



International Boundary Study

No. 47 – April 15, 1965

Hungary – Romania (Rumania) Boundary

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**The Geographer
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Bureau of Intelligence and Research**

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HUNGARY – ROMANIA (RUMANIA) BOUNDARY

I. BOUNDARY BRIEF

The Hungary–Rumania boundary is demarcated for its entire length of 275 miles by pillars and approximately 12 miles of the Maros (Muresul) River. The boundary exists today essentially as created by the treaties ending World War I.

No active disputes over the precise alignment of the boundary are known.

II. GEOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

A. Physical

From the U.S.S.R. tripoint in the north, the Hungary–Rumania boundary extends southwestward through the eastern margins of the Pannonian Plain to the Yugoslav tripoint in the Banat of Temesvar. The plain, which dominates the physical landscape from the Alps eastward to the Bihar Mountains and the Transylvanian Basin in Rumania, constitutes one of the most uniform physiographic regions in Europe: approximately 40,000 square miles of almost monotonously flat land drained by the Danube and Tisza rivers and their tributaries. However, in the frontier region east and south of Debrecen, sand dune formations straddle the border. These northwest-southeast oriented dunes, which extend a mere 100 feet above the normal elevation of the plain, have become fixed by afforestation. The river valleys of the Tisza and its tributaries, in contrast, lie less than 30 feet below the general plain level.

The drainage pattern of these streams is aligned generally east-west. The rivers flow from the Bihar-Transylvanian highlands eastward to the Tisza and thence to the Danube. Because of the lack of relief, much of the region is subject to periodic inundation without extensive flood control. Swamps and marshes are extensive along the various streams although many have been drained in recent times.

The climate of the Pannonian Plain is strongly influenced by the maritime Atlantic, the Mediterranean, and the continental interior. Summers are very hot and humid; three months have average temperatures over 70° F. During the three winter months average temperatures remain below freezing. The average seasonal range of temperature is approximately 46° F; the absolute range is much greater being one of the highest in Europe. In the summer, Mediterranean influences extend northward as far as the Carpathians and induce the clear, sunny but relatively rainless weather. In a similar manner, winter is dominated by the clear, cold continental climate from the east. The spring and fall, as a consequence, tend to be the period of greatest precipitation although no month usually has less than an inch of rain. The total precipitation varies considerably with exposure, but Szeged which is quite typical of the region, received 21.5 inches annually. The border region, thus, is marginal in its rainfall and droughts seriously affect agricultural production.

The Hungary–Rumania frontier is primarily a densely settled agricultural region. As a consequence, the natural vegetation has all but been obliterated by the spread of human occupation. In the sand areas to the north, forests have been planted to stabilize the dunes. A few areas of marsh and swamp also exist in the poorly drained river bottoms. Inside Rumania, the Bihor Mountains have extensive areas of forest with deciduous trees on the lower slopes and conifers on the higher elevations. The few isolated areas extending above the tree line have a true alpine vegetation.

B. Historical

After the collapse of Roman authority at the end of the third century in the lower Danube, the area of modern Rumania and Hungary, suffered from a prolonged series of invasions from the East. It is likely that elements of the mixed Daco–Roman population held out in Transylvania or in the adjoining mountain fastness. Successive waves of Goths, Gepidae, Huns, Avars, Bulgars, Petchenegs, Magyars, and Slavs swept through the region. In the latter half of the ninth century, the Finno–Ugrian peoples known as the Magyars, combined with certain allied Turkic tribes, arrived in the Danube delta region. The Magyars moved westward into the Pannonian basin, a grassy region ideally suited to their nomadic existence. In the next century, the Magyars and their allies raided from Italy to France until dealt a crushing defeat by the Germans near Augsburg. The nomads withdrew to the Pannonian basin, abandoned their nomadic existence, and over the next century established the Hungarian kingdom. By 1000, Hungary extended from Austria on the west, southward to the Drava River, eastward along it to the Danube as far as the Iron Gates before turning northeastward and then northwestward along the outer rim of the Carpathian Mountains. Within the next century, Hungary had expanded southward through the Banat of Temesvar as far as Belgrade and southwestward to the Adriatic.

The Magyars tended to settle in the lowlands of Pannonia and of central Transylvania while the defeated and subject tribes occupied the mountains which rimmed the plains. In the middle of the thirteenth century, the invading Mongols ravaged the lower Danube, depopulating entire districts. To escape the deprecations, Wallachian (Rumanian) settlers moved into the mountain fastness of the Carpathians. The rulers of Hungary also established programs of colonization in eastern and southern Hungary. Saxon Germans, Szeklers (a Magyarized Turkic people), Slavs, and Wallachians settled in the peripheral areas which had suffered so greatly from the Mongols. The Saxons and Szeklers soon formed self-governing groups within the Hungarian kingdom, while the Wallachians and Slavs became the peasants and herders. The newly-formed Rumanian principalities came, for a brief period, under Hungarian domination, as did Dalmatia and Serbia.

However, the Turks soon expanded into the lower Balkans. In 1526, Turkish armies ravaged the Pannonian basin and Transylvania became, in essence, an independent state. Over the next century and a half, Hungary was partitioned by Austria and Turkey on several occasions. The Turks ravaged the southern and central portions rendering it

virtually uninhabited. The Magyars, abandoning the countryside, sought refuge in the fortified cities and, as a consequence, displaced Serbs, Croats, Slovenes, and Rumanians began to settle in the depopulated rural areas. However, the forces of the sultan were eventually defeated at the gates of Vienna and by 1699 all of Hungary, except for the Banat of Temesvar, had been liberated.

Hungary, however, came under the Austrian Habsburg crown and remained so in one form or another until the end of World War I. The Habsburgs, while recognizing Hungarian sovereignty over Transylvania, practiced a policy of separating it from the main state. Additional Germans settled in the principality under official colonization schemes and a large number of Rumanians, fleeing the Turkish rule in their own principalities, also moved in to occupy vacant lands. As a consequence of the Turkish occupation and the Habsburg colonization policies, Transylvania underwent a great change in ethnic composition. It has been estimated that before the Turkish conquest the Magyars constituted about three-quarters of the population. By 1800, however, they had fallen to less than half of the total and their relative position continued to decline into the middle of the century.

In the 1840s, the multi-national Habsburg empire was shaken by demands for autonomy by the various minority elements. The Magyars led in the demands placed on the crown. Finally in 1867, Hungary gained full equality within the newly-created dual monarchy. Transylvania and other frontier territories reverted to full Hungarian control. While the new constitution guaranteed minority rights within Austria–Hungary, Transylvania was soon dominated by a Magyar racial policy and the de-Magyarization trend was reversed. A Rumanian nationalist movement, however, soon developed as a result of this pressure and the appeal of the new Rumanian state.

The defeat of the Central Powers in the First World War was followed in Eastern Europe by a period of chaos. Nationality councils, created by local groups, demanded separation from the Austro–Hungarian empire as independent states or in union with neighboring states. The breakup of the Habsburg empire became a fundamental condition of the peace settlement and Hungary, which possessed almost the same boundaries as had existed in 1000, faced dismemberment.

The 1920 Treaty of Trianon reduced Hungary to 32.9% of its pre-war area and 41.6% of its pre-war population. Segments were transferred to Austria (1.4%), Czechoslovakia (21.8%), Yugoslavia (7.5%) and Rumania (36.2%). The Rumanian acquisition included all of Transylvania, Crisana, Maramures, about two-thirds of the Banat of Temesvar and a thin strip of the Pannonian basin proper. Over 1,670,000 Magyars came under Rumanian administration.

The Hungarian nation and people argued, for the next two decades that the terms of the treaty had been too harsh. Among other factors, they claimed that (1) false population figures were cited for the lost territories; (2) Wilson's Fourteen Points were ignored; (3) the Allied Powers would not grant the right of plebescite to the areas; (4) a large percentage of the lost population lived in zones contiguous to Hungary and could have

been included in the nation with minor variations in the boundary; and (5) the promised revisions, which could have been made by the joint boundary commission, were never considered.

In contrast, the proponents of the treaty insisted that (1) the Hungarian census figures were heavily weighed in favor of the Magyars; (2) strategic considerations were as important as ethnic factors; (3) the ethnic picture was so complex that no purely ethnic boundary could be drawn; (4) the local nationality councils represented the will of the people in their desire to be separated from the Austro–Hungarian empire, rendering plebiscites unnecessary; and (5) the boundaries were established by technically competent experts.

The basic Trianon boundary appears to have been drawn to place the strategic Timisoara (Temesvar)–Arad–Oradea Mare–Satmar railroad inside Rumania and to provide a narrow buffer zone for that line. After these items had been considered, ethnic, social, or economic factors came into play.

After much agitation, Hungary obtained a revision of the Trianon boundary line in 1940 through the intervention of Italy and Germany when about 40% of Transylvania was restored. The treaty of peace in 1947, however, returned to the earlier boundary.

C. Political

While Trianon Hungary suffered from the economic consequence of the treaty in the deprivation of mines, forests, and water control, the loss of millions of Magyars caused the greatest pressure for revision. It was claimed that the movement of the boundary about 20 to 30 miles outward would have left most of these peoples in Hungary.

The area ceded to Rumania had a population composed approximately of 54% Rumanians, 32% Hungarian, and 10% German, the remainder consisting of scattered nationalities. The Rumanian portion of the Banat was a true racial mixture with no one group in the majority. Rumanians and Germans dominated the picture with Hungarians and Slavs in secondary positions. The ratio in Transylvania, however, was quite different. Hungarians attained majorities in the 20-mile wide band east of the Trianon frontier as well as in central and eastern Transylvania. These latter two groups were cut off from each other and from the main Magyar group to the west by solidly Rumanian territory. To further complicate the distribution, Hungarians and Germans dominated the cities while Rumanians occupied the surrounding countryside. To draw an equitable ethnic boundary was virtually impossible.

In spite of migration to and from the region, "Transylvania" still has a large Hungarian minority and the welfare of the group still concerns Hungary. The recent reorganizations of the administrative divisions of Rumania changed the status and extent of the Magyar Autonomous Region in Eastern Transylvania. This region was established under Article 19 of the 1952 constitution of the Rumanian People's Republic. In 1960 the

reform altered the name to the Mures Magyar Autonomous Region and the fear persists that it might eventually become the Mures Region without the concept of Magyar Autonomy. The reform also diluted the ethnic base of the region by adding three districts which had Magyar minorities and removing two in which they formed large majorities. Ostensibly in the interest of economic and administrative efficiency, the transfers are also charged with political meaning. Additional alterations in 1964 served to increase Magyar concern.

III. ANALYSIS OF BOUNDARY ALIGNMENT

The Hungary–Rumania boundary was delimited through the lowland of eastern Hungary by the specific allocation of villages to each state. The precise boundary, which was afterwards determined in the field by a mixed commission, reflects an effort to allocate peoples and resources within this narrow band.

From the first report of the Committee for the Study of Territorial Questions Relating to Rumania and Yugoslavia through to the final stage of the Treaty of Trianon, the boundary between Hungary and Rumania showed little basic change. The Committee stated that it proposed to "join to Rumania, not only Transylvania proper but also the adjacent districts where the majority of the population is Rumanian. It has not, however, always been able to apply the ethnical principle to the sub-division of this zone, for the following reasons:

- (a) When on the linguistic frontier Magyar towns are found surrounded by Rumanian country districts, ...the nationality of the country should be allowed more weight than that of the towns,...
- (b) On the other hand, it would...destroy the economic unity of Transylvania as a whole if Rumania were refused the outlets of the valleys in the plain, and a railway connecting these outlets with each other and with the Danube.
- (c) Finally, the Committee considers it advisable...to facilitate the junction of this railway with the railway systems of other Allied countries so as to make it a great connecting artery between those countries and the Danube.

The basic description of the boundary submitted by the Committee is as follows:

Leaving the point of junction of the frontiers of Rumania (sic) the Czecho-Slovak State (Ruthenian territory) and Hungary: the boundary between Rumania and Hungary runs in a general south-southwesterly direction, roughly parallel to and to the west of the railway Halmi; Szatmar–Nemeti; Nagy Károly; Nagy–Várad; Nagy–Szalonta.

Cuts the railway Nagy–Szalonta–Gyula about 12 kilometers from Nagy–Szalonta, passes between the two bifurcations formed by the junctions of this railway and the railway Szeghalom–Erdőgyarak.

Passes east of Kötegyan, east of Gyula, west of Ottlakan, east of Kevermes, and east of Dombegyház, between Battonya and Tornya, where it meets the administrative boundary between the Comitats of Csanad and Arad.

Following this administrative boundary to its salient north-north-west of Nemet–Pereg, whence it runs towards the river Maros which it reaches about 1 kilometer south of Nagylak station, passing between the town and the railway station.

Follows the Talweg (sic) of the Maros downstream to a point about 3.5 kilometers upstream from the railway bridge on the line Makó–Szeged. Thence it runs west-southwest, following the Talweg of a backwater as far as the bend which it makes at a point about 1 kilometer southeast of point 84 and about 9 kilometers southwest of Makó, of approximate position 46° 10' north and 20° 22' east of Greenwich. This point is the meeting place of the three frontiers of Rumania, Hungary, and Yugoslavia.

IV. TREATIES AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ACTS

The present Hungary–Rumania boundary stems directly from the treaties and acts ending World War I; no treaty prior to this time is of any significance for the boundary alignment.

The process of determining the boundary was very complex. It involved the actions of a committee of experts, the Supreme Council of Allied and Associated Powers, the successor Council of Ambassadors and the Roumano–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 U.K., and the U.S. 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 the signature of the treaty, responsibility devolved onto the Council of Ambassadors which continued to meet 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 territorial clause affecting the Hungary–Rumania boundary (Article 27, 3) bears essentially the same description as the recommendation of the Committee for the Study of Territorial Questions relating to Rumania and Yugoslavia, mentioned in Section III above. There were two exceptions: (1) the delimitation ran from south to north and (2) it contained a certain vagueness about the Rumanian–Yugoslav–Hungarian tripoint. The Supreme Council, on June 13, 1919, had telegraphed to the states concerned their edited version of the Committee boundary and this description served as the ultimate basis for the treaty text.

The original Rumanian territorial claim had been based upon the secret treaty of August 17, 1916 with the Allied and Associated Powers which recognized Rumania's rights to almost all of Hungary east of the Tisza. The U.S. opposed this, and all other secret treaties, and the effect on the final settlement was small. The ultimate boundary further to the east transferred to Rumania 39,452 square miles and a population of 5,240,000 including approximately 1,670,000 Magyars.

The treaty of Trianon (Article 29) also provided for the creation of boundary commissions to fix the portions of the boundary defined as "a line to be fixed on the ground" as well as to revise the boundary 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 define the boundary in a waterway, they equated with the median line in non-navigable waterways or the thalweg in navigable ones.

The Rumanoa–Hungarian Boundary Commission composed of representatives of France (Chairman), the United Kingdom, Japan, Italy, Rumania, and Hungary began its work August 1, 1921. At the request of Hungary, the Commission accepted proposals for the revision of the boundary but they had little effect on the ultimate alignment of the border. The commission established its bases of operation in two booklets, Instruction Technique and Instruction Particuliere sur les Travaux Geodesiques et Topographiques. The Commission ultimately placed approximately 4,500 intervisible markers, 1,500 of which were major pillars. Local surveying teams placed and constructed the markers after the precise position had been determined by the Commission's decisions. The boundary was divided into 11 sectors, six of which the Commission accepted as described by the treaty as the precise line; the remaining five had minor adjustments.

The basic map utilized for field determination was the Austro–Hungarian 1:2.880 (22 inches to a mile) cadastral map. Where property lines differed from the map, changes were made to the map. As a consequence, the boundary, where possible, was determined to coincide with property lines. The field boundary was then transferred to the 1:5,000 map, the 1:25,000 and finally the 1:75,000. The last-named extended for a one kilometer band on both sides of the boundary and it became the official boundary map. In view of the sketchiness of the treaty description, the maps become primary sources for the precise location of the boundary. The work of the Commission was certified in a series of monthly reports and process verbaux submitted to the Council.

There followed in the 1920s and early 1930s a series of treaties and agreements on publicly-owned property, property owned by non-residents, and water-control across the frontier. These particular problems served to strain relations between the two states for almost a generation. However, none of these affected the course of the boundary.

B. Protocol of Delimitation of the Frontier concerning the Question of the Common Point to the Three Frontiers in the Banat delimited by the Protocol of November 24, 1923, signed (by Rumania and Yugoslavia) on June 4, 1927. (League of Nations Treaty Series CLVIII: 443)

The two protocols, in effect, divided the transferred portion of the Banat of Temesvar between Yugoslavia and Rumania. At the time of the demarcation of the Hungarian–Rumanian boundary, the precise partition had not been agreed upon. The Commission, as a result, placed the tripoint monument as described in the Trianon treaty. The later agreement led to the creation of a new point some distance from the earlier marker. The agreement affected the length of but not the placement of the boundary.

C. The Vienna Award of August 30, 1940 (British and Foreign State Papers 144:417)

Hungary between the wars agitated consistently but peacefully for revisions to the territorial clauses of the Treaty of Trianon. The problem of Transylvania received the greatest attention with Southern Slovakia and Ruthenia second. After the beginning of World War II, Hungary's pressure for revision increased and finally on August 30, 1940 Germany and Italy made an arbitral award which returned Northern Transylvania to Hungary.

By the terms of the award, approximately 16,350 square miles (about 40% of the 1920 cession of Transylvania) was retroceded along with 2,864,402 inhabitants. The action, however, was never widely recognized since it was accomplished under duress.

D. Armistice Between the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on one hand and Hungary on the other signed January 20, 1945 (United Nations Treaty Series 140:397 ff.)

The armistice provisionally restored the boundary to the pre-war status pending a final peace treaty by declaring the Vienna Award to be null and void (Article 19).

E. Treaty of Peace with Hungary signed February 10, 1947 and in effect September 15, 1947 (UNTS 41:135)

Article 1 (2) stated "The decisions of the Vienna Award of August 30, 1940, are declared null and void. The frontier between Hungary and Rumania as it existed on January 1, 1938, is hereby restored." In effect, the Trianon boundary again became the effective line between the two states.

No detailed post-war agreement on the frontier has been published in normal sources. Agreements on state borders and on border cooperation were signed by the two powers in 1952, 1958, and 1963. In July 1962, representatives of Hungary and Rumania signed an agreement pertaining to problems arising from the use of frontier waters, but as yet no details have become available. In addition, documents relating to the tripoint of Hungary–Rumania–U.S.S.R. were signed on July 30, 1949.

V. Summary

The long-standing controversy between Hungary and Rumania over the possession of Transylvania has been subordinated since the end of World War II and is currently not a matter of active contention. The political situation in Eastern Europe has ostensibly reduced friction between the two countries over this area which has long been a source of serious disagreement and a cause of resentment. Neither country is openly pressing for boundary changes but the basic issues that provided the fuel for the past dispute still persist.

Cartographically, the boundary should be considered to be a demarcated, international boundary which is not in dispute. The 1:75,000 maps of the delimitation commission are not generally available and may never have been printed in quantity. However, the commission did publish the Carte de la Frontière entre La Roumanie et La Hongrie, Traité de Paix signé a Trianon, le 4 Juin 1920, echelle 1:360,000. A comparison has shown that the Trianon boundary is correctly represented on the pre-war Hungarian 1:25,000 and 1:50,000 series and the Rumanian 1:100,000 series. No medium- or large-scale maps have been received from either country since the war but available small-scale maps have identical boundary representations. An additional source is the 1:1,000,000 Russian map annexed to the 1947 Treaty of Peace with Hungary.

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

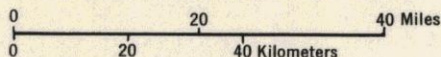
Government agencies may obtain additional information and copies of the study by calling the Geographer, Room 8744, Department of State, Washington, D.C. (Telephone: Code 182, Extension 4508).

HUNGARY-RUMANIA BOUNDARY

— Hungary-Rumania boundary

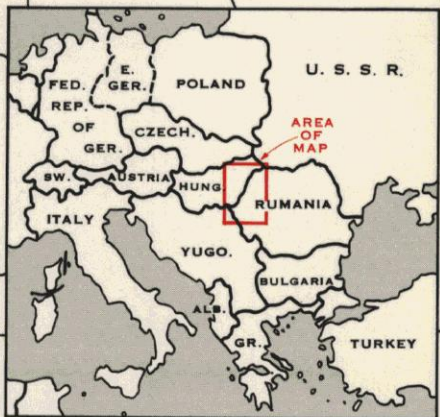
— • — Other international boundary

Source of Data: Office of the Geographer, Department of State.



BOUNDARY BRIEF

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BOUNDARY REPRESENTATION IS NOT NECESSARILY AUTHORITATIVE