Tibor Glant[*]

THE INQUIRY AND THE PARIS PEACE CONFERENCE: AMERICAN PREPARATIONS FOR PEACE AND THE FUTURE OF HUNGARY, 1917-1920

1 Introduction

At the outbreak of the First World War no one thought that four years later the Central Powers would ask for a ceasefire upon the peace plans of the US President announced publicly, and that Wilson would emerge as a key figure in international politics by 1919. America's entry into the war and later the 14 Points that reached mythical significance owing to US government propaganda gave new hope for the peoples of Europe suffering from the war. The key element of Wilsons' rhetoric was the doctrine of the "war to end all wars", the "national self-determination", and a "just" and "scientific peace". This "science for peace" was designed to ensure the fairness of the "new world order" promised by Wilson. Wilson instructed a committee comprised of mostly American east coast experts, the Inquiry, to map out this "scientific peace". The members of the committee were not only active in the preparation for peace but took part in the peace-making process in Paris as well. They served in the Territorial, Economic, and Political Intelligence Unit of the American Commission to Negotiate the Peace (hereafter ACNP), as well as in territorial committees and as members of the various diplomatic and relief American missions stationed to the Danube Basin.

The Inquiry was a typical Wilsonian institution. While French, British, Italian, and Japanese (and later Hungarian) preparations for peace primarily were carried out by foreign affairs experts, the American work was supervised by the President's unofficial chief

[*] Associate professor – University of Debrecen, North American Department, tglant@unideb.hu.

advisor, Colonel Edward M. House (1858-1938). The committee was chaired by House's brother-in-law and the cashier was the fellow lawyer of House's son-in-law. The costs of the Inquiry were provided by the President (officially in an amount of around a quarter of a million dollars) from the security and national defense fund granted for him by the Congress due to the war. The committee was formally under the control of the State Department but Secretary of State Robert Lansing (1864–1928) had no say in the work. Hence, American peace-preparation was carried out outside the constitutional framework of "checks and balances", and it was accountable and had reporting commitments solely to the President. Concerning its legal status, the Inquiry was an independent federal agency. The safety net of the State Department ensured access to governmental data, while House's appointments guaranteed that the Inquiry could stay out of administrative infighting, and Congress had no control over peace preparations. The administrative conditions and financial resources for the independent operation of the Inquiry were thus ensured from the very outset.[1] In our study we examine how the researchers of the Inquiry took this opportunity – in the case of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and Hungary –, and to what extent they could realize their wartime plans in Paris. But, first, let us look at the history of the establishment of the committee, its operation and performance.

2 Peace Initiatives and Preparations

Before the United States of America joined the war on April 6, 1917, President Wilson had offered to mediate in the conflict in August 1914 and also in December 1916, but in both instances the warring parties rejected the American offer. The entrance of the United States into the

[1] This study was produced within the framework of the Trianon 100 Momentum research group. Its text is an edited version of the introduction to our documentary publication on the subject. (See note 27 for details.) Lawrence E. Gelfand: *The Inquiry: American Preparations for Peace, 1917–1919*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963. This is the only monograph published on the subject.

war on the side of the Allies solely as an "Associated Power" made it clear that Washington did not share the war aims of Paris and London. French and British peace-preparatory work commenced in early to mid-1917, and the State Department became aware of this. However, Wilson tasked not the State Department but Colonel House with the work. In a September 2, 1917 letter to his "alter-ego" he wrote,

> "I am beginning to think that we ought to go systematically to work to ascertain as fully and precisely as possible just what the several parties to the war on our side will be inclined to insist upon as part of the final peace agreements, in order that we may formulate our either for or against them … [I]n brief, prepare our case with a full knowledge of the position of all the litigants. What would you think of quietly gathering about you a group of men to assist you to do this? I could, of course, pay all the bills out of the money now at my command. Under your guidance these assistants could collate all the definite material available and you would make up the memorandum by which we should be guided."

Two days later House stated in his reply that he was pleased to undertake the task and that he too had hoped to raise this matter with the President at their next personal meeting.[2]

The tasks and operating framework of the future committee were clearly designated by the Wilson-House exchange of letters. The President ensured the financial resources from the war defense fund voted year by year thereby giving his foremost and the most confidential advisor a free hand. Thus, House could freely select his colleagues and the areas for research, and himself acted as a filter between the proposals of the committee and the President. Wilson did not want to consult with the members of the committee, but (being also a scholar) he guaranteed for them the conditions of free research. All this was to be kept from the public. This was the conception of

[2] *Ibid*., 24–28. Gelfand cites Wilson's letter (pp. 26–27) as well as House's reply (p. 28).

the first American "*think tank*" on foreign affairs, which later (after the war) continued to operate as the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) and still publishes one of the most important and powerful journals, *Foreign Affairs*.

3 Organization and Operation of the Inquiry

Although Wilson was thinking of a smaller group of experts at the start, House finally created a research network of more than 100 members. He appointed Sidney E. Mezes (1863–1931), the President of the College of the City of New York, as head of the Inquiry. He was House's brother-in-law, but this did not bother Wilson: "I do not think that anyone could reasonably criticize your associating President Mezes with you ... you certainly can do the work best with the assistance of men you know and trust." Trust was of paramount importance, as President Wilson wanted to keep the start of preparation for a "scientific peace" a secret.[3]

Walter Lippmann (1889–1974) became the secretary of the committee on the proposal of Wilson; he was replaced by Isaiah Bowman (1878–1950) in the summer of 1918. Lippmann was a young (then liberal) journalist of note; Bowman was the director of the American Geographical Society (hereafter AGS) seated in New York. In Paris Bowman headed the Intelligence Section created from the Inquiry. He was a personal acquaintance of Pál Teleki and Jenő Cholnoky.[4]

The Inquiry's cashier (and one of the international law experts) was David Hunter Miller (1875–1961), a lawyer from New York. Miller was

[3] *Ibid*., 23. Gelfand cites Wilson's letter to House on Mezes, dated September 24, 1917: p. 38, note 15. See also Jonathan M. Nielson: *American Historians in War and Peace: Patriotism, Diplomacy and the Paris Peace Conference, 1918–1919.* Bethesda – Dublin – Palo Alto: Academica Press, 2012, 133–134.

[4] Ronald Steele: *Walter Lippmann and the American Century*. Rev. ed. New York and London: Routledge, 2017.; Neil Smith: *American Empire: Roosevelt's Geographer and the Prelude to Globalization*. Berkeley – Los Angeles – London: University of California Press, 2003. On the relationship of Bowman, Teleki and Cholnoky see dr. Cholnoky Jenő: *Utazásom Amerikában Teleki Pál gróffal*. Budapest: Vajda-Wichmann, 1942. Balázs Ablonczy: *Teleki Pál*. Budapest: Osiris, 2005, 84–87.

the fellow lawyer of Gordon Auchincloss (1886–1943), who was House's son-in-law. After the war Miller emerged as a recognized international law expert and authority and prepared the first documentary publication of the international treaties signed by the United States (published between 1931 and 1948, in eight volumes). He worked at the Historical Division of the State Department between 1929 and 1944. His most important work for our purposes is the 22–volume private publication of his Paris diary, including documents and maps (1924). As a member of the ACNP in Paris he actively participated in the drafting of the covenant of the League of Nations.[5]

The Inquiry's research director was James T. Shotwell (1874–1965), a Canadian-born historian of Columbia University. Shotwell spoke (and taught in) French and German, and he studied in Europe during his doctoral training. The name of the committee comes from him as well: he argued in favor of the vague choice of word, saying it provided a "blind to the general public, but would serve to identify it among the initiated". Shotwell was the driving force behind the Inquiry and was invited to travel to Paris as a member of the ACNP. He officially served as a librarian there, and he also took part in the creation of the International Labour Organization (ILO).[6]

According to Gelfand, 11 of the 126 officially appointed members of the Inquiry dealt with the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the Balkans, 15 with Russia, 14 with the history of diplomacy, and 8 with questions of international law. Besides the 17 cartographers employed 4 experts were in charge of Africa, 3 of the Far East, 5 of Western Europe, and 12 of Latin America. 10 staff members were charged with general research tasks, 6 people dealt with economic matters, and the committee had an Italian expert as well. Two-thirds of the scholars graduated from four universities (Chicago, Columbia, Harvard, and

[5] Gelfand 1963 *op. cit.*, 51–52. Miller's papers are held in the Library of Congress in Washington and in the archives of the University of Washington in Seattle. David Hunter Miller: *My Diary at the Conference of Paris, with Documents.* Vols. 1-22. New York: privately published, 1924.

[6] James T. Shotwell: *At the Paris Peace Conference*. New York: Macmillan, 1937, 6–8.; id.: *The Autobiography of James T. Shotwell*. New York and Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1961. See also Nielson 2012 *op. cit.*, 123–124. Shotwell's papers are held at Columbia.

Yale) and half of the staff was recruited from five institutions (Columbia, Harvard, Princeton, Yale, and the AGS). One notable exception is the American-born Robert J. Kerner (1887–1956), who was of Czech origin, then a professor at the University of Missouri, who had studied with Archibald Cary Coolidge (1866–1928) at Harvard and later became a professor at Berkeley. Thus, the Inquiry technically was an East Coast "think tank" in which some members had already known each other before their commission and could work well together. Their expertise is rightly criticized by Gelfand, but it is beyond dispute that they (with a few exceptions) extensively and carefully studied their assigned research subjects during the available time of less than a year.[7]

Besides the recruitment of researchers, specific tasks and research areas were also determined. According to a memorandum from the summer of 1918, research was conducted on the basis of the following territorial divisions: (1) the Western Front; (2) Austria-Hungary; (3) the Balkans; (4) Russia; (5) Turkey; (6) the Far East; (7) the Pacific Islands; (8) Africa; and (9) Latin-America. The Polish issue, which was also important in domestic American politics, was investigated by the Eastern European/Russian study group headed by Coolidge.[8] According to Mezes, writing in 1921,

> "But the bulk of the work of The Inquiry dealt with Mittel Europa, indeed, with the distracted areas of Central Europe and the Near East on either side of the much-heralded Hamburg-Bagdad Railway, stretching from the North Sea and the Baltic to the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean, and the data gathered proved to be indispensable when the Conference met. And as the spring and summer of 1918 advanced, the exact nature of the data required grew clear. It became evident, namely, that many kinds of information bearing on the drawing of boundary-lines would

[7] Gelfand 1963 *op. cit*., 45–49.; Nielson 2012 *op. cit*., 121–123.

[8] For materials on the organization and operation of the Inquiry see *Papers relation to the Foreign Relations of the United States: The Paris Peace Conference*, vols. 1–13. Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1942–1947, 1: 9-220. Hereafter: *FRUS PPC*. An undated memorandum on the structure of the Inquiry: FRUS PPC 1: 104.

> be needed, and that no information that did not bear on such settlements excepting general economic information that would be needed in drafting the economic clauses of the treaty, would be of any value. In August, therefore, the staff of The Inquiry was asked to confine its consideration to such data, and soon thereafter the work clarified and definite objectives were established. Only the regions along or adjacent to probable boundary-lines were now studied. Others could be dismissed from consideration."[9]

This citation shows that the Inquiry's researchers first got a free hand in their study, but after the turn in American diplomacy in the summer of 1918 (when Wilson began to support the dismemberment of the Monarchy[10]) they had to concentrate only on territories "along or adjacent to probable boundary-lines".

The cartographic program of the Inquiry is one of the forgotten success stories of American geography. The AGS had international connections, and its journal, founded in 1916, the *Geographical Review,* published the writings of internationally renowned geographers from all over the world. The map program was headed by Bowman's mentor, Mark Jefferson (1863–1949, a professor at Michigan State Normal College), who was a member of the Latin-American study group as well. The committee collected and prepared almost 1,500 maps in total. These maps were transported to Paris but were separated from the documents they belonged to, and they are still kept in a separate fond in Archives II (National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, MD). Besides the printed maps of English, Austrian, French and German editions, the AGS made its own templates for

[9] Sidney Edward Mezes: "Preparations for Peace". In: Edward Mandell House and Charles Seymour (eds.): *What Really Happened at Paris. The Story of the Peace Conference, 1918-1919 by American Delegates.* New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921, 1–14. The citation is from page 5.

[10] For details see Tibor Glant: *Through the Prism of the Habsburg Monarchy: Hungary in American Diplomacy and Public Opinion during World War I.* Highland Lakes, NJ: Atlantic Research and Publications, 1998. (War and Society in East Central Europe Vol. XXXVI.; Atlantic Studies on Society in Change No. 95), chapter 11.

the Inquiry. These poster-sized maps were called "base maps". They were printed in black and white and used for displaying boundary proposals. These maps were utilized in military education later, and the coloured versions of the maps depicting Central Europe were published in the *Geographical Review* after the war.[11]

The headquarters of the Inquiry were in New York City until the end. First, they were placed in the New York Public Library. The program could be kept secret at the request of the President only for a few weeks: at the end of September 1917, the press broke the news of start of American peace preparations. At the end of September, the committee moved to the headquarters of the AGS in secret, and the archives were kept there as well. The work of the Inquiry was decentralized, though: the Austro-Hungarian division operated at Yale (New Haven, CT), the Eastern European section worked at Harvard (Cambridge, MA).[12]

The Inquiry produced and collected about 2,000 reports by the end of the war. However, only a quarter of these were written by committee members, and only about 1,000 of them were catalogued and numbered. In addition to the reports, they managed a card catalogue on the available academic literature. Members of the committee submitted the reports in four copies: one copy remained with the author, one copy went to the head of the study group, and two copies were catalogued by author and topic and were placed in the archives. Shotwell and the Research Committee were responsible for the assessment of the reports, but such written assessments exist for only a handful of reports. In August 1918 they shifted to preparing summaries on the proposed borders and compiled thematic card catalogues in preparation for the upcoming Peace Conference. [13]

The library program of the Inquiry was organized by Andrew Keogh, the chief librarian of Yale. His right-hand woman was Florence Wilson, a librarian of Columbia. About a total of 10 thousand dollars

[11] Bowman sent a set of these maps to Seymour in 1926. Charles Seymour Papers (Ms. 441), box 63, folder 117: "Miscellaneous Maps", Sterling Memorial Library, Yale. Hereafter: SML, Yale.

[12] Smith 2003 *op. cit.*, 120–121.; Gelfand 1963 *op. cit.*, 39–41, 54–60.

[13] Gelfand 1963 *op. cit.*, 79–113.

were paid for the library program. Yale contributed Keogh's salary; the Inquiry paid (Mary) Wilson's. Yale recalled Keogh in June 1918. Afterwards, the library program operated without an expert leader. In August Vladimir Simkhovitch, an economic historian of Columbia, was charged with the task, yet he continued to work for the study group headed by Coolidge as well. A large part of the committee library was taken to Paris. There, the collection was expanded with books published in English in Europe during the war. The tons of materials "packed in heavy oak cases" left for Paris on the same vessel as President Wilson himself. As has been mentioned, in Paris Shotwell served as librarian for the ACNP.[14]

The Inquiry spent a total of 240,000 dollars of government funds between September 1917 and January 1919.[15] This was complemented by support from certain universities (e.g. the salary of researchers and staff) and additional funds for library services. My own estimate is that the total cost must have been around 500,000 dollars. One 1918-date dollar is worth about 20 dollars at today's exchange rate, so the present-day value of US investment in the work of the Inquiry amounts to 10 million dollars. Over the same period of time Wilson's "ministry of propaganda", the Committee on Public Information (CPI) spent 6.85 million dollars (1919 data).

One of the most popular myths about the Inquiry claims that the commission actively took part in the formation of the American war policy. Mezes clearly refuted this in 1921, "Policies would, of course, be determined, and the culminating negotiations conducted by our plenipotentiaries. The Inquiry staff would thus be limited to the role of gathering and evaluation facts, and of digesting them for prompt and handy use. Work of such detail could not be expected of statesmen and

[14] O'Connor, Thomas F.: "Library Service to the American Commission to Negotiate Peace and to the Preparatory Inquiry, 1917-1919". In: *Library and Culture* Vol. 24, No. 2 (Spring 1989), 144–157. Shotwell 1937 *op. cit.*, 15–17. O'Connor points out that women were not entrusted with leadership roles in the Inquiry because they were not considered capable of performing "men's work".

[15] Gelfand 1963 *op. cit.*, 100–101.

diplomats, nor would they have been competent for it."[16] Ironically, these roles were reversed at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919: Coolidge in Vienna and American experts on the various territorial committees (Seymour, Day, and Allen W. Dulles in connection with Hungary) did not act as mere experts or advisors; they shaped Allied policy and were often involved in the decision-making process.

4 The Austro–Hungarian and Balkans Divisions

Peace preparations concerning the future of Hungary were carried out by two study groups of the Inquiry, and there were overlaps in their personnel. The Austro–Hungarian division was in charge of the issue of the Monarchy and Italy. It had altogether nine members, plus an administrative staff of four people. The Balkans division had eight members and was headed by Clive Day, who was a member of the Austro–Hungarian division as well. A total of seven people from the officially appointed members of the Austro–Hungarian and the Balkans divisions wrote reports of Hungarian relevance: Seymour, Day and Kerner from the former group, and, from the latter, Day, Max Handman, Paul Monroe and William S. Monroe (who were not related).[17] Leon Dominian (1880–1935), a key member of both the Balkans and the Latin-American divisions, set down the fundamental principles of research in his work *The Frontiers of Language and Nationality in Europe* (1917). The joint work of Seymour and Donald Paige Frary on the development of international suffrage and election systems (1918), was likewise an important resource.

The Austro–Hungarian division of the Inquiry operated at Yale was headed by Charles Seymour (1885-1963), a young historian (aged 32) of

[16] Mezes 1921 *op. cit.*, 6.

[17] Gelfand writes (p. 52) that he only took into account employees who were officially on the payroll in and after May 1918 and submitted at least two reports. The reason for the discrepancies between his list and the one presented here is to be found in the differences between the payrolls kept by Miller (in New York) and the Inquiry's personnel database.

the famous university of the East Coast. He obtained BA in history and election law in Cambridge (1904), England, and then from Yale (1908). During the years of his postgraduate studies, he attended German and French universities as well, and earned his PhD from Yale in 1911. Later he served first as university Provost (1927-37) then as President of Yale (1937-50). After his retirement, he was the curator of the House papers, which was donated to Yale in the meanwhile. Seymour participated in the drafting of the new Hungarian borders in Paris and was a founding member of CFR in 1921. In his monographs published after the war he examined the role of the United States in the First World War. Later, he edited House's diary for publication and a selection of his letters from Paris was also published after his death. He was not familiar with the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, he had to work his way into the subject from scratch.[18]

Clive Day (1871-1951), who headed the Balkans division and worked part-time for the Austro-Hungarian section, also obtained his PhD from Yale, and he was teaching economic history there when he was asked for cooperation. He published a book on the history of world trade in 1907. In this work of 640 pages, he made mention of Austria and the Monarchy only on seven pages, so he was hardly an expert either of the area of study entrusted to him. Just like Seymour, he was a member of the American peace delegation and took part in the drawing of the borders of Hungary and the successor states.[19]

The most informed member of the section was, of course, Robert J. Kerner (1887-1956). He was born in Chicago as a child of Czech immigrants and he obtained a BA and MA in history there. Between 1911 and 1914 he studied with Archibald Cary Coolidge at Harvard, and during his doctorial years he worked in Vienna, Berlin, Moscow, and Paris as well. He taught at the University of Missouri in 1917 from

[18] Harold B. Whiteman, Jr. (ed.): *Letters from the Paris Peace Conference by Charles Seymour*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1965, vii-xx.; Gelfand 1963 *op. cit*., 57.; Nielson 2012 *op. cit*., 126–127. See also the biographical section in the archival guide prepared in 1974 (and revised in 1998) for Seymour's papers held at Yale (pp. 4-8).

[19] Gelfand 1963 *op. cit*., 57.; Nielson 2012 *op. cit*., 126.; see also the biographical section in the archival guide prepared in 1986 for Day's papers held at Yale (p. 4).

where he was invited to the Inquiry by Coolidge. Kerner also took part in the work of the Peace Conference: he was sent to Prague on an intelligence and diplomatic mission. He moved to Berkeley in 1928 where he established the Slavic program. His first work (in 1916) was a Slavic historical bibliography in English followed by a presentation of Yugoslav claims in 1918. Later he wrote about Czech and Russian history, and about the Balkans and the Far East. His bias was known by his colleagues and superiors; therefore, his reports were used with particular care. He spoke French and German besides the "Balkan's languages", but we have found no reference to him being able to speak or read Hungarian.[20]

Two members of the division dealt with Italian issues. The official expert on Italy was William E. Lunt (1882–1956), who taught English and medieval history at Cornell. He published no books before 1918, but he could speak some Italian. Austin P. Evans (1884–1962) was a professor at Columbia. He could not speak Italian, and he was responsible for the research on the issues of the Austrian-Italian borders.[21] According to the Inquiry's personnel database additional members of the Austro–Hungarian study group in October 1918 included Richard B. Barrett, Florence A. Hague and Charles Sweeney, who also aided Day as research assistants, and W. G. Hoye, who provided similar services for Seymour. Administrative work was carried out by Martha Boucher, Thomas Burk, Bertha F. Norton, and Fannie Irvin.[22]

The Balkans division also operated at Yale and was headed by Clive Day. It shared the four-person administrative staff with the Austro-Hungarian division. The group's expert on Romania was the

[20] Gelfand 1963 *op. cit.*, 57, 200.; Nielson 2012 *op. cit.*, 130. For Kerner's university (Berkeley) obituary in April 1958 (with additional biographical information) see: http://texts.cdlib.org/view?docId=hb6r29p0fn&doc.view=frames&chunk.id=div00016&toc.depth=1&toc.id#X (Accessed: November 18, 2020).

[21] Gelfand 1963 *op. cit.*, 57–58.; Nielson 2012 *op. cit.*, 128–129. For Evans' letter on his language competence see Gelfand1963 *op. cit.*, 58, note 49.

[22] The personnel database was administered in two card catalogues. For both see Record Group 256: Documents of the American Commission to Negotiate the Peace, Item 22, National Archives and Records Administration II, College Park, MD, USA. Hereafter RG 256 ACNP, Archives II. Miller kept his own files.

Romanian-born Max Handman (1885–1939) who obtained his PhD from the University of Chicago, studied in France and Germany, and was a sociologist at the University of Texas when he was recruited.[23] William S. Monroe (1863–1939) dealt with the international relations of the Balkans and the freedom of navigation on the Danube. He spoke English, German and French, got his BA from Stanford in 1894, and wrote several books about the Czechs, Bulgarians, and Turks before 1918. Like Kerner and Handman, Paul Monroe (1869–1947) graduated from Chicago. He was an education expert and wrote a study on the educational system of the Monarchy for the Inquiry.[24]

An additional memorandum about Romania and Hungary was supplied by the Eastern European division headed first by Coolidge and then Robert Howard Lord. This was dated and submitted on November 30, 1918 by William Howell Reed Jr. (1876–1949) who had also graduated from Harvard. The main responsibility of Reed was to research the Dobruja and Bessarabia; so, he started to work under the direction of Coolidge in February 1918.

An important member of the Balkans division was the aforementioned Leon Dominian (1880-1935), who was of Armenian-Turkish origin. He studied at Robert College of Constantinople and in Belgium. He had lived in the United States since 1903 and acquired citizenship ten years later. He joined to AGS in 1912, and his work of "applied geography" on the frontiers of language and nationality in Europe was published in May 1917.[25] Scientific planning of the future

[23] Gelfand 1963 *op. cit*., 59.; On Handman's life see the obituary on the homepage of his university: https://www.lib.umich.edu/faculty-history/faculty/max-sylvius-handman/memorial (Accessed: December 19, 2018. Coolidge wanted to employ Handman as early as December 1917, but this was prevented by Shotwell on the grounds that the expert of Romanian descent had exhibited too much curiosity and caused some diplomatic complications as well. Still, he was eventually employed on August 26, 1918. RG 256 ACNP, Inquiry General Correspondence, box 6, folder: "Handman", Archives II.

[24] On the two Monroes, see Gelfand 1963 *op. cit*., 59.

[25] Gelfand 1963 *op. cit*., 60. For Dominian's obituary see W. L. G. Joerg: "Memoir of Leon Dominian". In: *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* Vol. 26, No. 4 (1936), 197–198. Details of the book: *The Frontiers of Language and Nationality in Europe*. Published for the American Geographical Society of New York by Henry Holt and Company, 1917.

political borders was of particular importance for the researchers working for President Wilson who, in turn, propagated "national self-determination". The conceptual framework of nationality sketched out by Dominian served as a key guideline for the Inquiry. This is important because it appears astonishing today how the categories of race and ethnicity were confused and applied in the early twentieth century: President Wilson, for example, regularly said that the "Anglo-Saxon race" was much more capable of democracy than the "Teutonic" or the "Slavic" one. However, Dominian identified only three „primary European races": the Nordic, the Mediterranean and the Alpine. In this narrative the Jews were an Oriental race, and they were not treated as European.[26]

5 The Inquiry's Reports on Hungary

Inquiry research concerning Hungary and the Monarchy falls into two clearly different periods separated by July-August 1918. As has been explained above, the reason for this was Wilson's change of policy from negotiations to the partition of the Habsburg Monarchy. During the first period the committee tried to gather all available information and began to develop plans for federalizing the Monarchy. During the second period the committee focused only on the examination of future borders and related economic issues. This work was carried out with a view to the impending Peace Conference, and they created easy-to-use card catalogues instead of long reports. The Inquiry's last summary report, which outlined the American standpoint for the peace conference, was completed during the armistice negotiations but prior to the termination of the war. The Austro–Hungarian and Balkans divisions of the Inquiry thus followed the policy established by the President in both periods: first they developed plans for the federalization of the Habsburg Empire, then they conducted an ethnic

[26] For details see Michael H. Hunt: *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988, 46–91. Leonard Dinnerstein: *Antisemitism in America*. Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 1994, 35–77.

and political survey concerning the disputed territories (mainly by statistical methods), and finally they submitted a final settlement plan. We published these documents in Hungarian as well in 2020.[27]

The vast majority of the reports dealing with the Monarchy, and thus directly or indirectly with Hungary, were submitted in the first period (before July 1918). The material accumulated in this way does not reflect targeted research. In the archives of the Inquiry, we can find reports on the forestry of the Monarchy but not on her light industries; a memorandum was prepared outlining the Balkans policy of Vienna but not one was submitted on Austrian-German or Austrian-Russian relations. These reports are of mixed quality at best, and this is reflected in the surviving evaluations added to some of them. The trio of Seymour, Day, and Kerner penned the reports in the first period; others appeared as authors from the summer of 1918 onwards.

Kerner's primary task was to examine the political life and government as well as the situation of minorities in the Monarchy and their participation in politics and government. In 1918 the researcher of Czech descent wrote approximately two dozen numbered reports in which he formulated surprising theories. For example, he presented the Dualist system as a personal union, although he knew very well that this was not true. He postulated that the survival of the Habsburg Empire would only "serve the interests of the Catholic Church, the Jews, and Western pacifists". He described the Slavs as "more democratically inclined" than either the Hungarians or the Germans (306). He misrepresented the issue of nationalities in a similar manner: in Hungary, people who are not "Magyar" (ethnic Hungarian) are denied the freedoms of religion, education, speech, association, and the press. Hungarian political life was, in his view, dominated by the

[27] This subchapter partly draws on chapter 9 of my book from 1998 (Glant: *Through the Prism*) in its analysis, but also contains additional pieces of information. For the reports of the Inquiry related to Hungary see Tibor Glant, ed.: *Az Egyesült* Államok útja *Trianonhoz*. *Az Inquiry* és *Magyarország jövője, 1917–1918*. *Sources*. (Trianon-dokumentumok és tanulmányok 5.) Budapest: BTK, TTI, 2020. Only the identification number of each report is given in the text because the citations can be found in the documentary publication. For a list of all reports of the Inquiry related to Hungary, see pages 49–53. The originals are in Archives II and at SML, Yale.

„landed gentry", the minorities lived in Ku Klux Klan-like terror (311). Keeping the Monarchy together

> "maintains the old terrorist order in areas previously ruled by Germans and Hungarians, and extends it to Serbia and Montenegro, where radical democracy used to rule. He plans the end of the Slovenians, the Serbs in Hungary, the Yugo-Slavs living in the coastal ports…" (310).

His political commentaries were similarly straightforward:

> "Corrupt practices, bribery, forgery, diet packing, and career-exploding practiced by the Bans and their henchmen in Croatia, as in Hungary, reduce the institutions of both to so much paper" (306).

In another report he claimed about the "Yugo-Slav nation":

> "The Serbs and Croats belong to the same nation although writing their language in two alphabets, the Latin and Cyrillic, and worshipping in three religions, Catholic, Serb Orthodox, and Mohammedan" (310).

It is hardly surprising in light of the above quotations that Kerner's bias was noted by his American colleagues. An assessment of his work reads, in part, "Owing to the fact that Professor Kerner is himself of Czech descent and an enthusiastic Czech nationalist, it is felt that his work requires careful checking up by men of cooler judgement." However, this was rarely the case. One of Kerner's memoranda was filed together with an unsigned review, according to which the Czech expert's reports should be returned for revision because the author tends to inserts the biased views of the Czechs into his reports but

fails to list his sources. During revision particular attention should be paid to eliminating all the propagandistic elements.[28]

A survey of the reports on economic issues related to Austria-Hungary suggests lack of interest and effort. It was Clive Day's task to study the economic life of the Danube Basin, and he prepared two longer reports (112 and 1007) and several statistical collections about Hungary. In his first report he examined, solely based on pre-1913 data, Austro-Hungarian railways and waterways, exports and imports, agricultural production and mining. He concluded that that the economic life of Austria-Hungary was at the level of the Balkans, and its main external trade partner was Germany. He could have got a more complex view if he had also included Hungarian light and food industry, banking, and animal husbandry; but this was simply not done. His statistics on internal and international trade, industry and forestry, and so on, were primarily based on official Austrian sources, which he did not comment on (39, 860, and 883). Day's reports clearly show that little attention was paid to the economic life of the Carpathian Basin during American peace preparations.

Both Kerner and Seymour dealt with Slavic territorial aspirations and the possible reform of the Monarchy. These reports were of particular importance. In this respect Kerner's language skills and his outstanding historical education, at least by American standards, really mattered, but he tended to misuse his knowledge regularly. He wrote his most interesting reports (310, 312, and 316) on these issues, but the leaders of the Research Committee insisted that he rewrite them. He analysed in detail, but in a highly biased manner, the problems and possible solutions to the federalization of the Monarchy. He supported, among others for strategic reasons, the plan of the Czech-Yugoslav corridor demanded by Masaryk (which would have resulted in the loss of much of Transdanubia for Hungary). The obvious contradictions in Kerner's writings can be explained by the fact that he had to follow Wilson's instructions when working on federation plans, while in

[28] The unsigned, three-page evaluation by Shotwell is attached to document 306 of the Inquiry. This is printed in full in Hungarian in the documentary reader cited in the previous footnote (pp. 172–174).

other instances he felt he could freely voice his opinion and directly or indirectly call for the dismemberment of the Monarchy.

At first Seymour studied these issues from a statistical point of view (January–February 1918). For example, he correctly understood the territorial claims of the South Slavs but he did not take any position in relation to them; he only noted that the population of the disputed territories is ethnically rather mixed (520). In another memorandum he rejected the plan of the Czech-Yugoslav corridor on the grounds of ethnic and economic considerations, and he successfully defended his position at the peace conference as well (517). In a third paper he opposed the granting of the areas of a Romanian majority of Hungary to Romania, yet he did not set out his concrete arguments (516). Seymour considered both the federalization and the reorganization of the Monarchy on the basis of trialism viable. In his view the political balance in the Monarchy could be restored by giving equal rights to the Poles or the South Slavs with the Austrians and the Hungarians. He thought that Polish trialism was the best solution and it could be achieved through the union of all territories populated by Poles. He argued that it could be carried out during the war, and it could break up the Habsburg-Hohenzollern alliance (507). He thought that South-Slav trialism was also a viable option, and he prepared four different versions for it. Interestingly, Hungary would have lost Croatia, Fiume, and the Slovenian territories in each version (506). Seymour regarded the reorganization of the Monarchy on the basis of federalism as a welcome alternative to trialism. His memorandum of May 25 is the only American report that sets out the question without any blatant political bias. Seymour suggests that an alliance created by six states should be established instead of the Monarchy. Parties to the planned confederation would be Bohemia, Yugoslavia, Poland-Ruthenia and Transylvania, besides, of course, Austria and Hungary. Seymour acknowledged that "this partition would hardly satisfy the different ethnic and political groups of the Dual Monarchy", but "it would have the practical advantage of merging the already existing administrative units without the need to modify the borders." According to the head of

the Austro-Hungarian study group this settlement plan would consider the historical borders, and it would create ethnically homogeneous (or almost homogeneous) states. Hungary would be the largest one among the six states with regard to its territory and population, and thus, it would be the leading power of the alliance. In exchange, it would have to give up Transylvania, Croatia, and Slovenia; altogether a territory of 22 thousand square miles and almost 5 million people (509). This plan may have seemed feasible to Seymour in May 1918, but it is difficult to believe that any major political force in power in the Danube basin would have subscribed to it.

The turnaround in Wilson's diplomacy during the late summer and early fall of 1918 opened a new chapter in the history of the Inquiry. Bowman took control from Mezes by August and established the Research Committee to enhance performance. The structure of the Inquiry actually had been reorganized earlier in May: 12 of the 29 thematic study groups dealt with territorial issues, the others focused on international relations, international and labour law, statistics, etc.[29] The Austro-Hungarian division got new tasks as well: direct preparation for the peace conference started, and the experts had to concentrate on the determination of the new borders. Most of the work was still carried out by the trio of Seymour, Day, and Kerner. To facilitate their work, research assistants were assigned to help them in September 1918. This clearly indicates the importance of the division's work. The Austro-Hungarian study group, partly disregarding the new situation, elaborated an ambitious plan for the period between August and November of 1918. According to this, they would have liked to work out, on the grounds of ethnic, religious, cultural, economic, and historical considerations, as well as weighing and presenting the views of the interested parties, possible road maps for the partition, federalization, and trialist reorganization of the Habsburg Monarchy.[30]

[29] On Bowman's takeover see Smith 2003 *op. cit.*, 126–130. On the reorganization of the Inquiry see "Report on the Inquiry", May 10, 1918. In: *FRUS PPC 1*, 82–83.

[30] Day–Seymour–Kerner: "Program of Topics Suggested by Collaborators for Research in Austria-Hungary to November 1, 1918". July 25, 1918. 17 p., Inquiry Papers (Ms. 8), box 7, folder 62, SML, Yale.

Compared to these ambitious plans, the work of the division was far more modest in the second period. During the last three months of the war the group collected and processed about 150 maps, prepared card catalogues, and finalized its proposals on "just and practicable" borders.

The most important change was the switch from writing long memoranda to compiling easy-to-use card catalogues. For example, a "who's who" was created which contained some 60 portraits of politicians supporting the dismemberment of the Monarchy. The catalogue which presented the political parties, the press, and the leading politicians of the Monarchy was not particularly convincing. The members of the group might have felt this as they did not complete the collection of materials. There were three additional statistical catalogues concerning the Monarchy. These analysed population density, religious statistics and language use, as well as industry, in some cases broken down by administrative districts. Only the official German-language statistics published in the Monarchy were cited as sources. When the armistice negotiations started Seymour and others created an index consisting of 61 cards on the committee materials relating to the Monarchy.[31] Of course, the card catalogues were taken to Paris.

In the meantime, Bowman and Mezes sent senior Columbia geographer Douglas W. Johnson, holding the rank of major, to Europe to contact the French and British peace-preparatory committees. Johnson interviewed numerous European politicians; we can find his recorded conversations among the reports of the Inquiry. However, his letter to Bowman dated May 9, 1918 is more important; it reveals how the informal personal network between American and British geographers operated, and, indirectly, why the Austro-Hungarian division of the Inquiry stopped working on population and economic statistics. The reason for the latter can be found in the work of British

[31] These are in the Washington collection with one exception: RG 256 ACNP, Items 5–8, Archives II. The catalogue of reports on the Monarchy can be found at Yale: "Inventory [of Inquiry material]: Austria-Hungary" n.d. Inquiry Papers (Ms. 8), box 26, folder 28, SML, Yale.

researcher B. C. Wallis. Bowman, who officially headed the Inquiry at that time, decided to publish various studies by Wallis on the 1910 population census and ethnic composition of the Monarchy in the *Geographical Review* (which he also edited). Wallis was deemed the ultimate authority on these issues in the Inquiry, which then operated in the building of AGS.[32]

In the last days of August 1918 Bowman asked Mark Jefferson, his mentor and the leading geographer of the AGS, to take charge of the slowly developing map program. Boasting the well-sounding rank of "chief cartographer", Jefferson achieved considerable results in a short time.[33] However, the maps of the Austro-Hungarian division were neither organized nor catalogued, so they are of limited use for research today. Most of them were printed publications displaying mainly ethnic and economic information. Several maps were hand-made and coloured. The proposed borders were often marked on them in different colours, and they were attached to the relevant memoranda. Later these maps were separated from the reports, and in most cases, it is impossible to determine which map belonged to which report.[34]

Based on instruction dated September 23, 1918 (which reached the Austro-Hungarian division only on October 1) the team drew up its final, detailed plan for borders. Although the memorandum was the result of the whole section's work, it was catalogued under the name of Seymour at the headquarters. This report of about 100 typed pages reached Colonel House, and it served as a foundation for the Inquiry's

[32] Gelfand 1963 *op. cit.*, 126–129. An interesting addition regarding Wallis: while the Czechs, Yugoslavs and Seton-Watson declared the data from the 1910 Hungarian census a deliberate forgery, the English scholar considered them authentic. B. C. Wallis: "The Peoples of Hungary: Their Work on the Land". In: *Geographical Review* Vol. 4, No. 6 (December 1917), 465–481. On page 473 he specifically states, "The net result of all these considerations is that the census returns must be taken as accurate."

[33] Geoffrey J. Martin: *Mark Jefferson: Geographer*. Ypsilanti, MI: Eastern Michigan University Press, 1968, 167–198.

[34] Maps and Charts Relating to Austria-Hungary, 1917-1919 (128 items), RG 256 ACNP, Item 51, Archives II. There is also a 78-item Balkan map collection (Item 52) and a handwritten list with no author that does not accurately list existing maps. According to the archival index, the maps were separated from the reports for the Peace Conference.

so-called "Black Book". The Black Book contained the official boundary proposals of the ACNP and was finalized only in Paris, in January 1919. The full title of the memorandum was "Epitome of Reports on Just and Practical Boundaries within Austria-Hungary for Czecho-Slovaks, Jugo-Slavs, Rumanians, Poles, Ruthenians, and Magyars" (514).[35] The proposed borders were drawn, as explained in the introduction, with a view to ethnic considerations and were modified only if the (military) topography of the given territory, uneven linguistic borders, or the separation of the agglomeration of larger cities and mining areas made it necessary.

According to the memorandum, 1.2 million Hungarians would live in Czechoslovakia in the future and 160,000 would live in Yugoslavia. Romania would get Transylvania, and 95,000 Hungarians would live beyond the Ruthenian border. Lastly, the report examines Hungary and proposes the preservation of the historical borders between Austria and Hungary. The territory of this "smaller Hungary" would be 112,000 square meters, which would amount to 40% of the pre-war territory of the Kingdom of Hungary. 80% of the population (7.5 million people) of the planned new Hungarian State would be Hungarian, and the proportion of Germans would decrease to 11% (1 million people). In the rather short section on Hungary, Seymour writes,

> "It is obvious that in the attempt to secure just and practical boundaries for the subject nationalities, frontiers have been proposed which, from the Magyar point of view, are unjust. Of a total population of about ten millions, nearly a quarter are excluded from the suggested Magyar state. This might be possible in the case of a people newly liberated and securing sovereignty for the first time in existence. But the Magyars have been masters in Hungary for eight centuries; to place a large percentage of them under foreign domination will certainly arouse dissatisfaction and possibly a spirit of irredentism which might prove to be a germ of serious disturbance in the future."

[35] Memorandum No. 512 is a brief, 11-page summary of this.

The second part of the report analyses the possible economic impacts of the new borders. According to Seymour, Hungary remains largely agrarian but loses a significant proportion of her mineral resources. She will most likely sustain her lively commercial relations with German Austria and South Germany, will have free access to the Black Sea through the Danube, and free access must also be secured to the Adriatic. However, this latter matter is not of primary importance given the agricultural nature of the country. Most of the new Hungary's trade will be conducted within Central Europe.

The most honest thoughts of the Inquiry's last report regarding the case of Hungary can be found in the introduction to the main body of the text of the memorandum:

> "The Committee is forced to the conclusion that the frontiers proposed are unsatisfactory as the international boundaries of sovereign states. It has been found impossible to discover such lines, which would be at the same time just and practical. An example of the injustice that would result may be instanced in the fact that a third of the area and population of the Czecho-Slovak state would be alien to that nationality. Another lies in the placing of a quarter of the Magyars under foreign domination. But any attempt to make the frontiers conform more closely to the national line destroys their practicability as international boundaries. Obviously many of these difficulties would disappear if the boundaries were to be drawn with the purpose of separating not independent nations, but component portions of a federalized state. A reconsideration of the data from this aspect is desirable."

This report summarizes the work of nearly one year of the Austro-Hungarian division of the Inquiry and it acknowledges the failure of the venture in terms of "just and practical boundaries".[36] If we compare

[36] We published the full text of this report in Hungarian in our documentary reader (note 27 above), 213–235.

this report to Seymour's May 25 plan of federalization and the Black Book of January 1919, we may conclude that the head of the Austro-Hungarian division finalized his border proposals as early as May 1918. All later modifications are adjustments to accommodate Wilson's policy reversal towards Austria-Hungary. This can best be proven by the case of Slovakia. In May Seymour suggested that Hungary should keep this territory, but he marked with a dotted line the Slovak territories that might be given to Bohemia. As the partition of the Monarchy and Hungary was a foregone conclusion in October 1918, Seymour simply replaced the dotted line with a solid one. This old-new line then was included in the Black Book.

This report is one of the Inquiry's few documents that, at least in part, addressed the Hungarian position. This raises the question whether the Inquiry had any means and opportunity to employ a Hungarian-speaking researcher who could have interpreted and perhaps even represented the Hungarian position. In other words: had there been a demand for it, could the Inquiry have identified the Hungarian standpoint or not? The answer to this question is definitely yes. Let us take a look at the details.

In October 1917 an unidentified Dr. Green offered his services to the committee. On November 3, 1917 Coolidge wrote to Shotwell, "I am sending along Green's Hungarian article. To tell the truth it does not impress me. […] At the same time a man who knows Hungarian is not to be found every day and I am not sure we may not want to use Dr. Green. Owing to his training he would be able to investigate the subject and we need not particularly accept his conclusions." Shotwell appeared to have left Coolidge's recommendation unanswered.[37] A Hungarian-speaking researcher was still in demand, and Day made two further unsuccessful attempts to acquire somebody in July 1918.

[37] For the letter see Archibald Cary Coolidge Papers, Correspondence, box 1, folder: "The Inquiry: Peace Aims", Pusey Library, Harvard. I have found no trace of Shotwell's response here, nor among his papers at Columbia, in Washington, or at Yale. A copy of Coolidge's letter is also kept in the Washington archives of the Inquiry, also under Coolidge's name in the correspondence file.

Gelfand presented several cases when they could not hire researchers because of their shaky national security background.[38]

A concrete example proves that the Inquiry was not really interested in the Hungarian perspective. At the request of Bowman, Mary Scudder, the assistant of the head of the National Research Council, conducted a series of interviews with several immigrants and emigrant organizations, among others with the journalist Géza Kende, the key New York Democrat Sándor Konta, the Reverend Harsányi, and the noted book collector Károly Feleky. According to a report sent directly to Bowman but never digested, Feleky was

> "the possessor of most unique library on works pertaining to Hungary, all the books being in English. The library has cost him a great amount of money although he does not emphasize that point. He spent a very sultry afternoon climbing up a small ladder and selecting books that pertained to our subject and those [t]hat were the best authority. […] Through Mr. Feleky we have secured references that could only have been obtained after a great amount of research and some of these sources we would never have located without his aid."[39]

The Inquiry acquired numerous statistical summaries and maps about the Habsburg Monarchy, but the sole pro-Hungarian source in

[38] Allyn A. Young's letter to Clive Day, July 3, 1918, and Day's letter to V. G. Simkhovitch, July 11, 1918. RG 256 ACNP, General Correspondence of the Inquiry, box 4, folder: "Day", Archives II. Young was head of the Research Committee. See also Gelfand 1963 *op. cit.*, 75–76.

[39] Inquiry 110 (Archives II): Mary T. Scudder: Foreign Organizations, Societies and Individuals that Might Become a Source of Information to the National Research Council. May 14, 1918. 110 p. There is another 169-page report from C. D. Davenport to Bowman under the same title, but dated November 25 (also part of Inquiry memorandum 110). A third report was sent to Bowman on December 13, 1918, by Davenport: Inquiry Papers (Ms. 8), Correspondence, box 11, folder: "Ethnic Groups US/Scudder", SML, Yale. Feleky's collection was eventually acquired by the Library of Congress. For details see Kenneth E. Nyírády: *The History of the Feleky Collection and Its Acquisition by the Library of Congress.* Washington, D. C.: LoC European Division, 1995.

English they used was the two-volume work of the English author C. M. Knatchbull-Hugessen published in 1908, *The Political Evolution of the Hungarian Nation*. Furthermore, the Hungarian-American journalist Jenő Bagger-Szekeres regularly published in English in the *New Republic* (formerly edited by Lippmann). There were clearly various opportunities for the Inquiry to get acquainted with the Hungarian take on the various matters its experts were studying, but the staff of the Austro-Hungarian division was not really interested in these.[40]

An in-depth study and analysis of the Inquiry's memoranda, maps, and card catalogues on Hungary (and in a broader context on Austria-Hungary) offers far reaching conclusions. Most importantly, the work of the committee was biased from the start as it ignored the Hungarian perspective on the issues it considered while Kerner and the two Romanian experts (Handman and Reed) openly used the anti-Hungarian atrocity propaganda materials generated by the Czechs, South Slavs and Romanians. Consequently, the Austro-Hungarian division had no chance to correctly evaluate the economic-political situation in the Danube-basin. However, we must not forget that the review of Kerner's reports shows that this was due more to negligence than to animosity.

Second, Seymour's work deserves special attention as he was the one who drew up the committee's only serious plan for federation and its final boundary proposals. Seymour, who represented the Americans both in the Czechoslovak and the Romanian-Yugoslav Territorial Committees in Paris, did not understand the Central European mentality. His statistics and reports on Yugoslav trialism indicate that he approached the question merely as a logical challenge. The problem with this is that he tabled his proposals ignoring the many irrational characteristics of the region. The Hungarian political elite would obviously have rejected the plan of federalization in May 1918 and also the American boundary proposals of October 1918 or January 1919. The fact that the American proposal would have created a Hungary considerably bigger than what the victors approved in Paris in 1919

[40] Glant 1998 *op. cit.*, 172–182.

(112,000 sq. kms as opposed to the preset-day 93,000) makes Seymour's proposal look attractive with hindsight only.

Third, Seymour was correct in suggesting that by approving the dismemberment of the Habsburg Monarchy the President himself cancelled out any chances of the regional integration he hoped would replace the rule of Vienna and Budapest in the Danube basin. The fact that the Inquiry's Austro-Hungarian division was unable to offer a practical and just proposal after a year's worth of research, and openly acknowledged it, shows that the American plan for a "scientific peace" had failed before the end of the war. This failure was not due to the lack of intellectual capital the experts invested in the project but the direct result of the President drastically changing the previously assigned direction of research in the summer of 1918. Then, because of the sudden termination of the conflict, Seymour and his team had no chance to complete the new project in less than three months (early August to early November).

That is why, in Paris, President Wilson insisted on creating the League of Nations as a first step and closing the war with one, general peace treaty. He suggested that international experts of the League of Nations should finalize the various European borders once wartime hatred had cooled off. Thus, the failure of a "scientific peace" was obviously recognized and acknowledged in time, before the Peace Conference even started. This became most obvious in connection with the future of Hungary.

The plan of a Danube Confederation (a form of regional integration preferred by Wilson), which would have taken the role of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, had failed to materialize during the war and not in Paris in 1919. The successor states could hardly be expected to cooperate when they had territorial claims against one another. And this was confirmed by the final report of the Austro-Hungarian division of the Inquiry, too.[41] The combination of Masaryk's "New

[41] In the fall of 1918 in Washington, under the auspices of the CPI, an attempt was made to organize a "Mid-European Union" upon American initiative, but due to overlapping territorial claims, it "refused to be born." For details see Glant 2008 *op. cit.*, 200–203.

Europe" project and French security concerns resulted in the unilateral and dictated peace of the victors. Its long-term consequences are all too obvious.

6 The Inquiry in Paris

The First World War dragged on endlessly but ended rather abruptly, in six weeks between the Bulgarian surrender and the armistice signed by the Germans. On September 30 Bulgaria requested a ceasefire and six weeks later the Germans also laid down their arms. In the middle of October Colonel House travelled to Europe (again) for the armistice negotiations and asked Lippmann and Frank I. Cobb, who were in Paris working for American intelligence, to summarize the changes that occurred in the fourteen points. The Lippmann-Cobb interpretation was published in the Allied papers and communicated to Vienna through diplomatic channels. It was made abundantly clear that the original point ten on the federalization of the Monarchy was no longer in force.[42] In the absence of House, President Wilson asked the State Department to coordinate preparations for the Peace Conference. The victorious allied and associated powers agreed that the conference would take place in Paris and that the great powers would be represented by 5–5 plenipotentiaries.

The composition of the American peace delegation has been the subject of intense debate ever since 1918. The majority of the 1,300-member delegation, including President Wilson himself, left for Paris on the *USS George Washington* on December 4, which indicates that the White House had only a month to set up the delegation. In the mid-term elections on November 5 the Democrats lost their majority in both Houses of Congress. The Republicans gained two dozen seats thereby forming a 240-192 majority in the House of Representatives,

[42] Charles Seymour (ed.): *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House*. Vols. 1–4. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1926–28, 4: 156–163 and 198–209. The former is the background on, the latter is the full text of the Lippmann–Cobb memorandum on the 14 points.

and they turned around the Senate: from 44-52 to 49-47. Thus, for the first time since 1908, they held a majority in both Houses again. In light of this, it is surprising that there was only one Republican among the five American plenipotentiary delegates: Henry White, a retired diplomat, who had personal contacts with both House and Wilson. The White House itself made a political issue out of the composition of the delegation and had to pay for it dearly when in the summer of 1919 the Republican majority rejected the Treaty of Versailles. The subsequent "treaty fight" was lost by Wilson: He then he suffered a major stroke (October 2) and his wife ran the affairs of the country until the election of 1920. Thus, the American government operated without the president from December 4, 1918 until the end of Wilson's second term (March 1921) as the chief executive was first in Paris and then his health prevented him from performing his duties.[43]

Mezes first tried to exclude Bowman from the delegation. On Wilson's intervention, however, he ended up as head of the Territorial, Economic, and Political Intelligence Division of the ACNP. Out of the 100 plus members of the Inquiry 23 (later a total of 35) researchers travelled with Wilson. According to Lansing's original plans the State Department delegation headed by Joseph C. Grew, who performed secretarial duties for the ACNP, was to mediate between the five plenipotentiaries and the experts, but House did not agree to this. The commission to Paris also meant the formal termination of the operations of the Inquiry as the 35 researchers in Paris officially received their salaries from the State Department. Due to House's influence the group retained a special status, but its role clearly changed.[44] During the Peace Conference the former members of the Inquiry worked mainly in the field (Coolidge in Vienna), in territorial (boundary) committees (Mezes, Seymour, and Day), and took part in

[43] For details see Tibor Glant: "Wilson Párizsban: Trianon amerikai háttere". In: Zoltán Kovács and Levente Püski (eds.): *Emlékkönyv L. Nagy Zsuzsa 80. születésnapjára*. Debrecen: Történelmi Intézet, 2010, 73–83. Wilson may have invited Elihu Root, a Nobel laureate then heading the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, or any key Republican in Congress, e.g. Henry Cabot Lodge, Sr. of Massachusetts.

[44] Gelfand 1963 *op. cit.*, 160–169 and 176–180.

the drafting of international labour law agreements (Shotwell) and the Covenant of the League of Nations (Miller).[45]

In Paris, the experts who had worked on a "scientific peace" during the war were now charged with diplomatic tasks. As has been mentioned, Mezes wrote in 1921 that scientists had to be entrusted with the preparations for peace because diplomats were not trained to do so. In Paris roles were reversed: non-diplomatically trained academics performed crucial diplomatic and political decision-making tasks. This further intensified the tensions between the Inquiry and the State Department. According to Walworth, in Paris the American delegation split into four rival units as the economic experts (headed by Bernard M. Baruch) and the American Relief Administration (headed by Herbert C. Hoover) also tried to secure room for independent action for themselves.[46]

The former members of the Inquiry played an active role in shaping the future of Central Europe at the Paris Peace Conference: some of them worked in the field (in the Danube basin) while others in Paris in the various committees. Field work was coordinated by Archibald Cary Coolidge from Vienna. Coolidge was appointed on November 16 and travelled to Paris on November 25, 1918. From there he set out with his team of 11 people on December 27 but did not arrive in Vienna until January 5, 1919. Robert Kerner was also a member of the mission and he was active in resolving the Czechoslovak-Polish and Yugoslav-Austrian border disputes. Following the expiration of his mandate, Coolidge returned to Paris on May 22. He was replaced by an official State Department mission headed by Albert Halstead. Halstead previously served as Consul-General in Vienna. His appointment was a clear sign that preparations for the Austrian peace treaty had been completed in Paris. Coolidge arrived in Paris on May 27 where he immediately joined the work of the ACNP. After the signing of the German peace treaty, Wilson and House (on June 29) and then Lansing (on July 12) left Paris.

[45] For a full list of the members of each committee see *FRUS PPC 3*, 1–153.

[46] On the divisions within the ACNP see Arthur J. Walworth: *Wilson and His Peacemakers. American Diplomacy at the Paris Peace Conference, 1919.* London and New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1986.

Most former members of the Inquiry travelled with them, and Frank Lyon Polk was put in charge of the ACNP. Coolidge (with Douglas W. Johnson by his side) continued to represent his country in a number of committees: he replaced Mezes in the Central Territorial Committee, and Seymour and Day in the Czechoslovak and Romanian-Yugoslav Territorial Committees. He returned home on September 4.[47] Bowman was recalled to Paris (October-November 1919) for consultation on the Bulgarian peace treaty and the Polish and Balkans borders.[48]

The vast literature in English on the history of the Paris Peace Conference pays minimal attention to the Central European settlement after the war. Although the conference officially began with the plenary session of January 18, 1919, the debates over organizational and operational issues lasted until the middle of March (and, for example, they could not even agree on the official language to be used). The former Inter-Allied War Council was transformed into the Council of Ten and then was replaced by the Council of Four at the end of March. This was the highest decision-making body at Paris and it also appointed members of the permanent and ad hoc committees. The complexity of the tasks tackled by the Peace Conference is well illustrated by the fact that more than 100 such committees were set up.[49]

The Peace Conference began its work with drafting the Covenant of the League of Nations. Among heated debates, the text was completed by February 14, 1919. Wilson travelled home to present the text to the new Congress. In the absence of the President House made a Faustian deal with the British and the French: there will be no single peace treaty but each defeated state will be dealt with separately; as a gesture

[47] Harold Jefferson Coolidge and Robert Howard Lord (eds.).: *Archibald Cary Coolidge: Life and Letters*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1932. (Reprint: Freeport, NY, 1971.), 192–233.

[48] Geoffrey J. Martin: *The Life and Thought of Isaiah Bowman*. Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1980, 95–97.

[49] F. S. Marston: *The Peace Conference of 1919. Organization and Procedure*. London – New York – Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1944. To date this is the best summary of the bureaucratic processes of the Peace Conference. For debates about publicity and the official language of the conference see 65–66.

to Wilson, the first Article of each peace treaty will be the Covenant of the League of Nations. Wilson, who returned to Paris on March 14, was thus confronted with a *fait accompli* and had a serious fall-out with House. The plan of "one size fits all" peace treaties also meant that after signing the German peace treaty the American president thought there was no point in staying any longer in the French capital. In July 1919 the British delegation even suggested that the conference should end, but this did not happen in the end.[50]

The Council of Ten set up the various territorial committees in January. Each committee reported to the Central Territorial Committee, the latter reported to the Council of Foreign Ministers, and then to the Council of Four. The main decision-making body finalized the borders. The Americans were represented by Seymour and Allen Welsh Dulles on the Czechoslovak Territorial Committee, and by Day and Seymour on the Romanian-Yugoslav Territorial Committee. The proposed borders for Hungary were approved by the Central Territorial Committee on March 24 and April 15, and by the Council of Four on May 12. Later on, in June, using the Bolshevik threat as an excuse, the Hungarian-Czechoslovak, the Hungarian-Yugoslav, and the Hungarian-Austrian borders were all modified at the expense of Hungary (where the Communists ruled under Bela Kun between March 21 and August 1).

In Paris Wilson's principles of peace were clearly not applied. The principle of national self-determination had already been violated by excluding the defeated states; consequently, only the objectives of the "Powers with General Interests" (the big four) and of the "Powers with Special Interests" (the successor states) were considered. As for the new Hungarian borders of 1919–20 only a section of the Western border (Sopron and its vicinity) was subject to a referendum. The situation was further complicated by the various referenda in which the people involved voted by disregarding the ethnic principle. The principle of

[50] Walworth 1986 *op. cit.*, 437–439.

"open diplomacy" was similarly violated, as only the plenary sessions were open to the press at the Paris Peace Conference.[51]

Even if there had been a feasible American peace plan for post-Habsburg Central Europe, it could not have been enforced by the American delegates because of the composition of the various territorial committees. Case in point: the French delegated Jules Cambon to the Czechoslovak Territorial Committee and Andre Tardieu to the Romanian-Yugoslav Territorial Committee. They were both plenipotentiary delegates (members of the official French five). Moreover, they were both experienced diplomats and had strong American connections: Cambon was an ambassador to Washington (during the Spanish-American War of 1898), and Tardieu headed a French military delegation to Washington in 1917. In light of this, it is hardly surprising that French interests prevailed in our region and that the American delegates could only prevent the realization of irrational demands (e.g. the Czechoslovak-Yugoslav corridor or the Romanian border on the Tisza River).

In Paris Hungarian interests were completely ignored, so we can hardly speak of a "just", "scientific", or "Wilsonian" peace. Seymour commented on the work in the Czechoslovak Territorial Commission, "My whole line of argument in the Commission has been that the fewer Germans and Magyars in the Czech state the better for it; but Sir Joseph [Cook] insists that our duty is to reward the Czechs for what they have done during the war by giving them all the population possible, regardless of whether or not it wants to be Czech citizens."[52] According to the minutes of the May 8 meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers, "Mr. Lansing said in his view the Council was dealing with the territory which in 1914 had been the domain of Austria and Hungary. It was recognised that this territory was to be dismembered,

[51] George Bernard Noble: *Policies and Opinions at Paris, 1919: Wilsonian Diplomacy, the Versailles Peace, and French Public Opinion*. New York: Macmillan, 1935. See also Marston's work cited in note 49 above. On the outcome of the referenda see Balázs Ablonczy: *Ismeretlen Trianon: Az összeomlás és a békeszerződés története, 1918–1921.* Budapest: Jaffa, 2020, 70.

[52] Whiteman (ed.) 1965 *op. cit*., 176.

that Austria and Hungary were to be made separate states, and that their lands were to be limited by new States, whose frontiers were to be determined. The definition would arise automatically as a result of establishing the new States."[53]

The two quotations above clearly demonstrate that debates in the various territorial committees revolved not around a fair delineation of future borders but around the justifiably and/or perceived interests of the Successor States (and around the conflicts among them). The bone of contention between Seymour and Cook was what served best the interests of the new Czechoslovak state. Lansing said the same thing: let us draw the borders of the Successor States and what remains will be Austria and Hungary. This has little if anything to do with the settlement plans developed by the Inquiry in 1918.

In addition, the reports of the *interim* American diplomatic mission reopened in Budapest at the end of 1919 prove that in many cases the State Department not only performed traditional consular work but also tried to open the way for American private economic interests even applying diplomatic pressure in truncated Hungary waiting for the peace agreement. The head of the mission, Ulysses Grant-Smith (who had previously served in Vienna) first refused to issue visas to those who, at least in his opinion, intended to travel with non-American shipping companies, and then produced a long report to the State Department on how the Hungarian government discriminated against the American car industry (since it once bought Italian and not American cars).[54]

7 Evaluation of the Work of the Inquiry in Light of Paris

As has been explained, Wilson created the Inquiry in order to draft scientifically based proposals for the post-war settlement primarily in territorial and international law matters. This work had three main

[53] *FRUS PPC* 4: 671.

[54] For details see RG 84 Records of the Foreign Posts of the Department of State, Diplomatic Posts: Hungary, Vols. 1–6. (1919–22), Archives II.

priorities: (1) drawing new borders, (2) "making the world safe for democracy", and (3) supranational cooperation. As regards the issue of borders, the intellectual foundation was Dominian's work with the doctrine of "linguistic borders" and the narrative of the differences between the levels of development of "races". The intellectual basis for (liberal) democracy export was the broadening of suffrage: the basic work used for this was the volume published by Seymour and Frary in 1918. There was no scientific antecedent to the supranational legal-political-economic cooperation. Furthermore, Wilson set out for Paris without a detailed plan even for the League of Nations.

The Inquiry had relatively few real experts in each field; thus, we may conclude that the members of the various divisions learned about the topics assigned to them on the fly and had hardly more than a year to do so. At the same time, there is a marked difference between the performances of the Austro-Hungarian and Balkans divisions: we could hardly find any reports from Day's team to be presented either here or in the documentary reader published in Hungarian. Day penned a history of world trade, also used as a textbook, but its section on the Monarchy (one of the potential intellectual foundations of the work) is only a page and a half long. While the best reports of the Balkans division were obtained from outsiders, in the Austro-Hungarian study group they carried out quality work which, however, was blatantly biased against the Central Powers, as has been documented. Kerner tried to incorporate his own political agenda into the committee's work, and this is clearly evident in the language (evoking atrocity propaganda) he used. In the meanwhile, Seymour worked within the framework set by Wilson. The official American policy was, until early September 1918, to guarantee the territorial integrity of the Monarchy (with the exception of Poland) and to somehow make the empire more democratic and ensure the autonomous development (according to point 10) of minorities living under Habsburg and Hungarian rule. Interestingly, the Inquiry did not draft a single memorandum on the Bolshevik threat. The reason for this may be that the events in Russia

were seen as a short-term historical dead-end and not a real issue of any consequence.

An in-depth analysis of the reports on the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy suggests that the Inquiry did not shape but followed Wilson's policy. Seymour and his team clearly knew that the restoration of the *status quo ante bellum* could easily be the result of a compromise peace and that a total victory of the Allies could result in the partition of the Monarchy (which was expressly supported by a member of the group, Kerner). The Austro-Hungarian research group worked only on the plans for the federalization of the Monarchy and the various trialist options that could potentially replace Dualism because it was commissioned to do so. When Seymour's team was instructed to synthesize new political goals (Wilson's new policy of supporting the dismemberment of Austria-Hungary) with earlier research on linguistic and ethnic borders, he himself admitted that they could not propose borders that were both fair and practical as international boundaries in Central Europe.

In Paris the former Inquiry staff were entrusted with tasks they were not, nor could possibly be, prepared for. Mezes has been quoted twice before: scientific peace preparation was entrusted to scholars because diplomats were not trained for that. In Paris the opposite happened: scholars took part in diplomatic missions (Coolidge and Kerner) and in political decision-making in the various territorial committees. And it is quite obvious that a Seymour–Cambon dispute on the Hungarian-Czechoslovak border or a Day–Tardieu dispute on the Hungarian-Romanian border would have been a struggle of unequal forces. Moreover, while French diplomats were guided by clearly defined political goals (French security concerns), American scholars had to discuss borders about which they themselves wrote that were unsustainable and would only give rise to new conflicts. In other words: even if there had existed, on a theoretical level, a "scientific peace" guaranteeing "just and practical boundaries" in the Danube-basin, it still would have been impossible to realize in the given political set-up simply because the diplomats of the European Allies (the Brits,

French, and Italians) dominated the decision-making and did not want this to happen. We may even say this is exactly not what they wanted to happen. This is how the new borders were drawn, which defined the political and economic history of Central Europe over the last hundred years. However, the Inquiry should not be blamed for this. From a Hungarian perspective the only well-founded criticism towards the Inquiry may be that they failed to their best to identify and incorporate into their proposals the interests of Hungary, the less significant half of the smaller Central Power.

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