

1938-1941: PARTIAL RECOVERY OF LOST TERRITORIES

Between the years of 1938 and 1941 Hungary succeeded in recovering some of the territories lost after WW. I to Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Yugoslavia.

Cronologically speaking, Czechoslovakia was the first to return its Hungarian-inhabited area to Hungary, an area subject to dispute:

A SUMMARY OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK-HUNGARIAN BORDER DISPUTE OF 1938

The roots of the Czechoslovak-Hungarian border dispute of 1938 reach back to the Paris Peace Settlements following World War I. The Treaty of Trianon reduced Hungary proper to less than one third of her former territory and about two-fifths of her population. Large numbers of Magyars were attached to the newly created "Successor States", without consulting the population of the territories transferred. Hungary maintained from the beginning the position that she would seek to change the terms of the Treaty by all available peaceful means as it was not a negotiated, but an "imposed" treaty, and as such, it was unjust. Her main hope was the League of Nations, a new organization which was thought to be capable of correcting all the mistakes committed by the peacemakers. Instead, the League became an instrument of the victorious powers to preserve the status quo. Consequently, Hungary began to orient her foreign policy toward the anti-status quo Powers; first toward Italy, who was openly sponsoring the Hungarian revisionist case, and after the annexation of Austria, toward her new neighbor, Germany. In 1938 Hungary definitely abandoned the idea of seeking peaceful revision through the procedure envisaged by Article XIX of the Covenant. Instead, she joined the policies of Germany and Poland. The aim of the three states was similar: the attainment of a favorable settlement of their minorities' question with Czechoslovakia.

The opening was provided by the Munich Agreement signed by the Big Four on September 29, 1938, as a result of the changing European distribution of power. The agreement arranged for the cession of the Sudeten areas of Czechoslovakia to Germany. It also called for the settlement of the Polish and Hungarian minority questions through direct negotiations. While Poland achieved her aims within days by presenting an ultimatum to Prague, Hungary entered into direct negotiations. These, however, failed.

Ultimately, at the wish of the two parties the matter was referred to Italo-German arbitration. Foreign Ministers Galeazzo Ciano and Joachim von Ribbentrop arbitrated the dispute, the latter supporting the Slovak, the former the Hungarian case. The arbitral award was based almost exclusively on ethnographic factors and restored to Hungary 12,103 square kilometers (approximately 4,630 square miles) of territory with slightly over one million

population, eighty percent Magyars.

Thus, the number of Hungarians in Czechoslovakia diminished to 66,000. At the same time, the ratio of Hungary's non-Magyar population had increased from 7.2 per cent to approximately 9 per cent.

Conforming to plans worked out by a Czechoslovak-Hungarian commission of military experts, the ceded area was occupied by Hungary between the 5th and 10th of November as stipulated by the Award. On the latter date, the line of demarcation was fixed by the military commission.

Note:

Following WW II, the Paris Peace Conference declared in 1947, the Vienna Award “null and void”, restoring thereby the **status-quo-ante**.

The same fate befall the 2nd Vienna Award, which on August 30, 1940, returned Northern Transylvania from Rumania to Hungary.