

Introduction

This book sets forth the vicissitudes of an ex-enemy state, Hungary, at the Paris Peace Conference in 1946 and analyzes the intricacies of preparations for peace in the shadow of the Swastika and the Red Star. Although inter-Allied strategic and political decisions had settled the fate of the Danubian countries well before the end of the war, this fact was not known, and the cognoscenti in Hungary discounted such rumors. It seemed incredible that after a victorious war the Western powers would allow simply a "changing of the guard," the installation of Soviet domination after German occupation. Hungarian emissaries established contacts with British and United States representatives in neutral countries in 1942–43, and the Western negotiators did not contradict the Hungarian assumption that British and American forces would reach Hungary and occupy the mid-Danubian basin.

Although in several chapters I discuss events in which I took a part, I did not intend to write a memoir. I describe events as I observed them as an actor or witness. In the process of research and writing, I sought to use official publications, memoirs, and archives, including my private papers. Because I participated in peace preparations in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in 1943–44, headed the peace preparatory division after the war, and served as secretary-general of the Hungarian peace delegation in 1946, I have included my personal experiences as well. In these years Hungary's destiny was like a Greek tragedy. German occupation in early 1944 was followed by Soviet invasion later in the year. Most parts of the country became battlefields and for nearly two months Budapest was under constant siege.

In the first chapter a personal account helps to explain the abrupt transition from the Horthy regime to the postwar era—the chaotic conditions during the last stage of the Nazi occupation, the siege of Budapest, and the first phase of the Soviet occupation. In similar

fashion, I relate from my vantage point the peace preparations in postwar Hungary and events at the Paris Conference, hoping to convey a direct and realistic sense of the many strange happenings during this period of seemingly whimsical changes. Chapter Two unfolds the domestic political transformations and the interplay of Soviet and Western diplomacy in postwar Hungary. These events influenced our preparations for peace. Chapters Three and Eight sum up Allied policies that led to the division of Europe and to postwar peacemaking. The rest of the chapters discuss Hungary's international political problems and the aftermath of peace negotiations.

Peace preparations in Hungary during and after the war assumed that the United States would play a major and probably decisive role at the peace table. This assumption seemed realistic because the United States was the only Great Power not affected by wartime destruction. Its industry and productive capacity was immensely strengthened during the hostilities, and its military power reached an unparalleled peak in the last stage of the war. It was not known in Budapest that by this time Danubian Europe had become the dark side of the moon for the Western allies. The Joint Chiefs of Staff had decided in the autumn of 1943 that the United States should take no responsibilities "in the area of the Balkans, including Austria." The political implications of this military ruling foreshadowed the future.

Another assumption during our peace preparations was that the convocation of a comprehensive peace conference would establish a new international order. This assumption seemed plausible in the context and perspective of European history. In modern times, after major wars, belligerent countries had negotiated at a peace conference to establish a generally recognized political and territorial order. The Congresses of Westphalia, Utrecht, and Vienna were milestones not only in the art of peacemaking but also in formulating diplomatic and juridical rules for a developing state system. After the Napoleonic wars, the settlement worked out by the Congress of Vienna secured general peace in Europe for a century. The informal cooperation of the continental Great Powers and the only world power, Great Britain—known as the Concert of Europe—solved international issues and isolated wars. Even major changes, such as the unification of Germany and Italy, were achieved through isolated wars. But this system began to deteriorate after the Congress of Berlin (1878), when the formation of the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente brought about a rigid bipolar balance of power in Europe. The failure of diplomacy in 1914 was a major immediate cause of the outbreak of one of the most irrational wars in history, which in turn triggered a

series of catastrophic events and fundamental transformations in international relations. The war demonstrated to the world the breakdown of solidarity among the European Great Powers and showed the weaknesses of Western civilization.

At the Paris Conference in 1919, the three great Western democracies—the United States, Britain, and France—formed the core of peacemakers; Italy and Japan participated in some of the deliberations. A momentous result of the war was the temporary eclipse of two European Great Powers, Germany and Russia, and the dissolution of Austria-Hungary. The Congress of Vienna could not serve as a model for peace in 1919 because the traditional state system of Europe was destroyed and world conditions were in a stage of rapid transformation. Social and technological changes had a large impact on diplomacy, and revolutionary events and ideologies became again factors in world politics. Talleyrand was an influential participant at the Congress of Vienna, but after the First World War, Germany and the other defeated countries were excluded from the peace negotiations. Russia, still torn by civil war, was not invited to attend the conference. Instead of creating a democratic federation in the Danubian gateway to Western Europe, the peacemakers replaced the Austro-Hungarian monarchy by small quarrelsome states.

Few serious conflicts of interest existed among the major victorious powers in 1919, and their visions about the future were compatible. Under President Woodrow Wilson's leadership they sought to replace the balance of power with a system of collective security built around a League of Nations. The Covenant of the League was incorporated in each peace treaty, and the treaties established the territorial status quo and juridical order the League was obligated to defend. Yet the League could not replace the Concert of Europe in power politics because resolutions were not effective for the maintenance of order and law.

As long as France was the dominant power and the guardian of the status quo in Europe, the new system seemed to work satisfactorily. But in the 1930s French power sharply declined, and the lack of political leadership in Britain and France increased disagreements between them and paralyzed their effectiveness in European politics.¹ There were no "international policemen" to maintain law and punish aggressors. Isolationist policies and neutrality legislation in the United States contributed to international conditions which made Europe a safe place for dictatorship and war. The safety valves of the traditional European system no longer existed, and the old order and society disintegrated.

Hitler's aggressions and declarations of war created a *de facto* alliance between the Western democracies and the Soviet Union. Stalin endorsed the Atlantic Charter and in his speeches praised the virtues of democracies, dissolved the Comintern, fought a "Great Patriotic War," and at Yalta accepted the Declaration on Liberated Europe. In Roosevelt's "Grand Design" for the postwar world, the USSR was one of the four policemen. Leaders of the United States, particularly Secretary of State Cordell Hull, assumed that wartime cooperation with Moscow would continue as a partnership in peace. This belief still prevailed when the Conference of San Francisco approved the Charter of the United Nations in June 1945 and at the Potsdam Conference. Unlike the Covenant of the League of Nations, the Charter was not part of a peace settlement. Peace treaties were not concluded with the major enemy states, Germany and Japan, and an internationally recognized status quo was not established. Major Western states signed a peace treaty with Japan only in 1951, and the Western and Communist countries later concluded patchwork agreements with the two Germanys, but this tortuous procedure was a poor substitute for a comprehensive peace settlement—the declared purpose of American foreign policy. In 1945 an unprecedented method of peacemaking began. Conclusion of peace treaties was restricted to the five less important ex-enemy states. The plan for a major peace conference was not abandoned explicitly but rather unwittingly with the acceptance of a gradual approach to the conclusion of peace.

At the Potsdam Conference of the Big Three in July-August 1945, the American delegation proposed and the conference accepted a Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) of the five principal victors—the Soviet Union, United Kingdom, United States, France, and China. It was agreed that in drawing up treaties with the ex-enemy states each treaty should be drafted by the nations that signed the armistice with that particular enemy. This meant that Britain and the Soviet Union prepared the treaty for Finland. For the three Danubian countries it was Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States. The French government accepted the invitation to participate in the Council of Foreign Ministers and emphasized that France was "interested in all important questions concerning Europe in any region of Europe." For the Italian settlement France was to be regarded as a signatory to the armistice, and so for Italy, France and the Big Three prepared the peace treaty. Here was the origin of the 4-3-2 formula of peacemaking. Western expectation was that the Council of Foreign Ministers at an initial meeting would consider these drafts *ad decide* controversial questions. Texts prepared by the council would be sub-

mitted to "the United Nations," and their recommendations would be considered when the council approved the final version of the five treaties.

Secretary of State James F. Byrnes noted in his memoirs that he thought at the time of the Potsdam Conference that a start should be made promptly, and he hoped experiences with the five minor peace treaties would make it easier to agree on a treaty for Germany. He supposed that after agreement on principles, the foreign ministers would appoint deputies to draft the detailed provisions. The peace treaties then "would be presented to all the United Nations for considerations and amendment." He contemplated that a similar course would be followed later for Japan. When the meaning of the reference to the United Nations was discussed at Potsdam, Stalin remarked that the inclusion of such a phrase in the document made no difference as "the three powers would represent the interest of all." Byrnes had assumed that "at the end of hostilities an era of peace would be so deeply desired by those nations that had fought the war in unity that the inevitable differences of opinion could be resolved without serious difficulty."² In this spirit Byrnes believed that the peace treaties could be prepared in a few months.

The gradual approach to peacemaking might have worked during the nineteenth century, the era of the Concert of Europe, and even after the First World War when the Great Powers had the same view of the world, and their aspirations and expectations were compatible. But the Western and Soviet visions of political and juridical order to be established by the peace settlement differed greatly. In the war against Napoleon, Russian troops had marched across Europe, and the Czar himself had arrived in Paris with his army. But at the subsequent Congress of Vienna, Russian ambitions had received satisfaction with award of Polish territories, and the Russian army withdrew from other European countries. Although Western nations hoped in 1945 that the Soviets would imitate this precedent, Stalin had no such intention. In addition to the differences in political goals and interpretation of agreements, the compromise-inclined British and Americans were surprised by the Soviet code of conduct in negotiations.

The piecemeal approach to peace after the Second World War might have worked better, had the Big Three included in their design a treaty with Austria. The Moscow Declaration of 1943 had recognized that Austria was an occupied country to be liberated. A state treaty with Vienna should have preceded the conclusion of peace treaties or should have been concluded simultaneously with them. This procedure would have made possible the simultaneous evacua-

tion of foreign troops from Italy and the Danubian countries. At the time of the Potsdam Conference the United States was in an overwhelming position of power. Stalin understood the meaning of power and could have been persuaded to accept an Austrian treaty. With rapid American demobilization after the close of hostilities, the power equation in Europe changed drastically. The United States proposed in February 1946 that the Austrian treaty be prepared along with the other treaties, and Byrnes submitted a treaty draft to the CFM in April "For the Reestablishment of an Independent and Democratic Austria." Molotov was unwilling to discuss it. Byrnes argued politely but did not insist, and the occasion was lost. When the CFM decided that Italian sovereignty should be restored on the conclusion of peace, and foreign troops withdrawn, Molotov reluctantly agreed to withdraw Soviet troops only from Bulgaria.

The expectation for a speedy conclusion of the five peace treaties proved to be an illusion. The first session of the CFM met in London in September 1945 and ended in three weeks without accomplishing its task. The council was unwilling to consider far-reaching Soviet aspirations in Japan, the Mediterranean, and the Balkans, and Molotov retaliated with procedural demands that the other participants could not accept. After this failure, the definitive pattern of peace-making was worked out in December 1945 at the Moscow meeting of the foreign ministers of the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union. There the Big Three resolved that draft treaties prepared by the foreign ministers on the basis of the 4-3-2 formula should be submitted to a conference consisting of the five members of the council and the sixteen other Allied nations that had fought in Europe with substantial contingents. The conference was to meet in Paris not later than May 1, 1946, to discuss the draft treaties, express opinions, and make recommendations. The Soviet government had opposed a peace conference with wider jurisdiction and would have preferred a peace settlement exclusively by the Big Three. After the conference rituals, the council was to establish the final text of the treaties and forward them to the other victorious and ex-enemy states.

At the insistence of the Western governments it was decided that adequate opportunity should be given to the ex-enemy states to discuss the treaties and present their views at the Paris Conference. France was particularly anxious to avoid even the appearance of dictation, in view of its experiences with "dictated" peace treaties after the First World War.

The deputy foreign ministers began their deliberations in London in January 1946, and the Council of Foreign Ministers held two ses-

sions in Paris, where the peace conference duly assembled at the end of July 1946 and concluded its deliberations in mid-October.

Preparations for peace in postwar Hungary were made difficult by the heritage of the past, the Soviet occupation and restrictions of the armistice agreement, and the lack of agreement among the coalition parties on peace aims. Within one generation Hungary found itself on the losing side in two cataclysmic world wars. After the First World War the Peace Treaty of Trianon had shifted large territories with three million ethnic Hungarians—almost one-third of the Hungarian nation—to neighboring states, and in the ensuing situation a revisionist policy hindered friendly relations with those countries. The two Vienna awards delivered by Germany and Italy in 1938 and 1940 returned to Hungary some of these territories from Czechoslovakia and Rumania; Hungarian troops occupied Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia in March 1939 and Yugoslav territories in April 1941, following the German aggression on Yugoslavia and the declaration of Croatian independence. The armistice agreement of January 20, 1945, then obligated Hungary to evacuate all Hungarian troops and officials within the frontiers existing on December 31, 1937.

Although Hungary as an ex-enemy state was not a partner at the peace negotiations, peace preparatory notes between July 1945 and May 1946 presented Hungarian views and proposals concerning the future of the Danubian nations. The notes were addressed to representatives of the three Great Powers in Budapest and subsequently were submitted to the Council of Foreign Ministers and the Paris Conference. The notes disapproved the antagonistic relations in Danubian Europe and emphasized the need of close economic and cultural cooperation and political reconciliation of neighboring nations and made specific proposals in these fields. These "peace aim" notes posed the general problems of Danubian Europe in constructive terms, advocating regional economic reorganization, freedom of navigation on the Danube and revival of international control over the river, deemphasis of narrow nationalism, "spiritualization" of frontiers, self-determination of peoples, and protection of national minorities.

But during the armistice period Hungarian sovereignty was subordinated to the Soviet-dominated Allied Control Commission (ACC). The Soviet envoy in Budapest, Georgi J. Pushkin, expressed dissatisfaction with the Hungarian proposals. In countries under Soviet occupation, Russian policy was not the reconciliation of nations but "divide and rule." When Philip E. Mosely, a member of the American delegation at the Paris Conference, later appraised the volumes published

in 1947 by the Hungarian Foreign Ministry on peace preparations and the Conference of Paris, he concluded that

The general impression left by the three volumes so far published is that the Hungarian government had prepared its case with care on the assumption that the issues would be treated on their merits by the Great Powers, all of them concerned primarily with promoting peace and stability in the Danubian region. In the procedural and substantive tussles of the Paris Conference this assumption proved ill-founded. The struggle over the formal terms of the treaty was merely one aspect of a more general struggle to extend or confine Soviet power in Europe. In that struggle Hungary had little to hope for and much to fear.³

By the time the peace conference convened in Paris, the Council of Foreign Ministers had formulated most provisions of the peace treaties, and members of the council were obligated to support them at the conference table. Consider the result for Hungary in connection with its territorial claims on Rumania. Transylvania had been a major bone of contention during the war and in the armistice period. Despite Soviet encouragement given to postwar political leaders in Budapest concerning Hungary's territorial claim in Transylvania, at the London session of the CFM the Soviet delegation was unwilling to consider an American proposal even to study the possibility of a modest revision of the Hungarian-Rumanian boundary along ethnic lines. In view of the unyielding Soviet opposition, Secretary Byrnes, in a period of East-West concessions in May 1946, proposed in the CFM the reestablishment of the Trianon boundary between Hungary and Rumania.

The greatest immediate threat to Hungarian interests at the Paris Conference was a Czechoslovak proposal for the expulsion of 200,000 Hungarians from Czechoslovakia. Since the proposal was an amendment to the draft treaty accepted by the CFM, only a unanimous approval of the Big Three would have made possible its inclusion in the treaty. The United States opposed the punishment of an ethnic group on the basis of collective responsibility, and in the last stage of the debates Great Britain joined American opposition. The peace treaty, instead of the original amendment, obligated Hungary to enter into bilateral negotiations with Prague to solve the problem of Magyar inhabitants of Slovakia. This incident was one of the consequences of the Czechoslovak policy of expelling all non-Slavic inhabitants. In the spirit of Hitlerite legislation, Hungarians were deprived of their citizenship, of all political and elementary human rights, and they were persecuted by a series of administrative measures. The Hungar-

ian government was forced to conclude a population exchange agreement with Czechoslovakia in February 1946. Through this exchange, as well as expulsions and persecution, over 90,000 Hungarians left Czechoslovakia for Hungary.

Peacemaking in 1945-47 was not much more than recasting the armistice agreements into peace treaties. This implied the recognition of an unprecedented division of the Old Continent, an iron curtain that still exists throughout Central Europe. Soviet troops remained in Hungary and Rumania to maintain the lines of communication with the Soviet zone in Austria. While geography played an important role in military decisions, it is true that Britain and the United States did not have vital economic or other interests in any East European or Danubian country, and this fact influenced their wartime and postwar policies. Yet the shift to Russia's Europe of a substantial part of the continent with over a hundred million people, affected their power position, greatly reducing the rimland necessary for the defense of the Western world.

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization and American troops in Europe later reestablished a military balance, which in more recent years has been perilously affected by new weapons systems and rapidly changing military technology. Despite this gloomy picture, as an optimist by nature I do not agree with doomsday predictions. I hope that the precarious military balance and the makeshift postwar arrangements will be replaced one day by a worldwide cooperative state system for the benefit of all mankind. Although human folly has few limits, it seems futile to contemplate the alternative to negotiated settlement on the basis of self-determination of peoples and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. For centuries war was considered diplomacy by other means. In our time, the military resolution of a major international conflict would almost inevitably result in the mutual suicide of the superpowers, atomic devastation of the northern hemisphere with far-reaching global side-effects and with benefit to no one.