940-H-17528. This statement was made by a representative of the Slovak League in Nitra.

reveal the coercive power of modern states, but at the same time the practical limitations of implementing revisionist ideology on the ground.

Chapter 4

The Learning and Unlearning of Nationality: Hungarian Education in Felvidék

"Hungarian youth! After so much sadness, the dawn of the Hungarian resurrection is upon us and the downtrodden Hungarian land. . . . With intensified strength we must set upon that which was prohibited over the sad past twenty years: the fulfillment of our Hungarian calling. And this calling cannot be other than having the Hungarian soul, vigor, and Christian way of life guide the paths of our lives."[1] –Benedek Áldorfai, Kassa Premontory High School

Introduction

When Hungary reoccupied Felvidék in 1938, educational leaders had two goals for the youth now under their authority: for them to "unlearn" the Czechoslovak nationality allegedly forced upon them during the twenty years of Czechoslovak rule, and in its place to learn to identify as Hungarian citizens. As schools, school districts, and curricula were reconstituted, loyalty and service to the nation became the educational focus throughout the regained territory. But there was more than the hearts and minds of the youth of Felvidék at stake: successful reintegration of the region would help justify Hungary's further territorial aspirations. If the people of Felvidék could be effectively and happily brought back into the state, Hungary's case for border changes in Ruthenia, Transylvania, and Voivodina stood a much better chance in the court of international public opinion. Felvidék's inhabitants would have to be re-taught loyalty to the Hungarian state and how to be properly Hungarian. The Hungarian administration used the region's school system as the main vehicle for this endeavor.

Both the larger educational history of Felvidék and the pedagogical methods employed by the Hungarian government during the reintegration period indicate that national leaders in

[1] Benedek Áldorfai, "Feltámadtunk!" in *A kassai Magyar kir. állami (premontrei) gimnázium évkönyve az 1938-39. iskolai évről,* Emil Buczkó ed. (Kassa: Wikó, 1939), 7. "Magyar ifjúság! Oly sok szomorúság után a magyar feltámadás hajnala sugározza be lényünket és az eltiport magyar tájat. . . . Itt azonban nem állhatunk meg, s amiben a húszéves szomorú mult megakadályozott, fokozott erővel kell hozzálátnunk magyar hivatásunk betöltéséhez. S ez a hivatás nem lehet más, mint magyar lélekkel, lendülettel és krisztusi életprogrammal haladni életsorsunk útján."

East-Central Europe strongly believed in employing education in the service of their nations. Perhaps they would have agreed with nationalism theorist Ernest Gellner's assessment that "the monopoly of education is now more important, more central than is the monopoly of legitimate violence."[2] Indeed, an army of teachers and administrators played a larger role in the reintegration process than Hungary's limited occupying military force. Education was also a feasible antidote to minority agitation. Anthony D. Smith's theory of "civic education" argues that "if ethnic cleavages are to be eroded in the longer term, . . . this can be done only by a pronounced emphasis on inculcating social mores in a spirit of civic equality and fraternity."[3] Hungary strove to use education to impart Hungarian mores and achieve a sense of fraternity, but failed to fully grasp what civic equality for its new minorities would entail. Thus, Hungarian treatment of minorities in the educational realm in Felvidék was riddled with inconsistencies and suspicion. Standing in the way of fraternity on Hungarian terms was a history of territorial back-and-forth that brought frequent and radical changes to the educational system in Felvidék. Each new regime signaled change in the region's political jurisdiction, privileged ethnicity, and educational policy, and a new blueprint for the upbringing of the next generation.

Transforming education was equally about the curricular language and message as it was about the calculus of language use. The school system exhibited tremendous success in eroding Slovak language use in the seven years of Hungarian administration. It was largely a battle of attrition, as young Hungarian students entering school received no Slovak language instruction, older Hungarian students no longer perceived benefits of continuing to learn Slovak, and Slovak or nationally indifferent parents chose the dominant Hungarian schooling. With these linguistic advantages, revisionists could feel confident that they had turned back the tide of two decades of

[2] Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), 34.
[3] Anthony D. Smith, *National Identity* (Reno, NV: University Nevada Press, 1991), 118-119.

Czechoslovak schooling and succeeding in reintegrating Felvidék into the Hungarian student and national body.

The Origins of Nationalist Education in Hungary and Czechoslovakia

In Hungary, the emergence of modern education more or less coincided with the development of the nationalist movement. As was the case elsewhere in the region, the roots of Hungarian nationalism were part of a linguistic-cultural movement. The mid-nineteenth century saw the codification of the modern Hungarian language and the founding of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in 1824. At the same time, Hungarian leaders developed a territorial concept of Hungarian nationalism similar to French and English nationalism, which held that the entire population of the Kingdom of Hungary, despite its mixed ethnic makeup, belonged to the Hungarian nation. Thus, the minority populations of Slovaks, Croats, Serbs, Romanians, Germans, Ukrainians, and Jews, which made up over fifty percent of the population at the time, were expected to embrace Hungarian national identity and assimilate to the dominant Hungarian culture and language. Education was seen as a means to unify the ethnically diverse kingdom into a singular nation.

In 1844, Hungarian officially replaced Latin as the language of parliament and of instruction in secondary schools, marking a critical ideological shift, after which "the national tongue . . . became the keystone of the Hungarian educational ideal."[4] As the Hungarian national movement gained strength, what had begun as a defense of Hungarian language and culture became an attack on the languages and cultures of the other national entities within the Kingdom of Hungary. Hungarian political and educational leaders often practiced an aggressive policy of

[4] Julius [Gyula] Kornis, *Education in Hungary* (New York: Teachers College of Columbia University, 1932), 13.

Magyarization, by which the kingdom's other ethnicities would come to identify as Hungarians. This was particularly true for Slovaks, whose level of national identity lagged behind some of the other minority ethnic groups like Serbians and Romanians in Hungary who had the advantage of drawing from their ethnic brethren in independent states bordering Hungary. Slovaks were thus especially targeted in the drive for Magyarization. As Béla Grünwald, a county official in Felvidék in the 1870s, boasted, "the secondary school is like a huge machine, at one end of which the Slovak youths are thrown in by the hundreds, and at the other end of which they come out as Magyars."[5]

In the late nineteenth century, at the height of Hungary's Magyarization drive, the government closed down the kingdom's three Slovak secondary schools along with the Matica slovenská, the leading Slovak cultural organization, charging them as agencies of Pan-Slavism.[6] Thus, the conception that education was a battle line in nationalist competition in Slovakia has deep origins. In the words of historian Alexander Maxwell, "zero-sum linguistic conflict has remained a permanent feature of Slovak-Magyar relations" since the mid-nineteenth century.[7]

A new phase of this battle began in 1919 with the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic. The new government quickly moved to reverse the effects of Magyarization on the Slovak population. They closed down several Hungarian secondary schools and converted the vast majority of the remaining institutions into Czechoslovak schools, sometimes immediately,

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[5] Quoted in Ivan Berend, *History Derailed: Central and Eastern Europe in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 271. For a description of Grünwald's anti-Slovak activities, see Stanslav Kirschbaum, *A History of Slovakia the Struggle for Survival* 2 ed. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1995), 139.
[6] Alexander Maxwell, *Choosing Slovakia: Slavic Hungary, the Czechoslovak Language and Accidental Nationalism* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2009), 26-27.
[7] Ibid., 19.

sometimes phasing out Hungarian instruction one grade level at a time.[8] An entirely new teaching staff was brought in, made up of between 300 and 400 teachers from the Czech areas of Bohemia and Moravia, due to a lack of qualified Slovak teachers.[9] The result of this transformation was that by the 1925-26 school year, more students in Slovakia graduated from Czechoslovak secondary schools than Hungarian ones.[10] In less than ten years, the educational landscape had changed so dramatically that the undisputed cultural dominance of Hungarians had been shattered. It was now the Hungarian minority that began to feel the squeeze of assimilation by means of educational discrimination.[11]

The attempts by the Czechoslovak State to alter the status quo in the schools of Slovakia were vehemently protested by both the Hungarian minority in Felvidék and the Hungarian State. A passage in a report on schools to the President of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1920 accuses the Hungarian minority of hindering the progress of the new educational regime:

> The people of Košice sabotaged [the schools]. "Don't put your son or daughter in a Czech school" was the cry which went up at meetings, in newspapers, in all possible and impossible flyers. They enrolled them in the Hungarian gymnazia, and the Slovak high schools and vocational schools stayed almost empty.[12]

Ultimately, such efforts were only marginally effective. The Czechoslovak state took complete control over the system of education. Leaders from Hungary proper urged the Felvidék Hungarians to resist the assimilation attempts made by the Czechoslovak government, but feared the consequences of the new system nonetheless. In an article on the Czechoslovak school

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[8] Owen Johnson, *Slovakia 1918-1938: Education and the Making of a Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 103-104.
[9] Ibid., 110.
[10] Ibid., 128.
[11] For a comprehensive study of Czechoslovak educational policy and the relationship between nationalism and schools, see Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2008). Rather than analyzing it in the context of schools, I discuss national indifference at length in Chapter 5.
[12] Qtd. in Johnson, *Slovakia 1918-1938*, 106.

system, Adolf Pechány noted that "Czechization is difficult among the Hungarians," but despite that, even in the purely Hungarian areas "the young generation begins to speak broken Czech."[13] In order to combat this gradual assimilation, the Hungarian State worked to actively retain contact with and support the Hungarians living in Felvidék. They created organizations such as the Alliance of Felvidék Associations [Felvidéki Egyesületek Szövetsége] to strengthen ties between the Hungarian minority and their homeland state. The Alliance served the dual purpose of publicly organizing cultural activities for the Felvidék Hungarians while secretly agitating for territorial revision.[14]

The reflections on the Czechoslovak period in school yearbooks produced after the Vienna Award reveal that there was some clandestine contact between Hungarian students in Felvidék and schools in Hungary. The Royal Catholic Gymnasium in Miskolc, for example, administered exams to Hungarian students who chose private home schooling over attending the Czechoslovak State Gymnasium in Košice. Once border crossings for students became more difficult, a board of examiners was set up in Košice and upon their recommendation, the gymnasium in Miskolc would issue the student a diploma.[15] Needless to say, Czechoslovak authorities did not approve of Hungarian schools meddling in their minority affairs.

The treaties concluded at the end of World War I contained stipulations for the protection of minorities living in the successor states of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. According to the Treaty of Saint Germain, which officially established the Czechoslovak Republic, all minority groups had the right to be educated in their own language:

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[13] Adolf Pechány, "A Felvidék közoktatásügye," in *Az elszakított magyarság közoktatásügye*, Gyula Kornis, ed. (Budapest: Magyar Pedagógiai Társaság, 1927), 199. "A magyaroknál nehezebben megy ugyan a csehesítés, bár ennek hatását már a csallóközi tőrzsgyökeres magyar falvakban is tapasztalni. A fiatal nemzedék törni kezdi a cseh nyelvet."

[14] MOL K28 [Miniszterelnökség], 37/77.

[15] Emil Buczkó, "A kassai premontreiek a húszéves cseh megszállás alatt," in *A jászó-premontrei Rákoczi Ferenc Gimnázium évkönyve az 1939-40 iskolai évről* (Kassa: Wikó, 1940), 15.

> Czecho-Slovak nationals who belong to racial, religious or linguistic minorities shall enjoy the same treatment and security in law and in fact as the other Czecho-Slovak nationals. In particular, they shall have an equal right to establish, manage and control at their own expense charitable, religious, and social institutions, schools, and other educational establishments, with the right to use their own language and to exercise their religion freely therein.[16]

This obligation was upheld by Czechoslovak law 189/1919, the Minority Schools Act, which provided for minority schools in any district where twenty percent of the inhabitants belonged to a particular ethnic group. However, policy and practice did not always coincide. Gerrymandering of districts with a large number of Hungarian inhabitants by Czechoslovak authorities meant that in a number of cases, purely Hungarian areas were without a Hungarian elementary school.[17]

In 1928, at the request of the President of Czechoslovakia, British historian R.W. Seton-Watson undertook an independent investigation into minority conditions in Slovakia. He found that while the Hungarians in Czechoslovakia were not being mistreated to the extent that Slovaks had been under the Kingdom of Hungary, Hungarians nonetheless had critical grievances, especially in the realm of education. He noted that, in addition to the problem of predominantly Hungarian villages without Hungarian primary schools, there were only seven Hungarian secondary schools in all of Czechoslovakia and, most critically, there was no Teacher's College for Hungarians.[18] Compare this to the situation in 1918, when there were sixty Hungarian

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[16] Miklós Zeidler, "A comparison of the minority protection articles from the treaties between the [Allied Powers] and: Czecho-Slovakia (September 10, 1919); Serb-Croat-Slovene State (September 10, 1919); Roumania (December 9, 1919) in *Czech and Hungarian Minority Policy in Central Europe, 1918-1938*, Ferenc Eiler and Dagmar Hájková, ed. (Prague: Masarykuv ústav a Archiv AV ČR, 2010), 177.

[17] Jan Rychlík, "The Situation of the Hungarian Minority in Czechoslovakia 1918-1938," in *Czech and Hungarian Minority Policy in Central Europe, 1918-1938*, Ferenc Eiler and Dagmar Hájková, ed. (Prague: Masarykuv ústav a Archiv AV ČR, 2010), 36.

[18] R. W. Seton-Watson, "The Situation in Slovakia and the Magyar Minority," Doc. 139 in *R. W. Seton-Watson and His Relations with the Czechs and Slovaks: Documents, 1906-1951*, vol. 1, Jan Rychlík, ed. (Prague: Ústav T. G. Masaryka, 1995), 421-422. There was, however, a parallel Hungarian course of studies at the Slovak Teacher's College in Bratislava.

secondary schools in operation in Slovakia and a Hungarian university in Pozsony (Bratislava), and it is easy to see why the Hungarian minority felt slighted.[19] The reflections on the Czech period by Felvidék educators paint a bleak picture. Benedek Áldorfai, a faculty member at the Hungarian State Gymnasium in Kassa after 1938, claimed, "the Czechoslovak pedagogical goal [is] clear: to estrange the Hungarian youth in their souls, language, and spirit from Hungarian life, nationality and homeland."[20] Though Áldorfai's statement is certainly guilty of more than a measure of hyperbole, it demonstrates nevertheless that education was a flash point for Hungarian relations with the Czechoslovak government.

Hungarian law XXXIII (1921) and Educational Act 110.478 (1923) also provided minority protection in the field of education within Hungary, though not to the same extent as the Czechoslovak Minority Schools Act.

> In any commune containing at least forty children who belong to one (ethnic) minority group, also in any commune in which the majority of the population belongs to one (ethnic) minority group, instruction in the mother tongue is to be introduced upon the request of the parents or guardians concerned.[21]

Whereas in Czechoslovakia the threshold was twenty percent for the introduction of minority education across the board, in Hungary it could be as high as fifty percent. The Hungarian law potentially provided greater rights to small minority populations in urban areas, but was definitely a greater hindrance to rural minority education than the Czechoslovak law. Furthermore, the fact that instruction in a minority language had to be "requested" by a parent or guardian in order to be implemented meant that someone in the locality needed to be familiar with the law and know how to navigate the bureaucracy required to have minority education put

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[19] Charles Wojatsek, *From Trianon to the first Vienna Arbitral Award: the Hungarian Minority in the First Czechoslovak Republic, 1918-1938* (Montreal: Institute of Comparative Civilizations, 1981), 39.
[20] Áldorfai, "Feltámadtunk," 6. "A csehszlovák pedagógia célja nyilvánvaló: lélekben, nyelvben, szellemben elidegeníteni a magyar ifjúságot a magyar élettől, nemzettől és hazától."
[21] Quoted in G. C. Paikert, "Hungary's National Minority Policies, 1938-1945," *American Slavic and East European Review* 12 no. 2 (April 1953), 207.

in place. Thus, while both Czechoslovakia and Hungary offered laws to protect minority education during the interwar period, implementation often failed to meet the minimum standard these laws were meant to provide for.

The Irredentist Curriculum

Education in interwar Hungary, divested of much of its historical kingdom, had strong ties to the revisionist movement. Many educational leaders saw education as a possible antidote to the weakened position of the country. "The completely disarmed and incapacitated Hungarian nation has to rely chiefly on the power of the intellect," stated Gyula Kornis, a member of the Hungarian Parliament and one-time Under Secretary in the Ministry of Public Instruction. "It is in the increased advancement and deepening of her culture that she seeks to find the possibility and the firm ground upon which to regain her old freedom and strength."[22] One of the chief aims of this educational regime was to continue the old process of nationalizing. At the policy level, there was an explicit call to boost national identity among schoolchildren. For example, the national curriculum for teaching geography in elementary schools stated as its goal the "inculcation of a love for the pupil's native country and nation, and awakening of a national consciousness."[23]

Indeed, geography lessons were of critical importance, for the native country that these pupils were taught to love was not the independent Hungary created after Trianon, but the thousand-year-old Kingdom of Hungary with its pre-1918 borders. One interwar high school geography textbook introduced the territory of Hungary as "our home" which has "good, natural borders" (the Carpathian Basin) and consists of the entirety of the old Hungarian Kingdom

[22] Kornis, *Education in Hungary*, 40.
[23] Ibid., 55

including the areas lost after the Treaty of Trianon.[24] Only in the fourth lesson did students learn about the current political borders of Truncated Hungary [Csonka-magyarország].[25] The introduction to another textbook with similarly arranged lessons sheds light on the reason for this peculiar organization. "In the discussion of Hungary's economic and political geography we first show historical Hungary. Only in this way will the student truly understand the huge degree of truncation."[26]

The image of Greater Hungary was constantly reinforced in school activities and materials. Students began the school day with a prayer that went, "I believe in one God, I believe in one homeland, I believe in God's eternal justice, I believe in the resurrection of Hungary! Amen."[27] This primary lesson would then be reinforced throughout the day. Many textbooks presented three maps of Hungary: Past, Present, and Future; the Past and Future were represented by Greater Hungary, while the "Present" showed the current political borders of the state.[28] Geography exercise books were essentially outlines of Greater Hungary printed over and over, upon which students were asked to draw the location of various geographic elements such as rivers, natural resources, and major cities.[29] With such constant visual reinforcement, there

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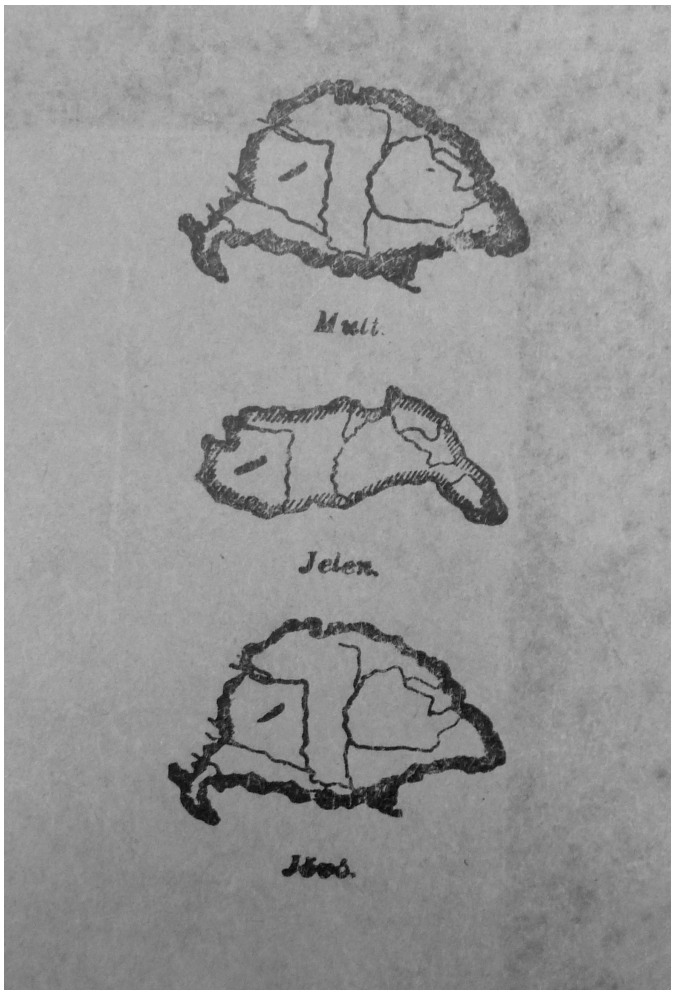
[24] János Karl and Győző Temesy, *A magyar föld és népe földrajz a gimnázium és a leánygimnázium I. osztály számára* (Budapest: Franklin Társulat, 1939), 23-24.
[25] Ibid., 108.
[26] János Karl and Ferenc Prochaska, *Általános földrajz magyarország gazdasági és politikai földrajza a polgári fiúiskolák IV. osztály számára* (Budapest: Franklin Társulat, [1942?]), 3. "Magyarország gazdasági és politikai földrajzának tárgyalásánál, elsősorban a történelmi Magyarországot tartottunk szem előtt. A tanuló csak így értheti meg igazán a megcsonkulás óriási mértékét. "
[27] "Hiszek egy Istenben, hiszek egy hazában: Hiszek egy isteni örök igazságban, Hiszek Magyarország feltámadásában! Ámen."
[28] See Ferenc Marczinkó, János Pálfi, and Erzsébet Várady, *A legújabb kor története a francia forradalomtól napjanikig a gimnázium és leánygimnázium VI. osztálya számára* (Budapest: Királyi Magyar Egyetemi Nyomda, 1940). For the map of the "Present" this particular textbook shows Hungary's 1940 borders, including areas awarded by the First and Second Vienna Awards and the Occupation of Ruthenia, though not those areas conquered during the 1941 invasion of Yugoslavia.
[29] István Albrecht, *Ezeréves hazánk a Magyar medencében terkép és munkafüzet a népiskola V. osztálya számára* (Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 1942).

could be little doubt that the Hungarian homeland was the entire Carpathian Basin. The current political borders were merely temporary. In 1938, the first Hungarian border change lent credence to the state of temporality that these textbooks were meant to impart.



Source: *A legújabb kor története a francia forradalomtól napjanikig a gimnázium és leánygimnázium VI. osztálya számára*

Figure 14: Hungarian textbooks depict "Past," "Present," and "Future," reinforcing integral revisionist demands, 1940.

A review of history textbooks from the 1930s by historian Eric Weaver revealed that universally, Hungarian history primers espoused the complete, "integral" restoration of the borders of Hungary.[30] The First Vienna Award, which made ethnography rather than history the basis for territorial changes in Felvidék, did nothing to alter the discussion of revisionism in textbooks. School textbooks published after 1938 reveal a continuity in the overt irredentist language seen in earlier editions despite the new borders. An elementary history textbook from 1941 triumphantly states that "the enlarged Hungarian homeland waits for a better future with the trusting belief that that the thousand-year-old border will be completely restored."[31] A high school geography textbook likewise tells us that "The mournful lynching of Trianon was broken in 1938 and is now only a bad memory," although "our great cultural cities, Pozsony, Brassó [RO: Braşov] Arad, Temesvár [RO: Timişoara], and Fiúme are still under occupation."[32] The primer ends with an explicit call for complete territorial revision:

> The natural endowments of the territory and the lives of its inhabitants . . . show the truth that Truncated Hungary is no country, Greater Hungary is heaven. Once and for all, this assures us that we will all the sooner regain, in its entirety, our thousand-year-old homeland's historical territory. So let it be![33]

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[30] Eric Weaver, "Revisionism and its Modes: Hungary's attempts to overturn the Treaty of Trianon, 1931-1938" (PhD diss., Oxford, 2007), 215.

[31] György Szondy, *A Magyar nemzet története osztatlan elemi népiskolák V-VI. osztálya számára* (Debrecen: Debrecen sz. Kir. Város és Tiszántúli református egyház kerület könyvnyomda, 1941), 114. "A megnagyobbodott magyar haza bízó hittel várja a jobb jövőt, mely teljesen helyreállítja ezeréves határait."

[32] Karl, *A Magyar föld*, 109. "A trianoni gyászos rabbilincset 1938-ban összetörtük, ma már csak rossz emlék. . . . Még megszállás alatt vannak a következő nagyműveltségű városaink: Pozsony, Brassó, Arad, Temesvár és Fiúme."

[33] Ibid., 111. "A terület természeti adottságaiban és lakóinak életében meglevő egység kiáltóan mutatja a Csonka-Magyarország nem ország, Egész Magyarország mennyország igazságát. Egyszermind azzal bíztat mindannyiunkat, hogy ezredéves hazánk történeti területét mihamarább egészen vissza fogjuk szerezni. Úgy legen!"

The indoctrination of school children thus continued in much the same manner as it had prior to 1938, with unflagging emphasis on *total* territorial recovery, not just the recovery of ethnically Hungarian areas. These textbooks thus refute the idea espoused in some circles that the territorial revisions brought about a decrease in Hungarian irredentism because they were satisfied with partial concessions. Rather, it demonstrates that there continued to be a high level of domestic production and consumption of irredentist materials even after territorial revisions stopped in 1941.

The territorial concessions fueled Hungary's justice complex of being robbed of territory in 1920 and elicited rhetoric of divine intervention in righting the wrongs of Trianon. "Our enemies believed that the Trianon peace would determine the borders of Hungary and her neighbors for a long time, perhaps centuries" said Lajos Bodnár, author of a secondary school geography primer from 1941. "With the help of God, however, after two decades the Trianon borders were successfully changed, at least in part."[34] Bodnár's line of reasoning fit nicely with the revisionist campaign's calls for divine justice and the belief that the natural order necessitated a powerful Hungarian state encompassing her historic borders. One history book from 1940, when Germany was dominant on the battlefields and the Western powers appeared overmatched, chose to emphasize the changing geopolitical climate and Hungary's allies as the reason for the country's enlargement. "The western powers in the League of Nations represented the interest of

[34] Lajos Bodnár and Gusztáv Kalmár, *Magyarország helyzete, mépessége és gazdasági élete földrajz a gimnázium és leánygimnázium VII. osztálya számára* (Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 1941), 96. "Ellenségeink azt hitték, hogy a trianoni béke hosszú időre, talán szazadokra megállapította Magyarország és szomsédai határait. Isten segítségével azonbon két évtized multán sikerült legalább részben megváltoztatni a trianoni határokat."

the Little Entente against us. The military emancipation of the Hungarian territory of Felvidék was the outcome of our cooperation with Germany and Italy."[35]

But another history textbook, written two years later, presented a very different explanation for the First Vienna Award, putting the primary agency not in the hands of God or the Axis Powers, but in the hands of the Hungarian Army.

> The year of St. Stephen [1938] changed the fate of our homeland. Reluctantly our fierce enemies recognized our right to rearm. Now the Hungarian army again became the guardians of our internal order and the outer authority of the country. When thereafter the Czech lands came out against the German Empire, then began to disintegrate into parts, our homeland also began to demand its rights in blood. Inasmuch as a peaceful agreement did not come into being, the foreign ministers of Germany and Italy as requested arbiters, awarded us back from the Czech occupied territory 12.000 sq. km, but the heroic fight of the warriors of Munkács had already stamped the seal of this observance.[36]

The emphasis on the heroic Hungarian army's role in territorial revision reflects an overall shift in Hungarian education that coincided with Hungary's formal entry into the Second World War. Schools were now a place where support for the war effort needed to be fostered alongside national identity. Thus, instilling a sense of pride in the Hungarian military was the priority over historical accuracy. Had the latter been taken into account, the author would have needed to acknowledge that the Hungarian army was a non-factor in the decision to award Czechoslovak territory to Hungary.

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[35] Marczinkó, Pálfi, and Várady, *A legújabb kor története,* 173. "A nyugati hatalmak a Népszövetségben a kisantant érdekeit képviselték velünk szemben. Németországgal és Olaszországgal való együttmőködésünk eredménye lett katonai egyenjogúsításunk, majd a Felvidék magyarlakta területének."

[36] Albin Balogh, *Magyarország történelem a gimnázium és a leánygimnázium III. osztály számára* (Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 1942), 115. "Szent királyunk szentéve egyszerre megfordította hazánk sorsát. Kénytelen kelletlen ádáz ellenségeink is elismerték arra való jogunkat, hogy fölfegyverkezhessünk. Most már a magyar honvédség ismét biztos őre lett a belső rendnek és az ország külső tekintélyének. Mikor azután Csehország szembe került a német birodalommal, majd pedig részeire kezdett bomlani, hazánk is követelni kezdte véreihez való jogait. Minthogy pedig békés megegyezés nem jött létre, Német- és Olaszország külügyminisiterei mint fölkért döntőbírák, nekünk átéltek vissza a csehektől megszállt területekből 12.000 km-t (1938 nov. 2-- I. bécsi döntés), de ennek megtartására már a munkácsi vitázek hősi küzdelme ütött pecsétet."

The triumphs of the Hungarian army in relation to the territorial adjustments were further explored in "Homeland Defense Studies" [Honvédelmi ismeretek], a compulsory subject introduced into the Hungarian curriculum in the 1942-43 school year.[37] One textbook describes the role of the Hungarian army in Felvidék after the changeover in glowing terms. "The soldiers came . . . the soldiers went. . . . They finished their duties well. Scrupulously, with love and devotion."[38] The author also made sure to impress the idea that the work of territorial revision was not done. "Throughout [the celebration], the old demands continuously rang out: 'Back, back! Everything back! Pozsony back! Nyitra back!'"[39] The youth were again taught not to be satisfied with the revised borders and to continue the fight for total revision.

The textbooks took an overly optimistic approach when discussing the economic repercussions of the territorial changes. One geography textbook claimed that "the returned territories have strengthened Hungary's economic life to a large degree."[40] It noted that the return of forest and mining areas increased the country's natural resources, thus giving Hungary greater self-sufficiency. Perhaps in peacetime conditions this would have been the case. However, any possible gains in Hungary's self-sufficiency brought about by the territorial awards was more than overshadowed by the economic concessions Germany demanded in return, which made Hungary completely economically dependent on the Third Reich. Also, as we will see below, the economic transition was by no means smooth for the re-incorporated territories. Most

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[37] Attila Horváth, "War and Peace: The Effects of the World War II on Hungarian Education," in *Education and the Second World War: Studies in Schooling and Social Change*, ed., Roy Lowe (London: Falmer Press, 1992), 147.

[38] *Honvédelmi ismeretek a gimnázium III., a polgári iskola III., valamint a népiskola VII. osztály számára hőseink a világháborúban katonaföldrajzi alapismeretek* (Budapest: Szent István Társulat, 1942), 112. "A katonák jöttek . . . a katonák mentek. . . . Jól végezték kötelességüket. Szeretettel, odaadással, lelkiismeretesen."

[39] *Honvédelmi ismeretek,* 111. "Közben állandóan felhangzik a régi követelés: 'Vissza! Vissza! Mindent vissza! Pozsonyt vissza, Nyitrát vissza!'"

[40] Bodnár and Kalmár, *Magyarország helyzete,* 97. "A visszacsatolások nagy mértékben erősítették Magyarország gazdasági életét."

of the inhabitants of Felvidék experienced a significant drop in their standards of living after the area was absorbed by Hungary, a fact that hardly fit with the version of events related in the textbooks.

Revisionism was so central to the Hungarian curriculum that high school students were often asked about the territorial changes during their final exams. Thus, in order to graduate and go on to university, students had to prove their knowledge of Hungary's triumphant border augmentation. For example, in 1941, students from the Girls' Jewish Gymnasium in Pest were asked to analyze the effects of the returned territories on Hungarian self-sufficiency, and students from the Saint László Gymnasium in Mezőkövesd had to compare Hungary's borders in 1918 and 1941.[41] The presence of such themes in the school exit exams again indicates that revisionism was a critical part of the Hungarian curriculum that teachers would be assured to teach and students would be wise to learn.

Hungarian (Re)education in Kassa

Alongside the theoretical integration of the returned territories into the national curriculum came the administrative integration of schools in the returned territories into the national school system. In Kassa, the largest city in re-occupied Felvidék, this process developed quickly after the First Vienna Award and was aimed at reversing the "damage" inflicted by the Czechoslovak regime. Hungarian-language institutions were quickly expanded, with at least three new Hungarian secondary schools created for the 1939-40 school year in the city. Those Hungarian schools in operation under Czechoslovak rule experienced radical

[41] László Jáki, *Érettségi tételek történelemből 1851-1949* (Budapest: Országos Pedagógiai Könyvtár, 2000), 45.

changes to their curricula and faculty, all meant to eradicate the vestiges of Czechoslovak priorities and pedagogy. Áldorfai lamented the hardships the Premontory Gymnasium in Kassa had experienced under the Czechoslovaks. "This gymnasium, which across nearly 250 years on Ancient Hungarian ground shaped the Hungarian lifestyle and spirit in the souls of the Magyar youth, became a tool of Czech . . . propaganda during the 20 years of Czech rule."[42] He then went on to express his disapproval of what had transpired.

> It is shocking how successfully the Czechoslovak schools were able to brainwash the youth of Kassa, which many times pitted the children against their parents in their historical perceptions. Around 800 Hungarian parents put their children into Kassa's Czechoslovak-language secondary schools. These Czechoslovakified Hungarian mother-tongued youth were overwhelmingly infected in their souls and spiritually degraded. The teachers of the emancipated gymnasium discovered this with aching hearts in the course of the past school year.[43]

Áldorfai viewed the educational battle in Felvidék as nothing less than a matter of existential war. At stake was not only the national identity of the Hungarian youth but, by extension, their very souls. He saw not only the Czechoslovaks but also the disloyal Hungarian parents as complicit in the spiritual depravity of these young people. By choosing a Czechoslovak education over pursuing Hungarian-language alternatives for their children, parents had inadvertently aided the Czechoslovak government in assimilating the Hungarian population. From the standpoint of a Hungarian nationalist, they completely jeopardized the Hungarian

[42] Áldorfai, "Feltámadtunk," 6. "Ez a gimnázium, mely körülbelül 250 esztendőn keresztül ősi magyar talajon a magyar élettípust és szellemiséget formálta a magyar ifjúság lelkében, a megszállás 20 évében a történelmi igazságot legázoló és meghamisító cseh propaganda eszközévé vált."

[43] Ibid. "Megrendítő az a lélekmérgezés, melyet a csehszlovák középiskolák a kassai ifjúságban végeztek, mely történelmi felfogásban sokszor állította szembe a gyermeket a szüllőkkel; körülbelül 800 magyar szülő járatta gyermekét a kassai csehszlovák tannyelvű középiskolákba. Hogy ezt a csehszlovákká fejlődő magyar anyanyelvű ifjúságot mennyire sikerült lelkileg megmételyezni és szellemi alacsonyabbrendűségbe szülleszteni, ezt a fájó szívvel tapasztalta a felszabadult gimnázium tanári kara ez elmult iskolai év folyamán."

revisionist project. "Had the emancipation been further delayed," Áldorfai concludes, "the consequences would have been staggering."[44]

For Áldorfai and educators like him, the task was to familiarize the students with a distinctly Hungarian body of knowledge. Czech language and literature were replaced by the Hungarian equivalent in all schools and Hungarian history and geography was placed into the curriculum of the appropriate grade levels immediately after Hungarian occupation. Otherwise, however, the Czechoslovak curriculum was largely followed during the 1938-39 school year in order to provide teachers with enough time to revise the program of studies. The Hungarian-language schools in Felvidék adopted the same textbooks as those used by schools in Hungary proper and by the beginning of the 1939-40 academic year, the Hungarian State curriculum was fully integrated into Felvidék schools.

Nationalist celebrations became a large part of the student experience in Felvidék. The review of the 1938-39 school year in the yearbook of Kassa's Ferenc Rákoczi Gymnazium gives a glimpse into the immediate steps taken to bring these schools into the national fold:

> We committed to the strengthening of all patriotic feeling. The moving days of November, the experience of the unforgettable entrance of the regent meant release from the Czechoslovak spirit for the youth. We served the deepening of national feeling with the displaying of the national coat of arms in every classroom, the requirement of rightful honor to the national flag, and the participation in all national holidays and ceremonies.[45]

Students at the Ferenc Rákoczi Gymnasium also watched patriotic films, such as *Magyar feltámadás* [Hungarian Resurrection] and *Észak felé* [Northwards], which discussed the triumph of revisionism. They received frequent visitors from Hungary proper, including then-Education

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[44] Ibid. "S ha a felszabadítás még tovább késik, a következmények megrázóak lettek volna."

[45] *Kassai premontrei gim. 1938-39 évkönyve*, 15. "A hazafias érzés erősítésére mindent elkövettünnk. A novemberi mozgalmas napok eseményei, a Kormányzó Úr felejthetetlen bevonulása megrázó erejű élményt jelentettek csehszlovák szellemtől gyötört ifjúságunknak. A nemzeti érzés elményítését szolgáltuk a nemzeti címernek minden osztályban való kifüggetsztésével, a nemzeti zászlónak kijáró tiszteletadás megkövetelésével, minden nemzeti vonatkozású ünnepen és ünnepélyen való részvétellel."

Minister Pál Teleki and a delegation of Hungarian scouts that ceremonially presented the school with a Hungarian flag.[46] Thus, major steps were taken to integrate these students, who had begun their educations under the dangerous influence of the Czechoslovak State, into the spirit of the Hungarian nation.

Statistical evidence from the secondary school yearbooks reveals that in terms of language acquisition, the Hungarian regime made significant inroads into strengthening their national language and reversing the progression of the Slovak language among the Hungarian population. At János Hunfalvy Gymnasium in Kassa, 57 percent of Hungarian students reported knowledge of Slovak in the 1939-40 school year (fig. 15). By the end of the 1943-44 academic term, the figure dropped to 24 percent. Conversely, students who reported speaking only Hungarian climbed from 38 to 74 percent over the same five-year period. The entry of younger students into the gymnasium that did not receive any schooling under the Czechoslovak system and thus no Slovak language instruction largely accounts for these dramatic changes. However, it also appears that some students gradually changed their responses to the question over time, disassociating themselves from the Slovak language. For example, in 1941-42, 60 percent of students from the third grade level at János Hunfalvy reported knowing Slovak in addition to their mother language of Hungarian, while 40 percent claimed to speak Hungarian only. The following school year, among that same group of students, now in the fourth grade, only 44 percent acknowledged speaking Slovak, and Hungarian-only speakers jumped to 55 percent. Considering that this pattern is relatively consistent throughout grade levels and academic institutions not only in Kassa but in Felvidék's secondary schools in general, such statistics

[46] Ibid., 10-11.

cannot be wholly attributed to changes in the student body.[47] Clearly, some students reported differently from one year to the next. With the absence of daily Slovak lessons and the reduced public use of the language, students' exposure to Slovak significantly diminished, and speaking it was no longer necessary or beneficial for the average Hungarian student. The unlearning of Slovak was a natural component of returning to the Hungarian curriculum.

Figure 15: Language Knowledge Among Hungarian Students at János Hunfalvy Gymnasium[48]

	Hungarian Students	Speak Hungarian and Slovak	Speak Hungarian Only	Percentage Bilingual Students	Percentage Monolingual Students
1939-1940	435	249	167	57	38
1940-1941	450	260	174	58	39
1941-1942	431	233	195	54	45
1942-1943	406	192	215	47	53
1943-1944	425	103	316	24	74

The Minority Question in Hungarian Education

The issue of minority education became an even greater point of controversy after the Hungarian takeover of Felvidék. Slovaks made up 11.6 percent of the 1.2 million inhabitants

[47] It is impossible to ascertain how many individuals changed their responses from one year to the next. Circumstances such as students repeating a grade level, leaving the school, or new students enrolling could all possibly contribute to changes in the sample. However, as this pattern is widespread across grade levels and institutions, it is reasonable to conclude that some students altered the way they assessed their language abilities.

[48] *A kassai m. kir. állami Hunfalvy János Gimnázium évkönyve az 1939-40 iskolai évről,* ed. László Födrős (Kassa: Wikó, 1940), 56; *Hunfalvy János Gim. évkönyve 1940-41,* ed. László Födrős (Kassa: [Wikó], 1941), 72; *Hunfalvy János Gim. évkönyve 1941-42*, ed. László Födrős (Kassa: [Wikó], 1942), 42; *Hunfalvy János Gim. évkönyve 1942-43,* ed. László Födrős (Kassa: Wikó, 1943), 37; *Hunfalvy János Gim. évkönyve 1943-44,* ed. László Födrős (Kassa: Wikó, 1944) 32.

living in the area re-annexed by Hungary, which also contained smaller minority populations of Ruthenians, Germans, and Jews.[49] The official government line called for tolerance toward the minorities in the region and emphasized their right to instruction in their native language. There was also an ideological reason to encourage good relations with the minority ethnicities in the educational sector. During the 1920s and '30s, the Hungarian revisionist campaigns had emphasized the mistreatment of Hungarians living in the successor states and, as we have seen, often pointed to problems in education to prove their point. They also claimed that a reconstituted multi-national Hungary would much more effectively protect minority rights. Now that the roles were reversed, the Hungarian government saw sound minority educational policy as one way to prove their claims were accurate and justify further territorial concessions. The awareness that satisfied minorities were important to the success of reintegration in Felvidék did not always ensure proper treatment of the Slovaks and other ethnic groups. However, it underlines the point that the government believed that in order to receive more territory, and potentially territories with a much lower percentage of ethnic Hungarians, the illusion of decent relations with the minorities of Felvidék must be preserved.

Due to the expansion of the minority population brought about by the First Vienna Award and the subsequent territorial expansions, the Hungarian government reiterated the rights of minorities to receive an education in their mother tongue guaranteed by the 1921 law.[50] The Ministry of Education issued a new order regarding minority educational instruction in 1939 to address the status of the minority language schools that were acquired in the First Vienna Award and the occupation of Ruthenia. The order stipulated that "in schools with Slovak or Ruthene or

[49] MOL K28 215/428.
[50] See Orders 133.200 IX (1939), 24.024 (1940), and 56.600 (1941) by the Hungarian Ministry of Education.

German as the teaching-language, instruction shall be in the mother tongue, while the Magyar language of the Hungarian State shall be taught as a compulsory subject."[51]

In reality, many of the minority language schools in Felvidék were closed or combined with Hungarian language institutions after the area came under Hungarian jurisdiction. Taking the Premontory gymnasium in Kassa as our primary example, we see that radical changes were implemented immediately after the First Vienna Award. In this case, three secondary schools – the Czechoslovak State Gymnasium, the Hungarian Language Czechoslovak State Gymnasium, and the Slovak Language Premontory Gymnasium – were combined into one, the Ferenc Rákoczi Premontory Gymnasium. According to the school's 1939-40 yearbook, only thirteen teachers were retained from these institutions: ten from the Hungarian language school, three from the Slovak language school, and zero from the Czechoslovak State school.[52] Though the yearbook claims that none of the teachers from the Czechoslovak school "requested to serve the Hungarian State," they would most likely not have been able to remain as teachers had they stayed. There was a high degree of suspicion of all teachers who were employed by the Czechoslovak State; in fact, the Hungarian Ministry of Education even set up screening committees in 1939 in order to ascertain the loyalty of all teachers to the Hungarian State.[53] The remaining positions at the new combined gymnasium were filled by education ministerial decree by a mix of temporary and permanent teachers, both from Felvidék and Hungary proper. At Ferenc Rákoczi Gymnasium, the principal was a local priest, Emil Buczkó, and the vice-principal, Lajos Sipos, was brought in from the capital in Budapest.[54]

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[51] Paikert, "Hungary's National Minority Policies," 208.
[52] *Kassai premontrei gim. 1938-39 évkönyve*, 12. "Magyar állami szolgálatba való átvételét nem kérte senki sem."
[53] Horváth, "War and Peace," 140.
[54] *Kassai premontrei gim. 1938-39 évkönyve*, 13.

Though many of the Slovak or Czechoslovak language schools experienced a similar fate, a number of Slovak language institutions remained. In general, secondary education in Felvidék was divided along ethnic lines. The student body of Hungarian-language secondary institutions was made up of only around 5 percent Slovak students. Hungarian enrollment in Slovak-language schools was similarly low.[55] Although Hungarian authorities recognized the right of minorities to attend school in their native languages, they were highly suspicious of minority schools and maintained tight surveillance over them. Local authorities continually reported on the activities of the Slovak schools to the central government. In 1941, the police in Bars County reported that the elementary school in the village of Hull [SK: Hul] did not fly the Hungarian flag on March 15, a Hungarian national holiday. Local members of the Hungarian Levente, a paramilitary youth organization dedicated to physical and military training, searched the school for the flag in order to raise it but only found Slovak flags and nationalist materials. The Prime Minister's office responded to the report by urging the Ministry of Education to be diligent in calling for the "surrender and destruction" of "materials, pictures, and instructional tools in schools left over from the period of foreign rule."[56] Such minor incidents were continually reported and often drew the attention of officials from the lowest to the highest levels of government.

[55] In the 1941-42 school year, yearbook statistics from eight Hungarian secondary schools, the Protestant Gymnasium in Rimaszombat, Menyhert Gymnasium in Rozsnyó, the Rozsnyó Commercial School, the Boys' Commercial School in Érsekújvár, Péter Pázmány Gymnasium in Érsekújvár, János Hunvalfy Gymnasium in Kassa, the Kassa Commercial School, and the Premontory Ferenc Rákoczi Gymnasium in Kassa give a total of 3,125 students, 155 of whom were Slovak, making up 4.9 percent of the student body of these institutions. At the Slovak Language Instruction Gymnasium in Kassa, 6.1 percent of the student body in 1941-42 was Hungarian.

[56] MOL K28 24/62. "… hogy egyes visszacsatolt területi iskolákban az idegen uralom idejéből visszamaradt, magyar nemzeti szempontból joggal kifogásolható tárgyak képek és segédeszközök . . . fenntartók nyomatékosan felhivassanak az ilyen tárgyak azonnali beszolgáltatására, illetve megsemmisitésére."

In another report, from the city of Nagysurány (Šurany), local authorities wrote the Interior Ministry to inform them that, despite an invitation, the principals of the Slovak secondary and primary school in the town did not take part in the celebrations commemorating the anniversary of the First Vienna Award. In this case, the Prime Minister's office followed up by asking the county governor not to hold "patriotic celebrations" in minority areas in order to avoid giving "the opportunity for demonstrations of passive resistance against the state."[57]

The vigorous surveillance that Slovak schools were under by the Hungarian authorities certainly did little to encourage a smooth transition to Hungarian rule or loyalty from the Slovak inhabitants. However, both of these cases do demonstrate a measure of sensitivity on the part of the central government towards minority issues in education. In neither case did the Prime Minister's office call for the dismissal of the Slovak principals accused of unpatriotic acts, and in the Nagysurány case, provocation by local Hungarian authorities was pinpointed as a reason for their behavior. In these matters, the position of the Hungarian government was difficult. Loyal minority citizens were seen as critical to the success of territorial reintegration. But the question was, which was more pernicious: leniency toward potentially dangerous minority agitators with the power to influence the younger generation, or the fallout from alienating minority groups who, though perhaps not enthusiastic supporters of the state, were well-behaved citizens capable of in time becoming the loyal members of the community?

In a lengthy report by education ministerial advisor János Puszta, which investigated problems with Slovak students in Kassa, we see the complexity of minority education in Felvidék and further evidence of the cautious approach Hungarian authorities took in dealing with these issues. The investigation was prompted by reports of an anti-Hungarian

[57] MOL K28 24/62. "nem adnak államellenes elmű passziv demonstrációkra alkalmat."

demonstration and riot that broke out during the screening of the patriotic Hungarian film *Magyar feltámadás* by students from the State Slovak Language Gymnasium in Kassa. The film portrays the hardships Hungarians in Felvidék faced during the twenty years of Czechoslovak rule and celebrates the area's return to Hungary. Employees at the local theater extended an invitation to all of the secondary schools in the area to attend a screening. Though the teachers at the Slovak Language Gymnasium were concerned that some parts of the film may be inappropriate for the students or cause them embarrassment, they feared it would give the impression that they were anti-Hungarian should they decline the invitation and thus decided to take their students to the see the film. Hungarian students from a nearby school attended the screening along with the students from the State Slovak Language Gymnasium.

Problems began during a scene in the film that dramatized Czech soldiers occupying a Hungarian village in 1918. When the actors started singing the Czechoslovak national anthem, some of the Slovak students stood up and began singing along. This prompted the Hungarian students to start hissing and shouting at the Slovak students. Then, in a later scene that depicted a group of Hungarian students secretly singing the Hungarian national anthem when it had been forbidden, the Hungarian students in the theater demanded that the Slovak students stand up and sing along to the song with them. After the film ended, some of the Slovak and Hungarian students encountered each other on the street outside the theater. A fight broke out, with eventually 30-40 students involved in the street brawl.[58]

In his report, Puszta noted that the local papers exaggerated the event (which they described as an anti-Hungarian riot), and identified a number of factors that led to the incident.

[58] MOL K28 23/62 file E 15623, p. 9-12.

He stated that given their ideological indoctrination under the Czechoslovak system, it should come as no surprise that the Slovak students would be offended by such a film:

> There are marks left on the Slovak students from the last twenty years. From the first moment, they heard that the Czechs are their true brothers and the Hungarians their eternal enemies. They were taught that Czechoslovakia was Europe's greatest state and society. In contrast, [they learned that] the Hungarian state and society lives in darkness, oppression, subjugation, and injustice. The Czechs brought freedom after centuries of oppression: the Hungarians can only give the Slovaks the fate of the servant.[59]

Puszta thus acknowledged that young Slovak students could not be blamed these beliefs, given their upbringing under the Czechoslovak system.

Furthermore, Puszta recognized that the hostility that Slovak students encountered from some Hungarians played a role in fostering their anti-Hungarian mindsets. He mentioned that provocation by Hungarian students during the screening of *Magyar feltámadás* was a factor in the Slovak students' actions, as was the general attitude of Hungarians toward the Slovak minority. Puszta noted that there were two variants of Hungarian attitudes towards Slovaks: "The one wants the Slovak question resolved with tolerance and acceptance, and the other does not believe that Slovaks can be won over by the Hungarian state through any means."[60] According to Puszta, the first group consisted of the younger generation of native Kassans and the mayor, who upheld tolerance, in line with the official policy of the central government. The latter group, he claimed, was made up of the older generation of Hungarians from Kassa, who had lost the most during the Czechoslovak takeover of the area, and many of the younger officials from Hungary proper who came to Kassa after the First Vienna Award, bringing with

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[59] Ibid., 14. "Ezeknek a tanulóknak a lelkében az elmult két évtized mély nyomokat hagyott. Öntudatuk első percétől kezdve azt hallották, hogy a szlovákok igazi testvére a cseh és örök ellensége a magyar. Azt tanitották nekik, hogy Európa legtőkéletesebb állama és társadalma Csehszlovákia. Ezzel szemben a magyar állam és a magyar társadalom a zsarnokság, az elnyomás és az igazságtalanság sötétségében él."

[60] Ibid., 24. "Az egyik türelemmel és megértéssel kivánja a szlovák kérdést megoldani, a másik nem hisz abban, hogy a szlovákokat bármilyen eszközzel . . . meg lehet nyerni a magyar nemzet számára."

them uncritical stereotypes of Slovaks. This inevitably caused problems in the schools, as many of these officials worked as schoolteachers and administrators.

Among Puszta's recommendations, he suggested removing the principal of the State Slovak Language Gymnasium, Jozsef Trochta, and replacing him with someone who was "definitely dependable from a Hungarian standpoint," spoke good Slovak, and was acceptable to the Slovak students. [61] Puszta also advised the Prime Minister not to blame anyone for the demonstration that broke out during the screening of *Magyar feltámadás* and that he should personally tell those involved that they are being pardoned, but that similar offenses in the future would not be.[62] Perhaps most interesting is Puszta's recommendation for the teachers; he states that both the Hungarian and Slovak teachers in Kassa need to receive further instruction in order to meet the State's pedagogical expectations. Hungarians must be enlightened on nationality politics and Slovaks should be warned of their obligation to the Hungarian State.[63] He goes one step further, recommending that "in the interest of peace and order" some of the teachers brought into the region but found to be "differing from the government's minority politics" be sent back to Hungary proper to serve as an example and that in the future, all teachers assigned to teach in Kassa be required to have experience teaching in a minority area.[64]

Puszta's findings highlight some of the complexities the Hungarian government faced in implementing their educational policies in the returned territories. Once again, we see that the government had difficulties deciding when and how to reprimand Slovak educators for fear of alienating the Slovak community. The fate of Jozsef Trochta is a prime example of this. In the course of his investigation, Puszta learned that Trochta had participated in anti-Hungarian

[61] Ibid., 33. "magyar szempontból feltétlenül megbizható."
[62] Ibid., 35.
[63] Ibid., 36.
[64] Ibid., 37. "A nyugalom és rend biztositása érdekében . . . a kormány nemzetiségi politikájától eltérő."

demonstrations, criticized the Hungarian government to a Czech reporter, and aided individuals in smuggling Slovak propaganda over the border. Yet despite these indicators of severe disloyalty to the Hungarian State, the government treated Trochta with a great deal of leniency. Though he was removed from his post as principal of the Slovak Language Gymnasium in Kassa per Puszta's recommendation, he was not dismissed outright; he was moved to the Slovak gymnasium in Ipolyság, a community further from the border with far fewer Slovaks and thus far fewer minority problems than Kassa. By moving Trochta to Ipolyság, the goal of the Hungarian authorities was most likely to isolate him geographically instead of allowing him to remain in ethnically charged Kassa as an embittered, idle, cast-off. It is probably also an indicator of the dearth of qualified Slovaks that could serve as educational administrators for the Hungarian State.

Puszta's report indicates that the variance between the official minority policy of the government and its actual execution in Felvidék was a major issue. This was by no means a new problem, as obstruction of minority education by local officials had been "the most effective and habitual vehicle of Magyarization" since the late nineteenth century.[65] However, the territorial expansion in Felvidék added new urgency to an old problem since Hungary's minority population drastically expanded literally over night. Any attempts by the Hungarian government to legislate minority rights were only as effective as the local officials and populace allowed them to be.

However, the central authorities cannot be completely cleared of blame for the difficulties in implementing a progressive minority policy in Felvidék. There was often a great deal of ambiguity in the material disseminated by the Ministry of Education. The Ministry's

[65] Paikert, "Hungary's National Minority Policies," 212.

1941 *Curricula and Instructions for the Eight Grade of Primary Schools*, stated that in Hungary, "everybody may preserve his own nationality, nourish his specific style of living, culture, [and] language," requiring "only that he should be the faithful citizen of the Hungarian State."[66] But this message of tolerance was obscured by the often negative portrayal of the minorities in school primers. Some history textbooks pointed the blame for the dismemberment of the country on greedy national minorities that unfairly capitalized on Hungary's wartime sacrifices. A typical example blamed Romanians and Serbs outside of Hungary who were "not satisfied with their countries" for stirring up Hungary's minorities in order to enlarge their own states.[67]

But when discussing the territorial awards, the textbooks welcomed the minorities back, as part of the natural order of the thousand-year-old Hungarian State. One typical line of reasoning emphasized that the differences in lifestyles of Hungary's various peoples was actually complementary and contributed to the overall success of the state. This harkened back to the founder of the Hungarian State, St. Stephen, whose oft-quoted adage stated that, "a kingdom where only one language is spoken and one custom is followed is weak and fragile." A geography textbook from 1941 enthusiastically claimed, "We have no doubt in the returned minorities … that according to the ideas of St. Stephen, peoples of different languages and religions will once again find each other and live happily within the frame of historical Hungary."[68] Another textbook states that the national minorities must see the error in their previous judgment of Hungarian intensions toward them.

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[66] Quoted in Horváth, "War and Peace," 143.
[67] Györgz Szondy, *A magyar nemzet története osztatlan elemi népiskolák V-VI. Osztálya számára*, 108.
[68] János Karl and Győző Temesy, *Hazánk részletes földrajza és térképismeret a gimnázium és a leánygimnázium VII. osztálya számára* (Budapest: Franklin Társulat, 1941), 116. "Semmi kétségunk: ebben visszatért nemzetiségeink [is segítségünkre lesznek s vállvetett munkával dolgoznak velünk,] hogy a szentistváni gondolat szerint a különféle nyelvű és vallású népek újra megtalálják egymást s boldogan éljenek a történelmi Hungária keretében."

> We must love our national minorities like brothers! However, they also must stick with the Hungarians in good times and bad; they must finally understand that Hungarians don't want to oppress them. . . . Only with mutual understanding [and] cooperation can we support a happier and more beautiful Hungarian future.[69]

However, despite these types of optimistic statements, the message conveyed by the textbooks on minorities was decidedly mixed. Slovaks were often described in unflattering terms; for instance, one primary school primer from 1942 refers to them as "simple, unambitious people."[70] One of the more outrageous examples is a high school textbook that called for "the strengthening of Hungarianness" by all means. The author boasted that "this work has already begun," praising the controversial colonization of minority areas by Hungarians that took place in the territories seized from Yugoslavia.[71] Lauding forced resettlement is a far cry from the exhortations of love and tolerance cited above. Thus, we see that many of the old habits of chauvinism crept back into education from time to time. One can imagine that these ambiguities led to confusion on the part of teachers and administrators, let alone the school children these messages were intended for.

Conclusion

Hungarian officials believed that restructuring the educational system in Felvidék along Hungarian nationalist lines was critical to the successful reintegration of the territory. Along

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[69] Marczinkó, Pálfi, Erzsébet Várady, *A legújabb kor története*, 172. "Szeressük nemzetiségeinket, mint testvéreinket! Viszont ők is ragaszkodjanak a velük jó és balsorsban együttélő magyarsághoz... Csak kölcsönös megértéssel együttműködéssel alapozhatjuk meg a boldogabb és szebb magyar jövőt."

[70] Gyula Kiss and Ferenc Nagy, *Földrajz az osztott elemi népiskolák használatára IV. osztály tananyaga*, (Budapest: Kókai Lajos Kiadása, 1942), 38. "A tótok egyszerű, kevés igényű emberek."

[71] Bodnár and Kalmár, *Magyarország helyzete,* 98. "Mindenképpen szükség van azonban a magyarság megerősítésére. . . . Ez a mozgalom már meg is indult." After Hungary invaded Yugoslavia in 1941, Hungarians from Bukovina, outside of historic Hungary, were brought in to magyarize areas where many Slavic language speakers had settled during the interwar period. This region was subject to the harshest treatment by the Hungarian army of any of the returned territories and was even the site of civilian massacres.

with the many public celebrations of Hungarian nationhood and the grandiose re-entry of the Hungarian army into Felvidék, education was the main vehicle through which the state could influence notions of identity among the people. Although mainly focused on children, this compensatory education was not limited to the schools. Libraries were a way to reach the adult population and offer a remedial education in all aspects of Hungarian culture. The Széchényi National Library supplied the public library in Kassa with 646 volumes in 1939. Included among these works were a number of books by classic Hungarian poets and authors like János Arany and Kálmán Mikszáth to rebuild the library's literary canon; national histories to reacquaint readers with the seminal events in Hungarian history like the 1848 Revolution and the Battle of Mohács; volumes extolling Hungarian achievement in fine arts, from painting to music; and practical works on industry, economy, and law to help with the reintegration process itself. Finally, books like Béla Imrédy's *National Ideas, Unity of the People, and Social Thought* and Ödön Tarján's *Hungarians, Slovaks and Ruthenes in the Danubian Basin* touched upon the all-important topics of revisionism and Felvidék's calling in the wider Hungarian national project.[72]

These educational tactics were meant to bolster the Hungarian population's "Hungarianness" and encourage the minorities to see themselves as full members of the Hungarian state. They functioned in cooperation with the more covert work of the nationalizing program – the surveillance of suspicious individuals and the forced removal of those elements deemed dangerous to the reintegration process and Hungary's revisionist goals.

[72] Archív mesta Košice (Košice City Archive), [AMK] 1938-1945 Collection, Box 20, File 18641.

Chapter 5

Loyalty and Suspicion

It has been long months since the liberation swept over us. We became an organic part of the enlarged homeland, a partner in the free and independent national life, and active workers for Hungarian state building. We do not deny that the transition did not go smoothly. We had to grapple with serious questions at every step, of how to fit into the political, economic, and cultural circulation of the motherland. . . . Many times we encountered misunderstanding, arrogance, and wise-cracking cynicism directed against us. . . . Those who see us as 'foreigners' [or] 'separatists' are mistaken. Because our beliefs are not only our own, but those of every Hungarian who sees not only the Hungarian present but looks to the Hungarian future as well."[1]
—Andor Jaross, Minister without Portfolio for Felvidék

Introduction

Andor Jaross, the highest-ranking Hungarian politician to come out of Felvidék, struck a bitter note in his dedication to a volume commemorating the return of the territory to Hungarian rule. Though grateful that Felvidék was now in Hungary, he expressed disillusionment at the suspicion leveled against him and his compatriots from Felvidék. Government policies in the region openly questioned the patriotism of even the most ardent Hungarian nationalists. If a man who was appointed a cabinet minister in the Hungarian government could feel slighted by this questioning, what was its impact on the average Felvidék resident? This chapter explores identity politics in Felvidék from ideological and everyday perspectives. The region's inhabitants were not simply divided between insider Hungarians and outsider Slovaks, but included Hungarians who saw themselves as distinct from those in the mother country, nationally ambiguous

[1] Andor Jaross, "Ajánlás," in *Felvidékünk Honvédségünk: Trianontól Kassáig: történelmi eseménysorozat képekkel* (Budapest: A Vitézi Rend Zrínyi Csoport, 1939), 5-6. "Felszabdulásunk óta hosszú hónapok suhantak el már felettünk. Szerves rész lettünk a megnagyobbodott hazában, részesei a nemzeti szabad és független életnek és aktív munkásai a magyar államépítésnek. Nem tagadjuk, az átkapcsolódás nem ment zökkenő néklül. Súlyos kérdésekkel kellett lépten-nyomon megküzdenünk, hogy beleilleszkedjünk az Anyaország politikai, gazdasági és kulturális vérkeringésébe. . . . Sokszor találtuk magunkat szemben bizonyos irányok részéről a megnemértés, a gőg és szellemeskedő cinizmus ridegségével. . . . Tévednek azok, akik 'idegeneket,' 'szeparatistákat' látnak bennünk. Mert a mi hitünk nemcsak a miénk, de minden magyar emberé, aki nemcsak a magyar mát látja, de keresi a magyar holnapot is."

individuals, and Slovaks from across the political spectrum who all had to be accommodated into the conception of the nation. The practical policies implemented in Felvidék to determine loyalty to and criminality against the Hungarian nation reveal the extent to which everyday life was colored by distrust. The reintegration of Felvidék into the Hungarian state stirred debates about national loyalty and identity at the state, regional, and local level that revealed deep suspicion of the returned population.

The "Felvidék Spirit"

Two decades of revisionist propaganda had portrayed Felvidék Hungarians as oppressed by their Czech masters and desperate to return to the Hungarian fold. But even before reincorporation, skeptics criticized the revisionist representation of the "Hungarians of [Felvidék] as crucified, close to death and with supplicating arms extended toward the mother country," for its failure to acknowledge that their situation had evolved since the disintegration of Hungary in 1918.[2] On both sides of the former border, people began to acknowledge that the twenty years of separation had created fundamental differences between the populace in Hungary proper and in Felvidék. But nobody was quite sure what those differences were. "We know little about the people, society, relations, politics, and associations [of Felvidék]," journalist and leading populist writer Zoltán Szabó remarked in 1938. He noted, furthermore, that Hungarians in the motherland were much more likely to know about the physical geography of Felvidék than its inhabitants. "We think about the land rather than about the people," which was, he observed, a "strange and somewhat antisocial approach."[3] Such an outlook stemmed from the dominant

[2] Miklós Zeidler, *Ideas on Territorial Revision in Hungary, 1920-1945*, trans. Thomas DeKornfeld and Helen DeKornfeld (Boulder, Colo.: Social Science Monographs, 2007), 248.
[3] Zoltán Szabó, "Magyarok Csehszlovákiában," in *A kelet népe 1935-1942*, ed. Endre Medvigy and József Tasi (Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó, 1986), 151. "De keveset tudunk népről és emberről, társadalomról és

position of integral revisionism in Hungarian discourse. Many revisionists were consumed by the concept of the Carpathian Basin as a perfect geographical unit, which put the emphasis squarely on the physical boundaries and features of the lost territories; people were of secondary importance in such an articulation of revisionist philosophy. Though the rights of Hungarian minorities were commonly cited in revisionist campaigns as well, the people were presented as passive, static elements.

The First Vienna Award forced a change in priorities. With over a million inhabitants added to the state, the need for understanding the mentality of the returned peoples became great. On the eve of the territorial changes, Sándor Márai asked, "can we speak of a Felvidék spirit in the way that the French speak of the spirit of Provence [or] the spirit of Normandy?"[4] In other words, was there an essential regional difference between the people of Felvidék and those in Hungary proper? He concluded that there was, indeed, a distinct regional identity, "characterized by a self-aware Hungarianness, deep Christianity, and strong social spirit."[5] As an exile who had not stepped foot in the region in twenty years, Márai's depiction of Felvidék's regional identity was based on historical notions of the area. He largely failed to incorporate the minority experience under Czechoslovak rule into his conception. Others saw the past twenty years as critical to understanding the temperament of the people of the region. Writer László Vass observed that before the First World War, a separate Felvidék identity had been denied in the interest of presenting a "united, undivided Hungarian nation" to the world. "The 'Felvidék Spirit'

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viszonyokról, politikáról és egyesületekről, folyóiratokról és lapokról. Szemléletünk, mint más vonatkozásokban is, e téren is a *földszemlélet* és nem *népszemlélet*, földrajzi szemlélet és nem társadalmi szemlélet. . . . Inkább a földre gondolunk, mint a népre—mondhatjuk és furcsa, kicsit antiszociális szemlélet ez."

[4] Sándor Márai, *Ajándék a végzettől: a Felvidék és Erdély visszacsatolása* (Budapest: Helikon, 2004), 87. "Beszélhetünk-e a felvidéki lélekről abban az értelemben, ahogy a franciák provence-i lélekről, normandiai szellemről beszélnek?"

[5] Ibid., 88. "A felvidéki lelket . . . *öntudatos magyarság, mély kereszténység és erős szociális szellem* jellemezte."

as a separate notion was born out of the twenty years' wait" outside state borders, he claimed, a modern construction but with deeper historical roots.[6] Journalist Pál Szvatkó, a former editor of *Prágai Magyar Hirlap* who moved to Budapest from Felvidék after the Vienna Award, became an expert on the so-called Felvidék spirit and published widely on the topic. In his 1938 work, *The Returned Hungarians*, Szvatkó claimed that "amidst the pain of twenty years of alien conditions, a new type of attitude evolved in the Hungarian soul, [and] a new type of person was born."[7] Suffering was at the core of this new person and the touchstone of the Felvidék experience. *Twenty Years of Felvidék Hungarians, 1918-1938,* a monograph published by the Hungarian Statistical Association's Center for Political Science shortly after the First Vienna Award, noted that Hungarians in Felvidék experienced "a difficult life, heavy from ordeals . . . [but] the Felvidék Hungarians bore their miseries with heroic souls." Through this suffering, they were invigorated. "They did not break apart during the twenty years of stress, but rather they returned to Hungary hardened in spirit and national sentiment."[8]

Szvatkó and others who chronicled the twenty years of Czechoslovak rule described a series of trials that the community endured, which had tested their loyalty to the state of Hungary and even their Hungarian identity. As the borders were closed off to Hungary, so was a proper understanding of the homeland. "The Hungarian public [in Felvidék] was hermetically sealed off from Hungary, and what they learned about it they heard from the mouths of emigrants," the

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[6] László Vass, "Egységes Magyarság," *Nyugat* 10 (Oct., 1940), 528. Egységes, osztatlan magyar szellem. . . . "A 'felvidéki szellem' különös fogalma az itthoni húszéves csodavárásból született."

[7] Pál Szvatkó, *A visszatért magyarok: A felvidéki magyarság húsz éve* (Budapest: Révai, 1938), 114. "Az idegen körülmények között húszéves kínnal a magyar lélekben új magatartás-féle alakult ki, új embertípus született meg."

[8] A magyar statisztikai társaság államtudományi intézete, *A felvidéki magyarság húsz éve 1918-1938* (Budapest: Magyar Egyetemi Nyomda, 1938), 133. "Nehéz élet volt ez, megpróbáltatásoktól terhes, de láttuk azt is, hogy a felvidéki magyarság a szenvedéseket hősies lélekkel viselte s hogy nem törött össze a húszéves nyomás alatt, hanem lelkében megedződve, nemzeti érzésében megacélozva került vissza Magyarországhoz."

Statistical Association's report noted.[9] Many of these Hungarian émigrés had migrated to Czechoslovakia from Hungary after the counter-revolution in 1919. As most had left for political reasons and under duress, their description of conditions back home was far from flattering. The "exiled writers, journalists, capitalists, or Jews, froth[ed] with rage [and] scolded Hungary" for its oppressive, authoritarian practices, the report claimed.[10] These political dissidents usually took up residence in Prague and remained separated from the greater Hungarian community yet they possessed a great deal of political power and influence over the press in Czechoslovakia; they tended to support radical left-wing programs and advocate hostility to the Hungarian state.[11] The dissident Hungarian community of exiles in Czechoslovakia complicated the perspectives of Felvidék Hungarians about Hungary proper, especially in the political realm.

The early 1920s also witnessed a political splintering of the Hungarian community in Felvidék. Religious and generational differences plagued the Hungarian minority parties, and their leaders grappled with whether to agitate for immediate border revision or engage, instead, with the new state. In 1920, despite putting forward "virtually identical economic programs and national goals," the two ethnic Hungarian political parties – the Hungarian Christian Socialists and the Hungarian Smallholders' Party – ran against each other in the Czechoslovak parliamentary election.[12] Because of this factionalism, the minority Hungarian parties lost membership to a variety of political adversaries, the most prominent among them the Czechoslovak Communist Party. According to Szvatkó, many Hungarian peasants in Felvidék

[9] Ibid., 20. "A magyar közönség Magyarországtól hermetikusan el volt zárva s amit megtudott róla, azt az emigránsok szájából hallotta."
[10] Ibid. "Magyarországból menekült irók, újságírók, tőkések vagy pedig zsidók tajtékzó dühvel szidták Magyarországot."
[11] Szvatkó, *A visszatért magyarok*, 100-101.
[12] Andrej Tóth, "Political Parties of Hungarian Minority in Interwar Czechoslovakia, 1918- 1938," *Öt kontinens: Az Új- és Jelenkori Egyetemes Történelmi Tanszék közleményei* (2010), 173. http://tortenelemszak.elte.hu/data/27204/dTothpAndrej.pdf

briefly saw international socialism as a possible antidote to both their destitute economic conditions and minority status:

> The communists' Hungarian division expropriated the national sentiment to a certain degree and explained to the cut-off Hungarian peasants that only the Soviets . . . could solve the national question, and Stalin would eliminate both the Czechs and the lords alike. The communist agitators' part-nationalist methods proved themselves effective and the Hungarian opposition parties' most dangerous adversaries became the exploited Hungarian in the village.[13]

By tying together class conflict with national oppression, communist parties capitalized on the discontent of the Hungarian minority. In the 1925 Czechoslovak Parliamentary elections, the Communist Party had its best electoral showing of the period of the First Republic, taking 13.2 percent of the total votes, bolstered in part by support from Hungarians.[14] Other non-Hungarian political parties in Czechoslovakia likewise succeeded in attracting Hungarian voters by vowing to solve pressing social issues, although through less radical means. "When the strength of the national idea was weak, part of the worker and peasant classes drifted towards the Czechoslovak parties," which promised to tackle the land question by breaking up large estates and redistributing parcels to landless peasants.[15] These gains were somewhat short-lived, however, due to the fact that when land reform did occur, Hungarian peasants received disproportionally little land. Less than five percent of the lands redistributed in Slovakia were allocated to

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[13] Szvatkó, *A visszatért magyarok*, 103. On why peasants sided with the communists: "A kommunisták magyar tagozata bizonyos fokig kisajátította a nemzeti érzést és azt magyarázta a letört magyar parasztnak, hogy a nemzeti kérdést egyedül a szovjet . . . oldhatja meg, s Sztalin egyformán eltávolítja majd a csheket és az urakat. A kommunista agitátorok e félnacionalista módszere eredményesnek mutatkozott s a magyar ellenzéki pártok legveszélyesebb ellenlábasa lett a kizsákmányolt magyar a falvakban."

[14] Joseph Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1974), 110.

[15] *A felvidéki magyarság húsz éve*, 15. "Mivel a nemzeti gondolat ereje ekkor gyenge volt, a munkás- és a paraszt- osztályok egy része a csehszlovák pártok felé hajlott."

Hungarians even though they made up 21 percent of the population.[16] This led to accusations that social reform in Czechoslovakia was merely another means by which to oppress the Hungarian minority.

Though the communist sympathies and Czechoslovak collaboration of the Felvidék peasantry looked rather damning politically, admirers of the Felvidék spirit urged skeptics to reserve their judgment. "The Hungarian peasantry . . . is the most secure foundation of the national life. Even when the Czechoslovak agrarian party was in their pockets, their hearts were purely Hungarian."[17] In other words, a population under duress could not be held accountable for turning to objectionable political philosophies as a way to preserve their community under national persecution.

The dark days of the 1920s, when the Hungarian community was cut off from the homeland and disunited politically and socially, were eventually put to rest, commentators like Szvatkó claimed. A combination of disillusionment with Czechoslovak policies and fresh leadership created a rejuvenated, united Hungarian community in Felvidék. The land reform issue, which had attracted so many to rival parties, brought the Hungarian minority together once the redistribution took place and left them dissatisfied. "When after the land reform the ugly face of Czechoslovak imperialism saw daylight, the Hungarians . . . returned to the frame of the Hungarian party," the Statistical Association's report noted.[18] Electoral statistics show that ethnic Hungarian parties progressively gained popularity, peaking in the final parliamentary election of

[16] Attila Simon, "The Colonization of Southern Slovakia as a Means of Constructing a Czechoslovak Nation-State," in *A Multiethnic Region and Nation-State in East-Central Europe: Studies in the History of Upper Hungary and Slovakia from the 1600s to the Present* edited by László Szarka (Boulder, Colo.: Social Science Monographs, 2011), 229.
[17] *A felvidéki magyarság húsz éve*, 16. "A magyar parasztság azonban a nemzeti élet legbiztosabb alapja. Akkor is, mikor a csehszlovák agrárpárt legitimációja volt a zsebében, a szíve tiszta magyar volt."
[18] Ibid. "Mikor azután, a földreform révén a csehszlovák imperializmus csúf arca napvilágra jött, a magyarság . . . visszatért a magyar párt keréibe."

the First Czechoslovak Republic in 1935 at 3.5 percent of the total votes cast, up from a low of 1.4 percent in 1925.[19] The pre-war generation of Felvidek Hungarian leadership gave way to a new generation of politicians, chief among them János Esterházy and Andor Jaross, who spearheaded the consolidation of the Hungarian Christian Democrats and Smallholders into a joint party, the United Hungarian Party, in 1936. Tacitly supported by the government in Budapest, Esterházy and Jaross brought a renewed strength to Hungarian minority politics.[20] They partially followed the increasingly fascist example of the German minority in Czechoslovakia, Szvatkó explained, which displayed a "new popular consciousness, the unification of the classes, the social principle, a disillusionment from Marxist ideology, [and] recognition of the hypocrisy in Prague."[21] Specifically, the United Hungarian Party drew inspiration from Konrad Henlein and the Sudeten German Party, hoping to duplicate their successes at the polls and in gaining international recognition for their plight by building a robust, populist party with strong ties to its homeland state. Growing ethnic solidarity played a critical role, binding disparate segments of Hungarian minority society together in their collective marginalization.

The United Hungarian Party became the organized, political voice of the Felvidék Hungarians, rallying Hungarians from different classes together to preserve their ethnic community. The authors of *Twenty Years of Felvidék Hungarians* argued that a "new Hungarian political method and populist political sentiment" coalesced around Jaross and Esterházy's

[19] Rothschild, *East Central Europe between the Two World Wars*, 116, 126. In comparison, the percentage of Hungarians living in Czechoslovakia according to the 1930 census was 4.78 percent. Thus, even in 1935, some Hungarians cast their lot with other parties.
[20] Tóth, "Political Parties of Hungarian Minority," 183-184.
[21] Szvatkó, *A visszatért magyarok*, 109-110. "Az egyik a német példa volt, az új népi tudat, az osztályok egyesülése, a szociális elv, a mindent elsodró nemzeti lelkesedés, a fegyelem, a tekintélytisztelet, a marxista ideológiából való kiábrándulás, a prágai hipokrizis fölismerése."

leadership, "in which every Hungarian comes together bravely and without reservation."[22] The party leadership did indeed envision itself a sort of vanguard of Hungarianness in Felvidék. Jaross claimed in a ministerial meeting in 1939, that "in the battle of the Felvidék Hungarians, the debt to the party and the Hungarian people is not only notionally apparent, but is a reality as well. The [Hungarian community] lived its life in and through the party."[23] The Hungarian government recognized its debt to the United Hungarian Party and rewarded its members in Felvidék by giving them a great deal of influence during the subsequent transition to Hungarian rule. After the First Vienna Award, it became the only legal political party in the returned territory and Jaross was appointed a cabinet member in the Imrédy government as the new "Minister without Portfolio" for Felvidék.[24] Szvatkó also praised the United Hungarian Party, crediting its populist political orientation with unifying the community. After the establishment of the United Hungarian Party, he observed, "now, finally a common goal hovered over politics, the intelligentsia, practice, and spirit: the exaltation of the economic and cultural levels of the people, as a defensive tool against Czech pressure."[25] The result of the Party's successes, commentators claimed, was that Felvidék Hungarians were returning to the Hungarian state with a renewed sense of their Hungarian identity and with the ability to contribute to the nation. "The[se] historic times, 1938, already finds the Hungarian Felvidék in complete unity. Together

[22] *A felvidéki magyarság húsz éve*, 21. "*Jaross Andor* és *Eszterházy János* jelentik az új magyar politikai módszert s népi politikai fölfogást, amelyben már minden magyar bátran és aggodalmak nékül egyesül."
[23] MOL K27 [Miniszterelnökség] (1939.01.20) 69R/86. "A felvidéki magyarság harcaiban a párt és a magyar néphez tartozás nemcsak fogalmilag azonosult, hanem tényleg is. A magyarság a pártban és a párton keresztül élte életét."
[24] Loránt Tilkovszky, *Revízió és nemzetiségpolitika Magyarországon, 1938-1941* (Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó, 1967), 37.
[25] Szvatkó, *A visszatért magyarok*, 147. "Most végre közös cél lebegett a politika, az értelmiség, a gyakorlat és a szellem előtt, a nép gazdasági és kulturális színvonalának fölemelése, mint védekező eszköz a cseh nyomás ellen."

are the people and the leaders, the politicians, the cultural laborers, the spiritual people alike. This is sifted, rich wheat which now falls onto the Hungarian soil."[26]

The social unity that came out of the minority experience in Felvidék was considered a vital element in the Felvidék Spirit. Many commentators believed that this unity had created a more socially egalitarian brand of Hungarianness. Jaross observed that the twenty-year exile of Felvidék Hungarians had led them to "consider every Hungarian person as a brother … whether they toil for sustenance with the pen, the hammer, or the hoe."[27] The minority experience and the populist orientation of the United Hungarian Party had brought Hungarians of different social classes together, linking them in the common cause of preserving their Hungarian identity. In the process, they came to appreciate this sense of equality and hoped to impart their newfound egalitarianism to the wider Hungarian community. For Felvidék Hungarians, an honorable Hungarian life gave "the possibility for human life, progress, and prosperity to every member of the national community," Jaross proclaimed. He further noted that "we brought this conviction with us and we will guard it and cultivate it in our new homeland as well."[28]

Felvidék egalitarianism, in Szvatkó's evaluation, was due as much to measurable social change as it was to the experience of being a minority. He explained that the community of Felvidék Hungarians had undergone a class transformation since departing from the Hungarian state. The landed aristocracy was stripped of much of its former influence and wealth by the

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[26] *A felvidéki magyarság húsz éve*, 21. "A történelmi idők, 1938 már teljes egységben találják a magyar Felvidéket. Együtt van a nép s vezetői, politikusok, kultúrmukások, szellemi emberek egyaránt. Megrostált, tartalmas tiszta búza ez, amely a magyar földbe most belehullik."

[27] Jaross, "Ajánlás," 5. "Megtanultunk azt, hogy ebben a szent közösségben testvérként és munkatársként tekintsünk minden magyar embert, tekintet nélkül arra, hogy tollal, kalapáccsal vagy kapával keresi meg kenyerét."

[28] Ibid. "És megtanultunk, hogy becsületes és magyar életet csak egy olyan szociális légkörben és berendezkedésben lehet élni, amely a nemzeti közösség minden tagja számára lehetővé teszi az emberi életet, fejlődést és boldogulást. . . . Mi ezt a hitet, ezt a meggyőződést hoztuk magunkkal és ezt őrizzük, ezt ápoluk az új hazában is."

Czechoslovak Land Reform Program in the early 1920s, which broke up their large estates. Most chose to remain in the background of Hungarian politics in Felvidék.[29] The middling gentry, meanwhile, had "readily jumped across the border and traveled to Budapest to grieve."[30] With their exodus, they too became nonfactors in the public sphere. This, according to Szvatkó, opened up the possibility for political participation by the lower classes of Hungarians. A modern middle class with "fresh, folkish strength" led the way, supported by a peasantry who developed a sense of political rights and national duty.[31] "The awakened peasant in Felvidék was like Snow White," he claimed, the minority experience functioning "like the prince whose kiss awoke her."[32] This was all in stark contrast to classes in Hungary proper, which retained the rigid pre-war social order; hereditary nobility continued to hold the vast majority of political and social capital, supported by a large, generally unproductive gentry and the peasantry remained, to an overwhelming extent, landless and disenfranchised.

These claims of social unity overshadowed major cleavages in Felvidék society. Although significant social leveling, especially compared to Hungary, had occurred since 1918, recollections of Felvidék Hungarians speak to serious ruptures within the Hungarian community. For one, those who chose to identify as Czechoslovak rather than Hungarian experienced ostracism not only from the Hungarian community generally but also scathing personal criticism from close family members. Rezső Peéry, a member of the Hungarian scouting association in Czechoslovakia, recalled that his uncle who had "turned Czech" after 1918 in order to retain his position as a civil servant had become completely estranged from his family due to his decision

[29] Szvatkó, *A visszatért magyarok*, 165.
[30] Ibid., 167. "Szívesen ugrotta át az állam határt és utazott Pestre búsúlni."
[31] Ibid., 169-174. "Új középreteg . . . friss, népi erővel."
[32] Ibid., 174. "A felvidéken fölébredt paraszt-Hófehérke élni kezdett, mintha a kisebbségi szenvedés lett volna a királyfi, akinek csókja fölebresztette."

to no longer identify as Hungarian.[33] Within Hungarian organizations, those who advocated working within the existing Czechoslovak state framework clashed radically with others who refused reconciliation with the Czechoslovak government and directed their efforts towards territorial revision. One of the most notorious Hungarian organizations to operate in inter-war Czechoslovakia was Sarló [Sickle], a Hungarian student movement that strove to bolster Hungarian peasant culture *within* the Czechoslovak state. They famously rejected territorial revisionism, instead advocating for "'ethnographic irredentism,' a movement to enable to people who spoke the same language and shared the same culture to develop an autonomous cultural unity" within a confederation of nations as opposed to a nation-state framework.[34] Sarló's seeming acceptance of Czechoslovak rule and rejection of the older generation's strategy of waiting for the return of Hungarian rule earned them the label of traitors by the Hungarian government. In a parliamentary session in 1930 in Budapest, officials called Sarló members who had traveled to Budapest to place a wreath with Hungarian and Czechoslovak colors at the foot of a statue of the Hungarian revolutionary Sándor Petőfi "Czech henchmen" and revoked their Hungarian visas.[35] The Hungarian parties in Czechoslovakia followed suit and broke off connections with Sarló. But they did have allies, among them many of Hungary's most influential populist writers, such as Zsigmond Móricz who gave a lecture tour in Felvidék organized by Sarló leaders in 1927.[36] During the Great Depression, Sarló's ideology shifted further to the left and some members joined the Czechoslovak Communist Party.

Commentators could, nevertheless, find much to praise in the democratization of Felvidek Hungarians, their periodical association with communism notwithstanding. "What the

[33] Deborah Cornelius, *In Search of the Nation: The New Generation of Hungarian Youth in Czechoslovakia, 1925-1934* (Boulder, Colo., Social Science Monographs, 1998), 92.
[34] Ibid., 239-240.
[35] Ibid., 269-270.
[36] Ibid., 176.

returned peasantry and with them the lower middle class brings to [Hungary]," Szvatkó believed, was "chiefly social experiences, or more precisely, *social demands*."[37] The social changes that had taken place among the Hungarian minority in Felvidek made them incompatible with the social order in Hungary proper, and distinct in their thoughts about the relationship between class and nation. Those who celebrated the "Felvidék spirit" were quick to reassure detractors that it was not communism nor a dangerous liberal democracy "but a people's [folk] democracy," which had necessarily been "built up in their souls and in their society for the protection of their lives."[38] As democracy was far from a revered concept in 1938 Hungary, admirers attempted to distance the democracy of Felvidék Hungarians from that of the traitorous Sarló, "strangely one-sided Czechs," and the "Budapest radical bourgeoisie."[39] This was supposedly an organic democracy, fundamentally different in character from that espoused by the enemies of the Hungarian government and thus not a threat to Hungarian political order.

Pro-Felvidék commentators emphasized the Europeanness of this democracy as opposed to its Czechness, in the past and in the present. Szvatkó claimed that historically, due to the fact that Felvidék had not been conquered by the Turks in the sixteenth century, the area had greater connections to the west than Hungarians living further south and east. Consequently, already prior to World War I, Felvidék Hungarians were "more European" than their brethren in Transylvania and the Great Hungarian Plain.[40] Trianon strengthened these ties even further. "It is

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[37] Szvatkó, *A visszatért magyarok*, 174. "Amit a visszatért parasztság s vele együtt a kisközéposztály visszahoz a házába, elsősorban a szociális élmény, vagy pontosabban: a *szociális igény*." Italics in the original.

[38] *A felvidéki magyarság húsz éve,* 134-135. "Nem a liberális, de a népi demokrácia. . . . Demokráciája azonban tiszta népi demokrácia volt, amelyet a hatalom birtokán kívül épitett ki lelkében és társadalmában életének megvédesére."

[39] Szvatkó, *A visszatért magyarok*, 92. "A csehek furcsán egyoldalú magatartásában nyomban észrevette, s különben is ismerte a budapesti radikális polgárságnál."

[40] Ibid., 156. "Gazdaságilag a nyugatszlovákiai magyar például már a világháburú előtt jobban állt, mint az alföldi, vagy erdélyi, s így európáibb alapot jelentett."

no wonder," Szvatkó explained, "that after 1920, when the eastern gates were closed and the western open, the west European model gained even more ascendancy."[41] Felvidék's western orientation resulted in an affinity for the "principle of the modern democratic lifestyle."[42] He believed that this democratic outlook could be used to bolster the decidedly undemocratic Hungarian regime. By employing "the same certain and solid, energetic and persistent, European and modern methods" that Felvidék Hungarians had used to defend themselves for the last twenty years, they could hopefully contribute to the goal of creating "the national and Christian Hungary."[43]

Hungary had much to gain, admirers believed, from Felvidek's democratization and regional virtues. "The Felvidék Hungarians feel that they can help the Hungarians of the motherland to build up the new country," the authors of *Twenty Years of Felvidék Hungarians* asserted.[44] Szvatkó likewise believed that "the experience and understanding" of Felvidék Hungarians would "bring a spark into Hungarian life [and], what is more, with luck perhaps [they will] favorably influence the future development of the nation."[45] Reformers, too, saw this potential in their newly returned countrymen. Szvatkó recalled that, on a visit to Budapest after the re-annexation, he was greeted on the street by an eager reformer who exclaimed, "you are the yeast of the new Hungarian life [and] with your help we can fight to reform Hungary."[46] This

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[41] Ibid., 154. "Nem csoda, hogy 1920 után, amikor a keleti kapuk bezárultak és a nyugatiak kinyíltak, a nyugateurópai sablón még inkább elhatalmasodott."
[42] Ibid., 155. "A nyugati kapun beáramló és kitűnően megmunkált talajban megfogamzó . . . a modern demokratikus életmód elve lett."
[43] Ibid., 205. "S a felvidéki szellem azzal a tudattal érkezik a hazába, hogy megkísérli ugyanannak a biztos és szolíd, erélyes és kitartó, európai és modern módszernek alkalmazását, amivel kisebbségi sorsban eredményesen védelmezte a saját életét. A cél világos: a nemzeti és keresztény Magyarország."
[44] *A felvidéki magyarság húsz éve,* 136. "A felvidéki magyarság úgy véli, hogy az anyaországi magyarságnak sokat segíthet az új ország fölépítésében."
[45] Szvatkó, *A visszatért magyarok*, 114. "Tapasztalatai és belátásai valószínűleg soká vibrálnak a magyar életben, sőt, ha szerencsénk van, talán előnyösen befolyásolják a nemzet eljövendő fejlődését."
[46] Ibid., 5. "'Ti vagytok az új magyar élet kovászai," hallotuk, 'a ti segítségtekkel vívánjuk megreformálni Magyarországot.'"

reformer and others like him hoped that Felvidék Hungarians, as the "yeast," would be the active agent needed to change the social landscape in Hungary. Historian Tamás Gusztáv Filep points out that it was "logical for those who, through reform, wanted to change . . . social relations" to see the Felvidék Hungarians as "potential partners."[47]

This hopeful discourse about the Felvidék spirit was at its height in the months following the First Vienna Award. As Hungary regained other territories revisionist focus shifted, first onto the population of Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia when it was occupied by Hungarian troops in March 1939, and then onto the inhabitants of Northern Transylvania reincorporated in 1940 under the Second Vienna Award. "In 1940 it was already known," Gusztáv explains, "that the 'Felvidék spirit' was spent as a political trend."[48] As evidence, Gusztáv points to a feature in the journal *Nyugat* [West], entitled "United Hungarians [magyarság]," which explored the differences between homeland Hungarians and the "redeemed" Hungarians reincorporated in the last two years. Five authors wrote about Hungarians from the motherland; nine others contributed pieces about Transylvania; only a single author, László Vass, represented Felvidék.[49]

Indeed, many questioned if there was such a thing as a Felvidék spirit. Sociologist István Weis noted that while many people believed there was a different mentality in the region, "others, including many from Felvidék, say that there is not a separate Felvidék spirit, only a Felvidék experience."[50] A prominent advocate of this latter viewpoint was Aladár Schöpflin, editor of *Nyugat.* "Nobody can detect the essence of the difference between the ideas and world

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[47] Tamás Gusztáv Filep, "A 'felvidéki szellem'-ről és utóéletéről," *Limes* 2 (2007), 111. "Logikus volt, hogy azok, akik – reform útján – meg akarják változtatni . . . a társadalmi viszonyokat, mind potenciális szövetségesüknek látták ezt a töredéktársadalmat."

[48] Ibid., 114. "1940-ben már régen ismert volt, hogy a 'felvidéki szellem'-nek, mint politikai irányzatnak befellegzett."

[49] Vass, "Egységes magyarság," 528.

[50] István Weis, "A magyarság úri mivolta: Széljegyzet a Felvidék visszacsatolásához," *Magyar szemle* 38:3 (Mar., 1940), 172. "Mások azt monják, -- és ezek között több felvidéki – hogy nincs külön felvidéki szellem, csak felvidéki tapasztalat."

view of Felvidék and motherland Hungarians," he claimed, because they both "sprouted from one root."[51]

The democratic process in Felvidék fell off dramatically after the territory's re-attachment to Hungary. In fact, residents never received the chance to vote in a Hungarian election. Though Hungary held general elections in 1939, the newly returned territories were excluded from participating.[52] Instead, twenty-six United Hungarian Party members who had previously served as parliamentary representatives in Czechoslovakia were simply appointed as deputies to the Hungarian Parliament.[53] Other political parties were banned from operating in the region. Among the reasons was the government's effort to prevent extreme right-wing parties like the Arrow Cross from expanding their support into the re-annexed territories.[54] Though the United Hungarian Party was loosely tied to the ruling national party in Hungary (the Party of National Unity), it did present its own platform in January 1939. The program was based on three pillars: a Christian worldview, the supremacy of the nation, and, uniquely, social justice. In line with the views the radical wing of government party, Imrédy chief among them, it called for new anti-Jewish legislation and radical land reform.[55] After Imrédy was ousted as prime minister and the government party split, the Teleki government feared political insubordination from Felvidék politicians who were known to be sympathetic to rival parties; in 1940, Teleki further tightened political restrictions, officially dissolving the United Hungarian Party and

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[51] Aladár Schöpflin, "Felvidék" *Nyugat* 20:12 (Dec., 1938), 1. "Ma senki sem fedezhet fel a felvidéki magyar és a csonkaországi magyar gondolat- és érzésvilága között lényegbe vágóbb különbséget . . . Egy gyökérből nőtt."

[52] This was the only election held in Hungary during the time Felvidék was under Hungarian jurisdiction. After 1939, national elections were suspended due to the war.

[53] Carlile Aylmer Macartney, *October Fifteenth, a History of Modern Hungary 1929-1945* vol.1 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1957), 308.

[54] Holly Case, *Between States: the Transylvanian Question and the European Idea during World War II* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2009), 107-108.

[55] Jenő Gergely, Ferenc Glatz, and Ferenc Pölöskei, ed., *Magyarországi pártprogramok, 1919-1944* (Budapest: Eötvös kiadó, 2003), 390-394.

incorporating its members into the government party.[56] These measures severely limited the national political influence of Felvidék politicians and curbed the potential radicalism of the Felvidék spirit, silencing the calls for social justice in their platform.

A final element of the Felvidek spirit that its supporters believed would positively impact the national scene was its advocacy of minority rights. They noted that the Felvidék Hungarians' previous minority status had provided important insights on how to treat national minorities. These lessons could be applied, they believed to the non-Hungarians reincorporated into the state "whose fathers and ancestors lived together with us for centuries."[57] The United Hungarian Party's 1939 program followed this line of reasoning, calling for the guarantee of "cultural and economic freedom" for the minority groups living in Hungary.[58] This tolerant viewpoint did not extend to all minorities, however. As noted previously, the United Hungarian Party adopted an anti-Semitic stance, supporting the exclusion of Jews from public life. Thus, the Felvidék spirit advocated greater rights for Slovaks and Ruthenians while simultaneously rejecting any role at all for Jews in Hungarian society.

Identifying Loyalty, Certifying Identity

The issue of how Felvidék related to the national body featured a set of practical concerns that went along with the intellectual debates on the Felvidék spirit. Officials in Budapest realized that locals could not be completely excluded from regional governance, but they were also

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[56] Tamás Gusztáv Filep, "Returnee Hungarians," in *Minority Hungarian Communities in the Twentieth Century* ed. Nándor Bárdi, Csilla Fedinec, and László Szarka (Boulder, Colo., Social Science Monographs, 2011), 236-37. Macartney, *October Fifteenth*, 382.

[57] *A felvidéki magyarság húsz éve*, 7. "A nem magyarajúakkal, akik a területtel hozzánk kerülnek, amelyen apáik és őseik évszázadokig a mieinkkel együtt éltek."

[58] Gergely, Glatz, and Pölöskei, *Magyarországi pártprogramok*, 392. "A magyar állam területen élő nemzeti kisebbségek számára biztosítani kívánjuk a kulturális és gazdasági szabadság és sazabad fejlődés jogát."

reluctant to bestow authority on individuals whose loyalty to the Hungarian nation-state they deemed questionable. Proof of national loyalty became the main criterion for employment, prompting the government to scrutinize every applicant for his or her loyalty to the Hungarian nation. Jews were excluded from these positions based on anti-Jewish laws passed in 1938 and 1939 that prohibited them from holding state jobs.[59] All others were, at least legally, eligible to apply, but faced a variety of difficulties in securing positions. Individuals who had been employed by the Czechoslovak state were the greatest concern and therefore received the most attention from authorities. They appeared before special loyalty councils, whose express purpose was to weed out undesirable elements and establish a trustworthy civil service in Felvidék. The government strove to exert its interest without offending its newly returned citizens but was ultimately unsuccessful in doing so. The drama in both Budapest and in Felvidek over government jobs – the introduction, awarding, denying, and abolition of loyalty certificates in particular – reveals the alienating consequences of reintegration in practice. The Hungarian state faced a spectrum of disappointment from the region's population, which ranged from loyal but offended Hungarians and apolitical Slovaks to dissidents of both nationalities. Nevertheless, the people of Felvidek strove to prove their loyalty to the Hungarian state, using revisionist rhetoric and an array of evidence of their national loyalty to justify their restoration to Hungary.

In general, the government showed a reluctance to appoint Felvidék residents to official positions, preferring to bring in civil servants from Hungary proper to fill vacancies. This inclination produced widespread resentment in the returned territory; Felvidék Hungarians desperately sought out government jobs that they believed were owed to them to compensate for the discrimination they suffered in applying for such jobs under the previous regime. The

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[59] Randolph L. Braham, *The Politics of Genocide: The Holocaust in Hungary* vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 127-130; 151-153.

National Council of the city of Kassa reported in December 1938 that they had received over six thousand applications for government positions since re-annexation a month earlier. The Council noted that these applicants, disfavored by the Czechoslovaks due to their Hungarian nationality, now had the right to fill these positions. "The resolute Hungarians of Kassa – and clearly only them!! – deserve this support!" the Council charged.[60] Individual job applicants often cited their suffering at the hands of the Czechoslovak government in their requests for employment. "During the Czech occupation I was employed in roadwork for a short time," recounted József Miklós, who applied for a road maintenance position in 1939. "But precisely because of my Hungarianness . . . they dismissed me."[61] Locals clearly felt that their suffering under foreign rule and their perseverance, which they interpreted from a national perspective, should be rewarded by the Hungarian state.

In Budapest, parliamentary representatives from Felvidék lobbied for preferential consideration for locals to fill the positions vacated by Czech and Slovak officials.[62] Andor Jaross, the Minister without Portfolio for Felvidék, explained that if applicants were evaluated based on merit alone, Felvidék Hungarians were at a severe disadvantage, considering the fact that "for reasons beyond their control, [they] could not receive higher academic degrees or enter into public service."[63] Therefore, he advocated a type of affirmative action for Felvidék Hungarians who, despite perhaps having inferior job experience and academic qualifications, brought special skills to government positions in Felivdék that imports from Hungary proper

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[60] MOL K28 [Miniszterelnökség] 26/66. "Ezt a támogatást a kassai gerinces magyarság – s tisztán csak ezek!! – megérdemlik!" For more on competition for government positions in Felvidék, see Tilkovszky, *Revízió és nemzetiségpolitika,* 56-63.

[61] SAK, AT-19 V227. "A cseh meszállás alatt rövid ideig már alkalmazva is voltam az uton, de éppen magyarságom miatt . . . elbocsítottak."

[62] Tilkovszky, *Revízió és nemzetiségpolitika,* 56-57.

[63] MOL K27 (1939.01.20) 63R/86. "Figyelemmel kell lenni ugyanis –nézte szerint—arra, hogy a felvidékieik többnyire önhibájukon kivül nem szerezhettek magasabb tudományos fokozatokat, vagy nem léphettek közszolgálatba."

would not possess: familiarity with local conditions and knowledge of the Slovak language, both of which were necessary for administering the returned territories. Jaross managed to win some concessions for locals while he served in the cabinet; the other members agreed in principle with his plan for preferential job placement in January 1939. However, when Jaross's temporary cabinet position was eliminated in 1940, the Teleki government reversed course. Instead, they much more heavily favored appointing officials from the substantial group of unemployed civil servants in Hungary proper, a corps still bloated since the shrinking of the country after the First World War.[64]

During the transitional phase of Hungarian rule in Felvidék, thousands of bureaucrats working for the Czechoslovak state were dismissed from their positions and thousands more fled fearing discrimination by the new regime. However, many police officers, railway workers, notaries, and others deemed essential to the maintenance of order and insurance of basic services, temporarily kept their jobs. In January 1939, the government initiated law 2300/1939 in order to evaluate these individuals and decide whether or not they should be permanently retained. As interior minister Ferenc Keresztes-Fisher remarked during a ministerial meeting, "part is unreliable from a Hungarian racial standpoint, [and] part from a national loyalty standpoint."[65] The special loyalty commissions that were set up throughout the returned territories were manned, significantly, by local leaders of the United Hungarian Party.[66] Individuals appeared in front of the commission and gave a personal statement about their actions during the period of Czechoslovak rule. Often, based on this testimony alone, one was granted or denied a loyalty

[64] Tilkovszky, *Revízió és nemzetiségpolitika,* 56.
[65] MOL K27 (1939.01.20) 67R/86. "Részben magyar faji szempontból, részben nemzethűségi szempontjából nem megbizható."
[66] Ibid.

certificate. But at times these standard proceedings were complicated by outside witnesses who denounced applicants for loyalty certificates.

As former employees of the Czechoslovak state, every individual whose case was heard in a loyalty proceeding was automatically considered suspicious by the Hungarian government, whether the individual in question was Hungarian, Slovak, or nationally ambiguous. A person's nationality was taken into account, but, despite Keresztes-Fischer's statement, it was far from the deciding factor. In fact, the loyalty councils seem to have evaluated the loyalty of Slovaks, Hungarians, and nationally ambiguous individuals differently. Slovaks were not automatically considered disloyal to the Hungarian state; the outcome of their hearings depended on both on the specifics of their personal situation and the disposition of the local loyalty council – some localities granted certificates more freely than others. Slovaks that had remained politically neutral during the Czechoslovak period, spoke Hungarian, and maintained good relations with Hungarian neighbors, often recived loyalty certificates. Language knowledge and evidence of affinity for Hungarian culture could particularly benefit Slovak candidates. Károly Rozsival, a town clerk from Nagysurány, testified in his loyalty hearing that not only did he speak Hungarian, but he had raised his three children to know Hungarian as well, to the extent that they even passed the Hungarian state language exam once the area came back under Hungarian control.[67] Cases where Slovaks were granted loyalty certificates usually conclude with a stock phrase explaining that since there were no complaints concerning anti-Hungarian behavior lodged against the individual and because "to this point [he or she] has demonstrated civic loyalty, certification is recommended."[68]

[67] MOL K568 [Felvidéki Igazoló Bizottságok], Nagysurány. "3 gyermeke van akiket magyar nyelven nevelt ugy, hogy a felszabaduláskor magyar intézetbe adta őket, ahol sikeresen vizsgáztak."
[68] See for example, MOL K568, Nagysurány. "A magát szlovák származásunak valló alkalmazottnak, az idegen uralom alatt és az 1938. évi november hó 2.-ika óta eltelt idő alatt a magyarsággal szemben

The more entrenched a Slovak individual had been in Czechoslovak cutural or political life in the Czechoslovak Republic, the more difficult it was for him or her to receive a loyalty certificate from the Hungarian government. Past membership in a Czechoslovak political party, trade union, or cultural organization could be grounds for denial.[69] These types of affiliations were damning because they were considered proof that an individual's allegiance lay elsewhere, precluding him or her from being loyal to the Hungarian state. Receiving parcels of land in the Czechoslovak Land Reform was likewise deemed highly suspicious and often cited by commissions as justification for not granting a loyalty certificate.[70] The perception that such people profited from Hungarian misfortune and artificially diluted Hungarian ethnic predominance in Felvidék made them favorite targets of the regime, not potential employees. The loyalty commissions also scrutinized past job performance for evidence of anti-Hungarian tendencies. Former bailiff Pál Jancsovics was denied because in his official capacity, it was alleged that "he handled affairs concerning Hungarians with malice and harmful intent."[71] In such instances, treatment of the Hungarian minority over the previous twenty years was presented as evidence of one's potential disloyalty to the Hungarian state.

Though comprehensive statistics do not exist for the loyalty certificates, it appears that the Hungarian government had a tendency to retain more Slovak officials in Slovak-majority areas where they could not easily be replaced by Hungarian officials, who often did not have the necessary Slovak language skills. Perhaps the most telling example is the case of József Zajicsek,

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követett magatartása tekintetében kifogás nem merült fel és panasz nem érkezett be s mert az állampolgári hüség tekintetében eddig megbizhatónak mutatkozott, igazolását javasolja."

[69] See for example, MOL K28 28/68 file 1940-L-15465. Gyula Vankó was denied a certificate because he was a member of a Czechoslovak trade union and Pál Petrás was denied because he was a member of a Slovak railroad worker association.

[70] MOL K28 28/68 file 1940-L-15465. Listed under "reasons for denial" for Pál Petrás and István Novoszád was the fact that both had received two-hold parcels of land.

[71] Ibid. "Az igazoló bizottság az igazolást azért tagadta meg, mert nevezett hivatalos müködésének során a magyar felek ügyeit rosszindulattal és ártó szándékkal kezelte."

a police officer from Nagysurány of Slovak ethnicity. The town, which was 79 percent Slovak according to 1939 Hungarian statistics, was a center for Slovak anti-Hungarian activity and was the sight of a brutal suppression of an anti-Hungarian demonstration outside a church on Christmas Day, 1938, in which several Slovaks were killed by Hungarian policemen.[72] Zajicsek was accused by an anonymous denouncer of being a former communist party leader and of alerting the demonstrators that Hungarian authorities were on their way to break up the meeting, allowing some of the agitators to escape.[73] The accusation that Zajicsek was involved in aiding the Nagysurány protesters was extremely serious. Hungarian crackdown on the protest was one of the most controversial episodes during Hungary's post-1938 rule of Felvidék and it established Nagysurány as a problem area for the government.[74] Yet Zajicsek received a certificate and kept his job as a police officer. In their investigation, the loyalty council noted that because the denunciation had been anonymous and because the local butcher, a "trustworthy Hungarian," vouched that Zajicsek was one of only two reliable officers on the police force in Nagysurány, he should receive loyalty certification.[75] Thus, the lack of available replacements played a role in the council's assessment of Zajicsek's loyalty.

Loyalty hearings involving ethnic Hungarians display several important commonalities with those of Slovak individuals. In both instances, job performance was scrutinized from a nationality standpoint; commissions wanted to know how a person in question had treated their fellow Hungarians during the period of Czechoslovak rule. Past political association was likewise deemed important in both instances. But in Hungarian cases, the loyalty commissions more closely investigated individuals' private conduct, since the preservation of Hungarianness

[72] See MOL K28 215/428 for population statistics. See Ladislav Deák, *The Slovaks in Hungarian Politics in the Years 1918-1938* (Bratislava: Kubko Goral, 1997), 96 for information on the Nagysurány incident.
[73] MOL K568, Nagysurány.
[74] Filep, "Returnee Hungarians," 237.
[75] MOL K568, Nagysurány.

in the domestic sphere had been considered essential to maintaining the Hungarian community under foreign rule. Showing that you had nurtured your Hungarian identity during the Czechoslovak period, despite the many risks of doing so, was thus an important way to prove your loyalty to the Hungarian state.

The loyalty hearing of Ferenc Piffkó, a police officer from Galánta offer a telling example of how loyalty was considered contingent on how one had treated Hungarians in his official capacity. Witnesses who supported Piffkó's claims of loyalty to the Hungarian state asserted that, although he was employed as a Czechoslovak police officer, Piffkó had nevertheless remained a faithful Hungarian. Pharmacist Géza Massányi and judge József Dudás testified that "officer Piffkó was trustworthy from a [Hungarian] nationality standpoint" during the twenty years of Czechoslovak rule. In fact, they claimed, he "always worked in the interest of Hungarians."[76] Another witness, musician János Bartos, recounted how Piffkó had worked to protect the Hungarian minority, undermining the attempts of the Czechoslovak state to police nationalist activity. Bartos claimed that whenever a Hungarian would be denounced for singing forbidden Hungarian songs or the national anthem at the local pub, Piffkó would forewarn the individual and coach him how to properly deny the Czechoslovak police's questioning so he would escape prosecution. In addition, Piffkó sometimes participated in these late-night Hungarian sing-alongs himself! According to Bartos, Piffkó "sang [the anthem] with as much enthusiasm as the other Hungarians." [77]

[76] MOL K568, Galánta. "Massányi Géza gyogyszerész és Dudás József községi biro, galántai lakosok előadták, hogy a cseh megszállás alatt Piffkó Ferenc rendőr nemzethüségi szempontból megbizható volt . . . és mindég [sic] a magyarság érdekében dolgozott."

[77] Ibid. "Bartos János zenész, galántai lakos, előadta, hogy a cseh megszállás[ban] nagyon sok esetben megtörtént, hogy a vendéglőben a magyar uraknak az eltiltott magyarnótákat és a Himnuszt elmuzsikálták, amiért minden egyes esetben feljelentették őket. Azonban még mielőtt a cseh csendőrök az eljárást meginditották volna, ezt meg előzőleg éjjel, Piffkó Ferenc rendőr minden egyes alkalommal az ő lakására ment és közölte vele a történteket és meg mondta ő neki, hogy a kikérdezés folyamán mindent

Piffkó's ability to prove that he had used his authority to support the Hungarian minority turned the extremely undesirable quality of working for the Czechoslovak state into an asset. Through the lens of nationality, he could be considered a protector— a saboteur working to preserve the Hungarian nation in Felvidék and undermine the Czechoslovak nation-building process.

Although Slovaks benefitted from having remained politically neutral during Czechoslovak rule, the opposite was true for Hungarians. Participating in the public life of the Hungarian minority during the Czechoslovak period more or less guaranteed a Hungarian a loyalty certificate. The most valuable distinction was membership in the United Hungarian Party. The party's claim that it had been the official representation of the Hungarian minority and its recognition as such by the Hungarian government gave its members a great deal of clout during the transition to Hungarian rule. Since United Hungarian Party leaders manned the local loyalty commissions, membership in the party did more to help a person's cause than any other single factor. Apart from party affiliation, applicants for loyalty certificates also mentioned participation in local Hungarian athletic clubs or choirs as proof of allegiance to the Hungarian nation.[78] However, Hungarians who engaged in public life in "non-Hungarian" ways were lambasted by the loyalty commissions. Those who had registered as members of Czechoslovak political parties often experienced even greater vitriol than Slovaks who had done likewise.[79]

Those who identified as Hungarians pointed to their Hungarian language usage in the private sphere, often citing marriage to other Hungarians and raising their children speaking

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tagadjon. Igy azután a cseh csendőrség idézésére már felkészülve tudott menni is kikérdezés alatt is mindég [sic] segitségére volt. Megtörtént az az eset is, hogy amikor ők a vendéglőben a Himnuszt játszották Piffkó rendőr is jelen volt és nem tiltotta meg, hogy a Himnuszt nem játszhatják, sőt még az is olyan lekesedéssel énekelte mint a többi magyarok."

[78] Ibid. István Bozsik was a sports team leader and Albert Janega belonged to a Hungarian glee club.

[79] See for example, MOL K568, Magyardiószeg. A Hungarian clerk named Ferenc Mányi was denied a certificate for even associating with members of the Czechoslovak Community Party.

Hungarian in their loyalty proceedings. For example, Ferenc Piffkó noted that both he and his wife were of Hungarian descent, and that his children only spoke Hungarian.[80] A witness in his loyalty hearing claimed that he had seen Officer Piffkó beat his children for speaking Hungarian in public and forced them to speak Slovak instead.[81] In his defense, Piffkó stated that this accusation was false, evidenced by the fact that his eight-year-old son "does not know a word of anything but Hungarian and at home he spoke only Hungarian with his children."[82]

Sending one's children to Hungarian schools was a particularly meaningful criterion. In fact, those that did not send their children to Hungarian schools had to justify their contrary decisions to the loyalty committees. City Accountant István Bartos, for instance, claimed that he had raised his three children "in the Hungarian spirit and language" at home, though he had sent his two older children to Slovak schools so that "they would not experience difficulties due to not having knowledge of the language."[83] Such complicated excuses were indeed necessary. In a number of cases, a child's attendance at a Slovak school was listed as grounds for denying a loyalty certificate. Records for railworker Ferenc Perni's denial indicate that the loyalty committee requested he transfer his children into Hungarian schools. "When this did not happen, he was not certified."[84] Piffkó's decision to send his youngest daughter to a Slovak school was a potentially serious blemish on his record. But he explained that his wife had made the decision without his knowledge "from a cleanliness and health standpoint" because the Hungarian school

[80] Ibid. Felesége magyar származásu és . . . gyermekei csakis magyarul beszélnek.
[81] Ibid. "Pifkó [sic] rendőr a gyermekeit odahaza ütötte verte, azért mert odahaza magyarul beszéltek s kényszeritette őket, hogy szlovákul beszéljenek, amihez hozzájárul még az is, hogy a magyar iskolából a gyermekeit kivette és a szlovák iskolába iratta, amit saját felesége ez alkalommal . . . panaszolt el."
[82] Ibid. "8 éves kisfia egy szót nem tud másként, mint magyarul és otthon soha nem beszélt más-ként gyermekeivel, mint magyarul."
[83] Ibid. "3 gyermekét magyar szellemben és magyar nyelven neveli, ellenben 2 idősebb gyermekét szlovák iskolába iratta be, hogy a nyelv nem tudása miatt nehézségeik ne legyenek."
[84]MOL K28 28/68 file 1940-L-15465. "Nemigazolás oka: mert három gyermeke szlovák polgáriba illetve a Nagysurányi szlovák gimnáziumba járnak. Az igazolóbizottság követelte, hogy gyermekeit magyar iskolába járassa. Mivel ez nem történt meg, nem lett igazolva."

was in a bad part of town near a gypsy encampment.[85] Thus, his defense simultaneously served as a critique of Czechoslovak neglect of Hungarian schools and his own family's suffering.

Piffkó also pointed to his reading preferences to prove his "Hungarianness." One witness noted that Piffkó read Czechoslovak newspapers like "A-Zet" and "Slovenská Politika" that were known for their anti-Hungarian sentiments. Piffkó countered that he did not speak Czech well enough to read such newspapers and, furthermore, that he "didn't buy newspapers because he didn't have that kind of money." He read newspapers such as *Prágai Magyar Hirlap* (the highest circulating Hungarian-language newspaper in Czechoslovakia) in coffeehouses instead.[86] Such evidence reveals the extent to which the everyday lives of the people of Felvidék were ethnicized. People's mundane actions were dissected to see if they had been conducted in a properly Hungarian manner. In the court of loyalty, *everything* could be imbued with national significance, from the paper one read to the way someone interacted with his or her child for the previous two decades.

The rhetoric of injustice, so central to the entire revisionist project, was prominent in the loyalty hearings as well. Just as the Hungarian nation had suffered collectively under Trianon, Hungarian candidates for loyalty certificates claimed they had suffered personally at the hands of the Czechoslovak regime. They presented their experiences of national persecution as evidence of their loyalty to the Hungarian state. Béla Vida noted that after the regime change, Czechoslovak authorities dismissed him from his job as a rail worker because of his previous

[85] MOL K568, Galánta. "A kisebbik leánya 4 magyar osztályt járt s az 5-ik osztály szlovák iskolában végezte, mert nem jó környezetbe ültették, cigányok közé, s felesége az ő tudta nélkül vette ki, egészségi és tisztasági szempontból."
[86] Ibid. "Nem felel meg a valóságnak, hogy a kérdéses lapokat olvasta, mert nem tud ugy csehül, hogy azokat megértse. Ujságokat nem is vásárol, mert erre pénze nem volt. Az ujságokat kávéházban olvasta, és a Prágai Magyar Hirlapot is."

affiliation with the Hungarian State Railway.[87] István Mészáros likewise testified that he was released from his position as town clerk because he did not know Slovak.[88] Such arguments were effective in persuading committees to grant certificates. They were considered powerful indicators of loyalty and were nearly always mentioned in committee recommendations. The Nyitra-Pozsony County Loyalty Committee report concerning village clerk István Bozsik was typical of the conclusions these committees reached. It determined that because Bozsik "suffered mistreatment by the Czech gendarme due to his national loyalty, certification is recommended."[89] Thus, revisionism played out in a concrete way in people's lives. Revisionism did not end at border changes—it also sought to reestablish the "proper" national order in the area.

Hungarian and Slovak were the two main categories used to describe individuals in the loyalty hearings. However, some people who sought certification failed to easily fit into either grouping. They were the "nationally indifferent" individuals who did not strongly identify with either nationalizing project. As historian Tara Zahra has discussed, despite the zealous efforts of both nationalizing states and minority nationalists, people in Central Europe continued to exhibit "national ambivalence" in the form of bilingualism, side switching, and even outright rejection of all national loyalties.[90] These individuals were among the most frustrating for government officials because they defied easy categorization. Loyalty commissions struggled with their cases more than others, often leading to arbitrary rulings.

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[87] MOL K568, Nagysurány.
[88] MOL K568, Érsekújvár. "Köbölkuton vezetőjegyző ahonnan elbocsátották a szlovák nylev nem tudása miatt."
[89] MOL K568, Galánta. "A nemzethüsége miatt a cseh csendőroktől bántalmazást is szenvedett, igazolását javasolja."
[90] Tara Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls: National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900-1948* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2008), 4-5. Zahra specifically looks at the situation in Bohemia but the trend appears to hold true for Felvidék as well.

The case of Gyula Subik, a district notary from the village of Hidaskürt [SK: Mostová] reveals some of the difficulties that national ambiguity brought forth for those that refused to identify strongly with either side. A local priest described Subik as a loner who had neither helped nor hindered the Hungarian cause. The priest confided that Subik had asked him for two statements; "one would have demonstrated Hungarian loyalty, the other Slovak."[91] Such hedging of bets did not sit well with committee members. They were further confounded when Subik "confessed that he considered himself neither Hungarian nor Slovak." In their eyes, this was symptomatic of a grave problem: Subik's "unpatriotic attitude."[92] He was further hurt by the fact that he had not taken part in any kind of cultural activities or political life on either side. Subik's only significant association was as an employee of the Czechoslovak government. Although Subik's family lived in Hungary proper and vouched that he had "manfully taken part in every anti-Czechoslovak movement," the loyalty committee could not overlook his lack of national affiliation and he was denied a certificate. His appeal of the decision turned ugly and is discussed further below.

In many of the cases where nationality could not be easily identified, loyalty councils often suspected that the individuals in question were really disloyal Hungarians who had turned Slovak since the regime change. For example, Jozsef Andrsik, a railworker from Komját (SK: Komjatice), was denied a certificate because he was from a mixed family (Hungarian father, Slovak mother) and had declared himself Slovak rather than Hungarian. [93] There was no room

[91] MOL K568, Hidaskürt. "Két bizonyitványt ért tőlem, ezek egyike szolgált volna a magyar hüség igazolására, a másik pedig a szlovák hüség igazolására, tehát mindkét oldalra biztositani akarta volna magát."
[92] Ibid. "A bizottság véleménye szerint nem annyira a magyarság sérelmére elkövetett konkrét tényeken van a hangsuly, hanem azon egészében hazafiatlan magatartáson, melyet nem csak a tanuk bizonyitanak, hanem ő maga is elismert, midőn megvallotta, hogy sem magyarnak sem szlováknak nem állitotta magát."
[93] MOL K28 28/68 file 1940-L-15465.

for hybrid identities; a person had to choose either one or the other, and the loyalty council concluded that Andrsik had chosen incorrectly. Another railworker from Komját, István Molnár, was denied a certificate because he sent his children to a Slovak-language school and spoke Hungarian poorly despite the fact that he had a traditionally Hungarian last name.[94] There was a clear expectation of how someone with the name Molnár should behave; failure to meet it was interpreted as treachery. The antipathy displayed by loyalty councils toward nationally ambiguous individuals stems from the success of ethnically-based border revision. The incorporation of Austria and Sudetenland into Germany and Felvidék's return to Hungary had all been based on the ethnic composition of the territories in question. Thus, those without clear national identities were not simply a nuissance; they had the potential to destabilize the region and reverse the First Vienna Award. Since Hungarian sovereignty in Felvidék hinged on such "population politics," nationally ambiguous behavior needed to be eradicated.

The Culture of Denunciation

Loyalty certificate proceedings fed a more widespread political culture of national denunciation in Hungary. Indeed, during the German occupation of Hungary in 1944-45 the German authorities received 35,000 denunciations against people accused of being Jews and Communists, more than in any other occupied territory.[95] In Felvidék, witnesses and individuals under investigation accused one another of disloyalty to Hungary during the Czechoslovak regime to a variety of ends. Sheila Fitzpatrick has noted that for citizens, denouncing can serve a manipulative function in that "citizens protect and advance their individual interests" by

[94] Ibid. Molnár István "rosszul beszél magyarul, jollehet magyar neve van, és hogy gyermekei szlovák iskolába járnak."

[95] Miklós N. Szilágyi, *The Story of My Times, Vol. 2: In the Wrong Place at the Wrong Time* (e-book, 2007), 3 and Károly Kapronczay, *Refugees in Hungary: Shelter from Storm During World War II* translated by Eva Barcza-Bessenyey (Toronto: Matthias Corvinus, 1999), 164.

provoking state action.[96] Denunciations in the context of the loyalty hearings were often very obviously about personal vendettas or the act of self-preservation, when an individual denounced as a way to deflect scrutiny away from him/herself and onto another. But denunciation also served an ideological purpose as "a means of correcting injustice or protecting the interests of the community."[97] Given Hungarian society's obsession with achieving justice after Trianon, the role of denouncer as fighter of injustice found a central place in the culture of Felvidék. The loyalty hearings were only one of several avenues through which residents could accuse one another of acting against the interests of Hungary. Law III/1921, the "Law for the More Effective Protection of the Order of the State and Society," contained a provision for prosecuting "any person who makes or spreads a false statement calcualated to reduce the respect for the Hungarian State and nation, or to detract from its good name."[98] Residents denounced one another for making inflammatory statements about the Hungarian nation, which could result in the maximum penalty of five years' imprisonment. These two types of cases, one to determine honor based on one's behavior living under another regime and the other to determine guilt based on actions within the Hungarian kingdom, made denunciation a familiar part of life for the people of Felvidék. While denunciations play a role in nearly every modern society, they appear to have a more prominent place in areas in political flux like borderlands. The culture of denunciation in Felvidék shows similar patterns to what occurred in both the democratic system implemented after 1918 in Alsace-Lorraine when it returned to French rule and to the totalitarian

[96] Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Signals from Below: Soviet Letters of Denunciation of the 1930s," in *Accusatory Practices: Denunciation in Modern European History, 1789-1989,* ed. Sheila Fitzpatrick and Robert Gellately (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 117.
[97] Ibid., 117.
[98] George Barany, "The Dragon's Teeth: The Roots of Hungarian Fascism," in *Native Fascism in the Successor States, 1918-1945*, ed. Peter Sugar (Santa Barbara, Calif.: Clio Press), 76.

regime installed by the Nazis in 1939 in the Reich Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.[99] In all of these areas, the new regimes were deeply suspicious of residents' political loyalties and relied on denunciations by private citizens to ascertain who should be considered a patriot and who a traitor.

In addition to being highly indicative of the problems of nationally indifferent individuals, Gyula Subik's case reveals the central role that acts of denunciation played in loyalty hearings. Gyula Subik's brother, Károly, a priest and member of the Order of Vitéz (a knightly order established by Regent Horthy) living in Hungary proper with personal connections to officers in the Interior Ministry, wrote a letter on his brother's behalf, assuring the government that Gyula Subik was "always trustworthy in his Hungarian sentiments."[100] The letter also noted that Felvidék was experiencing a flurry of accusations that reminded him of the denunciations he witnessed during and after Hungary's Bolshevik Revolution in 1919:

> During communism I stood in front of gun barrells and the good Lord's grace rescued me from the gallows. I lived through the post-communist times too when everyone hurled accusations at each other. I hear from some ministers that such a deluge of accusations is now happening in the returned territories as well. And maybe such accusations will be made against my brother.[101]

Károly Subik was observant to draw these parallels and right to fear his brother would be denounced. During his loyalty hearing, witnesses condemned Gyula Subik, charging that he had denounced Hungarians to Czechoslovak authorities. One individual recounted an instance in

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[99] On the purge trials in Alsace-Lorraine see Laird Boswell, "From Liberation to Purge Trials in the 'Mythic Provinces': Recasting French Identities in Alsace and Lorraine, 1918-1920," *French Historical Studies* 23:1 (2000), 129-162 and Tara Zahra, "The 'Minority Problem' and National Classification in the French and Czech Borderlands," *Contemporary European History* 17:2 (2008) 137-165. On the Reich Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia see Chad Bryant, *Prague in Black: Nazi Rule and Czech Nationalism*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2007), 4-5.

[100] MOL K568, "Hidaskürt. "Magyar érzelmeiben mindenkor megbizható volt."

[101] Ibid. "A kommunizmus alatt puskacsövek előtt állottam és az akasztófától a jó Isten különös kegyelme mentett meg s átéltem a kommunizmus utáni időket is, amikor mindenki ellen tömegével szórták a vádakat. Amint ezt egyes miniszter uraktól is hallom, ugyanilyen vádaskodási áradat indult meg a visszakerült területeken is. S lehet, hogy öcsém ellen is fognak vádaskodni."

which Subik reported some Hungarians to the Czech authorities for selling meat on the black market. "If Mr. Subik was even a little bit Hungarian," the witness stated, "he would not have . . . denounced a Hungarian person for such a thing."[102]

During his appeal hearing, Subik resorted to flinging accusations elsewhere in a desperate attempt to prove his loyalty to Hungary. Subik's aim was too high, however, when he targeted one of the members of the loyalty council, Ernő Biskoroványi. "Do not judge me in front of that loyalty council member Mr. Biskoroványi," Subik charged, "who sent his child to a Slovak school over a Hungarian one and thereby contaminated the soul of his innocent child with the Czechoslovak spirit!"[103] This accusation was met with indignation by the council, which called Subik's claim "excessive, audacious, arrogant, hypocritical, [and] mystifyingly false."[104] The council's report on Subik charged that he was "oppressed by dark guilt" when Hungarian troops reoccupied Felvidék and that "in his entire demeanor he gave off the impression of a guilty person."[105] The council took extreme offense to the questioning of Ernő Biskoroványi's loyalty and the chairman wrote a letter to the Interior Minister in which he pleaded for legal action against Subik:

> I need not emphasize that the unspeakable and false charge by such a person who used his connections with the Czechs to acquire property … and whose unpatriotic attitude is visible on the whole, against a truly honorable and exceptionally resolute, patriotic man . . . [who has made] sacrifices for Hungarian public life cannot go without punishment.

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[102] Ibid. "Ha Subik úr egy parányit is magyar . . . magyar ember nem jelent ezért fel."
[103] Ibid. "Ne itéljen én felettem az a Biskoroványi igazoló bizottsági tag Ur, aki gyermekét magyar iskola helyett szintén szlovák iskolába járatta és ezzel ártatlan gyermekének a lelkét a csehszlovák szellemmel megfertőzte."
[104] Ibid. "Ez a határtalanul merész és fennhejazó álszenteskedő megtévestően hamis és valótlanságokra felépitett szellem."
[105] Ibid. "Ez a határtalanul merész és fennhejazó álszenteskedő megtévestően hamis és valótlanságokra felépitett szellem. . . . a felszabadulás öröme helyett, sötét büntudatával terhelve, a bevonuló magyar csapatok elől elmenekült s a tárgyaláson és egész magatartásában is, a bünös ember benyomását keltette."

> And I ask for instruction and authorization, whether for criminal or petty offense proceedings.[106]

Despite the fact that Subik was denied a loyalty certificate and that the loyalty council attempted to punish him for his outburst, his accusation against a powerful local official demonstrates that in Felvidék denunciations became a way for individuals to express their frustrations toward the invasive Hungarian state, even if they were couched in patriotic language. The severe reaction of the loyalty council attests to the fact that although denunciation was a tool of the state in policing loyalty, it was a tool that could not be fully controlled and could be turned on the state as well.

In Officer Ferenc Piffkó's loyalty hearing, his main accuser, Vilmos Záreczky, claimed that he was reporting on Piffkó out of a sense of patriotic duty. Záreczky and his associates wrote a long letter to the loyalty council in Galánta detailing Piffkó's alleged wrongdoings. "We believe in Hungarian justice," Záreczky stated, "and we hope that this matter will be settled to everyone's satisfaction because this is not only our affair but . . . the affair of [all] Hungarians."[107] Záreczky considered reporting on issues of nationality to be his duty as a Hungarian and a citizen of the Kingdom of Hungary. Unfortunately for him, Záreczky's own suspect past came to light in the course of these proceedings. Some of the testimonies in support of Piffkó in turn denounced Záreczky as a former communist who had been involved in Hungary's Bolshevik Revolution in 1918, making him "untrustworthy" as a witness. Indeed, the loyalty committees were acutely aware of the often dubious motivations behind denouncers. In the loyalty proceedings of Julia Bujdák, an assistant from the town of Nagysurány, the council

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[106] Ibid. "Nem kell hangsuloznom, hogy a valóban tiszteletre méltó és kivételesen gerinces, hazafias magatartást tanusitó áldozatkész magyar közéleti férfiut ért minősithetetlen és hazug támadás, egy olyan ember részéről, aki a csehekkel való összeköttetését vagyon szerzésre használta fel s mindennek volt mondható, csak magyarnak nem s akinek egészében hazafiatlan magatartására nézve, még sulyos adatok állnak a bizottság rendelkezésére, nem maradhat megtorlás nékül s akár büntető per, akár a kihágási uton való felelősségre vonás tárgyában, kérem Nagyméltóságod rendelkezéség és felhatalmazását."

[107] MOL K568, Galánta. "Mi bizunk a magyar igazságban és reméljük, hogy ezen ügy közmegelégedésre lesz elintézve, mert ez nemcsak a mi ügyünk, hanem . . . a magyarság ügye."

acknowledged that a complaint received from a Mrs. Zlatinszky was of questionable reliability. The town's commissioner testified that to his knowledge, the two women had a personal issue with one another and that this was the reason for Mrs. Zlatinskzy's denunciation. "And such a denunciation" he stated, "cannot be accepted."[108] The loyalty council agreed with the commissioner and granted Julia Bujdák a loyalty certificate.

The cases of slander against the Hungarian nation provided another avenue for private individuals to denounce one another to the state in Felvidék. Prior to the reincorporation of Felvidék, Law III/1921 was generally used to target the government's political opponents—suspected communists and members of extreme right parties who criticized the social order or aspects of the regime's policy.[109] Beginning in the mid-1930s, however, some members of the country's German minority were targeted by the law.[110] The enlargement of Hungary's borders to include large minority populations led to a marked expansion in the number of cases of insulting the "honor" of the Hungarian nation prosecuted by the Ministry of Justice. Of the several hundred cases from Felvidék between 1938 and 1944, most concern people of Slovak nationality.[111] As historian Holly Case has demonstrated in her analysis of Northern Transylvania after the territory's return to Hungarian rule in 1940, "although the state clearly played a role" in setting standards for what could be considered criminal behavior and in encouraging citizens to report on one another, "much of the actual imposition and enforcement of the boundaries (categorizing individuals, and policing their behavior) took place in a social context that was otherwise free of state authority."[112] Cases from Felivdék demonstrate a similar

[108] K568, Nagysurány. "S igy vallomása . . . nem fogadható el."
[109] Barany, "The Dragon's Teeth," 76.
[110] Holly Case, "A City Between States: The Transylvanian City of Cluj-Kolozsvár-Klausenburg in the Spring of 1942" (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2004), 130.
[111] K28 30/73; 31/73; 32/73; 33/73.
[112] Case, "A City Between States," 154.

trend, in which locals took the initiative in reporting their neighbors for disloyalty to the state, often for seemingly trivial reasons such as complaining about the price of goods or making drunken disparaging remarks about the government in the local pub. The case against Imre Farkas is typical: While riding on a train, noticeably intoxicated, he overheard a passenger singing the song, "Hungary, You are Beautiful," at which time he spit at the singer and complained, "this is not singing! It sounds like cattle mooing as they go to pasture."[113] Although the prosecutor noted that alcohol had played a role in Farkas's actions, he was nevertheless tried for insulting the honor of the Hungarian nation because of his reaction to the patriotic song and sentenced to forty-five days in jail and a three-year loss of his political rights. The train passengers who reported on Farkas interpreted his drunken ramblings as a threat to the new Hungarian political order; the state agreed.

Each case of slander against the nation was reviewed by the Minorities Division of the Office of the Prime Minister, which analyzed whether these were incidents of individual opposition or part of a larger resistance to state authority. In its investigations, the department often requested demographic data for the locality where the crime allegedly occurred. Officials kept careful note of the number of Hungarians, Slovaks, Germans, and Ruthenians living in each town or village. In one case, the Prime Minister's office requested information on the disposition the village of Abaujrákos, asking if there had been a "change in the feeling of the residents" toward the regime.[114] In their investigation, county officials assured the Prime Minister's office that "a detrimental change in attitude is not perceivable in Abaujrákos. The community is

[113] K28 30/73, file 15018. "A szép vagy, gyönyörü vagy Magyarország szövegű dalt énekelni hallotta, az éneklők felé többször kiköpött s azt a kijelentést tette, hogy 'ez nem ének, olyan, mint amikor marhák mennek a legelőre és bőgnek.'"
[114] K28 30/73, file 15730. "Kérdés az, hogy a lakosság hangulatának megváltozása."

explicitly pro-Hungarian presently, just as it was during the first days of liberation."[115] Thus, they concluded, the incident under examination should be considered an isolated outburst.

The multiple changes of sovereignty in Felvidék and uncertainty over the area's future as part of the Hungarian nation was evident in many of the trials. For instance, Slovak Mária Vajda was accused of saying to a Hungarian man, "you're ashamed that you're Hungarian because if the Slovaks come back, you'll be the first person they deal with."[116] The idea of retribution, which the Hungarian government clearly advocated in order to mete out justice in Felvidék, could go both ways. There are many cases of Slovak residents warning Hungarians that the current political situation would not last. "Time is up for the Felvidék Hungarians," Imre Sidlik was accused of saying in 1940, "because the Slovaks and their Russian-Soviet brothers . . . will occupy Felvidék by this Christmas and the Hungarians will have to go back from whence they came."[117]

The cases also demonstrate the reach of revisionist politics and the extent to which revisionist rhetoric trickled down to the discourse of everyday life. Many individuals were prosecuted for either criticizing Hungarian irredentist goals or supporting Slovak ones. Mária Kothaj was charged with insulting the Hungarian nation when she quarreled with a neighbor, Mrs. József Kliszki, over border changes. Kliszki had remarked in July 1939 in the village of Jászfalu [SK: Jasová] that her daughter would "soon be able to travel home without a passport because Trencsén would come back to Hungary." Kothaj remarked that "you shouldn't wait for

[115] Ibid. "Abaujrákos község magatartásában hátrányos változás nem tapasztalható. A község határozottan magyarbarát hangulatu jelenleg éppenugy, mint felszabadulás első napjaiban."
[116] K28 32/73, file 15739. "Szégyelje magát hogy magyar, ha visszajönnek a szlovákok, az első lesz, akit el fog intézni." "Szégyelje magát, mert nem volt jó tót, de nem lesz jó magyar sem."
[117] K28 32/70, file 15684. "Ütött az óra a felvidéki magyaroknak, mert a tótok és az orosz-szovjettestvérekkel . . . Felvidéket ez év karácsonyára megszállják és a magyarok mehetek vissza ahonnan jöttek."

this" because in fact, the territory "all the way to Vác was once Slovak and will be again."[118] When the other women present asked where she learned this, Kothaj claimed she had heard it on the radio.[119] The prosecutor in the case noted that Kothaj was spreading false allegations because "according to the testimony of history, Felvidék was an integral part of Hungary for the last thousand years" and by accusing Hungary of "usurp[ing] foreign land" she had damaged the country's reputation.[120] In Kothaj's case, failure to acknowledge the "truth" of the Hungarian revisionist narrative was tantamount to insulting the nation.

Case's investigation of crimes against the Hungarian nation also revealed that in many instances, "ordinary people [stood] in for the state," meaning that if a person insulted a Hungarian individual, he or she could be charged with insulting the entire nation of Hungary.[121] The court cases in Felvidék again corroborate her findings. For instance, Slovak Anna Demkó was accused of mocking a Hungarian woman, Irén Matusek, insinuating that she and her children were like dogs who "could do nothing but bark in Hungarian," and telling her to "go back to Hungary to bark."[122] The prosecutor of the case claimed that although Demkó had insulted Matusek specifically, since she said "the Hungarian language is equivalent to that of dogs" the insult "was not only against Irén Matusek but against the entire Hungarian nation since its most precious treasure is the mother tongue." Although it might appear that the law simply drew a

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[118] Trenčín [SK] remained in Slovakia after the First Vienna Award. Vác is a city in the northern part of Trianon Hungary. It was never part of the Czechoslovak territory. Slovaks claimed it based on the fact that there were some Slovak speakers who lived there, though they did not make up the majority population.

[119] K28 30/73, file 15130. "Kliszki Józsefné azt mondotta a terheltnek, hogy hamarosan hazajön a lánya utlevél nélkül, mert Trencsén is visszakerül Magyarországba. Erre a terhelt azt felelte, hogy ezt ne is várja, mert Vácig a föld szlovákoké volt és lesz is. A tanu kérdésére, hogy ezt honnan tudja azt felelte, hogy a rádióban hallotta."

[120] Ibid. "A terhelt tényállítása valótlan, mert a történelem tanusága szerint a Felvidék utobbi ezer év alatt Magyarország integráns része volt. Ez a tényállítás azt a valótlanságot tartalmazza, hogy a magyar állam idegen terület bitoról s igy alkalmas arra, hogy a magyar becsülését csorbitsa."

[121] Case, *Between States*, 140.

[122] K28 30/73, file 15370.

firm line with Hungarian individuals and the state on one side and minorities on the other, prosecution of these cases was complicated by a continuing reluctance to define the Hungarian nation in ethnic terms. In his response to the Demkó case, Director of the Minorities Division of the Prime Minister's Office, Tibor Pataky, recommended omitting the line about the Hungarian language being the nation's most precious treasure because "on the one hand, a nation as such has no mother tongue, and on the other, the exclusive identification of the Hungarian nation with [native Hungarian speakers] is undesirable from the standpoint of nationality politics."[123] Pataky's inclination to retain the pre-war, inclusive definition of the Hungarian nation even while prosecuting members of the minority population for insulting it reveals one of the major tensions in Hungarian nationalism that border revision exacerbated. Trianon had not eliminated the articulation of the Hungarian nation as defined by geography and fealty rather than ethnicity. The suspicion that the Slovak minority could not be trusted was strong, but so was the inclination to assimilate and include these individuals. Many of the regime's difficulties in Felvidék stem from its inability to recognize that these two impulses were incompatible.

Conclusion

The system of loyalty certification, the trials for insulting the honor of the Hungarian nation, and the various daily encounters between the people of Felvidék and officials of the Hungarian government took a heavy toll on relations between locals and the state. State officials received numerous complaints from residents concerning their treatment at the hands of Hungarian authorities. Perhaps remembering his appeal to Slovaks during the reoccupation of

[123] Ibid. "'Melynek legféltettebb kincse az anyanyelve' szavakat teljesen mellőzendőnek tartom egy részt azért, mert egy nemzetnek, mint ilyennek, anyanyelve nincs másrészt, mert a magyar nemzetnek a magyar anyanyelvű néppel való kizárólagos azonosítása nemzetiségpolitikai szempontból nem kívánatos és tételes közjogunkkal sincsen összehangban." Copies of the cases of insulting the honor of the Hungarian nation from Felvidék were sent to the Minorities Division of the Prime Minister's Office for review.

Kassa, Augusta Petrovičova wrote a letter to the regent in January 1939 about her encounters with Hungarian officials. She told Horthy that if officials learned she was Slovak, they refused to help her. "Their hearts are made of stone," she lamented, "and this hurts the Slovaks."[124] Likewise, a Hungarian woman, Mrs. István Tóth, bitterly complained in a letter to Miklós Kozma from May 1940 that she too was fed up with the system. "What kind of mother gives her returned child a smaller slice of bread than his supposed stepmother?" she asked, implying that life had been better in Felvidék under Czechoslovak rule.[125]

The loyalty commissions in particular created a strong backlash for the Hungarian administration. They received hundreds of appeals to reopen the cases of individuals who had been denied loyalty certificates. Some residents complained about the toll the loyalty proceedings had taken on their local communities. For instance, Mrs. János Csalthó wrote a letter to Prime Minister Teleki in December 1939 protesting that her village of Zsitafödémes [SK: Úľany nad Žitavou] had been hit particularly hard. "Of the two thousand residents in our village, at least five hundred work for the railway" she noted. During the loyalty proceedings, many people "who had no complaints against them were released [from their jobs]." Furthermore, the loyalty commission gave no explanation to the individuals on why they had been rejected. She appealed to the prime minister to review the cases of three men from the village whom she believed had been unjustly released from their jobs and left without a way to support their families. The Trade and Transportation Ministry looked into the complaint and agreed to reopen one of the three cases. [126] But this did little to solve the overall feeling of discontent surrounding the loyalty certificates. Prime Minister Teleki conceded that "during the certification process, it

[124] Quoted in Tilkovszky, *Revízió és nemzetiségpolitika,* 62. "Szívük kőből van, és ez fáj a szlováknak."
[125] Quoted in ibid., 60. "Miféle édesanya az, amely hazatért gyermekének kisebb darab kenyeret szel, mint állítólagos mostohája?"
[126] K28 28/68, file 17169.

is generally known that in some cases, the decisions were erroneous" but he did not advocate a systematic review of loyalty council decisions.[127] Instead, each separate ministry was allowed to deal with the issue individually.

As the Hungarian government used trial and error in reintegrating Felvidék, it did sometimes learn from previous mistakes. The loyalty proceedings proved to be so confrontational and unpopular in winning back the allegiance of the region's residents that the controversial system was not adopted in Transylvania or any of the other returned territories. The policy of criminalizing Slovaks for insulting the Hungarian nation was also undermined; many of the Slovaks found guilty had their sentences suspended when the Slovak and Hungarian governments decided upon a general amnesty for political prisoners.[128] The policies implemented by the Hungarian state to reckon with its suspicion of Felvidék's residents backfired, producing instead widespread distrust of the government.

[127] K28 28/68, file 17702. "A visszacsatolt felvidéken a közszolgálati alkalmazottak igazolási eljárása során köztudomásulag több esetben téves határozat hoztak."
[128] For example, see K28 32/73 file 15696.

Conclusion

"The Germans and the Hungarians, who sinned so gravely against our nations and our republic, will be deprived of their citizenship and will be severely punished."[1] – Klement Gottwald, 1945

The re-annexation of Felvidék was the first of four territorial enlargements for Hungary between the years 1938 and 1941. Although the reintegration of Felvidék was far from smooth and dissatisfaction among the area's populace was frequent, there were no major challenges to Hungarian rule from 1938 to 1945. This relative success enabled Hungary to incorporate in Ruthenia, Northern Transylvania, and Voivodina, increasing its population by fifty percent and nearly doubling its territory in less than three years. But each of the enlargements came at an even greater cost to Hungary's long-term revisionist goal of permanently maintaining the enlarged borders than the one that preceded it.

Prime Minister Teleki believed that maintaining the country's independence from Germany was of paramount importance to Hungary's future, even more important than territorial revision. He rightly feared that revisionism would force Hungary into the Second World War on the side of Germany. "Revision . . . is the greatest danger that threatens" he told the Hungarian Ambassador to Great Britain György Barcza in a private conversation, "but I cannot do anything against it, because I would be finished. The public has gone crazy. They want everything back! No matter how, and no matter at what price."[2] In April 1941, Teleki's fears were realized. When Hitler offered Regent Horthy the territory of Voivodina in return for participating in the invasion of Yugoslavia, Teleki could not convince Horthy to decline the offer and honor Hungary's Treaty of Friendship with Yugoslavia. When Teleki received word that Great Britain would cut

[1] Quoted in Kálmán Janics, *Czechoslovak Policy and the Hungarian Minority, 1945-1948* trans. Stephen Borsody (New York: Social Science Monographs, 1982), 109.
[2] Quoted in Deborah S. Cornelius, *Hungary in World War II: Caught in the Cauldron* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 143.

off diplomatic relations with Hungary as a response to the country's participation in the Yugoslav invasion, he committed suicide.[3] In June 1941, Teleki's successor, László Bárdossy, declared war on the Soviet Union and sent Hungarian troops to participate in the German campaign. The decision was made again with revisionism in mind, as Romania and Slovakia had earlier declared that they would join the invasion and Hungarian government officials feared that if they did not volunteer to join as well, Germany might well reverse the Vienna decisions and return the territories to their more faithful allies.[4] Although later in the war the Hungarian government made attempts to extricate itself from the Axis war effort and join the Allies, this proved impossible when Germany invaded Hungary in in March 1944. The country was finally liberated in 1945 by the Soviet Red Army.

Thus, at the end of the Second World War, Hungary was in a similar position to the end of the First – a defeated state fighting a losing battle to hold on to disputed territory. The 1947 Treaty of Paris officially restored the pre-1938 borders of Hungary. But Felvidék had been lost long before that. Košice was liberated by the Red Army in January 1945 and became the temporary capital of reconstituted Czechoslovakia in April. Rehabilitated President Edvard Beneš issued the Košice Program on April 5, 1945, which was to be the "blueprint for the new Czechoslovakia."[5] Chapter VIII of the Program revoked the Czechoslovak citizenship rights of all Germans and Hungarians, except for those who could prove they were part of a resistance

[3] Mária Ormos, *Hungary in the Age of the Two World Wars, 1914-1945* (Boulder, Colo.: East European Monographs, 2007), 366-368.
[4] Ibid., 383-384.
[5] James Felak, *After Hitler, Before Stalin: Catholics, Communists, and Democrats in Slovakia, 1945-1948* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), 3.

movement, arguing that "the overwhelming majority . . . became tools of invaders from outside aiming to destroy the Republic."[6]

But the actual desires of the Czechoslovak government, hinted at as early as the Komárno negotiations in 1938, was for a population transfer to relocate the Hungarian minority in southern Slovakia to Hungary. In 1942, Beneš noted in an article in the journal *Foreign Affairs* that "Perhaps it will be necessary to undertake this time the transference of minority populations."[7] Czechoslovakia succeeded in obtaining authorization from the Allied Powers for the expulsion of the German minority but Great Britain and the United States rejected a similar proposal for removal of the Hungarian minority at the Potsdam Conference in August 1945.[8] The Allies did acquiesce, however, to a population exchange of Slovaks from eastern Hungary for Hungarians from southern Slovakia. 89,660 Hungarians were moved from Czechoslovakia to Hungary in exchange for 71,787 Slovaks.[9] In addition to the population exchange, over 41,000 Hungarians from southern Slovakia were forcibly relocated to western Bohemia to areas recently depopulated by the German expulsions and the remaining Hungarian populations were subject to "re-Slovakization" measures that granted citizenship and voting rights only to Hungarians who would declare themselves Slovaks. 326,000 individuals were successfully re-classified as ethnic Slovaks.[10]

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[6] Quoted in Janics, *Czechoslovak Policy and the Hungarian Minority,* 106. Janics estimated that only 3 percent of Hungarians were able to provide the proof necessary to retain citizenship.
[7] Quoted in Eagle Glassheim, "The Mechanics of Ethnic Cleansing: The Expulsion of Germans from Czechoslovakia, 1945-1957," in *Redrawing Nations: Ethnic Cleansing in East-Central Europe, 1944-1948* edited by Philipp Ther and Ana Siljak (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 201.
[8] Gyula Popély, "Case Studies 1944-1948: Czechoslovakia," in *Minority Hungarian Communities in the Twentieth Century* edited by Nándor Bárdi, Csilla Fedinec and László Szarka (Boulder, Colo.: Social Science Monographs, 2011), 301.
[9] Ibid., 302.
[10] Ibid., 303.

The Košice Program and subsequent anti-minority measures were justified by the principle of collective guilt, which posited that the Hungarian minority had betrayed the Czechoslovak state in 1938 and helped precipitate its destruction.[11] Hungary's re-annexation of Felvidék and local Hungarians' support of the border changes provided the rationale for dismantling Czechoslovakia's Hungarian community at war's end. Hungarian revisionism, it was argued, could never threaten Czechoslovakia again if there was no Hungarian diaspora community left in the country. Czechoslovakia's anti-Hungarian policies did not completely demolish the Hungarian community in southern Slovakia, however. Wholesale population transfer had failed, and after the communist takeover of Czechoslovakia in 1948 rights were gradually restored to the Hungarian minority and re-Slovakization programs ended.[12] The 1950 Czechoslovak census counted 354,000 Hungarians, an all-time low that rebounded to 518,000 (12 percent of the population in Slovakia) by the 1960 census once the systematic discriminatory measures had been fully abandoned.[13]

The post-war geopolitical re-structuring, which placed both Czechoslovakia and Hungary in the Soviet sphere of influence, greatly impacted the future of Hungarian territorial revisionism. The Soviet Union, in the interest of regional stability, pushed Czechoslovakia and Hungary to reconcile their differences. The two countries signed a treaty of friendship in April 1949, the first step toward normalizing relations.[14] The Hungarian revisionist movement, already thoroughly discredited by its ties to Nazism, Hungary's wartime regimes, and the country's

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[11] Janics, *Czechoslovak Policy and the Hungarian Minority,* 34.
[12] Árpád Popély, "Case Studies 1948-1989: Czechoslovakia," in *Minority Hungarian Communities in the Twentieth Century* edited by Nándor Bárdi, Csilla Fedinec and László Szarka (Boulder, Colo.: Social Science Monographs, 2011), 403.
[13] Patrik Tátrai, "Demographic Features," in *Minority Hungarian Communities in the Twentieth Century* edited by Nándor Bárdi, Csilla Fedinec, and László Szarka (Boulder, Colo.: Social Science Monographs, 2011), 364.
[14] Popély, "Case Studies 1948-1989: Czechoslovakia," 404.

defeat in the Second World War, was prohibited by the Soviet Union. Revisionism was abandoned as government policy and discouraged in public discourse. Even advocacy for the Hungarian minorities abroad was largely curtailed.

After 1989, Hungarian revisionism re-emerged as a subject of general debate but never again as a foreign policy goal of the government. Hungary signed bi-lateral treaties recognizing established borders with all its neighboring states in the 1990s and has focused since then on obtaining and protecting collective rights for the Hungarian minority groups living in East-Central Europe. The Slovak Republic, which became an independent state in 1993, still has a large Hungarian minority living in the south of the country that causes tension between the two states. The 2009 Slovak State Languages Act and the Hungarian Citizenship Law, adopted in 2010, are the most recent points of contention between Hungary and Slovakia. The State Languages Act imposes fines for the use of a minority language in areas where less than twenty percent of the population are registered as speakers of the language. The Hungarian government has charged that the law unfairly targets Slovakia's Hungarian minority. The Hungarian Citizenship Law allows individuals "whose ascendant was a Hungarian citizen or whose origin from Hungary is probable, and whose Hungarian language knowledge is proved" to become a Hungarian citizen.[15] The Slovak government has interpreted the law as an attack on Slovak sovereignty and responded by amending its own citizenship law so that individuals that apply for Hungarian dual citizenship will be stripped of their Slovak citizenship.[16] In light of this resurgence of controversial legislation, current debates on Hungarian-Slovak relations would benefit from greater understanding of Felvidék's long history as a contested borderland.

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[15] Judith Tóth, "Changes to the Hungarian Citizenship Law," 2. http://eudo-citizenship.eu/docs/CountryReports/recentChanges/Hungary.pdf

[16] "Hungary citizenship law fuels Slovak resentment," last modified May 31, 2010, http://www.euractiv.com/enlargement/hungary-citizenship-law-fuels-sl-news-494553

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