

The Treaty of Trianon

Introduction

This Essay deals with the following questions: What was the treaty of Trianon and what were the treaty's demands from Hungary? More over the essay describes the negotiations and the circumstances influencing the negotiations as well as the political objectives of the different countries. In the last sections I will show the consequences of the treaty for Hungary. There I will deal with the question of revisionism in Hungary during the interwar period. In this essay I'm going to show that there was a compromise between the important Entente countries. The Entente countries compromised to break down Austria-Hungary. But this decision depended on special circumstances and the Entente countries' aims. But the aims of the winning powers could not be reached by the treaty of Trianon.

What is the treaty of Trianon?

Most of the treaties which officially ended the First World War were negotiated in small towns like Trianon near Paris. The important parties in these treaties were the Entente (Great Britain, Russia, France and others) and the central powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire). The Trianon-treaty was the result of negotiations between Hungary and several countries of the Entente. The Treaty was signed in 1920 by the corresponding parties. This treaty was mainly designed by French and British representatives. The Hungarians could not take part in the negotiations, so the treaty was dictated by the victorious powers of the Entente (Südosteuropa Lexikon 517), to refinance the war debts of the Entente powers. This was against the Wilsonian Fourteen Points which were meant as guidelines according to which the peace negotiations should take place [Vigh states that a lot of the negotiations took place „behind-the-scenes“ , cf. Vigh 74.] The idea of a dictated peace was against the idea that the contrary parties in these negotiations should deal with one another in a free and open-minded way.

The demands of the treaty consist of the three major points: First Hungary lost two thirds of its territory and more than thirteen million inhabitants, reducing the population to 7.62 million. Huge parts of northern Hungary were distributed to the newly founded Czechoslovakia. Moreover, several parts of Transylvania were given to Romania. In the south Hungary lost some parts as well which were given

to newly-founded countries like Yugoslavia (Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes). Some smaller parts of Hungary were surrendered to Austria and Poland. Secondly the treaty declared that Hungary had to pay a high amount of gold crowns, this sum of was not fixed when Hungary signed the treaty. Thirdly the number of soldiers in the Hungarian army was reduced to 35.000 soldiers. Moreover Hungary was not allowed to have more heavy artillery and airplanes than was necessary for the internal order service or for the border (Hoensch 103).

What were the intentions of the different entente states and were they reached?

(France) Every country of the Entente had a different aim. These aims depended on the special circumstances that Entente countries could sign the treaty. Because of the Russian socialist revolution (1917) France lost its former ally, so the French were forced to find new partners. The French thought, that they would find partners in Central Europe. France was afraid of the uprising of a socialist world revolution and that Germany would become an imperialist great power for the second time (Ormos 132). After the First World War the French army started an invasion in Odessa against the Russians. The aim of this invasion was the protection of French capitalist property in the Ukraine. At the same time Bela Kun, a Hungarian revolutionary and founder of the soviet government, started in Hungary the overthrow of the former civilian-democratical government of Mihaly Karoly, the first Hungarian president. This forced the French troops to invade from Romania to Hungary to prevent the beginnings of a revolution in Hungary (Ormos 136). [„The succeeding Communist regime of Bela Kun (...) created a general spread of Bolshevism all over Europe.“ (cf. Kertesz 42)]

With the help of Czechoslovakian troops the French were able to prevent the uprising of revolution, because the Czechoslovakians started to fight against the Hungarian Red Army from the north (Ormos 137). [In the words of Harald Nicolson (secretary at the British Delegation): „They (Czech, Romans and France) have decided to get rid of Bela Kun“ (cf. Vigh 70).] The French had to fulfill the territorial promises, which was given for the support of the Czech and Romanians to fight against the revolutionaries in Hungary and the Hungarian republic of councils. That is why the Hungarians had to give different territories of Hungary to countries like Yugoslavia, Romania and Czechoslovakia, how it is explained in the treaty. These major territorial ‘presents’ to the neighboring countries of Hungary allowed France to find new important partners. One can see that after

the Treaty of Trianon France started or planned to form new allies. There were plans to create three main allies: one between the Balkan countries, another one between the Baltic countries and the last one between Romania, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. The last alliance was the so called Little Entente (Südosteuropa Lexikon 354, Kertesz 45).

Without the break up of Austria-Hungary it would have been impossible for France to find a new partner in Central Europe, because the old Habsburgian Empire had been the usual partner of Germany. This idea was even expressed by Benes (Minister of foreign affairs of the Czechoslovakian Republic after the First World War) who stated that Austria-Hungary is „the most dangerous tool of German imperialism” (Borsody 29). So, the French delegation to the Trianon negotiations was influenced by special propaganda of Benes and Masaryk who wanted a new political order in the Danube region. Through their propaganda they managed to be heard in France. Benes explained in his famous pamphlet *Detruisez l’Autriche-Hongrie* that Austrian-Hungary should break up (Borsody 28), because they were enemies of the European peace and he wanted the independence of his home country Bohemia from Austria-Hungary. The propaganda of Benes and Masaryk was very influential, so the French banks started to invest in the Czechoslovakian heavy industry (Teichova 87). (Great Britain) What were the aims of the British delegation to the treaty? What did they think of the break-up of the former Habsburgian Monarchy?

After the Second World War Winston Churchill explained that the break up of the Austrian-Hungarian kingdom was a „cardinal tragedy” (Kertesz 40). Kertesz mentioned that the countries of the former empire still had cohesive powers, which made it possible to create a federal cooperation between the different states of the former empire (Kertesz 40). [This question marked in this Essay, because in Great Britain there were „several authoritative figures“ which found a federation in East Central Europe quite good. But this opinion was overthrown by the idea of a new „Europe with two or three additional Slav states“ (Sakmyster 112f).] But the British delegation did not like this idea, because this cooperation might have „revitalized the Monarchy” (Kertesz 40). So Harold Nicolson, secretary of the British delegation, explained in his book *Peacemaking 1919* that „it was the thought of new Serbia, the new Greece, the new Bohemia, the new Poland which made our hearts sing hymns at heaven’s gate” (Borsody 26, Sakmyster 114). Furthermore he wrote: „For centuries the Magyars had

oppressed their subject nationalities. The hour of liberation and of retribution was at hand" (Borsody 27). Therefore the British secretary demanded the break up of former Austria-Hungary and the independence of most of the nationalities. People in Great Britain became largely anti-Hungarians.

This anti-Hungarian mood peaked in 1918-19 and was caused by a longer discourse in the British society. Two former Hungarian friendly journalists, Steed and Seton-Watson, played „a leading role in the propaganda campaign launched against the enemy countries during the World War". These two journalists, writing for newspapers like Times and New Europe, were very influential. The reason for their anti-Hungarian attitude was that the Austria-Hungarian monarchy had not solved their ethnic conflicts through federalization since 1907 (Vigh 63f). Many offices of the British foreign services were well informed by these newspapers. Many members of the British delegation were influenced by these journalists, who had „maximum territorial claims of the Slavs and the Romans" (Vigh 64). So it is understandable why the Habsburgian Empire was dissolved. Until 1917 Great Britain did not plan to break up the former Habsburgian Empire. But during that year there were a lot of different peace proposals among the different countries, likewise the Germans Brest-Litovsk „robbery peace" with Russia.

This treaties demand after the total First World War huge reparations, because Germany wanted to refinance his war costs. These demands on the losing countries would finance the war expenses which result out the use of resources, bureaucracies, factories, organizations, soldiers and workers in Germany (Kiraly 17-19). This trend was obvious in Great Britain and in France after the win of the First World War. This trend explained why the Hungarians had to pay big reparations to the Entente powers and lost a lot of territories. The break up of the Habsburgian Empire was caused by the consensus found by the French and British delegation. The consensus can be explained by the huge demands in benefits to the later little Entente powers of the Hungarian territory. Moreover, Anti-Austria-Hungary propaganda made it possible that both powers signed the treaty. The high war expenses of the Entente powers caused huge demands on Hungary and make it understandable, why Great Britain and France found this compromise. (United States of America) Did the USA sign the Trianon-treaty? The USA had negotiated their own treaty with Hungary. In 1921 there was a meeting in Budapest, where a Hungarian and American delegation had ratified a treaty

(Kovacs-Bertrand 125).

One reason was that the USA had never been a member of the Entente powers. But this is only a formality. Some developments shortly after the First World War were much more important. The French and British government had approved a peace treaty with Czechoslovakia (Kertesz 40). These actions of both governments were committed in secret so that the USA had no knowledge of this. And this is a violation of Wilson's Fourteen points, namely that diplomacy should be open-minded. So the USA could not fulfill their own ideas and did not have a chance to bring their own interests into the negotiations. The USA wanted to „make the world safe for democracy” (Kertesz 45). But in the eyes of the Americans the worked out peace treaty of Trianon had not an effect on the democratization of the Danube region. More over the treaty helped to balkanize the Danube region (Kertesz 45).

Borders were drawn through the different countries that did not correctly separate the different nationalities. Therefore there are a lot of Hungarians in the Czechoslovakian part of former Hungary. These methods were used for the other neighboring countries as well and this has made it difficult for the region to come to peace (Kertesz 47). These borders did not follow the principle of the „self-determination of people” (Kertesz 42), which Wilson stated in his Fourteen Points, too. Moreover only the district of Sopron could vote his nationality by a referendum in 1921. The violations of the Fourteen Points and the American interests make it understandable why the Americans had to sign their own treaty with Hungary.

Consequences of the Treaty for Hungary

The dissolution of Austria-Hungary badly affected the Hungarian economy. Hungary had lost a lot of markets and resources like the wood in Transylvania. But a lot of the factories of pre-Trianon Hungary were within the borders of post-Trianon Hungary, so the relationship between the resources, markets and factories became disproportionate (Borsody 48). This disproportion of resources and plants caused a high number of unemployed people. „A third of Hungary's workers” were without work (Hoensch 107). Furthermore Hungary lost big parts of their infrastructure, like railways, public roads and canals (Vigh 74). The Hungarians who worked in public services in the former parts of Hungary lost their jobs to or were expelled by their homelands, so there was a big wave of

immigration into the small post-Trianon Hungary. To solve these problems the government under Bethlen tried to redistribute land to poor people. Moreover there was an uprise of anti-Semitism, because many people felt that there was a connection between Judaism and Bolshevism.

This connected was made by the right people to fight against the scapegoats of the communist revolution of Bela Kun. A lot of people who were responsible for the revolution like trade unionists and communists came into the focus of „persecution and repression” (Hoensch 107), because in the minds of the right-wing people (like former soldiers and officers) the Jewish and Bolshevik people had caused the loss of several Hungarian territories. At the beginning of the twenties there were restrictive laws against the Communists and Jews. The politics against the communists and Jewish minority was a result of the inability of the Hungarian government to find proper solutions for economical problems. Therefore the government started a „narrow-minded national chauvinism” (Hoensch 83). Kertesz argues that the immigration of 350.000 Hungarians from the neighboring countries to the territories of post-Trianon Hungary helped to force revisionist movements (Kertesz 49). Moreover the diplomatic isolation of Hungary until 1927 forced the establishment of revisionist movements, because there was not a possibility of making compromises about the new borders. In 1927 Hungary signed its first international treaty with the fascistic Italian government. In the same year the Rothermore press campaign which supports „Hungary´s revisionist demands” started.

During this time, the Hungarian Revisionist League was growing very fast. Two years later the world economic crisis leads to lower grain and crops prices on the world market, so that Hungary signed economical export treaties with Italy and Germany and lost its „independence” (Hoensch 124ff). Hungary became very important for Germany and during the thirties and forties Hungary could regain a lot of lost territories. Berend states that the defenselessness of the Danube-Basin countries drove them economically towards Germany. The growing influence of Germany in this region allowed them to create the „Anschluss” of Czechoslovakia in 1938 and destroyed an important ally of Great Britain and France (Berend 103).

Evaluation

You can see that the Trianon peace treaty did not establish a powerful Little

Entente, which would counterbalance German imperialism. Moreover this treaty helped to form a country that wanted to join each ally which helped to overthrow the Trianon treaty. The Hungarians thought that Germany wanted to support Hungary against the Treaty of Trianon, because they started already to destroy the Treaty of Versailles. Also, from a Hungarian point of view the construction of the little entente looks like a threat to Hungary, thereby strengthening the revisionist movements and driving Hungary into a coalition with Germany. Maybe the federalization of Hungary (and the disconnection of Austria) under the League of Nations would have been a better option for reaching the French aims to get an eastern partner. But then France would have needed a lot of power to control the developments in Hungary. After the First World War France was not able to manage this and decided to split Hungary into different countries. Maybe the British idea that Hungary deserved punishment for its failures in its minority politics leads to the break up of Hungary and influenced France. But I am not convinced that the reorganization of Central East Europe was the „culmination of organic development” (Kiraly 16). Because the decision which breaks Hungary in parts had been made at several conferences without the participation of Hungary or the people of Hungary. Therefore it was not an organic development. Only if the people are allowed to decide to which country they would like to belong and are allowed to create the country by themselves according to the right of self-determination, than there would be an organic development, which is determined by the peoples' will. But most of the politicians who decided where the new borders would be had been influenced by propaganda as shown above and did not listen to the wishes of the peoples.

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