

Permeable or Closed Borders? Territorialisation and Nation Building in the Carpathian Basin in the First Quarter of the 20th Century

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Trianon, 100 years after: Cross-border cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe

French Institute, Budapest, October 27, 2021.



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Theoretical background

- Territorialisation and borders
 - nation state forming
 - political rule over a bordered territory
 - increasing role of borders
 - exploitation of the internal territory
- Causes of territorialisation
 - new states / political regimes
 - international environment, wars
 - national or other minorities
 - development of bureaucracy
- Border regimes
 - Western: permissive, policing
 - Eastern: repressive, militarised



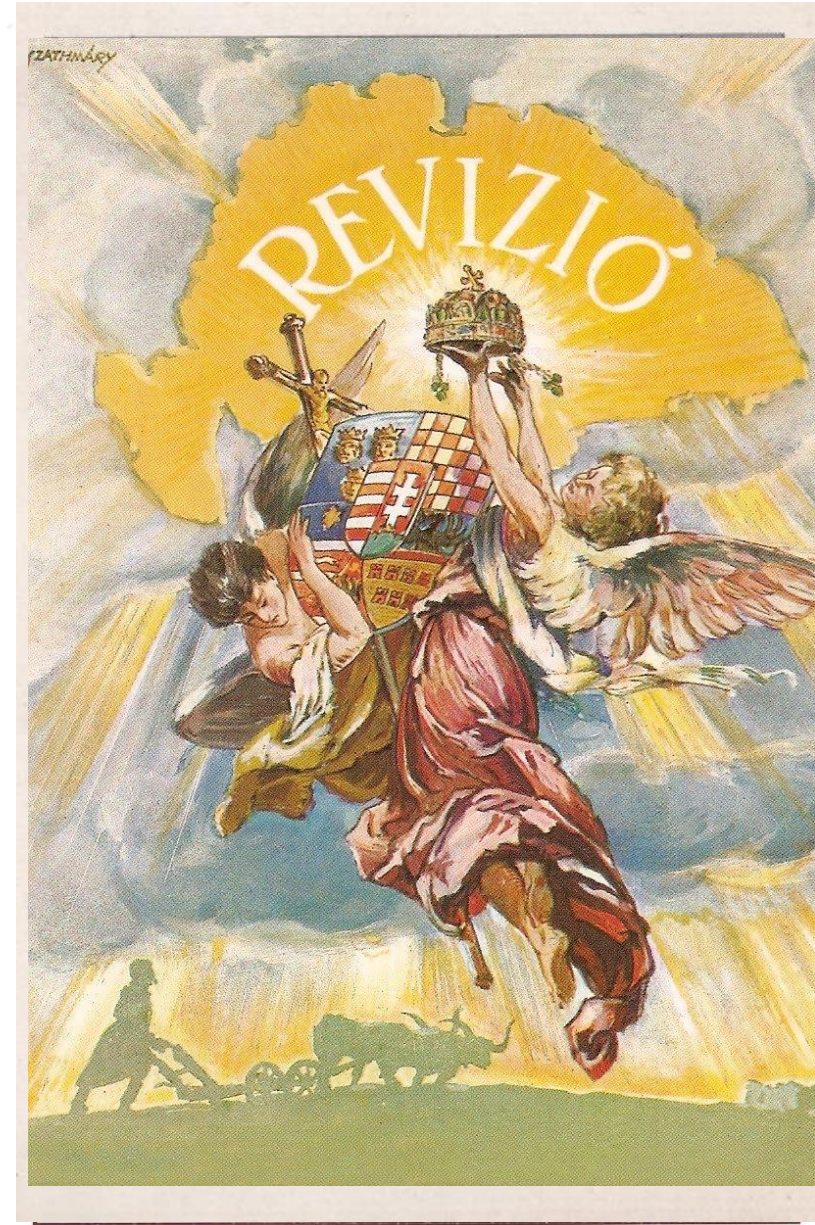
Hungary at the turn of the century

- Weak borders
 - mainly internal borders, without border surveillance (originally)
 - periphery of the Western regime
 - permeability of external borders
- Emigration as a drive for territorialisation
 - contradiction between Passport Act and Emigration Act
 - Fiume, or Hamburg and Bremen
 - border police 1906
 - agreement with the Germans
 - emigration and military obligation
 - negotiations and agreement with Austria 1901–1908–1914



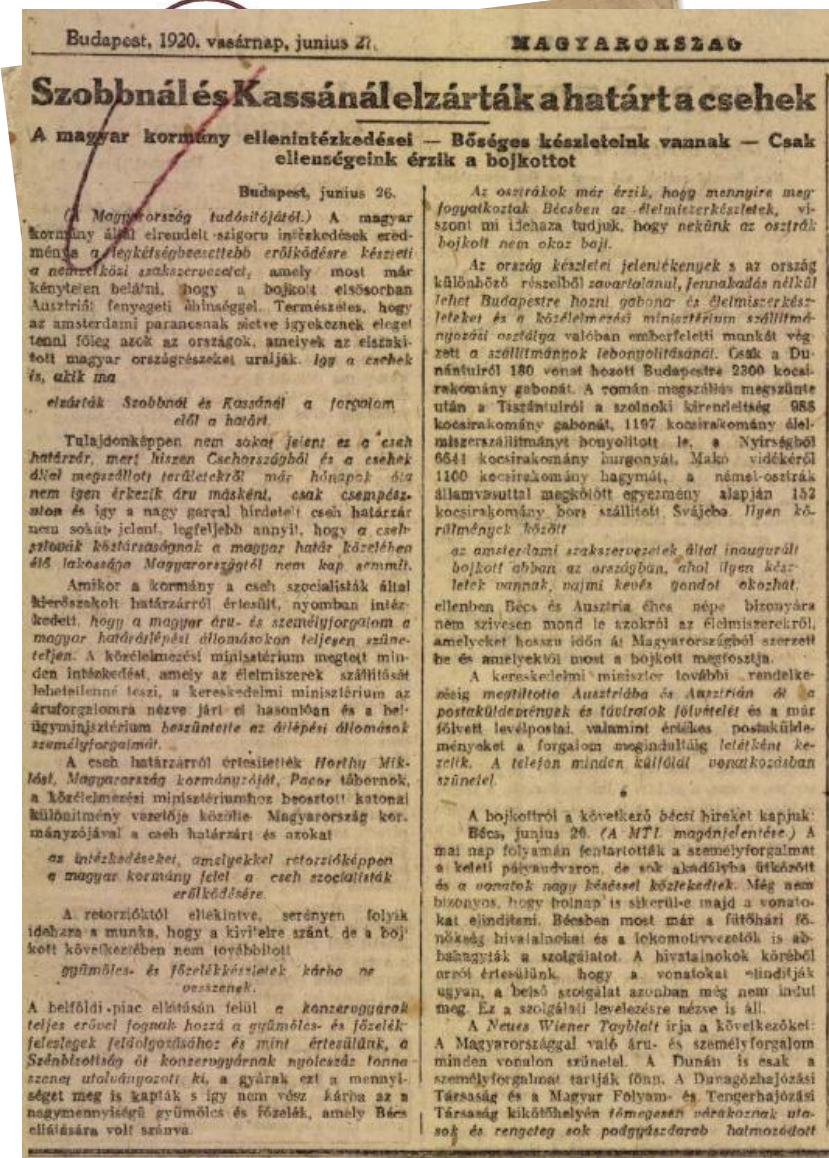
War, disintegration, Trianon

- World War I
 - ban for emigration
 - passport and visa obligation
 - special rules in combat zones
- Territorialisation after 1918
 - new states, borders, regimes
 - U.S. immigration quotas
 - nation building in successor states
 - efforts to isolate Hungary
- Hungarian national interests
 - supporting Hungarians over the borders
 - intensive cross-border connections
 - i.e., to decrease the significance of borders – deterritorialisation



Long distance and small border traffic

- Long distance traffic
 - passport application difficulties
 - full visa obligation
 - visa wars with neighbours
- Local / small border traffic
 - settlements, estates, families were cut into two parts
 - illegal crossing – authorities
 - dual landowners: local and later, international agreements (1922–27)
 - border closures, restrictions
 - protecting national interests on ethnic grounds
 - max. 10-mile-strip, cities excluded
 - not only dual landowners
 - success or failure? from demarcation lines to borders



Tightening border surveillance system

- Militarisation
 - customs guard – paramilitary force
 - unwanted elements, spies
 - spy hysteria (Romanians)
 - antisemitic actions: expulsion of Jews + entry restrictions
- Contraband (smuggling)
 - caused by war, famine
 - new borders – new locations
 - internal smuggling also
 - from food to more processed goods
 - changing of smuggler society
 - huge financial losses, crime
 - infraction or misdemeanour?
 - strengthening of borders
- Border incidents



Conclusions

- Mostly external effects
- Territorialisation started even before the war
- Changing international environment after 1918/1920
- Nation-building of neighbouring states: defensive nationalism, closed borders
- Hungarian national interest is deterritorialisation (active steps for Hungarians over the border, offensive nationalism)
- Hungarian state interests → territorialisation
- A slow shift into the direction of the Eastern border regime (implemented fully after 1945 by the Soviets)

Thank you for your attention!

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