

The Agony of Historic Western Hungary and the Birth of Burgenland (1914-1921)

TAMÁS SZÉKELY

Herder Institute

Many know that one of the most important consequences of the First World War was the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Yet only few know that the two defeated allies – Austria and Hungary – had not only lost large territories of their own to the neighbouring successor states, but they were also engaged in serious border dispute with each other between 1918 and 1921. This desperate struggle may seem as if it came out of nowhere since the three historic counties that composed the Western periphery of Hungary did not really suffer from deep political or social conflicts before the war, at least not on the surface and comparing to other multi-ethnic regions of Central and Eastern Europe. If we picture the old Habsburg Empire as a jigsaw puzzle then the Western Hungarian counties should be imagined as those oddly shaped interlocking and mosaiced pieces that geographically as well as culturally connected the two halves of the empire. Although the long but narrow area along the Western border of the Kingdom of Hungary was dominantly German-speaking for centuries, both countries were under Habsburg rule under which questioning the historical borders would have been simply unreasonable. This radically changed around the turn-of-the-century when modern nationalism broke through in public life and became a main driving force behind political aspirations. The disintegration of historic Western Hungary and birth of Burgenland were a very complicated process in which regard the significance of nationalism and its radicalization in the Great War cannot be underestimated.

Keywords: Austria; Hungary; Habsburg; Burgenland; First World War

Introduction

One of the most important consequences of the First World War was the collapse of the multi-ethnic conglomerate of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.¹ Yet only few remember that the two defeated allies, Austria and Hungary, had not only lost large territories of their own to the neighboring successor states, but they were also engaged in a serious border dispute with each other between 1918 and 1921. This desperate post-war struggle may seem as if it came out of nowhere. The three historic counties that made up the western periphery of the Kingdom of Hungary, i.e. Moson, Sopron, and Vas, did not really suffer from deep political or social conflicts before the Great War, at least not on the surface and not compared to other multi-ethnic regions in Central and Eastern Europe.

Recent research suggests it may have been the miseries endured during the war that destabilized society and aggravated the post-war political turmoil, escalating tensions across the otherwise peaceful western Hungarian landscape. As one contemporary expert on this topic points out in her dissertation project, the agony of historic Western Hungary and the birth of Burgenland were an extremely complicated process in which 'the chronology, historical events and occurrences alone hint at the interplay of the international and national politics throughout the whole process'.² Since the topic in general would require a more extensive elaboration, this paper focuses primarily on the regional aspects that enable us to better understand the reasons behind this specific territorial conflict.

‘Happy years of peace’? – Western Hungary before 1914

‘Western Hungary—such a part of the country does not exist and never did’, a Moson County journalist quite rightfully claimed when despairing of the loss of his homeland to Austria in 1921.³ Indeed, not only does the term ‘Burgenland’ sound ahistorical regarding events leading up to the early 1920s, but so to some extent does ‘Western Hungary’, which had at best a vague geographical meaning over the course of the centuries. This area, where the foothills of the Alps meet the plains and hills of the Carpathian Basin, has never been a unified administrative region but was historically composed of three counties and several self-governing towns. The western borders of the three counties were also a state border with Austria. However, since Austria and Hungary constituted a Dual Monarchy between 1867 and 1914, this should be considered rather a ‘weak’ state border compared to the ‘hard’ borders that usually separate two neighboring nation states.⁴ From an external point of view, Western Hungary may have appeared not to be a border region in the era before the Great War but in fact it was. It is necessary to emphasize, however, that the three counties as well as the royal cities of Western Hungary had, for centuries, been in a frequent social, cultural and economic exchange with the neighboring Austrian lands and cities: Styria (Steiermark), Lower Austria (Niederösterreich) and with the imperial capital of Vienna (Wien).⁵

According to the 1910 census, the combined population of the three counties and their four cities was about 815,000 inhabitants.⁶ More than half of them identified themselves as native Hungarian-speakers, 290,000 of them belonged to the German-speaking community and about 110,000 of them spoke a Slavic language (mostly Croatian or Slovene) as their mother tongue. In general, the closer the border, the more multi-ethnic the western Hungarian landscape was. In terms of religion, the absolute majority was Roman Catholic followed by a

minority of Lutherans who were especially present in the German-speaking towns. As a result of mass immigration during the nineteenth century, significant Jewish communities existed across the region as well.⁷ Despite their Germanophile attitude and the anti-Semitic tendencies shown occasionally by the ethnic Hungarian majority, they considered themselves not as an ethnic minority but as a religious subgroup within the Hungarian community. At the highest level of society were a number of wealthy Hungarian aristocratic families such as the famous Esterházy family who had held the hereditary office of Lord Lieutenant of the Sopron County since the seventeenth century.⁸ Public life was dominated by the Hungarian-born middle and lower nobility, who held the important offices in the county's administration as well.⁹ By far the largest social group across all three main ethnic groups was the peasantry, as the region's economy remained dominantly agricultural.

By the end of the long nineteenth century, new social groups (bourgeoisie and industrial workers) appeared on the scene as a result of the increasingly rapid industrialization and modernization that took place all over the country. Consequently, the region's society became considerably more diverse in terms of group identities, which, in the age of nationalism, sometimes led to political and social conflicts. However, it is difficult to determine whether and to what extent the side-effects of an otherwise integrative process of nation-state-building and modernization contributed to the disintegration of the society in Western Hungary in the decades prior to the First World War. Until now, only a limited amount of research has been done at the regional and local level on the question of the security of national minorities and whether a dramatization of security issues took place in Western Hungary. In my view, the complicated relationship between the regional administration and local identities, interconnected with the nationality question, should be understood as a key pre-war disintegrative force.

The term 'contested self-governance' summarizes this phenomena very well since it refers to the controversial transformation of Hungary's historic territorial administration at the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁰ Hungary had been subdivided into counties (in historic term: municipalities) since the Middle Ages, which served as a refuge for the Hungarian nobility's corporative positions against the Habsburg administration. As the counties constituted an important arena for local political opinion-making for centuries, they played an integral role in the nobility's local and regional identity. However, when Hungary regained its sovereignty within the Habsburg Monarchy in 1867, the Hungarian elites were able to establish their own national parliament and government, and attempted to transform a pre-modern, multi-ethnic kingdom into a modern and unified nation state.¹¹ As a result of the reforms implemented step-by-step after 1870, the counties conceded an increasing number of legal and administrative responsibilities to the central government. In this new era, the counties were no longer really seen as self-governing and identity-forming territorial units but as integral elements of the national administration that conveyed the decisions of the government and parliament at the local level.¹²

Simultaneously, the Western-Hungarian elites traditionally had patriotic and pro-Habsburg sentiments, and thus supported the 1867 policies, including the centralization of the public administration. However, the transformation of the state was achieved by the old elites and they might have failed to establish a new regional identity that facilitated the integration of the non-Hungarian communities into the nation state. This phenomenon is even more noticeable in the case of the so-called 'free royal cities'. The country's new political structure changed the conditions not only for the counties, but also for those cities that had held town privileges for centuries. They were not part of the counties but now they lost most of their privileges, including the right to directly communicate with the government. In Western Hungary, three of the

four towns that did have a self-governing tradition (i.e. Kőszeg/Güns, Kismarton/Eisenstadt and Ruszt/Rust) were incorporated into their respective counties in the 1870s. Only the region's most important city, Sopron/Ödenburg, was able to maintain some autonomy, though at a decreased level. As these were mostly German-speaking towns, their enforced incorporation into the counties (1876) was not just a matter of territorial administration but a question of nation-building. As Károly Mérey, the Lord Lieutenant of the four cities himself wrote in his resignation letter in 1874, he had to work under critical circumstances 'in those four German-minded, unpatriotic and wrongly educated towns'.¹³

One should be aware that, according to the nationality law of 1868, the society of Hungary was composed of several different nationalities (including 'Hungarian' itself) that had equal rights and liberties and together formed one single political nation, which was also to be called Hungarian.¹⁴ In reality, however, the representatives of the ethnic minorities never really shared this vision of the Hungarian elites and desperately resisted the government's so-called 'Magyarization' efforts. In the counties of Moson, Sopron, and Vas, similarly to the nationwide situation, the ethnic Hungarians enjoyed only a relative majority over non-Hungarian minorities. Furthermore, Moson was the only one of the 63 counties where Germans enjoyed an absolute majority over other ethnic groups. The western border area was predominantly inhabited by German speakers, which caused the Hungarian authorities to see a potential national security issue in Pan-German nationalism and separatism.

These worries were not entirely unfounded, at least not after the turn of the century. In 1908, a Bohemia-born journalist of German origin, Josef Patry, wrote a political leaflet entitled *Westungarn zu Deutschösterreich*.¹⁵ This should be considered one of the first signs of the subsequent Western Hungarian crisis. The leaflet was published by

the Vienna-based Pan-German journal *Alldeutsches Tageblatt* and the hundreds of copies were circulated among Austrian readers as well as the German-speaking inhabitants of Western Hungary. Patry's vision was indeed innovative as he invented 'Western Hungary' as a modern geopolitical term. According to the vision of the Austrian branch of the Pan-German ideology, German-Austria should be established on the ruins of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The ultimate goal of this new state-formation would be the eventual unification with Germany, but, prior to that, it aimed to incorporate all the German-speaking inhabitants of the Habsburg lands into one single political unit.¹⁶ In terms of geography, that was obviously an impossible idea, since most of the ethnic German population in Hungary and Transylvania, as well as in Bohemia and Moravia, lived either thinly spread or very far from the core provinces of German-Austria. What they could easily do without much risk, however, was to speculate about the future border between Austria and Hungary. Patry envisioned an imminent collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy and advocated the complete redrawing of the political map of Central and Eastern Europe. In exchange for Western Hungary, the German nationalist in Austria would have offered the provinces of Dalmatia and Bosnia to Hungary, though they demanded not only the German-speaking border area but also a far larger territory between the River Rába/Raab and the Danube. Even though Patry ruled out using military means to resolve the border question, he urged the 200 German representatives of the Austrian Parliament to protect their compatriots in Western Hungary from the 'culturally inferior Hungarians'. He also invited the German-speaking intellectuals, university students and even tourists from both sides of the border to join their cause.

The leaflet triggered outrage in Hungary. The question of the western border was even raised in the Hungarian Parliament in Budapest on February 26, 1908, when Hugó Laehne, an MP from the Kőszeg/Güns

district, addressed Prime Minister Sándor Wekerle.¹⁷ Although Laehne himself was born in Sopron/Ödenburg and was of German origin, he was also a member of the Hungarian nationalist 'Party of Independence and '48', and strongly demanded the immediate elimination of Pan-German propaganda from Hungary: 'Not at the moment when this movement is producing results, but now, when it is still in its infancy, should this [movement] be eliminated. [...] We must not let citizens of foreign states stir up emotions and question the territorial integrity of our country', Laehne told his fellow members of Parliament.¹⁸

In one of the biggest political dailies, a resident of Western Hungary reacted mockingly and furiously to the speculations about his homeland.¹⁹ According to János Breit from Sopronkeresztúr/Deutschkreuz, the Hungarian authorities had to be aware of the Pan-German danger from Austria and nip the propaganda in the bud: 'We, Hungarians cannot do anything but draw the urgent conclusion that the twelfth hour has arrived.'²⁰ He pointed out that the Pan-German movement seemed to be showing anti-Habsburg tendencies; therefore he urged the Austrian prosecutor to carry out an investigation into Josef Patry's political activities. Indeed, as long as both Austria and Hungary were under Habsburg rule by historic right, there was no room for any kind of border dispute between the two sides. Furthermore, Western Hungary was traditionally the most royalist and pro-Habsburg regions of Hungary, which contributed to the difficulties regarding the incorporation of the region into the left-wing dominated Republic of Austria after the war.

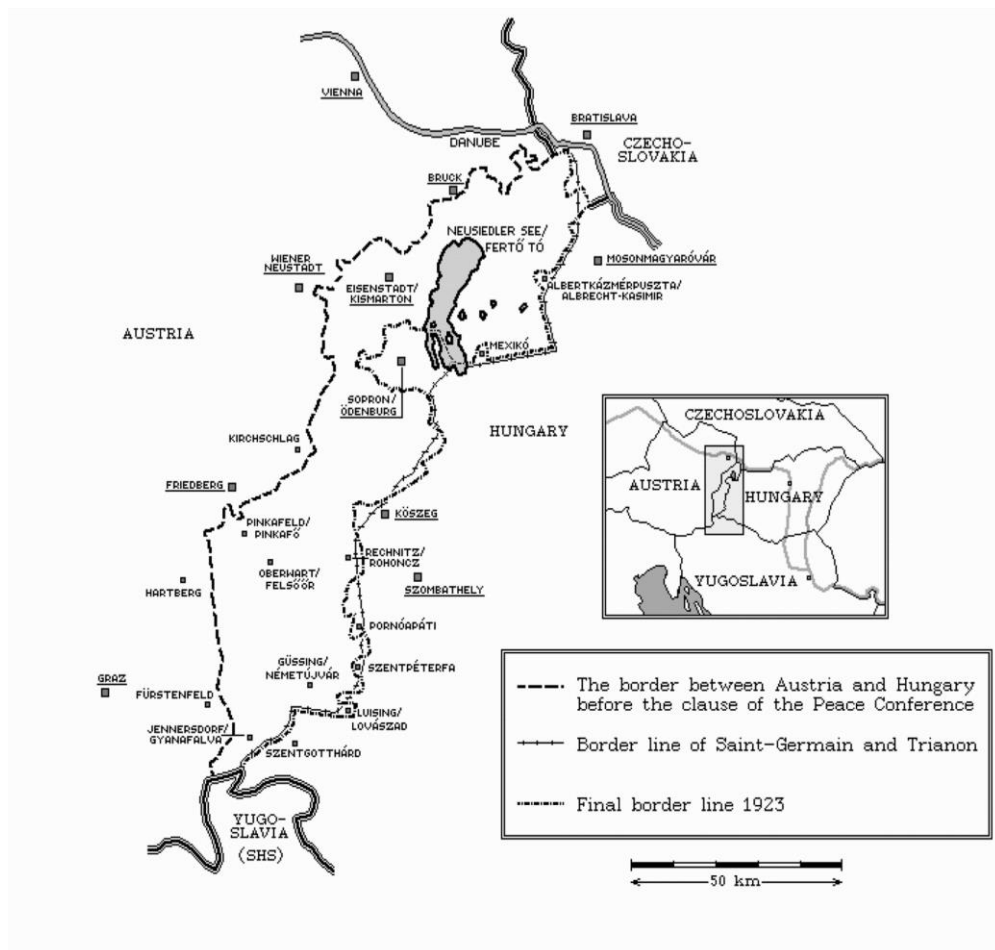
In a few years' time the potential danger of Pan-German nationalism became part of everyday administration in Western Hungary. Just before the war, in April 1914, for instance, the Ministry of Interior Affairs instructed the Lord Lieutenant of Vas County to keep an eye on local peasant organizations as they might have connections with a Budapest-based Pan-German umbrella organization called *Deutscher Bauernbund*

*aus den Ländern der Ungarischen Krone.*²¹ The Lord Lieutenant carried out a thorough investigation, receiving reports from the district administrators of Németújvár/Güssing and Szentgotthárd/St. Gotthard on the activities of an ethnic German citizen named Carl Wollinger. He was accused of using local savings bank branches to spread ideas of German nationalism among the border area population. According to the reports, as a result of Wollinger's activities, some villages had already started to demand the use of German language in local administration instead of the official state language. A few years later, the Hungarian elites would have been happy to grant this basic right in their desperate attempt to stop Western Hungary's disintegration.

Western Hungary as Hinterland of the Great War (1914-1918)

As we have seen, the Austria-Hungary border conflict between 1918 and 1921 did not come out of nowhere. Still, it would take much more to argue that the post-war conflict was deeply rooted in the pre-war political, social, economic and cultural developments of the region. What we have witnessed is the activity of a number of political adventurers or visionaries who might have had enough intellectual capacity to become the protagonists of a cause but certainly lacked the power and political influence to make it come true. Without a major turn that would radically change the political attitude of both the elites and the ordinary people, the idea of moving the Austria-Hungary border tens of kilometers eastwards would not have tempted a great audience. Recent research on East Central European political thought points out that 'one of the most unintended consequences' of the First World War was that it served as a 'laboratory for testing the radical doctrines', including Social

Darwinism's vision of a zero-sum game, and of the effects of the turn of the century in real life and on real people.²²



Source: M. Vares, *The Question of Western Hungary/Burgenland 1918-1923. A Territorial Question in the Context of National and International Policy* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Jyväskylä, 2008), 325.

Was it therefore the war and its consequences that made the Western Hungarian people's indifference towards nationalist appeals disappear within a short period of time? The academic concept of 'national indifference' suggests it probably was.²³ This concept has become one of the main issues in international research on nations and nationalism in recent times; it claims that the nationalist struggle in the Habsburg-ruled countries was not driven by a mass movement for the nation, but rather the opposite: indifference, ambivalence and opportunism of 'ordinary people' when dealing with issues of nationhood and with claims made by nationalists. The American sociologist Rogers Brubaker, a pioneer of the concept, argued that national identities are not the logical outcome of an already existing ethnic identity, nor is the nation a real group, but rather a practical category, an institutionalized form, and a contingent event.²⁴ Brubaker and his followers took the constructivist paradigm further to challenge Anthony Smith's ethno-symbolist position as well as Miroslav Hroch's phase theory of national movements and Michael Billig's analysis about the relentless spread of banal nationalism in modern society. Proponents of 'national indifference' insist there was no mass breakthrough of nationalism in the Habsburg lands before the First World War but that it was the general breakdown of society because of the war that created the conditions for the 'massification' of national movements.²⁵

When the heir to the imperial (Austria) and royal (Hungary) thrones, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, and his wife were killed by Gavrilo Princip in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914, nobody expected that a four-year-long world war would break out. Obviously, the governing elites of the Dual Monarchy had been aware of the threatening potential of an armed conflict, but the ordinary citizens were not yet in a hurry to sacrifice themselves for 'sacred war aims'.²⁶ Franz Ferdinand was certainly not a popular figure in Hungary, as his so-called 'Belvedere circle' had been openly advocating the structural overhaul of the Dual Monarchy for

many years, first and foremost at the territorial expense of Hungary.²⁷ The famous proposal of the *Vereinigte Staaten von Groß-Österreich* (United States of Greater Austria), drafted by the Archduke's right hand man, the ethnic Romanian lawyer Aurel Popovici, in 1906, would have meant a Trianon-like disintegration of the Lands of the Holy Crown. The proposal has been discussed by historians, but only limited attention has been paid to the fact that it would have granted the predominantly German-speaking parts of Western Hungary, including large parts of Vas, the Sopron counties and the entire Moson county with the addition of the cities of Sopron/Ödenburg and Pozsony/Pressburg to German Austria, one of the 15 different federal states of the envisioned Greater Austria. With Franz Ferdinand's death, the proposal was taken off the agenda only to make an unexpected return in a somewhat different form four years later.

Since the Archduke was also to inherit the Hungarian throne, a period of nationwide mourning took place, with black flags hoisted on public buildings and entertainment events cancelled all over Hungary. The Minister of Interior Affairs informed the Lord Lieutenants of the counties about the tragic news via telegram.²⁸ On July 1, 1914, the Roman Catholic Bishop of Szombathely celebrated a mass in honor of the late royal couple. On the very same day, the Imperial Defense Minister informed the Hungarian government about the plans for a 'larger military exercise' in the Austria-Hungary border area, which of course never took place due to the outbreak of the war.²⁹ On July 2, the Assembly of Sopron County sent its condolences via telegram to the Viennese court.³⁰ In his speech to his fellow assembly members, Dr István Tálas drew a comparison between the deaths of Crown Prince Rudolf (1889) and Archduke Franz Ferdinand and emphasized Sopron County's close attachment to the latter, who in the past had been known as the colonel of the regiment of county hussars. The Assembly of Moson County also expressed its condolences to the royal family.³¹

The Great War broke out on July 28, 1914, when Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia.³² Soon, the Dual Monarchy found itself in a very difficult two-front war as the Tsarist Russian army easily invaded Galicia and pushed in the direction of Kraków as well as into the northeastern counties of Hungary on the western side of the Carpathian Mountains. In May 1915, Italy also entered the war on the side of the Entente Powers, opening a third front in the southwest for the control of the Adriatic Sea and the Southern Alps. The following year in August, Romania joined the Entente and attacked Austria-Hungary from the southeast in the hope of the annexation of Transylvania and the Bánát region. Although with German assistance the Austro-Hungarian troops fought back and the Central Powers even invaded Bucharest, the Romanian conflict tied down significant military capacities for the rest of the war. As the initial illusion of a quickly concluded war completely shattered after a couple of months, it became increasingly obvious that those powers that produced more supplies and provided greater numbers of reinforcements in terms of manpower, weapons and food would have a better chance to win the war. In this regard, the Central Powers proved to be lagging behind the Entente, especially after the United States entered the war in 1917.³³

Geographically, the region of Western Hungary was located quite far from all the war zones, yet it was destined to face the tragic consequences of becoming a hinterland of the war. The war posed an enormous challenge to the public administration. The local authorities—the counties as well as the towns—were forced to switch from peace to war mode as soon as possible. In the latter, there was no room for traditional forms of self-governance as everything had to be sacrificed for the sake of the war effort. Unlike elsewhere, in the predominantly German-speaking district of Kismarton/Eisenstadt, the district administrator was able to implement the transition more or less smoothly.³⁴ Lajos Wolf, who became known as the Vice-Lieutenant of Sopron County in the

interwar period, established the local unit of the Red Cross, supported the left-behind poor families and organized a military hospital, among other things. He had to deliver the unpopular tasks as well, including the introduction of war loans and the management of local military mobilizations and requisition of food and equipment. In the course of time, these practices, as well as other wartime miseries, turned the local population against the authorities. In non-Hungarian regions public discontent typically took the form of anti-Hungarian sentiments. The hatred increased even more when local civil servants, whose salaries drastically lost value due to wartime inflation, were involved in corruption or abuse of power.³⁵ Listing the series of wartime difficulties, it is necessary to emphasize that almost every family—regardless of their ethnic background—lost at least one or two family members, typically fathers and sons, during the war. During the first four months of 1915 alone, the Austro-Hungarian army lost 800,000 soldiers—either killed or captured—in the battles against Russia for the East Carpathian and Galician territories.³⁶ Although the state censorship did the utmost to control publishing and the circulation of newspapers, bad news spread anyway.³⁷ In the village of Káld in Vas County, for example, a local doctor named Gyula Götzl from the nearby town of Jánosháza was accused of scaremongering. According to an investigation by the local district administrator, Götzl just could not stop talking publicly about tragic news from the front that contradicted the official military reports. The doctor unwillingly caused such a great panic and desperation among the women of the village that local authorities felt obliged to intervene.³⁸

The unprecedented scale of human and material losses on the one hand demoralized the society of the hinterland, whilst on the other hand undermining the agricultural and industrial production. The lack of men on the farms and in the factories, together with the increasing military requisition of food, clothes, boots and other goods and equipment, massively deteriorated the quality of life across the country.³⁹ In spite of

contemporary and posterior Marxist arguments, the elites had been very much aware of the suffering of the poor and cared for their needs, as is mirrored, for example, in a confidential message by a cabinet member to the head of Vas County.⁴⁰ However, the deprivation of the many was going hand in hand with the enrichment of the few. Either as official or black-market suppliers of the army, some traders and landlords became so wealthy within a short period of time that it caused widespread public outrage. In many cases the villagers, angered by the magnates who lived far from their vast farmlands channeled their hate towards the local servants of the public administration. These locally evolved tensions escalated more and more into a strange combination of ethnic and class hatred, often as antisemitism and anti-Magyarism. The ethnic hatred spread like an epidemic because of the refugee crisis too. In 1915-1916, tens of thousands were forced to leave their homes behind in Galicia, in Northeastern Hungary and in Transylvania during the attack of the Russian and Romanian troops.⁴¹ These refugees temporarily migrated to the hinterland regions, mostly to Budapest and Vienna but also to the countryside, including Western Hungary, and their arrival put an extra heavy burden on the local society.⁴² As most of the refugees from Galicia were of either of Slavic or Jewish background, they faced a strange combination of generous support and ethnic discrimination from the side of the hinterland population. At the same time, similar “ethnic boxes” were created spontaneously on the front within the divisions of the otherwise heterogeneous Austro-Hungarian army. These processes in a previously functioning multi-ethnic society clearly foreshadowed the post-war hostilities between the different ethnic groups.

Since Austria-Hungary was at war with both Serbia and Russia, Slavic people in general, especially South-Slavs and/or those of Orthodox religion, were securitized from the very beginning of the war. Whether they were prisoners of war, citizens of foreign states in internment camps or even Austrian/Hungarian citizens, in the eyes of the authorities

they all had the potential to stir up anti-war sentiments, undermine the government and betray the Dual Monarchy, desert the army, and possibly join the enemy. Spying on foreign agents and surveillance of suspicious figures and associations therefore became part of everyday life. In Western Hungary, the Croatian minority, which was spread rather thinly along the border, showed no sign of ethnic-based frustration, but the Slovenes formed a compact ethnic block in the southwestern corner of Vas County. Because of this Muraköz/Medžimurje micro-region, Vas County was considered one of those “southern” counties of Hungary that could be targeted by South-Slavic aspirations. For instance, in July 1915, the Ministry of Interior Affairs instructed the leadership of these counties to prevent the circulation of a leaflet by the “South-Slavic Student Association”. The text of the leaflet harshly criticized Germans, Austrians and Hungarians over the alleged oppression of Slavic peoples who were now urged to join the war effort of the Entente Powers.⁴³ In contrast to the Pan-Slavic paranoia, the question of Pan-German nationalism was temporarily taken off the agenda during the war years in Hungary, which can be explained through the close military alliance with the German Empire.

As the killing continued on the front, the miseries of war hit the big cities even more, mostly in the form of food rationing, and the lack of coal and every kind of material that is indispensable for everyday life.⁴⁴ The food crisis was even worse in Vienna than in Budapest, which contributed to Austria’s dependence on Western Hungary. Due to the geographical distance, the farmers, craftsmen and traders of Western Hungary, those of German origin in particular, used to sell their products on the Viennese markets long before the war. The increasing need for agricultural products in the imperial capital strengthened this economic bond even further. Until the end of the war, Austria and Hungary formed a customs union under Habsburg rule, which meant that there was no legal obstacle to Western Hungary’s economic gravitation towards Vienna. During the

war, the legal trade was no longer able to meet the increasing demands, therefore an intensive cross-border smuggling activity evolved between Western Hungary and Vienna, which accelerated even more in the years of the border crisis (1918-1921). The Hungarian border police put a lot of effort into curbing the illegal export of food.⁴⁵ The prospect of the end of the war with the potential collapse of the Dual Monarchy hinted at the possibility of a hard border between Austria and Hungary. Such a future border would have not only isolated the starving city of Vienna from Western Hungarian agriculture but would also have harmed the economic interests of the border area population profiting from either legal or illegal food trade.

From the Republic of Heinzenland to the German Autonomy of Western Hungary

When it became obvious that the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was losing the war, the days of the ancient regime were already numbered in Vienna as well as in Budapest. Although the borders of the Monarchy were still intact and the still existing Austro-Hungary army stood on the enemy's soil and not the opposite, the Dual Monarchy collapsed from the inside in the fall of 1918. A revolutionary wave swept through the Habsburg lands as the so-called national councils were established all over the regions of the former Empire.⁴⁶ In Cisleithania, Charles I – as Emperor of Austria – issued the Schönbrunn Proclamation on the day of the Armistice (November 11), in which he recognized the right of the Austrian people to decide over the form of the state. Two days later – as King Charles IV of Hungary – he also put his signature on a similar document known as the Eckartsau Proclamation, issued for the Lands of the Holy Crown (Transleithania). Charles relinquished his participation in the administration of both of his realms but did not abdicate from the two

thrones, leaving the option for a future return to power open. On November 12, 1918, the Austrian National Council in Vienna declared Austria to be a democratic republic, which was to be part of the new German Republic.

Meanwhile in Budapest, the Hungarian National Council announced the independent Hungarian People's Republic under the leadership of Mihály Károlyi on November 16. The 'red count' and his leftist circles seized power as a result of the so-called Aster Revolution in Budapest on October 31, on the very same day that István Tisza, a symbolic figure of the old regime, was killed by unknown terrorists. In both countries, the new political elites introduced a new ideology linked with the promise of a better future after the misery of the war. Consequently, the 400-year bond between Austria and Hungary, embodied by the Habsburg dynasty, was finally broken. Both Republics pursued moderately left-wing and social-democrat social and economic policies on the one hand, and pro-Entente foreign policies on the other hand, while simultaneously promoting nationalist and anti-royalist sentiments.⁴⁷

In addition, both countries faced similar challenges, including a catastrophic economic situation, social turmoil, a food and coal crisis and the uncontrolled return of tens of thousands of brutalized and demoralized soldiers from the front. Furthermore, over the coming weeks and months, Austria as well as Hungary lost enormous territories to the successor states of the Habsburg Monarchy. With the military intervention of the Entente Powers, Austria yielded South Tirol to Italy, ceded Bosnia, Dalmatia, Carniola and parts of Carinthia to the Serb-Croat-Slovene Kingdom, relinquished Galicia to Poland and lost Bohemia and Moravia to the Czechs and Slovaks. At the same time, the Romanian army occupied Transylvania and Eastern Hungary, the Serbs annexed Southern Hungary and Croatia, while the Czech troops marched into Northern Hungary to establish the new state of Czechoslovakia. Millions

of German and Hungarian speakers became at once ethnic minority groups in their own homeland after the war. Moreover, both Austria and Hungary lost significant industrial and agricultural capacities that would have helped to overcome their economic crises.

The main difference between post-war Austria and Hungary was that, while the new Austrian state was able to survive its internal crisis under the leadership of the Social-Democrat chancellor, Karl Renner, in Hungary the Károlyi administration failed to live up to the expectations, paving the road for the radicalization of politics. As a result of a well-organized coup d'état in Budapest on March 21, 1919, the extreme left rose to power and established the Republic of Councils in Hungary. Following in the footsteps of Soviet Russia, the Hungarian Communists, led by Béla Kun, stirred up class hatred and implemented Bolshevik social and economic policies by exerting 'red terror' for 133 days. In order to create a corridor towards Russia, the Hungarian Red Army even launched military operations against the Czech and Romanian troops with much success against the former and less against the latter. One should be aware that, in this period, the domestic political situation in Vienna was also critical; the chance of an Austrian version of the Bolshevik revolution was a distinct possibility. However, it did not happen, and, as a result, Austria was able to negotiate the peace terms, at least to some extent, with the Entente Powers whose diplomats had been gathering in Paris since January 1919 to discuss the future borders of Europe. Although the Communist regime collapsed by the end of July, the political turmoil in Hungary ended only in November 1919 after right wing, counter-revolutionist groups under the leadership of Miklós Horthy rose to power and took revenge on the revolutionists in the form of 'white terror'.

In Western Hungary, the national councils were established in late October and the early days of November 1918. They were the local branches of the Hungarian National Council in Budapest and were ready

to take over the public administration.⁴⁸ The members of these local councils came from either nationalist-independentist or left-wing, democratic backgrounds with a conventional interpretation of Hungarian history that the age-old marriage with Habsburg Austria was a fatal failure.⁴⁹ They had to realize soon that Austria would not let them just walk away after the disappearance of the Habsburgs. The government of German-Austria (*Staatsrat*) officially announced its claim on the German-inhabited territories of Moson, Sopron and Vas with the addition of the city of Pozsony/Pressburg/Bratislava on November 12, 1918. As Mari Vares points out, neither the formation of the Republic of Austria, nor the struggle for Western Hungary, can be interpreted without the context of Pan-German nationalism in the former Habsburg Monarchy.⁵⁰ The historic wish that all the Germans of the Habsburg Empire had the right to form their own state and to eventually join Germany also explains why the Austrian government defined the question of 'being a German' in accordance to Wilsonism and why they formally insisted on the idea that the new Austrian state territory was based on the voluntary union of German people. Although a delegation of ethnic German farmers from Western Hungary paid a visit to Vienna to request the annexation, the vast majority of the society of Western Hungary was yet to be convinced of the cause. In order to make it happen, the Austrian government established the so-called *Westungarische Kanzlei* (Western Hungary Bureau) in Vienna. This authority was responsible for the preparation of the annexation through an intensive propaganda campaign that aimed to speed up the historic region's disintegration.⁵¹

Over the course of the next weeks Austrian agents and agitators showed up in the borderland villages, distributing pro-Austria and anti-Hungary flyers among the German-speaking population. In early November, the locals of Nagymarton/Mattersburg chased the Hungarian public servants away and their children threw the textbooks to the floor in

school while chanting 'We do not want to learn Hungarian anymore'.⁵² On November 17, a joint gathering was held by the border villages of Savanyúkút/Bad Sauerbrunn and Pecsényéd/Pöttösching, where locals declared their intention to join Austria.⁵³ On December 2, Austrian officers visited the village of Szentmargitbánya/St. Margarethen, urging the local stone miners to start civil unrest in the nearby town of Ruszt/Rust.⁵⁴ Three days later, a truck transporting 300 rifles from the Lower Austrian city of Wiener Neustadt arrived in the border village of Lajtaújfalu/Neufeld an der Leitha, but the Hungarian police arrested the crew and confiscated the shipment. On December 5, a similar shipment reached the town of Nagymarton/Mattersburg, where the weapons were successfully distributed among pro-Austria locals who aimed to take control over the area surrounding the town.⁵⁵ The next day, also in Nagymarton/Mattersburg, a local Social Democrat, Hans Suchard, proclaimed the Republic of Heinzenland, a name referring to an ethnic-linguistic subgroup of Western Hungary Germans. This artificial ministate was brought to existence with the clear purpose to cut out a piece of the territory of Hungary and prepare its annexation to Austria. The following day, the Hungarian army deployed an armored train and a machine gun squad to the town, forcing the rebels to surrender without bloodshed. Although the interrogations at the police headquarters in Sopron/Ödenburg suggested otherwise, the Austrian government denied any role in these highly controversial events as well as any connection to the short-lived Republic of Heinzenland. Vienna tried to avoid an open conflict with Hungary even if good relations with the Eastern neighbor were not considered a top priority. The post-war Austrian foreign policy was much more focused on convincing the Entente diplomats to support the basic interests of the Republic, such as minimalizing territorial losses at its northern and southern borders, and to keep the option of a Pan-German unification open.⁵⁶

Meanwhile in Hungary, the territory of the one-time Kingdom was getting smaller day by day. The Károlyi-administration either did not want to or was just not able to organize substantive military resistance against the invasion of the Little Entente troops, while still feeding the illusion that a fair peace treaty could be reached by the Great Entente powers in Paris.⁵⁷ Oszkár Jászi, the Minister of Nationalities, attempted but failed to keep the Romanians, Serbs and Slovaks within the borders of Hungary by offering their leaders maximum autonomy. Jászi, who enjoyed a much better reputation as a scholar than a politician, even envisioned a Switzerland-like Danube Confederation that would mirror some ideas of the above-mentioned plan of the Belvedere circle on Great Austria (1906).⁵⁸ The prospects of ethnic autonomy, however, could have delayed the change of the historic border in the West as an influential group of Germans in Western Hungary, namely the German National Council, deemed an autonomous German region within Hungary a more persuasive option than annexation to Austria or a continuation of the traditional Hungarian rule.⁵⁹ On January 28, 1919, the Károlyi-administration passed the law 'on the practice of self-government of the German people of Hungary', recognizing the right of the German-speaking communities of Hungary to create 'autonomous self-governing zones' in areas where they formed the majority. Even though the Western Hungary border area constituted such a territory, the boundaries, structure, level of self-governance and its reconciliation with the existing public administration caused a series of local conflicts during the remaining two months of the ill-fated Republic.⁶⁰

The issue of German autonomy in Western Hungary was not taken off the agenda during the time of the Communist dictatorship (19 March-1 August 1919) either. On the contrary, the Bolshevik leaders considered Western Hungary a bridge towards Austria, the country they hoped would become the next scene of the World Revolution. The so-called *Gaurat für Deutsch Westungarn* [Territory Council for German West

Hungary] in Sopron/Ödenburg was first held at the end of April 1919, establishing an autonomous ethnic German territory for the first time in the region's history. As of this time, the Austria-Hungary border area was seen as an autonomous body of the Republic of Councils in Hungary administrated by the German Regional Council in Sopron and the German Western Hungarian Regional People's Office. However, in many multiethnic towns and villages, German autonomy was introduced in parallel with the new Bolshevik system, while the remains of the traditional administration still existed. The multiple institutions once again led to a series of local conflicts, if not chaos. All in all, the Communist experiment massively contributed to the disintegration of historic Western Hungary. It not only detached a specific area from the territories of the Moson, Sopron and Vas counties, but, through Bolshevik policies, it also deterred the dominantly Catholic, conservative and rural society of Western Hungary from the parent state. Moreover, Vienna could rightfully argue in front of the Entente Powers that the region could only be protected from the Communist terror through its annexation to Austria.

From Saint-Germain to the Sopron Plebiscite

The fate of Austria was ultimately decided when the Treaty of Saint-Germain was signed on September 10, 1919.⁶¹ After months of multilateral negotiations, the Entente Powers agreed with Vienna that the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy would be dissolved; therefore, Austria had to recognize the independence of the successor states, including Hungary. The former Cisleithanian Austria lost about 60 percent of its prewar territory, most of it already occupied by the Great and Little Entente armies. Furthermore, it was strictly forbidden for Austria to use the name 'German-Austria' and join Germany under any circumstances.

The Treaty however awarded the western parts of the Moson, Sopron and Vas counties, including the city of Sopron/Ödenburg, to Austria, although this amounted to a somewhat smaller territory than expected: 4364 square kilometers with 350,000 inhabitants, including 250,000 German speakers. The Treaty of Saint-Germain also meant the Entente Powers rejected Prague's surrealistic idea of establishing a 'Slavic corridor' between Czechoslovakia and the Serb-Croat-Slovene Kingdom through the territory of Western Hungary.

The fate of Hungary was ultimately decided on June 4, 1920 in the form of the treaty of Trianon.⁶² Due to the political chaos (Romanian invasion in Northern Transdanubia, counter-revolution and 'white terror' elsewhere, etc.), the new Hungarian regime in Budapest had only been consolidated in November 1919, months after the collapse of the Communist dictatorship. The Kingdom was restored without the return of the Habsburgs to the throne when Miklós Horthy, the leading figure of the counter-revolutionist movement, was elected regent on March 1, 1920. Although in the following months the Hungarian diplomats did their utmost to improve the peace terms, the Treaty of Trianon mirrored the current status quo: Hungary was sentenced to lose 71 percent of its prewar territory, including the western parts awarded to Austria by the Treaty of Saint-Germain. The difference between Western Hungary and the other territories was that, while most of the latter were *de facto* already lost at the end 1918, Western Hungary remained under some sort of Hungarian administration throughout the crisis years up until November 1921. On the one hand, Hungary was reluctant to evacuate the territory in the hope of a regional plebiscite or a turn in power relations; on the other hand, Austria lacked the military capacity to enforce the evacuation. Furthermore, after the fall of the 133-day Communist regime, the regional political forces in Western Hungary gravitated once again more towards counter-revolutionist Hungary rather than socialist Austria.

As the new Hungarian regime's rise to power began in August 1919, public administration in Western Hungary was reorganized through a new legal framework, the so-called Government Commission for Western Hungary. This authority was headquartered in Szombathely—the largest Hungarian-inhabited city of the region and the administrative center of Vas County—with the aim to reorganize and coordinate the administration of four western counties: Zala, Vas, Sopron and Moson. Under the leadership of the government commissioners Antal Sigray and József Cziráky, the remains of the territorial German autonomy were completely abolished, and Western Hungary was once again managed by the traditional county administration. However, due to the border dispute and the possibility of a future plebiscite, public servants were constantly reminded to pay special attention to the needs of the German-speaking citizens, including their right to use their mother tongue in local administration.⁶³ On February 18, 1920, the representatives of Western Hungary in the National Assembly sent their report to the Ministry of Nationalities, in which they called for an even more delicate approach to the German question in Western Hungary. They insisted that economic support and improved living standards would be the best way to earn the trust of the locals, instead of sending agitators from Budapest.⁶⁴ Meanwhile the question of the Croatian minority appeared on the agenda too. The Catholic priest of Pásztorháza/Stinatz/Stinjaki, Péter Jandresevits, who was known as the self-appointed commissioner of Western Hungary's Croatian community, started negotiations with both the county authorities and the central government. In exchange for the Croats' proven loyalty to Hungary, he demanded the extension of minority rights in public administration and education. Jandresevits also warned that the poor economic situation might speed up the region's disintegration.⁶⁵

The fate of Western Hungary was still hanging in the balance. Over the course of 1920 and 1921, Austria and Hungary were engaged in

continuous negotiations and embittered diplomatic competition for the disputed territory.⁶⁶ Austria demanded the Entente Powers to force Hungary to evacuate the area and also continued the underground propaganda campaign among the German-speaking border area population. At the same time, Hungary took advantage of the public administration to reverse the disintegration process and demanded the revision of the Austria-Hungary border in the respective peace treaties, or at least the possibility of holding a plebiscite in the disputed territories. Pál Teleki, the Hungarian Prime Minister, insisted on connecting the question of Western Hungary to the controversial issue of Baranya County in South Transdanubia, which, despite the provisions of the Treaty of Trianon, was still under Serb occupation. In order to mediate between the two sides, the Entente Powers deployed a so-called Inter-Allied Military Mission to Sopron/Ödenburg. This authority was also intended to oversee the evacuation process in order to prevent further escalation of the crisis. After several proposals for sharing the disputed territory, Hungary finally succeeded in reclaiming Baranya County on August 27, 1921 and in exchange Budapest agreed to evacuate Western Hungary on the very same day. According to the agreement, the Hungarian authorities were to hand over the territory to the Inter-Allied Military Mission first, which would pass it over to the arriving Austrian authorities.⁶⁷

When a group of Austrian gendarmeries, public servants and civilians crossed the historic border and headed toward Sopron/Ödenburg on August 28, probably both sides thought the crisis was coming to an end. However, a group of local rebels unexpectedly opened fire in the village of Ágfalva/Agendorf nearby Sopron, forcing the Austrians to retreat. This incident was the beginning of the so-called Western-Hungarian Uprising that lasted until October 14. The few hundred rebels, who became known as the 'scrubby guard', engaged in months-long guerilla warfare across the region later called Burgenland. They were led by Pál Prónai, a former

officer of the Horthy army, who was infamous for his role in the ‘white terror’. Among their ranks, we can find desperate locals as well as university students, former soldiers and political adventurers from other regions of the former Monarchy, even a group of Bosnian Muslims. Like one of the uprising’s prominent figures, Viktor Mádarsprach, many of the rebels felt they had had no opportunity to defend their respective home regions but now saw an opportunity to fight for Western Hungary.⁶⁸ The ‘scrubby guard’ not only successfully fought back the Austrian gendarmeries and custom officers attempting to occupy the region in several waves, but also cleared and secured the entire disputed territory to create an artificial ministate named the Banate of Leitha. The capital of this highly controversial state was Felsőőr/Oberwart, a predominantly Hungarian-speaking town in the south. They even issued their own postage stamps.⁶⁹ The clear purpose of the state that *de facto* existed between October 4 and November 5, 1921, was to prevent the annexation of the territory to Austria, even if it could not remain part of Hungary. Although Prónai was in frequent contact with Budapest and his rebels received unofficial and indirect support from Hungary, the Hungarian government was not able to control the uprising. In fact, many of the rebels claimed the Horthy regime simply let down Western Hungary with the evacuation of the region. At the same time, Hungary could argue vis-à-vis the Entente Powers that the Western Hungarian uprising proved that the people of the region had no intention to join Austria. In order to resolve the crisis, Italy volunteered to mediate between Austria and Hungary, inviting them to the negotiating table in Venice. According to the Venice Protocol signed on October 13, Hungary agreed to eliminate the Banate of Leitha, disarm the rebels, and fully evacuate the territory awarded to Austria by the Treaty of Saint-Germain. In exchange, Austria finally consented to hold a plebiscite in Sopron/Ödenburg and its surrounding villages.⁷⁰

The implementation of the Venice Protocol, however, suffered a delay due to an unexpected turn of events.⁷¹ Charles, the former Emperor of Austria (under the name Charles I) and the former King of Hungary (as Charles IV), surprisingly returned to Western Hungary in his second attempt to retake at least one of his former thrones, i.e. the Hungarian one. While his first attempt during Easter 1921 was thwarted in a peaceful manner, the second so-called 'Royal coup d'état' in Hungary led to a more serious conflict. After he received the support of the legitimist groups in Western Hungary, many of them involved in the uprising, Charles' airplane landed near the village of Dénesfa. The King immediately visited Sopron/Ödenburg where he quickly established his alternative government and recruited a minor royalist army that marched on Budapest. As the Little Entente powers threatened Hungary with a military invasion in case of the restoration of the Habsburg rule, Horthy decided to stop Charles by any means necessary. The legitimists suffered a defeat by the pro-government forces in the battle of Budaörs on October 23, and Charles was placed under military custody in the Monastery of Tihany. Although he did not abdicate the throne, he was forced into exile in Madeira where he passed away few months later after contracting the Spanish flu. In order to avoid a Little Entente intervention, the Hungarian Parliament passed a law to dethrone the Habsburg dynasty whilst formally remaining a monarchy.

The former western Hungarian border area (nearly 4,000 square kilometers) was officially incorporated into Austria on December 5, 1921, followed by the establishment of Burgenland on January 1, 1922. However, in contrast to the original plan, it was not Sopron/Ödenburg that became the capital city of the new Austrian 'land' but the town of Eisenstadt/Kismarton, since the plebiscite in Sopron and in eight nearby villages proved to be in favor of Hungary. The vote was held between December 14 and 16, 1921, under the supervision of the Inter-Allied Mission. Both sides waged desperate campaigns with flyers, posters,

newspapers and demonstrations.⁷² According to the 1920 census, about 50,000 people lived in the district of the plebiscite, of which 55 percent was German, 39 percent Hungarian, 5 percent Croatian and 1 percent of other ethnic background. In the city itself, Hungarians and Germans both made up nearly half of the population.⁷³ According to the plebiscite regulations, 26,879 citizens had the right to vote and 89.5 percent of them participated in the voting. After all, 15,334 voted for Hungary (65%), 8,227 for Austria (35%) and 502 votes were found invalid. In Sopron, 72 percent of the voters were in favor of Hungary, which meant that even many German-speaking citizens rejected the idea of joining Austria. In five of the eight villages, however, Austria won with an overwhelming majority. As a result of the plebiscite and in contrast to the Peace Treaties of Saint-Germain and Trianon, Hungary reclaimed 257 square kilometers of its former territory with a city of symbolic value and regional significance. Although the Austrian government questioned the legitimacy of the outcome and accused the Hungarian side of waging an unfair campaign and causing a series of irregularities such as transporting voters to Sopron, the Entente Powers confirmed the decision and put an end to the three-year-long border conflict between Austria and Hungary. The nationalist struggle, however, continued both in Budapest and in Vienna during the interwar period in the form of mutual accusations, irredentism, counter-irredentism and speculation about the future of Burgenland. For Hungarians, the historic Western territory remained one of the many 'heart-breaking and unjust' losses of the post-war peace treaties, whereas Sopron/Ödenburg had long been remembered in Austria as the lost heart of Burgenland ('das verlorene Herz des Burgenlandes').⁷⁴

Summary

The disintegration of historic Western Hungary and the birth of Burgenland were an extremely complicated historic process in which the significance of modern nationalism and its radicalization during the Great War cannot be underestimated. If we picture the old empire of Austria-Hungary as a jigsaw puzzle, then the Western Hungarian counties should be imagined as those oddly shaped, interlocking and mosaiced pieces that geographically as well as culturally connected the two halves of the empire. Although the long but narrow area along the western border of the Kingdom of Hungary was predominantly German speaking for centuries, both countries were under Habsburg rule under which questioning the historical borders would have simply been unreasonable.

This radically changed around the turn of the century when modern nationalism broke through in public life and became a main driving force behind political aspirations. The new nationalist elites of the nondominant ethnic groups engaged themselves in speculations on how to change the historic borders in accordance with real or imagined ethnolinguistic boundaries all over East and Central Europe. In the case of Western Hungary, these speculations took place either among the high elites (i.e. the Belvedere circle) or in the nationalist groups of the middle class, but could hardly reach the ordinary people who, in the beginning at least, responded with national indifference to the claims made by the protagonists of nationalism. This reluctance by the target audience slowly but surely disappeared during the First World War and the post-war chaos when the general breakdown of society created the conditions for the 'massification' of national movements. The misery of war and the series of local tensions escalated more and more in a strange combination of ethnic and class hatred. At the same time, the critical economic situation also contributed to the disintegration process as

crisis-stricken Vienna was in great need of the Western Hungarian agriculture.

After the collapse of the Dual Monarchy at the end of 1918, politics radically shifted to the left both in Budapest and Vienna, but it did not lose its nationalist character. On the contrary, the new, revolutionary leaderships entered the competition for the new borders after having helplessly witnessed the successor states claiming the former territory of their respective countries. However, it was socialist-led Austria and not short-lived Communist Hungary that was able to articulate its policies in accordance with the interests of the big powers and thus to secure the international acknowledgment of at least some of its territorial demands. Indeed, the decisive moment came when the Paris Peace Conference (1919-1920) finally agreed to move the historic border between Austria and Hungary somewhat eastward. However, the exact location of the new border, and thus the fate of tens of thousands of Germans, Hungarians, and Croats, remained a matter of embittered dispute between the competing neighbors up until the end of 1921.

Endnotes

¹ This study was written within the framework of the DFG Collaborative Research Centre/Transregio 138 subproject at the Herder Institute in Marburg, Germany, entitled *Discourses on the Rights of Minorities and Majorities in East Central Europe in the 19th and 20th Century*. Learn more: <https://www.herderinstitut.de/projekte/laufende-projekte/versicherung-und-diskurse-ueber-rechte-von-minderheiten-und-mehrheiten-in-ostmitteleuropa-im-19und-20-jahrhundert> More information on the collaborative research centre: <https://www.sfb138.de>

² M. Vares, *The Question of Western Hungary/Burgenland 1918-1923* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Jyväskylä, 2008), 12.

³ 'A nyugati határvidék sorsa (The Fate of the Western Border Territory)', in: *Mosonvármegye* XIX/2 (9/01/1921), 1.

⁴ The ecclesiastical jurisdiction over some border villages was a matter of dispute between Austrian provinces and Hungary even in the late nineteenth century: F. Pál, 'A szombathelyi püspök joghatóságának kérdései 1867 és 1914 között (The questions of the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Szombathely between 1867 and 1914)', in: *Vasi Szemle*, LXIX/3 (2015), 335-341.

⁵ G. Horváth, *Bécs vonzásában. Az agrárpiacosodás feltételrendszere Moson vármegyében a 19. század első felében (In the Attraction of Vienna. The Preconditions of the Agricultural Marketing in Moson County in the First Half of the 19th Century)* (Budapest 2013).

⁶ *A Magyar Korona Országában az 1891. év elején végrehajtott népszámlálás eredményei*, I. rész: Általános népleírás (*Results of the early 1891 census in the Lands of the Hungarian Crown. Part I. General Description of the People*), (Budapest, 1893) [hereafter: Census 1891], 100-111.

⁷ V. Heuberger, 'Zwischen Wien und Budapest: Der Einfluß der deutschen Sprache und Kultur auf das Westungarische Judentum', in: W. Kriegleder & A. Seidler (eds.), *Deutsche Sprache und Kultur, Literatur und Presse in Westungarn/Burgenland* (Bremen, 2004), 47-60.

⁸ The family's historic attachment to Sopron County was mentioned several times at the inauguration ceremony of the new Lord Lieutenant Prince Pál Esterházy on October 27-28, 1872. See more: MNL [National Archives of Hungary] Győr-Moson-Sopron Megyei Levéltár, Soproni Levéltára, Sopron Vármegye Törvényhatósági Bizottsága Közgyűlési Iratai, IV/402/b/54, no. 405.

⁹ Their political influence was ensured by the so-called virilist system. In the era of Dualism, half of the seats in county assemblies were reserved for the highest taxpayers. A list of the highest taxpayers in Sopron county on November 10, 1871: MNL Győr-Moson-Sopron Megyei Levéltár, Soproni Levéltára, Sopron Vármegye Főispánjának Iratai (1867-1871), IV/251/3, no. 118.

¹⁰ A comprehensive analysis of Hungary's constitutional development in the nineteenth century: L. Péter, 'Die Verfassungsentwicklung in Ungarn', in: H. Rumpler & P. Urbanitsch (eds.), *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848-1918. Band VII/1, Verfassung und Parlamentarismus* (Vienna, 2000), 239-540.

¹¹ A more detailed summary of the attempt: T. Székely, 'A közigazgatás átalakításának programja. Modernizáció és nemzetállam-építés a dualizmus korában. (The Program for Transforming the Public Administration. Modernization and Nation-state-building in the Era of Dualism)', in: N. Csibi & Á. Schwarczwölder (eds.): *Modernizáció és nemzetállam-építés. Haza és/vagy haladás dilemmája a dualizmus kori Magyarországon*. Kronosz Kiadó (Pécs, 2018), 165-179.

¹² Several public figures of the era argued for a powerful and centralized nation state at the expense of the "medieval" autonomies. Read more: B. Grünwald, *Közigazgatásunk és a szabadság (Our public administration and the Liberty)* (Budapest, 1876) 78; G. Beksics, *Új korszak és politikai programja (A New Era and its Political Program)* (Budapest, 1889), 16-18.

¹³ Lord-Lieutenant Károly Mérey's resignation letter to Vilmos Tóth, Minister of Interior Affairs on 24th of January 1874: MNL Országos Levéltára, K148, 83. d, 1867.III., pp.19-20.

¹⁴ L. Péter, 'Law of XLIV of 1868 "On the Equality of Nationality Rights" and the Language of Local Administration', in: M. Lojkó (ed.), *Hungary's Long 19th century, Collected Studies by László Péter* (Leiden-Boston, 2012), 343-354.

¹⁵ In 1918, when the author's unrealistic vision suddenly became a distinct possibility, he republished his thoughts as a book: J. Patry, *Westungarn zu Deutschösterreich* (Vienna, 2018).

¹⁶ R. Saage, 'Die Deutsche Frage. Die Erste Republik im Spannungsfeld zwischen österreichischer und deutscher Identität', in: H. Konrad & W. Maderthaner eds.), *Das Werden der Wersten Republik... der Rest ist Österreich, Band I* (Vienna, 2008), 65-82.

¹⁷ *Képviselőházi Napló (1906) XVI. kötet (Diary of the House of Representatives of the Hungarian Parliament called in 1906, Volume 16)*, 128-129.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 129.

¹⁹ 'Nyugatmagyarországot a németeknek!' (Western Hungary to the Germans!), in: *Budapesti Hírlap* (22/02/1908), 5-6.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 6.

- ²¹ Letter from the Ministry of Interior Affairs to István Békássy, the Lord Lieutenant of Vas County, on 29th of March 1914. MNL Vas Megyei Levéltára, Főispáni Elnöki Iratok 1914, IV.401/a/7, res 51.
- ²² B. Trencsenyi, M. Kopeček, L. Lisjak Gabrijelčič, M. Falina, M. Baár (eds.), *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe. Volume 1* (Oxford, 2016), 631.
- ²³ M. Van Ginderachter & J. Fox (eds.), *National indifference and History of Nationalism in Modern Europe* (London-New York, 2019).
- ²⁴ R. Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed. Nationhood and the national question in the New Europe* (Cambridge, 1996), 13-22.
- ²⁵ T. Zahra, 'Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis', in: *Slavic Review* 69/1 (2010), 93-119.
- ²⁶ T. Hajdu, F. Pollmann, *A régi Magyarország utolsó háborúja 1914-1918 (The Last War of the Old Hungary 1914-1918)* (Budapest, 2014), 63.
- ²⁷ A. Popovici, *Die Vereinigten Staaten von Groß-Österreich. Politische Studien zur Lösung der nationalen Fragen und staatrechtlichen Krisen in Österreich-Ungarn* (Leipzig, 1906).
- ²⁸ Minister of Interior Affairs János Sándor's telegram to István Békássy, the Lord Lieutenant of Vas County, on 29th of June 1914: MNL Vas Megyei Levéltára, Főispáni Elnöki Iratok, IV.401/a/7, Res. 80.
- ²⁹ Minister of Interior Affairs János Sándor's letter to István Békássy, the Lord Lieutenant of Vas County, on 7th of July 1914: MNL Vas Megyei Levéltára, Főispáni Elnöki Iratok, IV.401/a/7, Res. 86.
- ³⁰ The text of the mourning telegram was recorded in the protocol of the extraordinary assembly meeting of Sopron County on July 2, 1914: MNL Győr-Moson-Sopron Megyei Levéltár, Soproni Levéltára, Sopron Vármegyei Törvényhatósági Bizottsága Közgyűlési Iratai, IV/402/b/59, 453.bgy. 12097/914.
- ³¹ 'Vármegyénk közgyűlése' (Assembly of our County), in: *Mosonvármegye XII/57 (12/07/1914)*, 1.
- ³² On the military history of the Habsburg Monarchy in the Great War in general: R. Jeřábek, 'Militärisches Potential und Kriegsverlauf 1914-1918', in: H. Rumpler

(ed.), *Die Habsburgmonarchie 1848-1918, Band XI, 1. Teilband* (Vienna, 2016), 209-283.

³³ On the breakdown of the Austro-Hungarian war machine: M. Rauchensteiner, J. Broukal, *Der Erste Weltkrieg und das Ende des Habsburgermonarchie in Aller Kürze* (Vienna, 2015), 191-230.

³⁴ T. Balázs, 'Gévay-Wolff Lajos Sopron Vármegyei Alispán (1920-1938) élete és munkássága (The life and work of Lajos Gévay-Wolff, Vice-Lieutenant of Sopron County (1920-1938))', in: *Arrabonna* 41 (2004), 191-192.

³⁵ Hajdu, Pollmann, *A régi Magyarország*, 252-257.

³⁶ 'Statistics of the First World War casualties of Austria-Hungary', in: H. Rumpler (ed.), *Die Habsburgmonarchie 1848-1918, Band XI, 2. Teilband, Weltkriegsstatistik Österreich-Ungarn 1914-1918* (Vienna, 2014), 161-182.

³⁷ Wartime instructions by István Békássy, the Lord Lieutenant of Vas County, to the editorial groups of local newspaper: MNL Vas Megyei Levéltára, Főispáni Elnöki Iratok, IV.401/a/7, Res.176.

³⁸ Report on the investigation into the Gyula Götzl case by the local authorities to István Békássy, the Lord Lieutenant of Vas County on 14th of September 1914: MNL Vas Megyei Levéltára, Főispáni Elnöki Iratok, IV.401/a/7, Res. 222.

³⁹ 'Élelmiszernyomorúság' (Food misery), in: *Mosonvármegye* XIII/33 (13/06/1915), 1; 'Drágaság (High prices)', in: *Mosonvármegye* XIV/22 (28/05/1916), 1.

⁴⁰ Minister of Interior Affairs János Sándor's letter to István Békássy, the Lord Lieutenant of Vas County, on 10th of September 1914: MNL Vas Megyei Levéltár, Főispáni Elnöki Iratok, IV.401/a/7, Res.244.

⁴¹ 'Az erdélyi menekültek' (Refugees from Transylvania), in: *Mosonvármegye* XIV/41 (8/10/1916), 1.

⁴² Government and county plans for the relocating of refugees on the territory of Vas County (9th of January 1915): MNL Vas Megyei Levéltár, Főispáni Elnöki Iratok, IV.401/a/7, Res.379.

⁴³ Government warning to the local authorities of propaganda by the South-

Slavic Student Association that aimed to recruit a South-Slavic legion in Austria Hungary (29 January 1915): MNL Vas Megyei Levéltár, Főispáni Elnöki Iratok, IV.401/a/10, Res 548.

⁴⁴ Latest research results about the (post)war difficulties in Hungary: Z. Bódy (ed.), *Háborúból békébe: a magyar társadalom 1918 után, (From War to Peace. The Hungarian Society after 1918)* (Budapest, 2018).

⁴⁵ Letter by János Sándor, Minister of Interior Affairs, to all county leaders on the prevention of grain smuggling on 31st of October 1915: MNL Vas Megyei Levéltár, Főispáni Elnöki Iratok, IV.401/a/12, Res. 869.

⁴⁶ W. Maderthaler, 'Die eigenartige Größe der Beschränkung. Österreichs Revolution im mitteleuropäischen Spannungsfeld', in: H. Konrad & W. Maderthaler (eds.), *Das Werden der Wersten Republik... der Rest ist Österreich, Band I* (Vienna, 2008), 187-206.

⁴⁷ The Holy Crown of St. Stephen, for instance, was removed from the coat of arms of Hungary. 'A magyar címer és lobogó' (The Hungarian Coat-of-Arms and Flag), in: *Mosonvármegye XVII/4* (26/1/1919), 1.

⁴⁸ Abstract of the protocol of the extraordinary county assembly meeting in Sopron County held on 18th of November 1918: MNL Győr-Moson-Sopron Megye Soproni Levéltára, Sopron Vármegye Törvényhatósági Bizottsága Közgyűlési Iratai, IV/402/b/59, nr.18043, November 27, 1918.

⁴⁹ 'Megalakult a vármegyei Nemzeti Tanács' (The National Council of the County has been established), in: *Sopronvármegye* (19/11/1918), 1-2; MNL Győr-Moson-Sopron Megye Soproni Levéltára, Sopron Vármegye Törvényhatósági Bizottsága Közgyűlési Iratai, IV/402/b/59, nr.18043, November 27, 1918.

⁵⁰ Vares, *The Question of Western Hungary/Burgenland*, 94-96.

⁵¹ J. Botlik, *Nyugat-Magyarország sorsa 1918-1922* (Vasszilvágy, 2008), 24. (English translation: J. Botlik, *The Fate of Western Hungary 1918-1922* (Buffalo, NY, 2012)).

⁵² 'Osztrák ügynökök szítják Nagymartonban az elszakadás gondolatát' (Austrian agents propagate separatism in Nagymarton), in: *Sopronvármegye* (19/11/1918), 3; MNL Győr-Moson-Sopron Megye Soproni Levéltára, Sopron Vármegye Törvényhatósági Bizottsága Közgyűlési Iratai, IV/402/b/59, nr.18043, November 27, 1918.

⁵³ 'A savanyúkúti hazaárulók' (The traitors of Savanyúkút), in: *Soproni Napló* (20/11/1918), 3; MNL Győr-Moson-Sopron Megye Soproni Levéltára, Sopron Vármegye Törvényhatósági Bizottsága Közgyűlési Iratai, IV/402/b/59, nr.18043, November 27, 1918.

⁵⁴ Botlik, *Nyugat-Magyarország*, 25.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 25-27.

⁵⁶ E. Hanisch, 'Im Zeichen von Otto Bauer. Deutschösterreichs Außenpolitik in den Jahren 1918 and 1919' in: Helmut Konrad & W. Maderthaler (eds.), *Das Werden der Wersten Republik... der Rest ist Österreich, Band I* (Vienna, 2008), 207-222.

⁵⁷ On Hungary's failure to organize military resistance in late 1918-early 1919: T. Révész, *Nem akartak katonát látni? (They did not want to see any soldiers?)* (Budapest, 2019).

⁵⁸ O. Jászi, *Magyarország jövője és a Dunai Egyesült Államok (The Future of Hungary and the United States of the Danube Area)* (Budapest, 1918).

⁵⁹ The autonomy vs. annexation dilemma of local Germans was discussed by both sides: G. Zsombor: *Westungarn. Zu Ungarn oder zu Österreich?* (Sopron/Ödenburg, 1919); R. von Pflaunder, *Die Zukunft der Deutschen in Westungarn* (Vienna, 1919).

⁶⁰ The local journal of Moson County thoroughly discussed the issues around the German Autonomy: 'Mosonvármegye és a német kérdés' (Moson County and the German question), in: *Mosonvármegye* XVII/1 (5/1/1919), 1; 'A nyugatmagyarországi németiség' (The Germans of Western Hungary), in: *Mosonvármegye* XVII/2 (12/1/1919), 1-2.; 'A német autonómia és a nemzeti tanács' (The German autonomy and the National Council), in: *Mosonvármegye* XVII/8 (23/02/1919), 1; 'A német autonómia' (The German autonomy), in: *Mosonvármegye* XVII/11 (16/3/1919), 1.

⁶¹ L. Mikoletzky, 'Saint Germain und Karl Renner. Eine Republik wird "diktiert"', in: H. Konrad & W. Maderthaler (eds.), *Das Werden der Wersten Republik... der Rest ist Österreich, Band I* (Vienna, 2008), 179-186.

⁶² For detailed analysis see: I. Romsics, *A trianoni békszerződés (The Peace Treaty of Trianon)* (Budapest, 2007).

⁶³ Letter by Ödön Beniczky, Minister of Interior Affairs to József Cziráky, Government Commissioner for Vas County, on February 29, 1920: MNL Vas Megyei Levéltára, Főispáni elnöki iratok, IV.401/a/18, Res. 16.

⁶⁴ Opinion of the parliamentary representatives of Western Hungary on the internal situation in Western Hungary: MNL Vas Megyei Levéltára, Főispáni elnöki iratok, IV.401/a/18, 1920, 536/920.

⁶⁵ Letter by Péter Jandresevits, representative of Western-Hungarian Croats, to József Cziráky, Lord Lieutenant of Vas County, on November 16, 1920: MNL Vas Megyei Levéltára, Főispáni elnöki iratok, IV.401/a/19., Res. 23.

⁶⁶ Vares, *The Question of Western Hungary/Burgenland*, 208-211.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 222-238.

⁶⁸ V. Madersprach's memoirs, published first as a series of newspaper articles in the late 1920s, were republished as a book in 2014: V. Madersprach, *Élményeim a nyugat-magyarországi szabadságharcból (My memories of the war for freedom in Western Hungary)* (Budapest, 2014), 9-16.

⁶⁹ U. Brand, *Die Zerschlagung Ungarns. Aus Westungarn wird das österreichische Burgenland* (2014), 4-10.

⁷⁰ Vares, *The Question of Western Hungary/Burgenland*, 247-250.

⁷¹ Botlik, *Nyugat-Magyarország*, 285-295.

⁷² B. Rásky, 'Vom Schärpen der Unschärfe. Die Grenze zwischen Österreich und Ungarn 1918-1924', in: H. Konrad & W. Maderthaler (eds.), *Das Werden der Wersten Republik... der Rest ist Österreich, Band I* (Vienna, 2008), 150-155.

⁷³ *Az 1920. évi népszámlálás, I. rész: A népesség főbb demográfiai adatai (The 1920 census, Part I: The main demographic data on the population)* (Budapest, 1923), 29.

⁷⁴ See more: P. Haslinger, *Der ungarische Revisionismus und das Burgenland 1922-1932* (Frankfurt, 1944).