



International Boundary Study

No. 66 – March 1, 1966

Czechoslovakia – Hungary Boundary

(Country Codes: CZ-HU)

**The Geographer
Office of the Geographer
Bureau of Intelligence and Research**

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CZECHOSLOVAKIA - HUNGARY BOUNDARY

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CZECHOSLOVAKIA - HUNGARY BOUNDARY

I. BOUNDARY BRIEF

The Czechoslovakia - Hungary boundary extends 421 miles westward from the U.S.S.R. tripoint near the Tisza River to the Austrian tripoint situated approximately 4 miles west of the Danube River. Originally delimited by Article 27 (4) of the 1920 Treaty of Trianon, the boundary was modified slightly at the Austrian tripoint by Article I (4c) of the 1947 Treaty of Peace with Hungary. The entire boundary is considered to be demarcated: the terrestrial sectors by a dense network of pillars and the river and stream sectors by set courses.

No disputes over the specific alignment of the boundary are known to exist.

II. GEOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

A. Physical

The Danubian Valley, the physical axis of south-central Europe, comprises an alternating series of open level basins and narrow mountainous gaps which extend from South Germany to the Black Sea. The Danube breaks through the Alpine system at Bratislava in the critical gap which has long controlled traffic along the river artery. To the south and west of the gap is the high mass of the Austrian Alps while to the north and east the lower, but still impressive, chain of the Carpathians form the upland core of Czechoslovakia. Southeast of Bratislava, the Danube meanders through the broad, flat lowland of the Hungarian Plain, the largest of the Danubian basins.

To the east, the Czechoslovakia - Hungary boundary skirts the northern rim of this Hungarian Plain while crossing the southern foothills of the main Carpathian Mountains. The Carpathians are composed of a series of folded and heavily forested ranges, aligned roughly WNW - ESE, which have been dissected into blocks by south-flowing tributaries of the Danube. Historically, the alignment of ridges and valleys has hampered communications between Slovakia - Ruthenia in east and Bohemia - Moravia in the west. The natural flow of the valleys tended to orient Slovakia - Ruthenia southward with the Hungarian plain. During the period of the Austro - Hungarian Empire, geographic and political conditions made the adjacent parts of the Danube basin economically interdependent. Bohemia - Moravia became associated with Austria while Slovakia - Ruthenia and Hungary were drawn together. However, since World War I nationalism and improving eastwest communications have reduced this natural advantage.

Straggling villages parallel the river valleys, the prime agricultural land. In the Carpathians proper, meadows occupy most of the slopes to the 2,000-foot line; forests to the 4500-foot line; and Alpine pastures above.

In the west, the Czechoslovakia - Hungary boundary passes through the Little Alfold, the northern section of the Hungarian Plain. The plain is an area of subsidence; in recent geological times it formed a vast inland sea. Consequently, shallow lakes and poor drainage characterize the otherwise featureless lowland. Many streams meander through the lowland serving as arteries of internal and external communications and transport. Extensive flooding, a condition aggravated by extensive deforestation, particularly in the uplands surrounding the Danube basin, is common as the rampaging Danube showed during the 1965 summer. Consequently, the plain of Hungary suffers periodically from the results of an activity over which it has no control.

For 100 miles, the Danube forms the Czechoslovakia - Hungarian boundary and the Alfold north of it constitutes the only extensive lowland region within Slovakia. The soil of the Alfold is extremely fertile where drainage is good and, consequently the plain has been an agricultural exporting region for centuries.

Climatically, the border region is a transitional zone between the moderate conditions of maritime Europe and the continental extremes of the interior. Winters are cold with average January temperatures slightly below freezing. In contrast, summers are warm; July's monthly average is approximately 67° F. The Hungarian Plain to the south and east experiences even hotter summers with average monthly temperatures near 72 ° F. Rainfall throughout the region is adequate although light. The lowlands receive between 20 and 25 inches while the foothills have slightly over 25 inches per annum. A summer maximum of precipitation occurs throughout the border area. As a result, the climate is ideal for the growth of cereal crops and for stock raising.

B. Historical

Prior to World War I, the entire border region was part of the Kingdom of Hungary within the Austro - Hungarian Empire. Hungary, as a result, was a region of great physical, economic and ethnic diversity. During the middle of the 9th century, the original Magyar population centered itself in the plain, then a grassy region ideally suited to their nomadic, stock-raising existence. After a period of raiding in Italy and Germany, the Magyars abandoned their nomadic existence and established the economic and political bases of the modern state. By 1000, the Magyar kingdom extended from Austria on the west, southward to the Drava River, eastward to the outer rim of the Carpathians, and northward to the northern edge of modern Slovakia. The Magyars tended to occupy the lowlands while the subject, minority peoples settled in the mountains which rimmed the plain. During the ensuing centuries, Hungary was ravaged by Mongol and Turkish raiders who depopulated vast areas. As a result, a weakened Hungary came under the domination of the Austrian Hapsburg Crown and remained so, in one form or another, until the end of World War I.

In the 1840s, the multi-national Hapsburg Empire was shaken by demands for autonomy by the various minority elements, including the Hungarians. The Magyars, in fact, led in the demands placed on the Crown. Finally, in 1867, Hungary gained political equality within the newly-created dual monarchy. The aspirations of the other minorities, however, failed

to be satisfied. The Hungarians, proud of their regained status, adopted a program of enforced Magyarization of the minority peoples. Internal dissention increased until, with the collapse of the Empire in 1918, the national minorities rejected a proposed federal state. Instead they fought for and obtained complete independence. In the peace treaty negotiations, the Hungarians held that a people occupy a contiguous area within established boundaries and that such a region should not be partitioned. The minorities, however, claimed they had been and would be discriminated against and recent concessions were insufficient. Only independence would suffice.

Before the War, roughly 10,000,000 Magyars and 10,000,000 non-Magyars inhabited the Kingdom of Hungary. After the peace settlements, the total population of the new state was reduced to approximately 8,000,000 including about 800,000 non-Magyars. This left over 2,000,000 Magyars resident outside of the post-Trianon Hungary. They were centered primarily in Rumanian Transylvania and Czechoslovak Trans-Danubia and Sub-Carpathia. The Transylvanian Hungarians were separated from the main body of Magyars by an area of predominantly Rumanian and German settlements.

In contrast, in the southern rim of Slovakia they formed a contiguous mass on both sides of the new frontier.

A desire of the Wilson-influenced treaties of peace was to reduce national minorities by creating relatively homogeneous national states. However, Czechoslovakia, as a country, was to be very narrow and, as a result, strategically vulnerable if areas of only Czech and Slovak settlement were included. Furthermore, virtually all rail connections between Bohemia - Moravia and Slovakia passed through the areas of Magyar population. The Czechs, as a result, argued that to survive strategically they had to have the Danube as a boundary. Hungary, in contrast, demanded that the 8,800 square kilometers inhabited by the 750,000 Magyars be included within its boundaries.

However, the Czech position prevailed and Hungary was reduced to the plain, losing all of the mountainous rim containing forests, mines and factories. As a result, only 10% of the boundaries of Czechoslovakia coincided with the natural limits of the Czechs and Slovaks. Ruthenia, although not inhabited by either Czechs or Slovaks, was also granted to Czechoslovakia so that it would have direct connections with Rumania.

The Treaty of Trianon reduced Hungary to 32.9% of its pre-war area and 41.6% of its pre-war population. Segments were transferred to Austria (1.4%), Rumania (36.2%), Yugoslavia (7.5%) and to Czechoslovakia (21.8%). For the next two decades, the Hungarian nation and people argued that the terms of the treaty had been too harsh. The proponents of the treaty argued equally in its favor. After much agitation, Hungary obtained a revision of the boundary with Slovakia in 1938 through the intervention of Germany, following the Munich Agreement. Moreover, after the collapse of Czechoslovakia in 1939, Hungary unilaterally occupied Ruthenia and parts of Slovakia.

The treaty of peace in 1947, however, negated these actions and restored the Trianon boundaries of Hungary, with two exceptions.

III. ANALYSIS OF BOUNDARY ALIGNMENT

The Czechoslovakia - Hungary boundary was first delimited by the Committee for the Study of Territorial Questions of the Paris Peace Conference. This boundary was followed in the territorial clauses of the Treaty of Trianon although a limited degree of latitude for change was granted to field commissions. The basic description of the boundary between Slovakia and Hungary continued in the Treaty of Trianon is as follows:

[following the Tisza downstream] thence approximately westwards to a point in the Ronyva about 3.7 kilometres north of the bridge between the town and the station of Satoralja - Ujhely, a line to be fixed on the ground leaving to Czecho - Slovakia Tarkany, Perbenyik, Oros, Kis - Kovesd, Bedrog - Szerdahely, Bodrog - Szog, and Borsi, and to Hungary Damoc, Laca, Rozvagy, Pacin, Karos, Felso - Berecki, crossing the Bodrog and cutting the railway triangle south-east of Satoralja - Ujhely, passing east of this town so as to leave the Kassa - Csap railway entirely in Czecho - Slovak territory; thence to a point near point 125 about 1 1/2 kilometres south of Alsomihalyi, the course of the Ronyva upstream; thence north-westwards to a point on the Hernad opposite point 167 on the right bank south-west of Abaujnasd, a line to be fixed on the ground following approximately the watershed between the basins of the Ronyva on the east and the Bozsva on the west, but passing about 2 kilometers east of Pusztafalu, turning south-westwards at point 896, curving at point 424 the Kassa - Satoralja road and passing south of Abaujnasd; thence to a point to be selected on the ground about 1 1/2 kilometres south-west of Abaujvar, the course of the Hernad downstream; thence westwards to point 330 about 1 1/2 kilometres south-south-west of Pereny, a line to be fixed on the ground leaving to Czecho - Slovakia the villages of Miglecznemeti and Pereny, and to Hungary the village of Tornynosnemeti; thence westwards to point 291 about 3 1/2 kilometres south-east of Janok, the watershed between the basins of the Bodva on the north and the Rakacza on the south, but leaving in Hungarian territory the road on the crest south-east of Buzita; thence west-north-westwards to point 431 about 3 kilometres south-west of Torna, a line to be fixed on the ground leaving to Czecho - Slovakia Janok, Tornahorvati and Bodvavendegi, and Hidvegarde; thence south-westwards to point 365 about 12 kilometres south-south-east of Pelsocz, a line to be fixed on the ground passing through point 601, 381 (on the Rozsnyo - Edeleny road), 557, and 502; thence south-south-westwards to point 305 about 7 kilometres north-west of Putnok, the watershed between the basins of the Sajó on the west and the Szuha and Kelomori on the east; thence south-south-westwards to point 278 south of the confluence of the Sajó and the Rima, a line to be fixed on the ground, leaving Banreva station to Hungary while permitting, if required, the construction in Czecho - Slovak territory of a connection between Pelsocz and Losoncz railway lines; thence south-westwards to point 485 about 10 kilometres east-north-east of Salgotarjan, a line to be fixed on the ground following approximately the watershed

between the basins of the Rima on the north and the Hangony and Tarna rivers to the south; thence west-north-westwards to point 727, a line to be fixed on the ground leaving to Hungary the villages and mines of Zagyva - Rona and Salgom and passing south of Somos - Ujfalu station; thence north-westwards to point 391 to 7 kilometres east of Litke, a line following approximately the crest bounding on the north-east the basin of the Dobroda and passing through point 446; thence north-westwards to a point to be selected on the course of the Eipel (Ipoly) about 1 1/2 kilometres north-east of Tarnocz, a line to be fixed on the ground passing through point 312 and between Tarnocz and Kalonda; thence south-westwards to a point to be selected in the bend of the Eipel about 1 kilometre south of Tesmag; the course of the Eipel downstream; thence westwards to a point to be selected on the course of the Eipel about 1 kilometre west of Tesa, a line to be fixed on the ground so as to pass south of the station of Ibolysag and to leave entirely in Czecho - Slovak territory the railway from Ipolysag to Csata together with the branch line to Korpona (Karpfen), but leaving Berneceze and Tesa to Hungary; thence southwards to its confluence with the Danube, the course of the Eipel downstream; thence to a point to be selected about 2 kilometres east of Antonienhof (east of Kittsee), the principal channel of navigation of the Danube upstream; thence westwards to a point to be selected on the ground about 1 kilometre west of Antonienhog (east of Kittsee), this point being the point common to the three frontiers of Austria, Hungary and Czecho - Slovakia, a line to be fixed on the ground.

The post-World War II treaty of peace altered the Antonienhof sector of the boundary to add territory to the Czech exclave:

from the point common to the frontiers of Austria, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, as they existed on January 1, 1938, the present Hungarian - Austrian frontier shall become the frontier between Austria and Czechoslovakia as far as a point roughly 500 meters south of hill 134 (3.5 kilometers north-west of the church of Rajka), this point now becoming common to the frontiers of the three named States; thence the new frontier between Czechoslovakia and Hungary shall go eastwards along the northern cadastral boundary of the village of Rajka to the right bank of the Danube at a point approximately 2 kilometers north of hill 128 (3.5 kilometers east of the church of Rajka), where the new frontier will, in the principal channel of navigation of the Danube, join the Czechoslovak - Hungarian frontier as it existed on January 1, 1938; the dam and the spillway within the village limits of Rajka will remain on Hungarian territory.

IV. TREATIES AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ACTS

The present Czechoslovakia - Hungary boundary stems directly from the treaties and acts ending World Wars I and II; no treaty prior to 1918 is of any significance for the boundary alignment.

The process of determining the boundary after World War I was very complex. It involved the actions of a committee of experts, the Supreme Council of the Allied and Associated

Powers, the successor Council of Ambassadors and the Czechoslovak - Hungarian Boundary Commission. The supreme authority for the drafting of the treaty of peace with Hungary was the Supreme Council composed of two representatives each from France, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States. Since the Council proved too unwieldy, it was broken into the Council of Four (the ranking delegates of the Big Four) and the Council of Five (the foreign ministers of the five powers.) After signature of the treaty, responsibility devolved onto the Council of Ambassadors (in Paris.) The United States, after the U.S. Senate rejected the Versailles treaty in late 1919, officially withdrew from the work of the councils and was represented thereafter only by an observer.

A. Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Hungary and Protocol and Declaration signed at Trianon on June 4, 1920. Came into effect July 26, 1921.

The detailed delimitation of the treaty (Article 27, Para. 4). has been quoted in section III above. In addition, the treaty contained a description of the Ruthenian - Hungarian boundary which, as a result of the Ruthenian transfer to the U.S.S.R., now serves as the Russo - Hungarian frontier.

Article 29 created boundary commissions to fix those portions delimited as "a line to be fixed on the ground" as well as to revise the delimitation where it was deemed necessary for local economic and administrative convenience. Furthermore, article 30 stated that where the terms "course" or "channel" were used to delimit the boundary in a waterway, they equated with the median line in non-navigable waterways and the thalweg in navigable ones.

The Czechoslovak - Hungarian Boundary Commission composed of representatives of the great powers and of the two states concerned, worked from 1921 through 1925 on the demarcation. Certain problem areas were referred to the Council of Ambassadors for decision. These were then embodied into a series of protocols which became a part of the permanent records of the Council. The basic field map was produced at a scale of approximately 1:2,500 (the basic Austro - Hungarian cadastral map was 1:2,880). Additional, generalized maps followed at larger scales. These documents were incorporated into the following:

B. Convention relating to the settlement of Questions arising out of the Delimitation of the Frontier between the Kingdom of Hungary and the Czechoslovak Republic (Frontier Statute).

Signed at Prague, November 14, 1928 with Ratifications exchanged at Budapest on December 2, 1930. (League of Nations Treaty Series, Vol. CX, pp. 425 - 493.)

Article I stated "The Frontier between the Czechoslovak Republic and the Kingdom of Hungary, described in Article 27 of the Treaty of Peace of Trianon of June 4, 1920, was delimited, marked out and measured on the spot by the Delimitation Commission during

the period 1921 - 1925. Results of the demarcation and measurements are contained in three identical documents, two of which are in the archives of the Contracting Powers and the third in the archives of the Conference of Ambassadors."

C. Convention concerning the Settlement of Technical and Economic Questions on the Hungarian - Czechoslovak Frontier Sector of the Danube and on the Tisza below the Confluence of the Szamos, and Final Protocol.

Signed at Budapest on August 24, 1937; came into force on July 2, 1938. (ibid. Vol. CLXXXIX, pp. 403 - 421.)

The convention was concerned with the technical problems of navigation, regulations and control of the frontier rivers. The alignment of the boundary in the rivers had already been determined.

D. The Vienna Award of November 2, 1938 (Great Britain Foreign Office, British, and Foreign State Papers, vol. 142, pp. 529 ff.)

The southern, Magyar-inhabited portion of Czechoslovakia was returned to Hungary as a result of this agreement. However, the award was negated by the end of hostilities and the peace treaty.

E. Moscow Agreement signed on June 29, 1945 by Czechoslovakia and the U.S.S.R.

By ceding the 5,500 square miles of Ruthenia to the U.S.S.R., the agreement shortened the Czech - Hungarian boundary by an estimated 50 miles. It did not, however, affect the location of the boundary.

F. Treaty of Peace with Hungary signed February 10, 1947 to be in effect September 15, 1947.

Article I (4a) stated "The decisions of the Vienna Award of November 2, 1938, are declared null and void." With the exception of the change mentioned in Section III above, it also restored the boundary of January 1, 1938 from Austria on the west "to the point common to those two States [Czechoslovakia and Hungary] and the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics..."

Recently, the Czechoslovak and Hungarian Governments have concluded agreements governing some technical aspects of boundary control. An agreement of 1954 dealt with problems arising from the use of border rivers. It was followed, though not replaced, by the Hungarian - Czechoslovak Border Treaty of 13 October 1956. This treaty deals entirely with technical matters such as border alignment, the erection and maintenance of border markers, and the regulation of border rivers and roads, fishing, hunting, and forestry. It supersedes a 1949 directive governing the re-establishment of the boundary after World War II. The treaty will be in force for periods of 5 years, beginning with the ratification date

of 10 February 1958. It will remain in force for succeeding 5-year periods unless voided by one of the governments prior to the terminal date of the current 5-year period.

Hungary reportedly has also provided the initiative for a new form of direct cooperation between CEMA countries for the joint development of frontier areas. The Hungarian plan was adopted by the Town and Country Planning Section of the CEMA Permanent Building Committee. One of its first tangible results was the conclusion, in March 1960, of an agreement between Czechoslovakia and Hungary which provides for the joint development of their common frontier zone. In the first stage of this regional development plan, zones approximately 30 kilometers wide were drawn on both sides of the boundary -- from Szob to Salgotarjan on the Hungarian side from Lucenec to Filakova on the Czechoslovak side. Preliminary work in these two areas includes a survey of industry, agriculture, communications, supplies, and development possibilities. Eventually, this plan for common development is to be extended to other sections of the frontier.

Further evidence of border cooperation between the two countries is an agreement made in December 1961 for the joint study of that sector of the frontier running along the Ipoly River. This step is said to be the first stage in the development of a regional plan for the Ipoly River basin and will include the construction of a large reservoir to serve both irrigation and flood-control purposes.

These programs indicate that Czechoslovakia and Hungary have finally made some progress towards joint management and development of their common frontier areas. Much apparently remains to be done, however, before full cooperation can be realized. The dominant problems of Magyar minorities in the border region is complicated by the growth of friction between the Slovaks and the Czechs. While Slovak nationalism developed as a problem in the pre-war period, it has in recent years again gained strength within the state.

V. SUMMARY

The Czechoslovakia - Hungary boundary should be shown on official maps as an established international boundary. Its entire length of 421 miles has been demarcated by a dense network of pillars or by specific courses in boundary streams. The original large-scale, demarcation maps were never printed in quantity and are not available for compilation sources. However, both the pre-war Czech and Hungarian topographic maps at a scale of 1:25,000 represent the boundary in an identical manner and may be used for large-scale compilation sources. For the area near Bratislava, changed in 1947 treaty, the 1:75,000 map annex of the peace treaty will serve. The 1:1,000,000 map annex also may be utilized for small-scale compilation.

This International Boundary Study is one of a series of specific boundary papers prepared in the Geographer, Office of Research in Economics and Science, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State, in accordance with provisions of Bureau of the Budget Circular No. A-16.

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