

The Treaty of Trianon Imposed Upon Hungary

Objectives and Considerations From the Hungarian Perspective

Gábor Hollósi*

Abstract

Historians outside of Hungary often emphasize that the post-World War I peace conference did not erase the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy from the map. The Peace Conference merely confirmed the decision previously made by the peoples of Central Europe over the Monarchy. But is it really true that the issue of nationality and the self-determination of the peoples were the forces that tore the Monarchy apart? And was the Hungarian national tragedy of the newly drawn borders due to the irresponsible policies of Prime Minister Mihály Károlyi and the reckless policy of the Hungarian Soviet Republic? In the following paper I express the view that the fate of the Monarchy was primarily determined by the (fundamentally) changed role of the Monarchy in the European status quo, and contend that the issue pertaining to the establishment of Hungary's new frontiers was determined by the overwhelming military might of the opposing forces.

Keywords: Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, World War I, 1920, Hungarian Peace Delegation, Trianon Peace Treaty.

“Who would doubt that the establishment of the Hungarian border was somewhat arbitrary? Suffice to look at a map, to follow this boundary, which is not at all definitive, one can immediately see that it does not serve justice in any way. We are faced here with experimental solutions. It has to be decided whether they are based on fairness enough to satisfy them.”¹

1. On the Nationality Issue

For centuries, Central and Eastern Europe was the cradle of multinational empires (Turkish, Russian and Habsburg empires), and during Turkish rule, Hungarians did not have an independent state either. The idea of the ‘big states of small nations’ was not new in the 20th century, since the demands of Greater Romania and Greater Serbia were formulated in Wallachia and Serbia already in

* Gábor Hollósi: senior research fellow, VERITAS Research Institute and Archives, Budapest.

1 Speech by French Prime Minister Aristide Briand in the House of Commons. Cited by Andrea Zsoffai, ‘Trianon francia szemmel’, in Károly Kiss & Krisztina Lovas (eds.), *Történelem és nemzet. Tanulmánykötet Galántai József professzor tiszteletére*, ELTE Eötvös, Budapest, 1996, p. 368.