

A disputed land: Italy, the military inter-allied commission and the plebiscite of Sopron

Alessandro Vagnini*

Department of History, Cultures and Religions, Sapienza University of Rome, Rome, Italy

(Received 2 April 2012; final version received 26 February 2013)

In the fall of 1918, after over four years of war, the cohesion of Austria-Hungary collapsed. In the aftermath of the Great War, Burgenland (Western Hungary) was part of a pattern of complex territorial issues, though it was actually the smallest disputed territory between Hungary and her successor states. The region became a disputed land after the Allied Supreme Council recommended the transfer of most of it to Austria. The internal crisis in Budapest, the Habsburg restoration attempts and the activities of many militia on the ground led to an extremely dangerous situation. Diplomatic and direct military involvement of the Powers eventually resolved the issue with an agreement providing for a plebiscite on the fate of Sopron and the other smaller towns of the region. At least until 1921 Western Hungary represented an element of destabilization in Europe, while its partition was a significant event in the evolution of relations between the two new states of Hungary and Austria, and a testing ground for European diplomacy. The purpose of this article is to highlight the role of Italy in these complex events and to elucidate the contribution of its military in the formulation of clearer political strategy.

Keywords: peace treaty; Hungary; minorities; plebiscite; First World War

The Austro-Hungarian Compromise of 1867 inaugurated a dualist structure for the Empire, replacing the former unitary Austrian Empire (1804–1867). It originated from the Austrian relative decline in strength in the Italian Peninsula, as a result of the Austro-Sardinian War of 1859, and among the German Confederation, where Vienna had been replaced by Prussia as the dominant “German power” following the Austro-Prussian War of 1866. Hungarian discontent had been growing for many years within the Kingdom, and partially increased after the Revolution of 1848–1849, whose suppression by the Austrian Army with Russian help marks the beginning of a repressive policy. By the late 1850s, however, a large number of Magyars who had supported the Revolution were willing to accept the Habsburgs. This “party” stated that, under the Pragmatic Sanction, Hungary had the right to full internal independence, while foreign affairs and the military were “common” to both Austria and Hungary.

As a matter of fact, only through the support of the Magyars was it possible to strengthen the Habsburg position within their multinational Empire. Hungary and Austria had now separate parliaments, each with its own prime minister; there were only three joint ministries (*Kaiserlich und Königliche*): the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Imperial House, the Ministry of War and the Ministry of Finance. The Austrian part of the Dual Monarchy created after the *Ausgleich* was generally called Cisleithania, a name that was used by politicians and bureaucrats but actually it had no official status. The Cisleithanian lands

*Email: alessandro.vagnini@uniroma1.it

constituted the Empire of Austria, even if the latter term was rarely used after 1867 and the country was just called Austria.¹ It consisted of 15 *Kronland*, which were represented in the *Reichsrat* (Cisleithanian parliament); the crown lands were not states in the full sense and many of them lacked their own government or any sense of nationhood but were more than mere administrative districts, being conceived as historical and political entities. Each land had a regional assembly, the *Landtag*, responsible for matters of regional importance, which sent representatives to the *Reichsrat*. This structure was not particularly homogenous and had no real uniform identity. The first direct election of the *Reichsrat* was held in 1873, while universal suffrage for men was introduced in 1907; thus the *Reichsrat* became the ground for a nationalist struggle between Germans and Slavs, especially the Czechs, who strongly demanded autonomy and an equal position in the administration of the Empire (see e.g. Seton-Watson 1969; Niederhauser 1981; Sugar 1997 on Central Europe in the nineteenth century and the rise of nationalities).

The Kingdom of Hungary (*Magyar Királyság*) or Transleithania had existed for a thousand years within its “historical frontiers” and had shown notable stability. It included Hungary proper, consisting of several lands: Transylvania, Banat, Vojvodina, Ruthenia and Slovakia, the internally self-governed Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia, and the free city of Fiume (Rijeka). The political structure of the Kingdom had been unitary and stable for a long time, while its geographical configuration helped to impose a very close economic integration. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the unity of Hungary was thus very different from that of the Austrian part of the Dual Monarchy and perhaps more firmly established than that of many European states, though the ethnic composition of the country was indeed very varied, so much so that, even after a strict policy of integration and Magyarization, in the census of 1910 only about half of the population declared Magyar as its mother tongue.

The Magyar ruling class had not paid particular attention to the demands of the different nationalities and indeed, after the Compromise, Hungarian Governments had taken several measures on education, justice and nationality rights aiming to Magyarize the minorities. The use of other languages (besides German) was widely prohibited in public life, while any expression of national feeling other than Magyar was roughly attacked by the press and quickly repressed by the authorities. The Compromise, giving a new status to Hungary, entailed the rise of a firm Magyar identity within the Kingdom of Hungary; however, some concessions were made over the years to prevent unnecessary friction between the different ethnic components of the Empire. Language was indeed one of the most controversial issues in Austro-Hungarian politics. The language disputes were most fiercely fought in Bohemia, where German speakers now found themselves in an unusual minority position, having lost their majority in the Bohemian Diet in 1880 and the dominating position in Prague and Pilsen as well, while retaining a slight numerical majority in the city of Brno (Brünn). Though Magyars did not show more willingness than their Austrian counterpart to share power with the minorities, they granted a large measure of autonomy to Croatia in 1868 and to the German communities; notwithstanding, compared to the relatively open policy in Austria, the Hungarian Minority Act of 1867 gave individual rights only to a small part of the population.

At the turn of the century, several “national movements” emerged in Austria-Hungary, most of which called for partial autonomy without challenging the integrity of the state. Although some of the Austrian political circles were favorable to an amendment to the Dualism in support of the requests of the Slavs, the opposition of Franz Joseph and the Hungarians prevented any change of the political structure of the Empire until the outbreak of the First World War.

In the autumn of 1918, after over four years of war, the Central Powers collapsed. The first armistice was signed at the end of September between the Entente and Bulgaria, followed by Turkish capitulation; Austria-Hungary was defeated by the Italians at Vittorio Veneto and surrendered on 3 November 1918. Germany was the last to capitulate, being by then morally and strategically defeated.

Meanwhile, the internal cohesion of Austria-Hungary collapsed too while the different national groups had in fact expressed their rejection of war and begun to demand greater autonomy or full independence. In Hungary, on 31 October, the former Prime Minister István Tisza was assassinated while the Aster Revolution (*Őszirózsás Forradalom*) broke out in Budapest and Count Mihály Károlyi became Prime Minister, asking for a truce and eventually ordering the full disarmament of Hungarian troops. On 5 November, Serbs and Czechs attacked Hungary and on 12 November also Romania, that in the previous days had rejoined the Entente, invaded Transylvania. The Hungarian Republic was proclaimed on 16 November but Károlyi was not able to face the invaders and the government lost all popular support. Then Bukovina proclaimed its union with Romania and a National Assembly of the Romanians of Transylvania claimed the union with Romania on 1 December 1918. This crisis eventually led to the birth of the Hungarian Soviet regime in March 1919. By then, the Austrian part of the Empire had already ceased to exist. On 21 October the German members of the *Reichsrat* had met in Vienna and on 30 October proclaimed the birth of a German-Austria² while on 11 November, Emperor Charles IV, counseled by his ministers, declared his refusal to deal with state business, the day after German-Austria declared itself to be a republic (*Deutschösterreich Republik*) and asked to be part of the new German Republic.³

Meanwhile, the situation in Hungary had reached breaking point and the weak Károlyi government had failed to maintain control, while the activities of the extreme left had already become dangerous (Hétes 1969). Politically isolated and in the middle of a difficult crisis, the Magyars tried repeatedly to appeal for Italian support but, despite its aspirations, Rome was not in a position to provide any material aid. The crisis lasted for the following weeks, with the establishment of the Hungarian Soviet Republic (*Magyarországi Tanácsköztársaság*),⁴ a problem of no easy solution for Western diplomats. Nevertheless, the creation of a Bolshevik government was approached with realism by the Italian government since Rome, while not appreciating the existence of a Bolshevik regime, decided to maintain active communication channels with Budapest. In early March, Sonnino decided to create a new Italian Military Mission to Hungary, under the command of Colonel Guido Romanelli, for a few weeks the sole representative of the Allied Powers in Budapest, only partly supported by the American delegation.⁵ The Danube region was a priority for the Italian government, which hoped to take a decisive role in the future, both politically and economically, in this part of Europe; this was one of the main objectives of Italian politics and defined Italy's place in the European international system. Traditionally, Italy's main purpose had been to reach quickly the other European countries and to participate in the division of spheres of influence in the Balkans, the Mediterranean and in Africa, while Rome had on the other hand need of credit as an international power. If in the previous years Italy wanted essentially the stability of the Balkans and the containment of Austria-Hungary, now that her former "competitor" was dismembered, Italy was concentrating on collecting Austrian inheritance in the region aiming to keep out the new Yugoslavian state as well.

This policy, however, would have been fraught with difficulties and misunderstandings with France, who wanted to play a hegemonic role in Central and Eastern Europe, a policy that also would not have ensured, even for the inherent weaknesses of Italy, the control of a

region which Rome watched with particular attention considering its overwhelming strategic importance for the connection with the Adriatic Sea and the Italian Mediterranean policy.

In the aftermath of the war, Hungary also had desperate need of external help and only the Italian government seemed to be willing to support Hungarian instances on critical issues such as the future borders and the definition of concrete war reparations, even if indeed the Italian position was much more complex. Alongside a general willingness to search for a just peace, Rome was interested in securing a leading position in the region avoiding, as far as possible, any conflicts with the other allied powers.

In the middle of a deep crisis, Hungary would soon be involved in another war with its neighbors. Romania in particular was determined to take advantage of the situation thanks to the support of French forces. Since April, General Franchet d'Esperey was indeed resolute to intervene in Hungary suggesting to settle the issue as soon as possible and requiring special directives from Paris asking for the delivery of military equipment to Romania to complete its mobilization and start an offensive against the Bolshevik forces.⁶ Moreover, since March, after a series of meetings of the Subcommittee for the Borders Demarcation, the Powers had recognized the substance of Romanian territorial demands⁷ and on 16 April 1919, the Romanian Army began to extend its occupation beyond the limit of the neutral zone. On 19 April Szatmárnémeti was occupied and soon after Debrecen fell as well. The Romanians reached the Tisza and took three bridgeheads near Szolnok, Polgar and Tokaj, establishing a contact with the Czechoslovak forces in the region of Ungvár. The simultaneous Czechoslovak attack developed from Slovakia committed troops led by the Italian General Piccione and the French General Hennocque; they had managed to advance southwards but failed to achieve results comparable to those of the Romanians.

In early June the Hungarians were able to counterattack successfully and the Romanians were forced to retire on the Tisza's left bank and by 14 June the Czechs were in full retreat under the pressure of the Magyar offensive; the next day the Peace Conference ordered a ceasefire and a withdrawal within the provisional borders.⁸ On 24 June, Hungarian troops began a withdrawal on the Slovak front in accordance with the directives of the Entente. This gesture proved to be useless as the Romanians kept their positions and the Hungarians launched at this stage a new desperate attack on 23 July 1919, with intense fighting taking place around Szolnok. The ultimate Magyar defeat, accompanied by the collapse of the Bolshevik regime, rendered inevitable the Romanian advance to Budapest, which was occupied in early August. While the enemy was approaching the Hungarian capital, in the midst of an institutional crisis, on 2 August Romanelli was requested by the new Hungarian authorities to intercede as representative of the Entente with the Romanian General Staff but these requests were ignored by the Romanians. To prevent further violence, Romanelli then provided to the Communist leaders a safe passage to leave the country. The Bolshevik regime was coming to an end; on 2 August 1919, Béla Kun fled Hungary toward the Austrian border and eventually reached the Soviet Union, while a Socialist government was installed in Budapest under the leadership of Gyula Peidl (Fornaro 1980; Borsanyi 1993).

An uncertain future now awaited Hungary. The military defeat and political crisis had in fact created a situation of uncertainty and confusion, making clear the actual collapse of the state at the end of the war, a situation exacerbated by the experience of Bolshevik rule and Romanian occupation. On 4 August the Entente Supreme Council decided the formation of a Military Inter-Allied Mission to Budapest and, consequently, a military commission of four Generals representing the Powers was sent to Hungary to supervise the

disarmament and the implementation of the clauses of the armistice. The real control of the situation, however, was still in Romanian hands. Afterwards Miklós Horthy's national forces took control over Hungary while the Romanians were officially withdrawing. It was then time to reorganize the country and tackle the difficult issues of peace talks and disputed lands.

Since 30 May 1919, a group of anti-Communist politicians had formed a counter-revolutionary government in Szeged; there, under the French occupation forces, Gyula Károlyi asked former Admiral Miklós Horthy to become the Minister of War and take command of a National Army. Soon after, requested by the Entente, the Cabinet was changed and Horthy was not given a seat in it. Notwithstanding, Horthy called on the support of Magyar patriots and managed to retain control of the National Army by detaching its command from the Ministry of War. Among those who answered Horthy's call were many ultra-nationalists, who quickly launched a campaign of atrocities to avenge the victims of the Red Terror, and to suppress any remaining loyalty to the Communists, these groups had been particularly active during the spring and summer of 1919 taking the first measures against the supporters of the Communist regime.⁹

The situation in Burgenland

Burgenland was the smallest disputed territory between Hungary and her successor states. It consisted of a long narrow strip of land running the length of the Austro-Hungarian border, from a point in the north, where the frontier between the two countries meets the southwest corner of Slovakia (Czechoslovakia in 1919) in front of Bratislava on the right bank of the Danube, going south to the former Yugoslavian frontier; the northern part of this band touches the low Leitha, along which the old internal frontier partly ran. The city of Sopron (Ödenburg) is the most important in this flat, open country, where the population was sparse and there were no other towns larger than small market centers.

After the World War, Burgenland became a disputed land between Hungary and the new Austrian Republic. Since Leitha was considered in the western frontier of Hungary as early as the Middle Ages, historically, the Hungarian claim to most of the region was unquestioned even if, ethnographically, Burgenland had been mainly German,¹⁰ as all the towns in Western Hungary were of German descent and preserved their national heritage almost intact until the beginning of the twentieth century. In spite of this, the relationship between Magyars and Germans was good and, before the War, there was no irredentist movement among the Germans of Western Hungary, nor did the Magyarization of the towns stir up any special opposition (Macartney 1937, 47). An active German national movement demanding the transfer of Burgenland to an Austro-German state began only toward the end of the war, influenced by a wider national movement, but actually this national re-awakening came too late to touch many of the Hungarian Germans at all, many of them being loyal to the Magyar idea of a whole unified kingdom, maybe willing to be granted special autonomy. This was the critical situation in Burgenland when the Czechs occupied Bratislava and Serbian forces advanced in southern Hungary. On 20 January 1919, a general meeting of the Germans of Burgenland was held in the County Building at Sopron. The assembly addressed an ultimatum to the Government asking for the immediate enactment of the autonomy; otherwise Western Hungary would proclaim its independence or a union with Austria.

The situation was very difficult and on 27 January the Government drafted an act recognizing the Germans of Hungary as a single nation, granting the right to form

special districts (*Gaurat*) with legislative and administrative autonomy.¹¹ It was proposed to create five districts, each of them with their own Governing Council, under a governor and an elected assembly.¹² The language of communication with state authorities should be German, the “nation” would be represented proportionally in the Hungarian Parliament and for autonomous affairs the German community would have its own National Assembly. Again, a German Minister was to be established in Budapest to deal with the ethnic issue, equally responsible to the German National Assembly and to the Hungarian Parliament. This Minister was to be responsible for directing the activities of the districts and had the right to sit as an equal member of the Government in all common issues (Macartney 1937, 49). Despite the many organizational problems and the difficult political situation, at least for a while, a German Minister in Budapest was actually established and a governor in Western Hungary as well,¹³ and the administration was partly Germanized even if the Minister and the governor were never really effective. However there were some consequences for schools, many of which were turned into German ones, with Hungarian only as a subject.

Since the Hungarian Soviet Republic had been established in March 1919, the situation of Hungarian Germans remained essentially unchanged and the work on autonomous districts went on almost undisturbed during the Communist rule. As a matter of fact, the new People’s Commissar for German affairs, Miklós Kalmár, himself a German, conveniently abstained from placing any Communist in the administration and left the German community free to organize its own life.

On 16 July 1919, a new law was enacted, preserving all the provisions of the previous one, except for the city of Sopron. Here, the Magyar community, strongly supported by the press, vehemently resisted all the guarantees relating to German autonomy. Since the first Act was enacted in January, an agitation began for exempting the town from any law granting special rights to other national groups and asking Sopron to be considered as a special area in view of its mainly Magyar character and culture. This request was initially refused by Kalmár but later accepted by Kun who excluded the town from the competence of the District Council. However, there was not enough time to develop a real policy toward the nationalities as the Soviet Republic broke down in August and a Romanian military occupation was established.

After Horthy and his counter-revolutionary army had entered Budapest on 16 November, the new government sent garrisons to the German district to “fortify the loyalty of the population”, completely ignoring the autonomy, and subsequently enacted Law I/1920 that canceled it, along with all the other legislation of the revolutionary period.

On the other side of the border, Austria was going through a very difficult period as well. Although many Austrian politicians, like the leadership of the Christian Social Party, did not agree on the desirability of annexing Western Hungary, some important branch of the Social Democrats and the small Pan-German party favored this solution. An active agitation was carried out in Vienna, where a Society for the Preservation of Germans in Hungary (*Verein zur Erhaltung des Deutschtums in Ungarn*) was founded. The opposition of the Christian Socials, which feared to damage the friendship with Hungary necessary to any plan for a restoration, was finally swept away by the strong “coalition” of the other parties and for this reason, when in the spring of 1919 the Austrian delegation departed for Saint Germain to open the negotiation for the peace treaty, brought with it the demand for the transfer of Burgenland.¹⁴

Meanwhile, in Paris, peace talks between the Allied powers had already started since 18 January 1919, though Germany, Austria and Hungary were excluded from the

negotiations and actually only on December 1919 were the Magyars officially invited to Versailles.

When the Peace Conference turned to discuss the treaty with Austria, it was initially proposed to leave her frontier with Hungary untouched. Accordingly, the first draft terms presented to Austria did not consider any gains at Hungary's expense but, after the British Minister Balfour argued that maybe the local population would prefer to join Austria, a special commission was established to report on the real situation on the ground. This commission had reported on 9 July 1920 recommending the transfer of most of Western Hungary to Austria. The Allied Supreme Council adopted the report and informed Austrian representatives about the new frontier,¹⁵ though Austria renewed its request for the whole region protesting that those parts which were excluded from the transfer were indeed the most important economically. Even if Austria eventually gave up her efforts, signing the peace treaty on 10 September 1920, the Powers did not allow Austrian forces to occupy the region and on 17 September an Inter-Allied Military Mission was sent to Sopron to assist in the maintenance of order. As a matter of fact, the occupation by the Austrian police and gendarmerie was stopped on the same day, hindered by Hungarian sharpshooters who offered armed resistance. That was a very difficult time for Austria. The new Republic, consisting of most of the German-speaking Alpine part of the former Austrian Empire, recognized the independence of Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland and the Kingdom of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs. Austria was reduced not only by the loss of her crown lands incorporated into various successor states but by the cession of Istria, Trentino and Südtirol (Alto Adige), the cities of Trieste and Zara, and several Dalmatian islands to Italy and the cession of Bukovina to Romania.

An important article of the Treaty required Austria to refrain from directly or indirectly compromising its independence, which obviously meant that despite the new Republic of German-Austria already having declared to be part of Germany, it had to shorten its name and could not ask for a political or economic union with Germany, without the agreement of the council of the League of Nations. Moreover, the Austrian Army was limited to a force of 30,000. The peace treaty included war reparations of large sums of money, directed toward the Allies, to pay for the costs of the war; there were also numerous provisions dealing with navigation of the Danube, transfer of railway equipment and many other details.

Meanwhile, in Hungary the new national government disallowed the acceptance of the loss of Burgenland and when the Hungarian delegation arrived at Versailles, it refused to sign a treaty not including Western Hungary and suggested a plebiscite. Vienna, however, rejected any idea about negotiations on a territory that now was legally hers. Hungary submitted various reports about the importance of Burgenland for her economy and stressed the fact that the transfer would destroy the industries of the region. The Allies actually did not reply in detail to the Magyars, giving only some nebulous assurance that something would be done to solve the worst situations. However, Budapest was under pressure and finally had to sign the Treaty of Trianon on 4 June 1920 (Romsics 2001). It established the cession of Transylvania, Banat, Maramureş and Crişana to Romania, the assignation of Baranya, Medjumurje, Prekomurje and part of Bácska to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, the independence of Fiume (Rijeka), while Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia became officially part of Czechoslovakia (Ádám, Cholnoky, and Pomogáts 2000; Romsics 2002).¹⁶ In economic terms, the results of Trianon proved particularly tough, with the loss of more than half of industrial plants, 83% of iron production, 67% of banking and credit institutes, 62% of the railways, to which must be added the losses in the agricultural sector, which covers more than 60% of arable land and 88% of forests.

It also imposed the restriction for the Hungarian Army (*Honvédség*) to enroll only 35,000 men.¹⁷

In 1920, the Conference of Ambassadors decided, in execution of Article 71 of the Treaty of Trianon, the transfer of the so-called Western Committees of Burgenland to Austria. The transfer was to take place after the Hungarian ratification of the Treaty but actually no steps were taken by the Supreme Council to enforce the implementation of the agreement. Many problems came from speculation about a union between Germany and Austria, thus pushing the Allies to threaten to suspend or cancel the transfer unless this risk was removed. Moreover, when in Vienna a new Christian Social government took office, Austria thought it was possible to renew the friendship with Hungary that, however, asked in return as a reward for any further agreement the restoration of Burgenland.

In those difficult weeks, Western Hungary became a battlefield for Austrian and Hungarian forces, and many paramilitary as well, while sharpshooters soon became a central element of Hungarian politics (Bodó 2004).

Only in 1921, however, did Austria and Hungary finally begin to negotiate the conditions of the assignment, to be implemented in a first phase with the transfer of these territories to the Allied Powers (Vares 2008). On 21 January 1921, the Italian Minister to Vienna, Tomasi Della Torretta, requested by the Hungarian government to interpose his mediation, reported to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Carlo Sforza about his conversation with the Austrian Chancellor, Michael Mayr, who had been informed that the Hungarian government entered the order of ideas to come to talks under the auspices of Italy and that he would report any concrete proposals that could come from Budapest.

Later on, a special Inter-Allied Military Commission, made up of three generals, headed by the Italian General Ferrario,¹⁸ was sent to Sopron, arriving on 6 August 1921 to oversee the transfer,¹⁹ and as a matter of fact, the Conference of Ambassadors decided to use Allied generals as mediators. The original transfer plan was announced on 1 August 1921, and as planned, the Generals and the Austrian and Hungarian representatives, Robert Davy and Count Antal Sigray, met in Sopron. Then, following a specific order by Marshal Foch, the Inter-Allied Control Commission in Hungary and the other Allied missions in Budapest had to send men and materials to support the Commission of Sopron.²⁰ The first special train carrying personnel and supplies for the Commission departed from Budapest on the evening of 16 August.²¹ Several British and French military personnel were present in the Commission. However, the role of the Italian officers was crucial as well as of great importance was Italy's interest in the stabilization of a region in which Rome hoped to establish its leadership.²² The action of these military personnel would prove to be not only effective in practice, contributing despite many difficulties to contain an escalation of the crisis, but also of great importance at the political level through the exercise of intelligence activity which proved to be of great benefit to the definition of Italian policy-making.

Obviously, the Powers had different interests although there was a general tendency to work for a "stable solution". Since the days of Kun's regime, the Italians had been accused of secretly supporting the interests of Hungary as France on the other hand was viewed with great suspicion and the British were probably the only ones to be considered by all parties "sufficiently neutral".

Italy was a part of the community gathering in Paris for the Peace Conference, but at the same time Rome was often accused of pursuing its own ideas on how the Danube area ought to be reorganized, differing from those of the other Allies (Vares 2008, 70). This is somewhat true but does not fit exactly with the concrete vision that Rome had of the situation. A deeper analysis of the documents shows us a real interest in the stabilization and in

a new order in Central Europe as well as a fear of excessive French influence in the region. In fact, Italy considered the reorganization of the area a priority since in the eyes of the Italian leadership the peace treaty system had a great impact on the country. Rome sought to secure its own position in the region through a new balance of power. Unlike Italy, France and Great Britain were geographically and mentally far from the Danube region and observed it within the context of the Great Power policy.²³ On the other hand, Italy was particularly active in those international policy questions, as Western Hungary, where it was possible for the country to act like a Great Power. Moreover, Rome had no direct interests in the disputed area and tried to establish itself as a fair judge and claimed the role of a sort of mediator and a peacekeeper; its intervention was thereby a kind of order-maintaining activity.

A crucial point of the matter was, however, the role of the Allied officers in the area. The attitude of the military would often also affect relations with the population and local authorities, even if we can say that in the case of Burgenland the Allies have been able to support a common and fairly balanced strategy.

Following the decision to initiate the transfer, Hungary was thus faced with a binding decision to which it could put forward any legal objection. However, as official resistance to the transfer was impossible, many Magyar insurgents opposed armed resistance. These bands had been organized by Hungarian military and local landowners and were led by some notorious regular officers.²⁴ The situation on the ground was very dangerous and only with great difficulty could the Allies prevent an escalation. Even if Hungary maintained that the resistance was a spontaneous upheaval of the local population, it was clear that Budapest was directly responsible for it and in fact, Austrian diplomacy publicly accused the Hungarian Government of infiltrating elements from the interior of the country to terrorize the German minority. Moreover, most of the landowners, mainly of Magyar origin, opposed the transfer and helped the Hungarian authorities to organize the resistance together with many workers and students from Sopron. Their contribution to the local insurgency was essential, even if on the other hand, resistance substantially came from inner Hungary and the bulk of the bands consisted in the many volunteers from other counties. Most of them were actually refugees from Transylvania and other former Hungarian provinces.²⁵

Moreover, even if at the beginning Hungarian Germans' support for Hungary was not consistent, the majority of the population continued to maintain traditional ties to Budapest. In the last months of the Great War and during Károlyi's regime their traditional loyalty gradually eroded in favor of association with fellow Germans in neighboring Austria. As a matter of fact, even if the Entente arbitrarily had transferred most of Burgenland to Austria, most Germans had desired to join Austria only during the Károlyi and Kun interludes. Throughout Friedrich's tenure, and especially after Horthy's conservative forces swept into office at the end of 1919, German public opinion shifted sharply toward Hungary and the Hungarian German press publicized Austria's betrayal of Hungary, a wartime comrade-in-arms, hoping to dent the Germans' Austrian preferences (Király, Pástor, and Sanders 1982, 337). In addition, Sopron's Mayor Michael Thurner, a German Hungarophile, incessantly urged his German fellow citizens to remain loyal to the Crown of Saint Stephen, arguing that, under Austrian rule, Western Hungary would atrophy and die. As a matter of fact, many Hungarian Germans wanted to maintain their ethnic identity inside a Hungarian state. This trend responded primarily to a long tradition of loyalty to Budapest, but at the same time was also a direct consequence of the restoration of a central authority which had followed the convulsive stages of the Bolshevik regime. The shift in ethnic Germans' attitudes toward Hungary is particularly

interesting also because it reflects a general inclination to support the consolidation of a moderate and conservative regime, which came to be identified with Horthy. On the other hand, this shift was also a result of the activities of armed Magyar nationalist bands that were unofficially supported by the Hungarian government and that had contributed so much to complicate the situation in Western Hungary.

Accordingly, Burgenland had been divided by the Powers into different zones. The transfer had to be realized at an early stage, with the passage of the Committees to the Allied Powers. The situation remained, however, unresolved and on 27 August Austria made a new proposal for a plebiscite although the Hungarians gave no answer. Even if Magyar forces began to evacuate the A Zone, Budapest refused however to evacuate the B Zone, which included Sopron. Accordingly, Austrian forces began to occupy Western Hungary on the 29th. This action provoked a strong opposition from conservative circles who feared the social influence of the Austrian Army and the Government resolved to send only gendarmerie units, which met stiff resistance by Magyar bands, and were driven back and crossed the frontier. Furthermore, on 7 September a battle near Ágfalva provoked several casualties. After the skirmish the Hungarian retreated while in another clash, near the village of Pinkafeld, stronger Magyar groups, supported by machine guns, defeated the Austrians, which started a general withdrawal. At the same time in Sopron Magyar forces occupied the railway station, suspending all communication from and to the town and a triple line was drawn, surrounding Sopron. New troops were sent to stop the Hungarian insurgents and fighting took place even on Austrian soil, near Friedburg, Hardberg and other Styrian towns. The Commission of the Generals had no chance to control this chaotic situation and eventually had to ask for the intervention of the Conference of Ambassadors in Paris while Vienna remonstrated against the Hungarian action. By then, all the Austrian forces had been withdrawn across the Hungarian frontier.

In early September 1921, the evacuation of B Zone had not yet begun, while the A Zone was infested by the Hungarian bands, which together with about 2000 regular Honvéd, crossed the former Austro-Hungarian border near Kirschlag, defeating two companies of the Austrian Army.²⁶

On 8 September, the President of the Conference of Ambassadors, Aristide Briand, sent a note to the Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Miklós Bánffy, accusing the Hungarian government of being responsible for the riots in Burgenland. The cooperation between regular forces and sharpshooters and the threat to the Austrian border were indeed serious violations of the Allied Powers' provisions for which Budapest was afterwards considered responsible and Allied officers had in fact continued to send alarming reports on the activities of these militias. The Conference of Ambassadors thus considered Budapest responsible for this serious situation and protested to Hungarian government against disturbances summoning a complete evacuation of Magyar officials from the region.²⁷

The day after, Lago, at the time General Director for Political Affairs at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, informed Bonin Longare that the Italian Minister in Budapest together with his French and British colleagues had met Bánffy to which they repeated that the Allies were determined without a doubt to abide by the peace treaty and therefore the evacuation of the entire Western Hungary and asked for the signing of a protocol. The Italian diplomats associated great importance to the issue and despite the risk of further complications, a "solution" for Burgenland was considered a priority in Rome. The Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs noted, however, that there were two major problems to be overcome: first, the return of the rebels in the already evacuated zone, then the practical application of the evacuation of the remaining area. However, the position of the Italian

Minister in Budapest was particularly clear; he stated that the Hungarian government had left organized armed gangs and now had the duty and responsibility to stop them, that the directives of the Entente were executed and that the evacuation of the B Zone had to conform exactly to the orders of the Commission of the Generals in Sopron. General Ferrario was particularly firm on this point, considering it impossible to reach a solution to the question as long as the parties continued to meet only part of the Commission's guidelines.

Meanwhile, Vienna asked the authorities to send troops to the area and for the transfer of the whole Burgenland. It was in this context that on 14 September Budapest requested Italy to intervene and guarantee the maintenance of Sopron within Hungary. Finally the Conference of Ambassadors, strongly supported by the Italian government, announced its disposition to mediation and asked to begin the evacuation of all Hungarian military and civil personnel. Actually, most of the officials did not withdraw while also the Magyar police of Sopron was still in office. Again, security was a problem and the generals were forced to accept the presence of paramilitary forces in the region. Promptly informed by the military, Italian authorities expressed concern about the situation though they were still confident of a diplomatic solution. Notwithstanding, despite the expectations of the diplomats, the British in particular, the original plan for the transfer had to be postponed. Unlike the British, the Allied Generals proposed a route that would secure more flexibility (Vares 2008, 244). The Generals in Sopron had indeed a better understanding of the situation and informed the Conference of Ambassadors that the transfer originally intended for 3 October would not succeed. As General Ferrario stated, it was a problem that signatures to the transfer protocol were necessary before the real pacification of the area, since in those conditions it was almost impossible to control the area.

Even after Budapest asked Rome to intervene in her favor with the Allies stressing the evacuation of all Magyar military and civil personnel, Budapest still denied, however, any encouragement of armed resistance in Burgenland, and stated its readiness to continue the evacuation but pointed out that such an action would put the area at the mercy of the bands.²⁸ Thus there were rumors in the reports from the British delegation in Paris about the request of the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs for vigorous action in Budapest suggesting that the Allied Powers consider economic sanctions in order to put pressure on the Hungarians.²⁹ In fact, since Austria refused to sign the Memorandum for Burgenland until order had been restored in the region, and the Hungarian government, for its part, claimed not to have control of the bands and refused any responsibility for their actions, on 22 September, the Conference of Ambassadors sent an ultimatum, threatening sanctions if by 4 October 1921, the disputed area had not been evacuated.

In the meantime, Bánffy asked Tomasi Della Torretta, now the Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs, to accept a request for mediation, and advanced a proposal for the transfer of Burgenland except the city of Sopron to Austria. The Italian Minister readily agreed to communicate the proposal to the Austrian government in order to find a solid basis for negotiations and then informed the Italian ambassadors in Paris and London, Bonin Longare and De Martino, that any mediation should not in any way hinder the work done by the Allied Powers in the interests of Peace Treaties and the deliberations of the Conference of Ambassadors. Moreover, as the government of Vienna received the Hungarian proposal for a plebiscite in Sopron, Tomasi Della Torretta officially informed the Allies of the Italian action and invited Bonin Longare and De Martino to ask the Allied governments to join the proposal and contribute to draft the amendments in order to make it fair for both parties, taking any other measures for its eventual implementation.

Tomasi della Torretta also proposed to the Conference of Ambassadors to postpone the deadline of the ultimatum to 12 October. In a memorandum on his talks with

representatives of Austria and Hungary, sent by Bonin Longare to Briand on 30 September, Tomasi della Torretta, well informed of the situation due to the reports of the Italian Army, also expressed the view that no limitation of liability of the Hungarian government was acceptable in relation to the Magyar bands and that the control of Sopron was to be entrusted as soon as possible to the Commission of Generals.

When finally the Commission of Generals announced that Magyar forces had withdrawn from Western Hungary and the transfer document had been signed, they also commented that their departure from Sopron would endanger the safety of the population. Therefore, the Generals had decided to stay on in Sopron and to ask Hungarian gendarmerie to help them; the presence of a gendarmerie battalion in the city was required to maintain public order and to prevent the infiltration of militiamen. The unit would remain under the control of the Commission, under the command of British Colonel Gothie.³⁰ Notwithstanding, the security of the region was not yet assured and moreover, the diplomats in Paris, the Generals, and the Allied missions in Budapest were still of different opinions about the role of the military. While the Conference of Ambassadors was unwilling to send troops to Western Hungary, the Generals in Sopron required military assistance and the diplomatic representatives of the Allies in Budapest agreed with them (Vares 2008, 244).

The hesitation of the Allies on the diplomatic side, especially by the British Government, also favored the emergence of a misunderstanding. In those days in fact, the Czechoslovakian Prime Minister Edvard Beneš interpreted an offer of mediation submitted by Count Frigyes Szapáry as an official step of the Hungarian Government. Bánffy, in turn, stated that he believed Szapáry's proposal was indeed coming from Beneš himself.³¹ On 28 September 1921, at the new session of the Conference of Ambassadors, Bonin Longare declared that the mediation proposed by Tomasi Della Torretta had been specifically requested by Hungary and Austria and that the Beneš' proposal could coexist with the Italian one, but not to replace it. Later Bonin Longare noted that the proposed Czechoslovakian mediation was a non-official one unlike the Italian one which, moreover, was already fully underway. Accordingly, Beneš's initiative faded quickly, while the Italian mediation became more concrete and was to be officially accepted by the Conference of Ambassadors on 2 October 1921.³²

Nevertheless, on 3 October, Austrian troops made another attempt to take control over the region, facing strong resistance of Magyar bands. The day after, Prónay tried to create an assembly to proclaim the independence of a part of the region as an independent Banat of the Leitha.³³ The so-called *Lajtabánság*, supposedly ruled by Pál Prónay, lasted for some days between 4 October and 5 November 1921. Its center was at Felsőőr (Oberwart) but the self-proclaimed state was small while the rebels had no money and were shortly deprived of the few links to inner Hungary; thus the Banat of the Leitha had no chance to survive. Moreover, the Hungarian Government disapproved this "autonomous politics" of the bands. The Hungarian Prime Minister officially regretted the episode and assured the Allied Powers about his intention to disarm the free-corps but some of the bands however refused to obey the government's orders and only after the intervention of Admiral Horthy did all the irregulars retreat. The political situation in Hungary was therefore very difficult and Osztenburg together with Prónay, now in open rupture with Budapest, eventually participated in the second Habsburg coup in October 1921.

However, despite the many problems at the diplomatic level and the risk of escalation, in some way, with the Italian mediation, in the autumn of 1921 the crisis was almost resolved when a settlement between Austria and Hungary was finally reached in Venice on 13 October (de Martens 1939, 763–767).

The plebiscite

On 6 October 1921, the British Minister to Budapest, Beaumont Holher, informed his Italian colleague Caracciolo di Castagneto that the British government supported the Italian mediation and the French High Commissioner Fouchet gave a similar notice shortly after. Thus the Italian government proposed to meet and discuss the situation while France and Great Britain urged the Austrian Chancellor Johann Schober to accept the invitation.³⁴ Two days after, Hungarian and Austrian plenipotentiaries met Tomasi Della Torretta in Venice where they eventually signed the “Venice Protocol”.³⁵ The agreement stated that Hungary agreed to evacuate the territory and disarm the irregular bands by 6 November 1921, while Vienna accepted a plebiscite to be held in Sopron and in eight other communities.³⁶ Though Austrian government still had some concerns, the Venice Agreement had been received with full satisfaction in Hungary³⁷ and finally, on 13 November Austrian forces began to occupy part of Western Hungary in accordance with the proposals of Allied generals in Sopron.³⁸ Meanwhile, on 5 November, the extension of the Commission of the Generals was decided upon and to send an additional 30 officers, most of them Italians, of whom, however, after several weeks only a small number had arrived in Sopron.³⁹

This was certainly an excellent result for Italian diplomacy. The agreement showed in fact the influence of Rome in the region and strengthened the standing of Italy, at the same time demonstrating the importance of a military presence on the territory. The role played by the military as representatives of the government had also increased their prestige in the eyes of the civil authorities and strengthened the tendency of a part of the Italian General Staff to consider itself an essential element for the definition of the government’s political strategy. The question of Burgenland and overall the management of conditions of peace with Austria and Hungary represented in fact a great opportunity for the Italian Army.

The Venice Agreement was certainly a good solution and finally it seemed to be possible to reach a stable agreement but further delay was caused by the second attempt of King Charles to restore the Habsburgs on the throne of Hungary. Encouraged by Hungarian legitimists, still supporting the rights of the Habsburgs, Charles sought twice in 1921 to reclaim the throne of Hungary but failed largely because Admiral Horthy, who had been chosen Regent of Hungary on March 1920, refused to sustain him.⁴⁰ On 20 November Charles arrived in Hungary and met his supporter Count József Cziráky near the village of Dénesfa. Few days after, Colonel Lehár, Count Gyula Osztenburg-Moravek and other legitimist officers had decided to send Charles a message asking him to seize power (Lehár 1973). In the afternoon of 21 October, legitimists were organizing in Sopron.

Hungary was now on the brink of civil war. Royalist forces were on the outskirts of Budapest, martial law had been declared, while Czechoslovakia was reported to be mobilizing. Horthy received alarming news reporting that in case of a legitimist attack the defense would probably collapse and then General Pál Hegedűs, fearing a foreign intervention, met Horthy and Bethlen offering to broker an “agreement”. In the meantime, supported by Gömbös, Horthy was able to incite the Army that eventually fought for him in the battle of Budaörs. The tide shifted accordingly in Horthy’s direction and Charles reluctantly agreed to negotiations, arranging a truce.⁴¹ The government now moved decisively to restore order while prominent legitimists and the royal family were placed under military custody in Tihany.⁴² After the defeat of the Habsburg loyalists the situation in Western Hungary was stabilized and Austrian troops began their occupation of the districts not included in the plebiscite.

Steps toward the plebiscite meanwhile resumed at full speed under the supervision of Allied officers. To oversee the proper conduct of the plebiscite, the area of Sopron was

divided into sectors, each controlled by an allied contingent.⁴³ Allied troops were also responsible for public order and to this end, by 8 December, reinforcements arrived in the city while the last Hungarian troops began their withdrawal.⁴⁴

The regulations for the electoral board had been issued on 18 November; the electoral commissions were prepared and began the checking of the electoral lists;⁴⁵ the electoral board was prepared on the evening of 5 December while Hungarian and Austrian delegates had to assist the Allied officers.⁴⁶ On 1 December 1921, Hungary had submitted the list of the Magyar delegates to the electoral commission while the Austrians demanded more time;⁴⁷ thus the examination of the electoral roll was quite slow and caused many complaints from the Austrian delegates, mainly because of the many Magyars absent or even deceased inscribed on the list of Sopron.⁴⁸ Therefore the whole electoral apparatus was set up and on 6 December, the instructions for voting were made public. After the withdrawal of irregular bands Burgenland seemed pacified and the Austrian delegate finally signed the Protocol for the transfer of the areas not subject to referendum (A Zone).⁴⁹ However, Hungarian troops left Sopron only on 12 December 1921, replaced by international forces while a proposal for the creation of a local police under Allied supervision was rejected by the Austrians. Vienna had indeed instructed her delegate Egon Hein to propose the formation of joint police teams that would have better ensured Austrian interests and the democratic nature of the upcoming vote, but this proposal was also not feasible.⁵⁰ Notwithstanding, the Allied representatives were willing to accommodate as much as possible the claims of the two parties and in fact accepted some of the Austrian proposals, allowing, for example, the plebiscite in Sopron and other areas to take place in different phases. The Generals also accepted that the outcome of the vote in the city would not be known until the end of the counting of all ballots.⁵¹ However, when at the beginning of December, the Austrians tried again to slow down the voting process, the Generals reacted with suspicion and irritation thwarting any further delay.⁵²

After all, mutual distrust and the many technical problems could not stop the activities of the Allied Powers though the legality of the electoral process was often questioned. One could argue, for example, that it was quite easy for Hungary to control the entire electoral process. The Magyars used martial law and County and Municipal apparatus to verify the electoral documents, closing the frontier and on the other hand opening the border to many Magyars. These abuses caused an Austrian protest but actually the voting took place under the control of Allied forces under conditions of secrecy and without violence. However, the situation in the region was much better, especially after Hein had also signed the Protocol for the transfer of B Zone.⁵³

As resolved by the Commission of Generals the plebiscite took place on 14 December in Sopron and only the day after in the other villages.⁵⁴ The voter turnout was almost 90% and the polling resulted in a majority of 65% in favor of Hungary.⁵⁵ On 17 December the counting of votes began and eventually the results, together with a report drafted by the electoral board, were submitted to the Commission of Generals that fixed their publications for the next day. It is not to be doubted that many irregularities took place, especially if we consider many unqualified voters allowed by Hungarian authorities, while on the other hand many Austrians were disfranchised even if they had the right to vote, though it is hard to say that a fully fair vote would have been in favor of Austria. However, the Commission of Generals announced the result of the plebiscite on the evening of 24 December 1921; the Conference of Ambassadors accepted it and persuaded Vienna to recognize Sopron as part of Hungary starting from 1 January 1922.⁵⁶ In the meantime, all the necessary arrangements had been made for the transfer. On 5 January, the Commission of Generals was dissolved and the Allied troops had already begun their withdrawal while in February Vienna finally accepted the inevitable and agreed to recognize the cession of the region to

Hungary. The operations ended with the signing of the Protocol of Transfer by the Hungarian delegate General Guillaume and with a Hungarian military parade in Sopron. A new commission was charged with the final delimitation of the border while the situation on the ground remained calm though some minor incidents occurred.⁵⁷

The question of Burgenland has been a particularly difficult event for the construction of post-war Europe. The solution of the dispute would come only after long negotiations and despite the many armed clashes between the two parties. Overall, however, the plebiscite has proved a valuable tool for solving this difficult problem and in fact the formula of the referendum would be used in other similar situations in those years even if only in the case of Burgenland the solution has undoubtedly proved to be fairly stable.

The partition of Burgenland was a significant issue in the evolution of relations between the two new states of Hungary and Austria. The fragmentation of the territorial unit of the region would have major consequences at the social level, while Burgenland lost part of its role in linking what had been the two parts of the same empire. The economic consequences of the plebiscite were very important as well. The loss of central and southern Burgenland, now in Austria, with its timber, was seriously damaging for the Hungarian economy and Sopron suffered the loss of many villages around the town and of their significant supplies. The city lost much of its previous position as market center and Sopron's importance as an administrative center had declined also, though it maintained a significant cultural and political relevance (Macartney 1937, 69–70). For Austria the transfer brought great advantage, thanks to the considerable proportion of livestock, cereals and other small quantities of dairy products. The first Austrian census in 1923 registered 285,600 people in Burgenland. The ethnic composition of the province slightly changed and the percentage of Germans increased compared to 1910 (227, 869) while the percentage of Magyars rapidly declined to 14,931, but this change was obviously due to the emigration of the Magyar civil officials and intellectuals after the transfer. Because of its different historical roots at the time of its formation it did not have its own regional political and administrative institutions such as a representative assembly (*Landtag*) and imperial governor. Accordingly, contrary to the other Austrian states, Burgenland did not constitute a specific *Kronland* and many interim arrangements were made for the changeover from Hungarian to Austrian jurisdiction.⁵⁸

Conclusions

The Paris Peace Conference attempted to reshape the map of Europe but failed in assuring a new stable political order since the end of the War and the dissolution of the great multinational empires opened up a new and unexpected situation in the international balance. Europe, as it emerged from the Great War, was therefore not that dream of peace and rights that many expected it to be but rather a disputed land, root of many crises like in Silesia and Western Hungary that broke out already in the aftermath of the conflict. With regard to Hungary in particular, the issue of new borders and the internal political crisis linked to the Kun's Bolshevik regime and then to the Habsburg restoration attempts combined to create a context of severe crisis.

In those years, Western Hungary represented another element of destabilization. The dispute did not only concern Hungary and Austria but was part of the whole peace process led by the Allies. As a matter of fact, tension with Austria for Burgenland affected the Hungarian internal policy when Magyar paramilitary, deployed in the region, refused to become part of any established hierarchy and threatened the stability of the government, while their very existence prolonged chaos and lawlessness in the country. Thus the

Great Powers was concerned and a major commitment by the Inter-Allied Military Commission was required.⁵⁹ Despite the many criticisms, this international intervention took the form of one of the few concrete cases of self-determination in Europe after the First World War and represents, even today, an interesting experiment in crisis management. Moreover, as an international issue, Burgenland stands on a different footing from the other disputed lands of the former Hungarian Kingdom as it concerned two defeated countries and appears to be the consequence of a diplomatic compromise. Later on, it was generally considered as a small matter, not included in Magyar revisionist plans or at least considered easy to solve by negotiation. Vienna on the other hand had no intention whatever of reconsidering the transfer. Moreover, the plight of the two countries and their relative diplomatic isolation helped to leave aside the problem of Burgenland so as to not preclude friendly relations between Austria and Hungary.

Perhaps the most interesting part of the question lies in the manner and timing in which a peaceful conclusion was found to this territorial dispute, despite the many incidents, thanks to the direct intervention of the Powers, especially Italy, whereas the role of the military in the management of the plebiscite and during the transfer has been particularly effective and also gives us an interesting picture of the relations between the Allies.

Moreover, with regard to this article, we have tried to present some aspects of Italy's commitment in Western Hungary. The contribution of the Italian Army was in fact decisive for the definition of the government policy regarding Burgenland, and the contribution of Rome was essential for its diplomatic solution.

In addition, in several studies on Western Hungary, except some references to the documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Italian sources have often been underutilized and underestimated, and the documents of the Italian General Staff have generally been ignored. These sources are of great importance for a comprehensive analysis of the events, in which as previously stated the Italians had a leading role, and if used in relation to the documents of the other powers, they are also an excellent resource for a better study on post-war Europe.

An example of this potential is the study of the motivations and priorities of Italian policy toward the Danube area, a study that has been often limited only to the major themes of anti-Slavism and Italy's hegemonic ambitions, without mentioning other instances – political, economic, military and even “humanitarian” – which are largely present in the Italian archives.

In short, the opinion on the activities of the Allies is undoubtedly positive, without wanting to exaggerate the importance of an issue that is still limited compared to many and far more complex problems facing Europe in the twenties.

The Allies and their military representatives made an important contribution to containing the threat of a protracted military confrontation between Austria and Hungary, organizing the plebiscite that finally put an end to the problem of Western Hungary. This solution would prove lasting, saving at least this small region of Europe from hatred and disasters which would pass through the rest of the continent in later years.

Notes

1. The official name was “The Kingdoms and States represented in the Imperial Council” (*Die im Reichsrat vertretenen Königreiche und Länder*).
2. This new government was invited by the Charles IV to take part in the decision on the planned armistice with Italy, but they refused and left the responsibility for the end of the war solely on the Emperor and his government (Jelavich 1987).
3. The request was refused by the Entente.

4. For a better idea of the internal dynamics of the Bolshevik regime in Hungary (see Low 1963; Tókécs 1967; Carsten 1972; János and Slottman 1972; Imre and Szücs 1986; Fornaro 1987).
5. Romanelli's role was decisive at critical stages of the Communist regime, thanks to the many interventions of the Italian officer, which led inter alia to the salvation of the cadets of Ludovika sentenced to death for treason by Kun (see Romanelli 2002; Vagnini 2008, 3–28).
6. Archivio Ufficio Storico Stato Maggiore Esercito (AUSSME), Fondo E-8, *Commissione Interalleata di Parigi*, Busta 112, fasc. 5, Le Gènèral Franchet d'Esperey a M. le Prèsident du Conseil, Ministre de la Guerre, 4 April 1919. *Copia*.
7. AUSSME, Fondo E-8, *Commissione Interalleata di Parigi*, Busta 75, fasc. 1, Delegazione Italiana per la Pace – Sezione Militare, *Promemoria sintetico sulle frontiere della Romania*. Paris, 17 March 1919.
8. AUSSME, Fondo E-8, *Commissione Interalleata di Parigi*, Busta 143, fasc. 8, T. n. 8915. Paris, 18 June 1919.
9. As the National Army moved through the countryside and gathered thrust began a two-year campaign of anti-Communist reprisals also known as the White Terror.
10. According to the Hungarian census of 1910, apparently favorable to the Magyars, the population of this area was 285,609, including 26,225 Magyar-speaking citizens.
11. People's Law No. VI/1919 of 27 January 1919.
12. The five proposed districts, Transylvania, North Hungary, South Hungary, Central Hungary and West Hungary, as a matter of fact were partly at that time under enemy occupation and it would have been extremely difficult to realize any kind of autonomous policy there.
13. Mathyas Zsombor was the first and the last governor to take office.
14. Eventually, Dr Ernst Beer, as an expert on Burgenland was added to the Austrian delegation (see Macartney 1937, 51).
15. The Treaty stated that «La Hongrie renonce en faveur de l'Autriche à tous droits et titres sur les territoires de l'ancien royaume de Hongrie, situés au delà des frontières de la Hongrie» (see *Trattati e Convenzioni fra il Regno d'Italia e gli altri Stati*, Torino: Tipografia del Regio Ministero degli Affari Esteri, vol. XXVI, 140).
16. For the full text of the Treaty of Trianon see *Treaty of Peace Between Allied and Associated Powers and Hungary and Protocol and Declaration Signed at Trianon*. June 4 1920. London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 11–15.
17. Art. 104 of the Treaty.
18. Also known as Commission of Generals, it was formed by General Carlo Antonio Ferrario (Italy), General Reginald Gorton (UK) and General Camille Hamelin (France) and 240 Allied officers and staff.
19. Initially the transfer was to be held on 29 August.
20. At first 26 officers, including 13 Italians, AUSSME, Fondo E-15, *Commissioni Interalleate di controllo*, Busta 93/1, Commission Militaire Interallies de Controle en Hongrie – la Prèsidence, Annexe au procès verbal no. 2. Budapest, 12 August 1921.
21. AUSSME, Fondo E-15, *Commissioni Interalleate di controllo*, Commission Militaire Interallies de Controle en Hongrie – La Prèsidence, annexe au procès verbal n. 254, Note de service. Budapest, 13 August 1921.
22. Italy's role in the question of Burgenland has received attention in earlier researches. Particularly Mária Ormos have discussed the border dispute between Austria and Hungary focusing on Italy.
23. They did not acquire systematic information about Burgenland in particular, but nevertheless, they had formed a general view on the region (see Vares 2008, 105).
24. Notably Pál Prónay, Iván Héjjas, István Friedrich and Gyula Osztenburg.
25. The bands included many officers and a large number of Székely as well.
26. On the activities of the Magyar bands in this period see also *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1918–1939 (DBFP)*, First Series, vol. XXII, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London 1946, 307.
27. DBFP, First Series, vol. XXII, 315.
28. DBFP, First Series, vol. XXII, 316 and 318.
29. DBFP, First Series, vol. XXII, 322.
30. Major Craig was also assigned to the battalion as liaison officer. AUSSME, E-15 *Commissioni Interalleate di controllo*, Busta 71/1, Commission de Generaux Alliés de Sopron, n. 122. Sopron, 2 October 1921.

31. A better overview of the Beneš' proposal is in the British documents, DBFP, First Series, vol. XXII, 339 and 347.
32. DBFP, First Series, vol. XXII, 365 and 372.
33. *Lajtabánság* (Banat of Leitha) was proclaimed on 4 October 1921, at Felsőőr (Oberwart).
34. Schober actually agreed to the Italian invitation on 8 October. DBFP, First Series, vol. XXII, 379.
35. Archivio Storico del Ministero Affari Esteri, Affari Politici 1921–1931, *Archivio conferenze*, Busta 42, Verbale delle riunioni di Venezia, 2–16 (see also, *British and Foreign State Papers*, 1812–1934, vol. 114 (1921), London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1921, 624; de Martens 1939, Series III, vol. 19, 763).
36. Kroisbach/Rokos, Wolfs/Balfs, Kohlnof/Kophaza, Hölling/Boz, Gross Zankendorf/Nagy Czenk, Harkau/Harka, Wondorf/Bahnfalva, Agendorf/Ágfalva.
37. DBFP, First Series, vol. XXII, 387.
38. DBFP, First Series, vol. XXII, 521.
39. AUSSME, E-15 *Commissioni Interalleate di controllo*, Busta 93/1, Commission de Generaux Allies – Hongrie Occidentale, n. 262T. Oedenburg (Sopron), 8 December 1921.
40. Later the Hungarian Parliament formally dethroned the Habsburgs.
41. Reports of the Royalist forces' dispersal and the King's capitulation to the Government were greeted with relief by the Allied Powers, especially by the British officials. DBFP, First Series, vol. XXII, 417.
42. It became a priority at this stage to resolve the question of the exile of the King, as the Magyar government officially requested the Powers to decide his destination. The solution would be reached when the Portuguese authorities eventually agreed to welcome Charles to Madeira.
43. Each area was guarded by a detachment of 25 men. At that time the Allies had in Sopron a total of 450 men, of which about half were Italian.
44. AUSSME, Fondo E-15, *Commissioni Interalleate di controllo*, Busta 71/1, Commission de Generaux Alliés de Sopron, n. 435. Sopron, 9 December 1921.
45. Actually the check started only on December 4th because of the delay in the arrival of Austrian delegation. See also DBFP, First Series, vol. XXII, 385.
46. The electoral board was composed of 3 Allied officers and 2 Hungarian and Austrian delegates.
47. AUSSME, Fondo E-15, *Commissioni Interalleate di controllo*, Busta 83/5, A.M.Kir. Kormány Képviselője a Soproni Szövetségközi Kantonai Bizottsággal, n. 60/994. Sopron, 1 December 1921.
48. AUSSME, Fondo E-15, *Commissioni Interalleate di controllo*, Busta 71/1, Commission Centrale du Plebiscite, *Rapport sur le déroulement des opérations pour l'exécution du plebiscite*, pp. 2–3. Sopron, 19 December 1921. However, the lists of the smaller communities did not show any falsification.
49. AUSSME, Fondo E-15, *Commissioni Interalleate di controllo*, Busta 71/1, Commission des Generaux Allies – Hongrie Occidentale, n. 588, *Rapport n. 6*.
50. AUSSME, Fondo E-15, *Commissioni Interalleate di controllo*, Busta 71/1, Commission des Generaux Allies – Hongrie Occidentale, n. 427. Oedenburg (Sopron), 8 December 1921.
51. AUSSME, Fondo E-15, *Commissioni Interalleate di controllo*, Busta 71/1, n. 333. Sopron, 10 November 1921.
52. AUSSME, Fondo E-15, *Commissioni Interalleate di controllo*, Busta 71/1, n. 477. Oedenburg (Sopron), 14 December 1921.
53. AUSSME, Fondo E-15, *Commissioni Interalleate di controllo*, Busta 71/1, Commission des Generaux Allies – Hongrie Occidentale, n. 588, *Rapport n. 6*.
54. DBFP, First Series, vol. XXII, 564.
55. Six constituencies of Sopron and two villages had a majority for Hungary while only one ward of the city and six other villages chose Austria. See also DBFP, First Series, vol. XXII, 574.
56. On 27 December 1921 the Venice Protocol had been already ratified by the Austrian President. DBFP, First Series, vol. XXII, 590, Note 8.
57. Work on boundary demarcation would be continued throughout 1922. AUSSME, Fondo G-22, *Scacchiere orientale*, Busta 56/1, Commissione per la delimitazione della frontiera Austria-Ungheria; Busta 56/2, Carteggio sotto-commissione tecnica (1922).
58. The first elections for the parliament of Burgenland took place only on 18 July 1922.
59. These activities are well documented in the Archives of the Italian Army General Staff. See the several reports drafted by the Allied officers in Sopron. AUSSME, Fondo E-15, *Commissioni Interalleate di controllo*, Busta 71/1.

References

- Ádám, Magda, Győző Cholnoky, and Béla Pomogáts, eds. 2000. *Trianon. A Magyar békeküldöttség tevékenysége 1920-ban*. Budapest: Lucidus.
- Bodó, Béla. 2004. "Paramilitary Violence in Hungary After the First World War." *East European Quarterly* 2 (38): 129–172.
- Borsanyi, György. 1993. *The Life of a Communist Revolutionary, Béla Kun*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- British and Foreign State Papers, 1812–1934*. 1921. Vol. 114. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
- Carsten, Francis L. 1972. *Revolution in Central Europe 1918–1919*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1918–1939 (DBFP)*. 1946. First Series, Vol. XXII. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.
- Fornaro, Pasquale. 1980. *Béla Kun, professione rivoluzionario: scritti e discorsi scelti, 1918–1936*. Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino.
- Fornaro, Pasquale. 1987. *Crisi postbellica e rivoluzione: l'Ungheria dei consigli e l'Europa danubiana nel primo dopoguerra*. Milano: FrancoAngeli.
- Hétes, Tibor. 1969. *A Magyarországi forradalmak krónikája 1918–1919*. Budapest: Kossuth Kiadó.
- Imre, Magda, and László Szücs. 1986. *A Forradalmi Kormányzótanács jegyzőkönyvei 1919*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó.
- János, Andrew C., and William B. Slottman, eds. 1972. *Revolution in Perspective: Essays on the Hungarian Soviet Republic of 1919*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Jelavich, Barbara. 1987. *Modern Austria: Empire and Republic, 1815–1986*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Király, Béla K., Peter Pástor, and Ivan Sanders, eds. 1982. *Essays on World War I: Total War and Peacemaking. A Case Study on Trianon*. New York: Brooklyn College Press – Columbia University Press.
- Lehár, Anton. 1973. *Erinnerungen: Gegenrevolution und Restaurationsversuche in Ungarn 1918–1921*. Vienna: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik.
- Low, Alfred D. 1963. *The Hungarian Soviet Republic and Paris Peace Conference*. Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society.
- Macartney, Carlile A. 1937. *Hungary and Her Successors. The Treaty of Trianon and Its Consequences 1919–1937*. London: Oxford University Press.
- de Martens, Georg F. 1939. *Nouveau recueil general de traités*. Series III, Vol. 19. Leipzig: Librarie Hans Buske.
- Niederhauser, Emil. 1981. *The Rise of Nationality in Eastern Europe*. Budapest: Corvina Books.
- Romanelli, Guido. 2002. *Nell'Ungheria di Béla Kun e durante l'occupazione militare romana. La mia missione (maggio-novembre 1919)*. Edited by Biagini Antonello. Roma: SME-Ufficio Storico.
- Romsics, Ignáz. 2001. *A Trianoni békeszerződés*. Budapest: Osiris Kiadó.
- Romsics, Ignáz. 2002. *The Dismantling of Historic Hungary. The Peace Treaty of Trianon, 1920*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Seton-Watson, Robert W. 1969. *The Southern Slav Question and the Habsburg Monarchy*. New York: Constable.
- Sugar, Peter F. 1997. *Nationality and Society in Habsburg and Ottoman Europe*. Aldershot: Variorum.
- Tőkés, Rudolf L. 1967. *Béla Kun and the Hungarian Soviet Republic*. New York: Praeger.
- Trattati e Convenzioni fra il Regno d'Italia e gli altri Stati*. Vol. XXVI. Torino: Tipografia del Regio Ministero degli Affari Esteri, 140.
- Treaty of Peace Between Allied and Associated Powers and Hungary and Protocol and Declaration Signed at Trianon*. June 4 1920. London: His Majesty's Stationery Office.
- Vagnini, Alessandro. 2008. *Momenti di storia ungherese*. Roma: Nuova Cultura.
- Vares, Mari. 2008. *The Question of Western Hungary/Burgenland, 1918–1923. A Territorial Question in the Contest of National and International Policy*. Jyväskylä: Jyväskylä Studies in Humanities.