



# **International Boundary Study**

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## **Hungary – U.S.S.R. Boundary**

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No. 76

## HUNGARY - U.S.S.R. BOUNDARY

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## **HUNGARY - U.S.S.R. BOUNDARY**

### **I. BOUNDARY BRIEF**

The Hungary - U.S.S.R. boundary extends for approximately 75 miles from Czechoslovakia in the west to Rumania in the east. The basic boundary alignment derives from post-World War I agreements. At that time, it formed a segment of the Czechoslovakia - Hungary border. World War II treaties and agreements have confirmed the boundary and no disputes are known to exist over the precise alignment of the boundary.

### **II. GEOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND**

#### **A. Physical**

The Hungarian - Soviet frontier cuts the northeastern corner of the great Hungarian Plain. Extending eastward from the Alps along the southern flank of the Carpathians, this vast lowland of monotonously flat land drained by sluggish rivers covers an area of approximately 40,000 square miles. Northward from the plain lie the main Carpathian ranges which form the heart of Soviet Ruthenia (Zakarpatskaya Oblast). The Carpathian Mountains comprise a series of folded and heavily-wooded ranges, aligned roughly west-northwest by east-southeast, which have been dissected into blocks by the south-flowing tributaries of the Danube. The natural flow of communications down these valleys tended historically to orient Ruthenia toward the Hungarian Plain. Hampered by the ridges, east-west communications were difficult, while traffic to the north had to traverse the main water divide of the Carpathians to attain the plains of Eastern Europe.

During and before the period of the Austro - Hungarian Empire, geographic and political conditions drew Ruthenia and adjacent Slovakia into economic interdependence with Hungary. However, since the end of World War I, nationalism and improved communications across the Carpathians have reduced Hungary's community of interest particularly with Slovakia. Ruthenia, however, tended to remain peripheral both to Hungary and to the centers of Czech and Slovak development.

The international boundary straddles the basin of the middle Tisza (Tisa, Tissa, Theiss) River system the principal left-bank tributary of the Danube. The Tisza meanders across the plain in a manner typical of low-gradient streams with braided channels, abandoned courses (ox-bow lakes), and low, marshy floodplains. Straggling villages lie along the river valley, the prime agricultural land. In the Carpathians, however, meadows occupy most of the slopes below 2,000 feet in elevation while forests extend to approximately 4,500 feet and alpine pastures above.

Climatically, the border region is a transitional zone between the moderate conditions of maritime Europe and the extremes of the continental interior. Winters are cold with average January temperatures slightly below freezing. Summers are warm; July's monthly

average is approximately 67° F. The Hungarian Plain to the south 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 per annum, while the Carpathian foothills have slightly over 25 inches. A summer maximum is ideal for the growth of cereal crops and for stock raising.

## **B. Historical**

Prior to World War I, the frontier area was part of the Kingdom of Hungary within the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Hungary in this period was a land of great physical, economic, and ethnic diversity. The original Magyar population had become centered during the middle of the 9th century in the plain, then a grassy land ideally suited to their nomadic, stock-raising existence. After a period of raiding far south to Italy and west to Germany, the Magyars abandoned their nomadic ways and established the economic and political basis for a 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 include modern Slovakia and Ruthenia. The Magyars tended to occupy the lowlands while the minority peoples they subjected settled in the mountains which rimmed the plain. During the ensuing centuries Hungary was ravaged by Mongol and Turkish invaders, who depopulated vast areas. A weakened Hungary, as a result, came under the domination of the Austrian Hapsburg crown in 1526 and remained thus, in one form or another, until the end of World War I.

In the 1840's the multinational Hapsburg Empire was shaken by demands for autonomy made by the various minority elements, led by the Magyars. Finally in 1867 Hungary gained political equality within the newly-created dual monarchy. The aspirations of the other minority peoples, however, failed to be satisfied. The Hungarians, proud of their regained status, adopted a program of enforced Magyarization of the minority peoples. Internal dissension increased until, with the collapse of the Empire in 1918, the national minorities rejected a proposed federal state. Instead they fought for and obtained independence based upon ethnic considerations. In the post-war peace treaty negotiations the Hungarians held to the premise that a people occupy a contiguous area within established boundaries and that such a historic region should not be partitioned. The minorities, however, claimed they had been and would continue to be discriminated against and that recent Hungarian concessions were insufficient. Only independence would satisfy their individual aspirations.

After considerable discussion at the peace conference, Ruthenia was detached from Hungary and included in the new Czechoslovak state. The inhabitants, not closely akin to the adjacent Slovaks, were promised a large measure of local autonomy. However, the promise was slow in being fulfilled. Nevertheless, the negotiators felt that a viable Czechoslovakia had to have a direct land connection with Rumania to withstand the Hungarian pressures. Many people, particularly in Hungary, felt that the territorial provisions of the treaty of peace had been too harsh; others argued equally in favor of the new boundaries. After nearly two decades of agitation, stemming from dissatisfaction with

the Treaty of Trianon of 1920, Hungary in 1938 obtained a revision of its boundary with Slovakia and Ruthenia through the intervention of Germany and Italy. With the collapse of Czechoslovakia in 1939, Hungary unilaterally occupied Ruthenia and additional parts of Slovakia.

At the end of World War II, as a result of Soviet military action, confirmed by the 1947 Treaty of Peace, Hungary returned to its pre-1938 boundary with Czechoslovakia. The latter, in turn, after negotiations ceded Ruthenia to the U.S.S.R. in 1945. The Hungary - U.S.S.R. boundary was created by this cession.

### **III. ANALYSIS OF BOUNDARY ALIGNMENT**

The boundary was first delimited by the Committee for the Study of Territorial Questions of the Paris Peace Conference after World War I. In Paris, the delimitation had devolved on committees of experts who examined frontier problems on an ad hoc basis. The Supreme Council intended to review each of the decisions of the experts but eventually was forced, by the press of detail, to accept with only superficial examination the direct recommendations of the experts. They, in turn, had received little in the form of instructions other than that the boundary solutions were to be equitable, a status never defined with precision. On March 12, 1919 the Commission on Czechoslovak Affairs embodied its findings in a report which on March 25 was approved by the Central Territorial Commission.<sup>1</sup> With a minor rectification (Ipolysag - Sahy to Czechoslovakia), the boundary drawn by the Commission in March and approved by the foreign ministers in May was endorsed by the main Conference on June 12, 1919. This boundary was followed in the clauses of the Treaty of Trianon, although a limited degree of latitude for change was granted to the field demarcation commissions. The basic description of the boundary between Ruthenia and Hungary in the treaty is as follows:

From point 123 described above north-westwards to a point to be selected on the course of the Batar above 1 kilometre east of Magosliget, a line to be selected on the ground;

thence the course of the Batar downstream;

Then to a point to be selected on it below Badalo and near this village, the course of the Tisza downstream;

thence north-north-westwards to a point to be selected on the ground north-east of Darocz, a line to be fixed on the ground north-east of Darocz, a line to be fixed on the ground leaving in the Ruthenian territory of Czecho-Slovakia

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<sup>1</sup> Rapport presente au Conseil supreme des Allies par le Commission des Affaires Tcheco-Slovagues, Annexe au proces-verbal No. 10 Recueil IV C(1)A (Recueil des Actes de la Conference de la Paix, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Imprimerie Nationale, Paris, 1922 - 1934, 45 vols.)

Badalo, Csoma, Macsola, Asztely and Deda, and in Hungarian territory Bereg-Surany and Darocz;

thence north-westwards to the confluence off the Fekete-Viz and the Csaronda, a line to be fixed on the ground passing through point 179, leaving in Ruthenian territory Mezokaszony, Lonyay Tn., Degenfeld Tn., Heteny, Horvathi Tn., Komjathy Tn., and in Hungarian territory Kerek Gorond Tn., Berki Tn., and Barabas;

thence to a point to be selected in its course above the administrative boundary between the comitats of Szabolcs and Bereg, the course of the Csaronda downstream;

thence westwards to the point where the above-mentioned boundary coming from the right bank cuts the course of the Tisza, a line to be fixed on the ground'

thence to a point to be selected on the ground east-south-east of Tarkany, the course of the Tisza downstream....

#### **IV. TREATIES AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ACTS**

The present Hungary - U.S.S.R. 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 the committee of experts (See Section III above), 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 passed to 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. The description of the Ruthenian - Hungarian boundary, as a result of the Ruthenian transfer to the U.S.S.R., now serves as the Hungarian - Soviet border. In addition, the cited paragraph contains the basic delimitation of the Czech - Hungarian frontier in Slovakia.

Article 29 of the treaty created boundary commissions to fix those portions of the respective boundaries 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 of the stream in non-navigable waterways and the thalweg (center line of the main navigation channel) 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 of the border. Certain problem areas arose which could not be solved by the Commission; these issues were referred to the Council of Ambassadors for resolution. Its decisions were then embodied into a series of protocols, which became a part of the permanent records of the Council. The basic field map of the Boundary Commission was produced at a scale of 1:2,500 (the Austro - Hungarian cadastral map was 1:2,880). Additional, generalized maps followed at smaller 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...**, 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, regulation 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 areas of dense Magyar settlement in Ruthenia (and Slovakia) were returned to Hungarian rule as a result of this agreement. However, the award and later unilateral Hungarian occupations were negated by the end of hostilities in 1945 and the peace treaty (Armistice of January 20, 1945; U.S. E.A.S. 456; United Nations Treaty Series, Vol. 140, pp. 397 ff.)

**E. Moscow Agreement** signed on June 29, 1945 by Czechoslovakia and the U.S.S.R. (British and Foreign State Papers, Vol. 145, pp. 1096 ff.)

By ceding the 5,500 square miles of Ruthenia to the U.S.S.R., the agreement created the Hungarian - Soviet boundary. The agreement did not, however, affect the location of the border as originally delimited.

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

Article 1 (4a) confirmed "The decisions of the Vienna Award of November 2, 1938 are declared null and void." The Treaty further stated in Article I (3) that "The Frontier between Hungary and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, from the point common to the frontier of those two States and Roumania [sic], to the point common to the frontier of those two States and Czechoslovakia, is fixed along the former frontier between Hungary and Czechoslovakia as it existed on January 1, 1938."

## **V. SUMMARY**

The Hungary - U.S.S.R. boundary is an established international boundary and should be so shown on official United States maps. No disclaimers relating to the boundary or to nomenclature are required. The border has been demarcated by set courses in the specified streams and rivers and by a dense network of demarcation pillars on the land segments. The original demarcation maps were deposited only in the national archives of Czechoslovakia and Hungary and with the Council of Ambassadors. Consequently they have never been available as compilation sources. The prewar large- and medium-scale topographic map series of both Czechoslovakia and Hungary show the frontier in the same manner and may serve as compilation sources. In addition, post-war small-scale Hungarian and Soviet maps, identical in their representation, may be used for compilation. A 1:1,000,000 map, affixed to the Hungarian peace treaty, is also an official document.

This International Boundary Study is one of a series of specific boundary papers prepared by the Geographer, Office of Strategic and Functional Research, 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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