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Unrequited Love? The Hungarian Democrats' Relations with the Czechoslovak Authorities (1919-1932)

Aliaksandr Piahanau

[W]e need to work on overthrowing the Horthy-rule. This is not going to happen without outside pressure and actions: [...] people have almost messianic expectations from Prague and Vienna, from you and from us, waiting for [liberation].
Vilmos Böhm to Mihály Károlyi (Vienna, 3 September 1920)¹

'The backbone of my policy is a full agreement with the Czechs. I can regard President Beneš, whom I know for over 20 years, as a personal friend.'
Mihály Károlyi to a Soviet diplomat (London, 8 June 1943)²

Abstract: This paper defines the main objectives, stages, and the dynamics of the secret cooperation of the democratic Hungarian opposition, hostile to the Horthy regime, with the government of Czechoslovakia. It focuses on the Prague's contacts with Hungary's Octobrists, social democrats (active both within the country and in exile) and liberals. The paper covers mostly the period of the so-called consolidation of the Horthy regime, carried out under the leadership of Prime Minister István Bethlen. Our research concludes that the struggle of the democratic opposition against the Horthy-Bethlen regime was consistently encouraged by Czechoslovak political and diplomatic circles. The collaboration between anti-Horthyist groups and Prague was particularly intense in 1919–1921 and in 1930–1931. Our study utilises hitherto unknown documents from archives in Prague and Budapest, to re-evaluate the causes of interwar tensions between Hungary and Czechoslovakia — beyond their disputes over borders and disagreements over the treatment of minorities.

Following the dissolution of Austria-Hungary and a series of revolutionary upheavals after the end of World War I, an authoritarian rule under the regency of Miklós Horthy was established in Hungary in 1920. This conservative and nationalist regime forced its most ardent domestic opponents to make a choice between a recognition of the new government and emigration (mostly to neighbouring countries). But the consolidation of the 'counter-revolution', as the circle around Horthy proudly called their rule, did not eradicate the opposition in the country. Relying on the public discontent with the Horthy's regency and with the support provided by foreign governments and political parties, Hungarian oppositionists continued their attempts to democratise Hungary throughout the 1920s. It was the neighbouring Czechoslovak Republic (hereafter the ČSR) that provided most active support to the anti-Horthyist circles, and this article strives to uncover the story of the Czechoslovaks' secret actions.

The official relations between Budapest and Prague in the interwar period were far from trouble-free. The most important reason for their disagreements was a territorial dispute over Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia, which had belonged to Hungary until the end of the Great War. After these lands were incorporated into the ČSR in 1918–1921, the vast majority of Hungary's political establishment looked forward their full or partial return. Budapest authorities maintained strong ties with anti-Prague opposition movements in Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia, particularly among local Magyars. Moreover, Prague also had its own claims against Budapest (which concerned certain territories and the position of Slovaks in Hungary), and, apparently, it even saw Hungary as its potential sphere of influence. The Prague-Budapest tensions reached their zenith during the border rectifications in Slovakia and Ruthenia in 1938–1939.

The reading of the interwar realities through the prism of "mixture of border and ethnic conflicts" seems to simplify the complex relations between the post-WWI Czechoslovakia and Hungary. It ignores the fact that both states were uninterested in escalating their disputes excessively. Budapest had to take into consideration that Czechoslovakia far exceeded Hungary in terms of military potential and was a member of the Little Entente – a military and political bloc that guaranteed the ČSR Yugoslav and Romanian aid against Hungary. Furthermore, the ČSR was Hungary's second-largest trade partner behind Austria, meaning that a rise of strife between them would greatly damage the Horthyist economy. Prague, in turn, could not be sure that

the population of its eastern provinces would remain loyal in case of war and feared the possible interference of other regional states in the conflict. In this context, and despite their numerous disagreements, both Prague and Budapest worked towards the bilateral normalisation. But, whenever diplomacy could not deliver desired results, the two governments applied various soft power instruments of pressure on each other, spreading the hostile propaganda or secretly supporting the political opposition on the other side of the shared border.

Foreign interferences in domestic affairs, especially regarding the interwar Central Europe, are often associated with the activities of national minorities. The classical examples are the German or Magyar minorities that sought a protection from Berlin or from Budapest respectively, to counter-balance the power of majority.³ In the case of Hungary-Czechoslovakia relations, a lot of scholarly attention has been paid to the contacts between the Hungarian authorities and the opponents of Prague among the Slovak and Magyar political parties in the ČSR.⁴ While some historians see these relations as 'justified' and 'natural,' other condemn them. Labelled as the Horthyist interference in the internal affairs of Czechoslovakia, these relations were described as proof of Budapest' and national minorities 'aggressive' and 'disloyal' attitude to the Czechoslovak state, and considered one of key reasons for persistent tensions between Budapest and Prague.

As the number of Slovaks in post-Trianon Hungary did not reach 200 thousand, and were speedily Magyarised, 'national-minded' historians failed to notice a 'pro-Czechoslovak strata' inside the Hungarian political scene. Despite that the counter-revolutionary regime in Hungary was challenged by a wide front of oppositional groups, the issue of collaboration between these anti-Horthyist circles and the government in Prague remains little studied.⁵ This paper aims to overcome this gap by giving an outline of the stages, events, and substance of the partnership between the Magyar democrats and the Czechoslovak diplomacy. Also, it seeks to contribute to the scholarship by suggesting that it is not necessarily the 'national minority' which acted as an third pillar in the bilateral relations of neighbouring states, but rather the united opposition movement.

The scarcity of preserved primary sources is one of main problems for studying 'secret cooperation' between the opposition movements and foreign governments. Aware of potential danger of presenting proofs of such cooperation, which could be used either as proof of

'foreign interference,' 'political venality' or 'national treason,' the involved parties tended to convey information on their plans and activities with the minimum of written records.⁶ For example, when the Czechoslovak representative in Budapest, Milan Hodža, cabled to Prague in August 1919 that he would provide details which kind of action should be taken regarding the republican parties with pro-Czech orientation in Hungary only during his next visit to Prague.⁷ The question of financial subsidies was hidden with special diligence, and sources contain only allusions to it.⁸ Otherwise, the Hungarian journals were full of different accusations against the opposition parties of accepting foreign funds, but it is almost impossible to verify them. For example, in December 1930, the rightist press in Budapest published several letters apparently exchanged between Hungarian socialist party leaders and their Czechoslovak partners. The letters showed that the ČSR had been supplying the social democrats with money for their political struggle.⁹ Due to these scarcities or biases of sources, speculations about relations between the Hungarian opposition and the governmental circles of Prague, and especially the funds involved, remain a very slippery area for research.

At the same time, there is enough evidence of the existence of 'special relationship' between the Hungarian democrats and the Czechoslovak authorities. First, the Hungarian émigrés maintained extensive correspondence among them, and the letters of such figures as Mihály Karolyi, Oszkár Jászi or Vilmos Böhm contain multiple references to Prague's support of their anti-Horthyist struggle. Second, the Czech sources also mirror these relations. On one hand, they testify to the extent of Prague's support for the 'democratisation' of Hungary, and the place that this issue occupied in official diplomatic relations between Budapest and Prague. Finally, as the Horthyist regime kept an open eye on the Czechoslovak relations of its domestic opponents, and documents housed in the National Archives of Hungary shed some additional light on this intricate problem.

Another challenge in studying unofficial relations between a foreign state and Hungarian domestic opposition lays in terminology. The word choice probably would be a reason for critique always as the distinction between institutional or personal cooperation and hidden manipulation is often very subtle. How to differentiate a foreign aid from a foreign interference? Should the Czechoslovak financial assistance to pay the legal fees during the trials over the social-democrats in Hungary¹⁰ be considered a justified reason to call the anti-Horthyist

activists 'agents' of the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister Edvard Beneš? Or should repeated Czechoslovak promises to encourage the establishment of 'democratic governance' in Budapest be understood as Prague's intention to meddle in internal affairs of a neighbouring country? Much less innocent seems to be a Beneš advise to the left-wing émigrés to put an end to the counter-revolutionary regime by an 'outright rebellion' in 1920, or Prague's enthusiasm about the right-wing radical István Friedrich's plans in 1932 to stage a coup to overthrow Horthy.

Leaving the clarification of these and many other issues for future research, this paper argues that the Hungarian democratic circles maintained partnership with the governmental spheres in Prague throughout the 1920s and that this relationship strongly affected the internal politics in Hungary as well as bilateral Prague-Budapest diplomatic relations. This research also concludes that the intensity of the collaboration between the anti-Horthyist opposition in the ČSR in the 1920s depended mostly on, first, the stability (or a lack thereof) of Horthy's regime, and, second, on the level of cordiality between cabinets in Budapest and Prague. Whenever the counter-revolutionary authorities had to confront a serious internal or external challenge, the opposition would increase its pressure on the Horthy regime, pushing it to loosen its authoritarian grip and carry out democratic reforms. However, Prague provided support to the opposition only upon a serious consideration of the potential consequences, and the paper concludes that the Hungarian opposition could not count on an unqualified Czechoslovak support against the Horthy regime.

The paper focuses on the 1920s and early 1930s, covering the period of the so-called consolidation in Hungary (1921–1931), carried out under the leadership of regent Horthy's closest political ally – Count István Bethlen. For one decade, the political system of the Hungarian 'kingdom without a king' remained surprisingly stable; its symbol, apart from regent Horthy, was the long-standing Prime Minister, István Bethlen. This Transylvanian aristocrat, who became head of the government after the (ex-) King Charles IV Habsburg had attempted a failed coup in March 1921, retained the reins of power until August 1931. The consolidation decade became so inextricably linked with the Prime Minister's name that foreign diplomats used to call the Hungarian ruling regime not only Horthyist, but also Bethlenist.¹¹

Throughout the 1920s, the camp opposed to the Horthy-Bethlen duo may be divided into three main groups: 1. democrats

(composed in turn of the so-called liberals who were proponents of democratic reforms; Octobrists – supporters of the Aster Revolution of 1918; and social democrats); 2. legitimists (who were calling for a Habsburg restoration); and 3. ultra-right nationalists. All three opposition groups rejected the consolidation policy to various extent. On the one hand, the *Magyarországi Szociáldemokrata Párt* (Social Democratic Party of Hungary, hereafter MSZDP) and the Octobrists (whose leaders were in exile), as well as the largest liberal parties (Vilmos Vázsonyi's *Nemzeti Demokrata Párt* (National Democratic Party, hereafter NDP), Károly Rassay's Party, as well as the Kossuth Party) principally opposed the government; on the other hand, many of the legitimists and radical nationalists (united around Gyula Gömbös) were in favour of a peaceful coexistence with the regime. Part of the opposition existed on the edge of legality: for instance, the *Magyarországi Szocialista Munkáspárt* (Socialist Workers Party of Hungary), which in 1925–1928 acted as a cover for the illegal Communist Party of Hungary; or the so-called Republican Party, repeatedly banned by the authorities in the 1920s. The situation was further complicated by the fact that both the democratic and the legitimist opposition saw as their main political opponents not Bethlen's clique, but rather Gömbös and his followers. The democrats disliked his chauvinism, anti-Semitism, and anti-socialism (Gömbös was seen as responsible for many of the 'white terror' killings), while the legitimists were averse to his anti-Habsburg position. Although the democrats and the legitimists held opposing views on many social and political matters, they were united in their demand for a 'democratisation' of the counter-revolutionary regime by means of a universal secret suffrage.¹²

Hungarian democratic groups carefully maintained connections with ideologically close movements and political circles abroad. The MSZDP was a member of the Second International and was well connected to influential socialist parties abroad, such as those of Great Britain, France, Austria, and the ČSR,¹³ while the Kossuth Party members were very active in the Pan-Europe movement.¹⁴ Apart from these direct contacts, the Hungarian democrats maintained relations with foreign partners through the left-wing émigrés who had left the country during the white terror in 1919–1920.¹⁵ Initially, a majority of these refugees fled to Austria, but at the height of the Hungarian crisis, the ČSR opened its borders to some of them. The Czechoslovak envoy in Vienna, Robert Flieder, reported to Prague in January 1920 that the opportunity to obtain asylum in the ČSR put newly-exiled Magyars in

a pro-Czechoslovak mood. Flieder noted that the émigrés, who hated the counter-revolutionary abuses of power, repeatedly offered their services to Prague; thus, it became clear which among them could become future intermediaries in the reconciliation between Czechoslovakia and Hungary.¹⁶

By the early 1920s the ČSR had become one of the main safe havens for the leftist Hungarian émigrés (apart from the Octobrists Mihály Károlyi, József Diner-Dénes, and Rezső Krejcsi, and many former Magyar Communists, like Ignác Schultz; intellectuals such as Lajos Bartha, Pál Ignótus and Jenő Gömöri also settled there), some of whom became involved in Czechoslovak politics (Hungarian cadres occupied top positions in the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia).¹⁷ The second wave of the Hungarian political emigration to Czechoslovakia happened after stifling the February 1934 rebellion in Austria that forced Magyar social-democrats to seek new asylum (such as Vilmos Böhm, Jenő Horovitz, Pál Oroszlán, and Pál Szende). Among the political refugees, the move to the ČSR was made much easier for those who had the official residence in Northern Hungary (Slovakia or in Subcarpathian Ruthenia) before 1918, and, thus, had a formal right for Czechoslovak citizenship. However, the Czechoslovak asylum was not as sure as the Hungarian émigrés may hope. When relations with the Horthy regime were improving, Prague was inclined to loosen its connections with the Magyar democrats. In 1920, in the background of the normalisation of official Prague-Budapest relations, Károlyi was invited to leave the republic. Many other Hungarian exiles also left the ČSR. Similarly, those left-wing Hungarians, who were criticizing the Czechoslovak regime, were under the threat of expulsion. The 'émigré' left-wing activist Lajos Surányi, who was even elected to the Prague parliament, was expelled as 'foreigner' to Hungary in 1929, and became a zealous critique of the 'Czechoslovak democracy.' While the Czechoslovak reception of refugees from Hungary laid foundations for collaboration between Prague and the anti-Horthyist movement,¹⁸ the importance of exiled Hungarian diaspora in the ČSR had significantly weakened by the end of the interwar period.

The Hungarian *frondeurs* made the Czechoslovak Republic one of the main pillars of their activity for several reasons. First, the disputes between official Prague and Budapest, although put on the back burner, allowed the Hungarian opposition to view the ČSR as a potential ally against the counter-revolutionary regime. Second, anti-

Horthyist and Czechoslovak circles had reasons for mutual sympathy: Hungarians were attracted to the ČSR as the foremost 'democratic' state in the Danubian basin, while the Hungarian democrats' pleas for aid against the Horthyist 'oppression' found a deep resonance among the Czechoslovak socialists.¹⁹ As a MSZDP authority Ernő Garami argued, the rapprochement with two democratic neighbours, Czechoslovakia and Austria, had to strengthen the democratization of Hungary.²⁰ Otherwise, the promoters of the orientation towards Prague usually stressed the economic interdependence between the former Habsburg lands, especially Hungary, Austria and Czechoslovakia.²¹

As the influence of the Magyar democratic emigration was diminishing throughout the 1920s, the role of the domestic opposition to the counter-revolutionary rule was increasing. The main base for independent political activity in Hungary was the Budapest Parliament itself, to whose liberties Regent Horthy still showed outward respect. The government reported to the parliament, which passed laws and approved the budget. However, thanks to a series of machinations and abuses of power by the Horthyist administration, the pro-government *Egységes Párt* (Unified Party; headed by Bethlen) repeatedly won two-thirds of all seats (in 1922, 1926, and 1931), which gave it full control of the legislative branch.²² As a result, the opposition did not regard the parliament as a fully legitimate legislative body. After the 1922 elections, the joint committee of the democratic deputies adopted a declaration stating that 'the National Assembly and its activities are ... unlawful.'²³

The most influential among the democratic parties was the MSZDP, but its political prestige slowly but steadily decreased. It reached what was probably the peak of its power during the winter of 1918–1919, when the party (according to its own statistics) counted as many as 1,5 million members.²⁴ Up until the mid-1930s, the MSZDP had the largest opposition faction in the parliament: it won 25 seats in 1922, 14 seats in 1926, and 11 in 1931; in the meantime, all the liberal parties put together counted circa 10 seats. In the elections of 1922, in which the democratic opposition won more votes than at any other point during the interwar period, the MSZDP received over 300 thousand votes (200 thousand in Budapest alone), while the liberals gained 100 thousand votes.²⁵ In the early 1930s, when the democrats lost part of their popularity, the MSZDP counted circa 50 thousand members,²⁶ while the NDP and Rassay's party had only 25–30 thousand and 14–15 thousand members, respectively.²⁷ With the decline of the left parties'

popularity, by the early 1930s the right-wing *Független Kisgazdapárt* (Independent Smallholders' Party) became the main opposition force inside Hungary. The new face of the parliamentary opposition – the Smallholder leader Tibor Eckhardt also inherited the label of a 'bribed Czech traitor' from his adversaries.²⁸

The alleged Czechoslovak financial assistance to the Hungarian opposition was the main reason to call the democratic parties 'Beneš or Little Entente agents,'²⁹ but it seems that these parties primarily sought to cover their expenses with donations made by their members. Concurrently, they did not refuse outside aid when it was offered. The liberals, for instance, could rely on financial aid from Hungarian banks and trade and commercial associations (such as TÉBE, GYOSZ, and OMKE), which were interested in lobbying the democrats' programme of regional economic cooperation. According to the historian Zsuzsa Nagy, the Hungarian democrats could also count on subsidies from the Rotary Club, the Fabian Society, the Pan-European Movement, the Hungarian section of the League for Human Rights (headed in Paris by Mihály Károlyi), and the freemasonry.³⁰

The uprooted left-wing exiles were economically more vulnerable than their home fellows. Thus, the acquiring of stable revenue became a major issue for their existence. 'The Program for the Emigration' prepared by Oszkár Jászi in 1919, which called for the unity of the anti-Horthyist leaders outside Hungary, stipulated that the émigré community could accept the financial backing from foreign states and private persons only with the assent of its all members.³¹ Nevertheless, the unification of leftist exile groups, not speaking about the entire Hungarian democratic opposition, was never achieved and it seems that their revenue streams remained unknown for each other.

The rumours that the Czechoslovaks were providing financial support to the Hungarian opposition were not completely unfounded. Sources indicate that the ČSR social-democrats assisted their Hungarian comrades, and that the Prague government supported opposition press both in exile (the Viennese *Bécsi Magyar Újság* and *Új Magyarok*)³² and inside Hungary (such as the *Világ*). The Czechs offered loans and distribution on the territory of republic. In the early 1930s, even the influential Budapest newspaper *Pesti Napló* approached Beneš for a financial help needed to propagate Czech-Hungarian reconciliation.³³ Apart from the loans, the Hungarian opposition tried to establish a more legal way of obtaining the financial help from Czech-

oslovakia. In 1921, the representatives of a 'liberal block' in Hungary proposed the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry to grant their commercial partners certain trading concessions.³⁴ Ten years later, a similar demand was formulated at Prague by another promoter of the Czech-Hungarian rapprochement Gusztáv Gratz.³⁵ Nevertheless, it seems that the interwar right-wing speculations about the amount of Czech subsidies for the Hungarian opposition were largely overestimated.

Prague and the Magyar democrats facing the counter-revolution in Hungary, August 1919–December 1921.

Many interwar contacts between the political establishment of Prague and the democratic forces of Budapest were rooted in the history of the Dual Monarchy. Some relations originated from the pre-war social-democratic networks, others were established in the halls of the Budapest parliament, or originated from common schooling. What was probably equally important is that during the First World War, the Czech and Hungarian democratic opposition set up clandestine connections with the Allies, hoping for outside assistance. The Czechoslovak National Council – instituted in 1916 in Paris by the émigrés, a former Reichstag MP Professor Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and his disciple Edvard Beneš – in the summer of 1918 received the Allies' recognition as the basis for a future Czechoslovak government. On 14 November 1918, Masaryk was elected president of the ČSR (to be reelected in 1920, 1927, and 1934), while Beneš became his irreplaceable Foreign Minister (1918–1935). In turn, Count Mihály Károlyi – leader of the Hungarian democratic opposition, who headed a Suffrage block in 1917 that included the leaders of the Radical party (Oszkár Jászi), Social Democrats (Manó Buchinger and Ernő Garami), and Vázsonyi from the NDP – also maintained secret contacts with the Allies and openly called for a break between the Habsburg Monarchy and Germany and for an immediate peace.³⁶

In 1918, the Hungarian opposition tried to renew its liaisons with the Czech left-wing politicians. In late October 1918, Buchinger met with the influential Czech socialist Vlastimil Tusar in Vienna, hoping to reach an agreement on future peaceful relations between Prague and Budapest, both of which were on the verge of revolutions.³⁷ Following the victorious Aster Revolution in Budapest on 23–31 October 1918, led by Károlyi, and the establishment of a 'People's

Republic' in Hungary, Budapest exchanged official representatives with Prague (where independence was proclaimed on 28 October). A primary objective in building good relations with Czechoslovakia was the need to obtain coal deliveries from the Silesian mines, and in November 1918, Buchinger arrived to Prague for 'coal negotiations.' As a consequence, and under pressure from the Allies, Károlyi approved the transfer of Slovakia to Czechoslovak administration in December 1918, thus creating conditions for further normalisation of Hungaro-Czechoslovak relations. However, in March 1919 the Octobrist regime in Budapest was replaced by Béla Kun's 'Soviet Republic'. Károlyi and many of his adherents were removed from power and persecuted.

Prague's reaction to the creation of the Hungarian commune was uncompromisingly negative: Czechoslovak troops moved into Hungary and occupied the Subcarpathian Ruthenia. Next, Masaryk suggested to Beneš to obtain approval of the Paris Peace Conference for an occupation of Budapest by the Czechoslovak army. Old Hungarian elites opposed the communist regime too, and several counter-revolutionary centres were created in Vienna and in the south-east of Hungary, under the protection of South-Slav and French troops.

In summer 1919, Károlyi settled in the ČSR. There, he met regularly with Masaryk, Beneš, and Tusar (Prime Minister of the ČSR in 1919–1920), coordinating the activity of the Magyar democrats in exile. Czech leaders assured Károlyi (as well as Oszkár Jászi – a frequent visitor from Vienna) that the ČSR would support the creation of a democratic government in Hungary. Masaryk and Beneš repeatedly stated that they would be ready to make territorial concessions to 'friendly' and 'non-reactionary' authorities in Budapest and restitute the Magyar-populated Schütt Island (Žitný ostrov) in Slovakia to Hungary.³⁸ Prague's promises to assist the return of the émigrés to Budapest tied the Octobrists' hopes to Czechoslovak diplomatic successes.

On 1 August 1919, the Soviet government in Budapest was replaced with a moderate socialist cabinet led by Gyula Peidl. Masaryk immediately ordered Milan Hodža to go to Budapest as the ČSR representative.³⁹ However, on 6 August power passed into the hands of István Friedrich, who proclaimed his allegiance to József Habsburg. Romania, whose troops were occupying Budapest, took this *de facto* Habsburg restoration calmly, but the authorities in Prague were disconcerted. Tusar, fearing a further monarchical consolidation in Hungary, kept trying to persuade the Hungarian envoy, Rezső Krejcsi, that

a republican form of government had to be preserved in Hungary.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, Beneš petitioned the Paris Peace Conference not to recognize Friedrich's pro-Habsburg cabinet, instead advising to replace it with a 'national democratic government'. In order to achieve that Beneš was ready to provide troops.⁴¹

The Allies declined the offer of a Czech intervention of Budapest but convinced Friedrich to disavow his loyalty to József Habsburg and, on 15 August, assign the position of Foreign Minister to the Octobrist Márton Lovászi, who maintained close links with Garami, Buchinger, Vázsonyi, and Hodža.⁴² As Hodža explained in his report to Prague, the Lovászy group was a 'lesser evil' on the Hungarian political scene, which he wanted to support against Friedrich. Hodža even suggested to the Inter-Allied Military Mission that had arrived to Budapest to appoint Lovászy the Prime Minister instead of Friedrich.⁴³ What was probably most important is that in Hodža's words 'Lovászy and Garami showed their will to recognize immediately the new frontiers already established by the peace conference.'⁴⁴ On 11 September 1919, Friedrich dismissed Lovászi,⁴⁵ but Czechoslovak diplomacy still hoped that he may be brought back to power. On 30 September, Hodža reported to Prague that he 'urged Lovászi's group to action.'⁴⁶

Prague was not ready to relinquish its plan to change the situation in Budapest in its favour. On 13 October 1919, Beneš assured Jászi that the ČSR would not allow a *de jure* recognition of Friedrich's cabinet and, 'if necessary', would even to launch a military expedition against him. At the same time, Beneš admitted that Miklós Horthy, who could rely on his own army, was even more dangerous than Friedrich. As an alternative to Friedrich and Horthy with their revanchist intentions, Jászi proposed his own concept of Danubian cooperation, which was supposed to unite Hungarians, Czechs, Austrians, and Yugoslavs, allowing for a development of economy and democracy in the region (although under the Czech leadership).⁴⁷ A couple of days later Beneš informed the Paris Peace Conference that Hungarian politicians had managed to draw up a plan of instituting a multi-party government in Budapest (consisting of democrats, socialists, and agrarians), which would function under the protection of Romanian and Czechoslovak troops. This shadow government intended to dissolve Horthy's army, sign a peace treaty with the Allies in the name of Hungary, and create an economic bloc with the ČSR, Yugoslavia, and Austria.⁴⁸

Participants of the Paris Peace Conference approved of the idea of a coalition cabinet in Hungary, but decided to supervise direct-

ly its creation. In October–November 1919, the Entente sent the British diplomat Sir George Clerk (recently appointed as the first British envoy in Prague). However, Clerk did not focus on bringing back the Octobrists to power, but only on assuring the participation of the social-democrats in a new multi-party government in Budapest. The democratic forces perceived the Clerk mission and the issue of reconciliation with the counter-revolutionaries without much hope, but the opinions whether to join a new government or not were divided. For instance, inside MSZDP, Garami opposed it, but another party leader, Károly Peyer, supported it. By the end of November, Clerk managed to obtain the resignation of Friedrich's cabinet, withdrawal of the Romanian troops, and the formation of a coalition government, which was dominated by counter-revolutionaries but also included members of the MSZDP (Peyer) and the NDP. The new cabinet, led by Károly Huszár, was *de facto* recognized by the Allies and invited to the peace conference. Even though the social democrats had joined the government, they were losing their positions under the 'white terror' persecutions. On 17 December, Hodža, reporting to Prague, wrote that the MSZDP would not be a powerful factor any more, but he added that a delegation of Hungarian republicans was preparing to leave for Prague.⁴⁹ At the same time, Garami, who had escaped to Vienna, was convincing the Czechoslovak representative Flieder that the left and right wings' reconciliation in Budapest would prove to be short-lived. Assuring that the MSZDP would soon pull out of the government, Garami entreated the ČSR not to establish economic relations with Hungary until its citizens were guaranteed democratic rights.⁵⁰ Garami turned out to be right: as Horthy's 'white terror' continued, Peyer left the government in January 1920, and the MSZDP announced that it would boycott the upcoming parliamentary elections.

In the beginning of 1920, and especially after the new Hungarian parliament officially reinstated the monarchy and elected Miklós Horthy regent on 1 March, the Budapest authorities intensified their action aimed to retake Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia by force. Their chosen methods included encouraging the Magyar irredentists, playing on Slovak separatism, and wooing the Allies. Budapest's revanchist plans created fertile conditions for the intensification of relations between the leftist émigrés and Prague. During a meeting with an Octobrist delegation on 31 March 1920, Beneš expressed his approval of Károlyi's plan to unite all the exiles and bring down the Horthy re-

gime. Next, Károlyi planned to restore the republic, carry out internal agrarian and social reforms, and develop stronger ties with neighbouring countries. Beneš agreed to grant semi-official recognition to the Magyar émigrés and promised to provide asylum in the ČSR to other Hungarians if necessary. According to the Czech Minister, the most efficient way to exert pressure on Horthy would be an open rebellion; however, Beneš recommended postponing the operation until after the signing of a peace treaty with the Allies, in order to make sure that Czechoslovakia would not be accused of breaking the armistice terms.⁵¹ This honeymoon period between the Prague Castle (Hrad) and the Octobrists lasted until the summer of 1920. In the meantime, Masaryk and Beneš continued to assure the Hungarian émigrés that an armed intervention against the counter-revolution in Hungary was possible;⁵² however, both Prague and Budapest eventually refrained from such military escapades.

Once the Trianon Peace Treaty was signed on 4 June 1920 between Hungary and the Allies, including the ČSR, exiles realised that Prague began to view Budapest in a different light. Now Beneš aimed at a normalisation of official Hungaro-Czechoslovak relations. On 7 June Masaryk made it clear to Jászi that although his sympathies remained unchanged, he did not consider an active intervention against the Horthy regime any more. The disappointed Károlyi, in turn, began planning to diversify the émigrés' international connections: he wanted them to collaborate not only with Prague, but also with Belgrade (which, in Károlyi's opinion, could help arm the 'anti-government' against Horthy), as well as with the British Labour Party (which had initiated an international investigation of the 'white terror' crimes and of the subsequent boycott of Hungary by the Austrian transport enterprises in summer 1920) and, if possible, with Moscow and with the Slovak communists.⁵³ Nevertheless, Jászi still hoped that Czechoslovakia would remain a stronghold of the Magyar émigrés.

Tensions between the Octobrists and the authorities in Prague kept rising. The autumn of 1920 saw the dissolution of the Hungarian émigré chancellery in Prague. Jászi, who continued meeting with Czechoslovak diplomats on a monthly and even weekly basis, criticised the 'Czech passivity' and proposed – without success – to create a series of Hungarian paramilitary units in South Slovakia.⁵⁴ After yet another audience in the Hrad in September 1920, Jászi concluded that Beneš would not act against Horthy without the support of the Western Great Powers.⁵⁵ Another Czech blow to the Magyar exiles came in

December 1920, when the Czechoslovak authorities banned the distribution of the leading exile newspaper *Bécsi Magyar Újság* ('Vienna Magyar Newspaper') in Slovakia, where most of its readers resided.⁵⁶

The symptoms of cooling in relations between Prague and the Magyar exiles were signs of a new trend in the Czech foreign policy. Beneš seemed to expect that the growing volume of trade between Hungary and Czechoslovakia would eventually induce the Horthy regime to cease its irredentist propaganda in Slovakia, demilitarise the country, and definitely relinquish the idea of a Habsburg restoration. Further, Beneš hoped that a place could be found for Budapest within the framework of Prague's policy in Central Europe. The Czechoslovak statesman even tried to persuade the Hungarian government to restore the republican form of government in Hungary.⁵⁷ When Prague set its priority on developing relations with Budapest, Hungarian émigrés suffered the loss of an important foreign protector. As this policy was introduced in autumn 1920, Károlyi left the ČSR; and after the first bilateral Czechoslovak-Hungarian talks in Austria's Bruck on 14–15 March 1921, where Beneš personally met with Prime Minister Pál Teleki and his Foreign Minister, Gusztáv Gratz, desperate Jászi wrote to Károlyi, 'we have never felt so crushed'.⁵⁸

Very soon the newly achieved reconciliation between Prague and Budapest seemed to falter: in March 1921, Teleki and Gratz compromised themselves when the (ex-) King Charles IV Habsburg tried to retake power in Hungary. Beneš replied with a threat of an intervention, and Charles IV chose to leave the country on his own accord. As the Czechoslovak Minister to Vienna, Flieder, noted, Magyar émigrés cheerfully welcomed the Czech's anti-Habsburg stand, losing their fears that Prague turned back to the democratic values in foreign policy.⁵⁹

Smooth Budapest-Prague relations, however, were soon restored. Teleki and Gratz resigned, and István Bethlen, who had been appointed Prime Minister in April 1921, continued the policy of rapprochement with Prague. In general, Bethlen's decision to give up both the irredentist propaganda and calls for a revision of the Treaty of Trianon (at least temporarily) became the basis of the Hungarian policy of good neighbour relations on the Danube.

The émigrés' hopes for a triumphant return to Budapest were momentarily rekindled in October 1921, when Charles IV undertook a second attempt to take back the throne. In reaction to this new restora-

tion putsch, Beneš – who acted as both Prime Minister and Foreign Minister in 1921–1922 – began a mobilization and warned Bethlen that unless the Hungarian government dealt with the Habsburg claims, the Czechoslovak army would. The Magyar exiles decided to use the pressure exerted by the ČSR as a tool to bring down the counter-revolutionary regime. Jászi and Garami urgently left Vienna for Prague. On 28 October, Beneš met with Jászi and explained that the exiles' plan to remove Horthy would be difficult to realise due to the position taken by the Allies (who wanted Bethlen and Horthy to deal with Charles without any outside interference). To Jászi's disappointment, Horthy's army defeated the Habsburg troops and took the king prisoner.⁶⁰

The aggressive Czech reaction to the Habsburg putsch, as well as the exiles' concurrent visit to Prague, led the Hungarian authorities to wonder if Beneš was harbouring imperialist plans.⁶¹ On 29 October 1921, the Hungarian envoy in the ČSR, László Tahy, pointedly asked the ČSR Foreign Ministry officials if Prague intended to force an *émigré* republican government on Hungary and create a 'Slavic corridor' leading into Yugoslavia.⁶² Beneš denied this; he also informed the authorities in London (with whom the Hungarian government had shared their concerns) that any allegations that Prague wanted to institute an *émigré* government in Budapest were false.⁶³

Even though in practice Beneš took the side of Horthy in the Habsburg putsch, some Magyar democrats remained convinced that Prague's sympathies still lay with them. Right before the planned dethronement of the Habsburgs in Hungary (scheduled for 6 November 1921), the *chargé d'affaires* of the Czechoslovak mission in Budapest, Karel Feistmantel, telegraphed to Prague that Horthy had resigned and the opposition was ready to form a new cabinet with Count János Hadik (a liberal legitimist who had been designated Prime Minister during the heady days of the Aster Revolution of 1918) as Prime Minister. The position of Minister of Foreign Affairs in this scheme would have gone to Garami.⁶⁴ Even though the Regent's resignation turned out to be a hoax, the shadow cabinet formed by the legitimist Hadik and the socialist Garami proved to be long-lasting: the idea of replacing the Horthy-Bethlen tandem with that of Hadik and Garami kept resurfacing during the consequent political crises of 1926 and 1931.

In the early 1920s, many Hungarian exiles left the ČSR, while the anti-Horthyist opposition found refuge mainly in Austria. In late 1921, Beneš instructed the new Czechoslovak envoy to Austria, Kamil

Krofta, to keep away from the 'dreamers' among the Magyar émigrés.⁶⁵ Thus it is not surprising that when Krofta held his first meeting with the leftist Hungarian politicians on 9 February 1922 in Vienna, Jászi was left with the impression that the new envoy was less cordial than his predecessor, Robert Flieder.⁶⁶ It became ever clearer to the Octobrists that Prague preferred to reach reconciliation with the authorities in Budapest rather than help the Hungarian exiles return home.⁶⁷ Even Krofta could not deny this: he admitted to Jászi that although the Hrad was sympathetic to the Hungarian oppositionists, Prague had to consider Horthy's significant political weight.⁶⁸ On 18 March 1922, Krofta informed Jászi that Beneš felt disappointed with the Octobrists exiles. The Czechoslovak Prime Minister was displeased that the predictions of Horthy's fall did not materialise and suspected that if the Hungarian émigrés were allowed to return to power, they would pursue a revanchist foreign policy.⁶⁹

Bethlen's consolidation policy and the marginalisation of the anti-Horthyist opposition (1921–1930)

While curbing their ties with the émigrés, the Prague authorities sought not only to normalise relations with Budapest, but also to find leverage points among the opposition movements within Hungary. Throughout the 1920s, the MSZDP (which possessed large cells in Hungary and abroad) became Prague's privileged partner on the Hungarian political scene, with socialist exiles frequently acting as intermediaries. In summer 1921, Garami – one of the leaders of the émigré wing of the MSZDP – helped Beneš to establish a rapport of trust with the so-called 'liberal bloc' in Budapest, which united assorted groups of anti-Horthyist socialists, radicals, industrialists, Catholics, Evangelicals, and freemasons. This new democratic front included both republicans and monarchists. The members of the new bloc hoped to obtain financial aid from the ČSR in order to pursue their political activities and publish their newspapers.⁷⁰

It soon became clear that the plan to form a *fronde* in Hungary with Prague's assistance had serious faults. Horthyist *agents provocateurs* succeeded in getting several leaders of the liberal bloc (such as Ádám Persián) arrested in summer 1921.⁷¹ Taking into account the danger of further persecutions by the counter-revolutionary authorities,

the opposition in Budapest chose to put their contacts with the ČSR on hold.⁷²

In late 1921, the home branch of the MSZDP – led by Károly Peyer, who had recently returned from exile – opted for a compromise with Horthy's regime. Once the so-called Bethlen-Peyer Pact was signed on 21 December 1921, the party was finally legalised. The MSZDP pledged to act in accordance with the kingdom's laws and limit its propaganda and calls to strikes. The social democrats also vowed to cut their ties with the émigrés and spread Hungary-friendly propaganda abroad.⁷³

Nevertheless, the MSZDP continued cooperating with its foreign fellows, using them as intermediaries in its contacts with the ČSR. On the eve of the parliamentary elections in Hungary, which were to take place in May–June 1922, Garami, Vázsonyi, and Rassay began talks on the creation of a new democratic coalition. The atmosphere before the elections was tense, and the electoral campaign was accompanied by attacks against members of the opposition. The inaction of the Budapest legal enforcement even gave rise to the joke that the evidence 'was intent on discovering the police'.⁷⁴ Rassay repeatedly came to Vienna to meet with Garami and various Czechoslovak politicians. Prague's connections to the opposition in Budapest caused several scandals that almost led to a severing of diplomatic relations between Hungary and the ČSR. On 11 June 1922, *Bécsi Magyar Újság* published an interview with Beneš, in which he professed the ČSR's moral support for Hungarian democracy and the work done by the Hungarian émigrés. Beneš insisted that the émigrés needed to return to Hungary and prepare the country for reforms from the inside.⁷⁵ Budapest protested against this statement and threatened to cut off diplomatic relations with Prague. Beneš disavowed his interview, and the incident was resolved.⁷⁶

The 1922 elections resulted in success for the social democrats: the MSZDP came in second after Bethlen's Unified Party in terms of the number of votes. Bethlen's party gained only twice as many votes as the MSZDP, it received 143 seats in the parliament, while the socialists got only 25. Considering the circumstances of the electoral campaign, the democratic and legitimist opposition leaders refused to recognize the legitimacy of the new parliament. In autumn the MPs from the MSZDP, the NDP, and Rassay's party created their own parliamentary faction – the Civic and Workers Union, which included circa 50 MPs.⁷⁷

Beneš did not hide his satisfaction with the successes of the opposition in Hungary. On 12 July 1922, he once again assured Jászi of his continued support of the exiles and even recommended the establishment of a new émigré representation in Prague. Beneš also promised to investigate the assassinations during the electoral campaign and to work on expanding the suffrage in Hungary.⁷⁸ Meanwhile Czechoslovak involvement in the 1922 parliamentary elections attracted wide public attention. The radical nationalists in Budapest suspected that the democrats had received funding from the ČSR and called them traitors,⁷⁹ while the Foreign Office procured confidential information that Prague had provided the MSZDP with a loan of 3 million Czechoslovak korunas for their electoral campaign. According to another British source, Beneš had promised the Hungarian leadership that if a social-democratic government were to be formed in Budapest, the ČSR would be prepared to make territorial concessions to Hungary.⁸⁰ It seems that this kind of offer was made by the Hrad more than once.

Those democratic leaders who had not returned to Hungary used every opportunity to exert pressure on Horthy's regime with the help of their international collaborators. In 1923–1924, Bethlen's cabinet found itself in great difficulty as a consequence of the post-war economic crisis. As the government desperately tried to obtain a relief from its burden of reparation payments (mostly by means of an international loan under the aegis of the League of Nations), the anti-Horthyists turned to private diplomacy. In April 1923, Károlyi, Jászi, and Béla Linder suggested to the Yugoslav authorities that the Little Entente members should approve a loan for Hungary only if Budapest agreed to carry out democratic reforms.⁸¹ At first the opposition had great hopes for the Little Entente: when in September 1923 Bethlen held several meetings with Beneš in Geneva to discuss the terms of the international loan, rumours spread among the Budapest liberals that Beneš was going to demand the creation of a reconciliation cabinet, which would include members of the leftist opposition.⁸²

Beneš' report to the parliament in early November 1923, in which he mentioned the issue of the Magyar émigrés, elicited a lively reaction in Hungary. According to the account sent to Prague by the Czechoslovak envoy in Budapest, Hugo Vavrečka, the Magyar émigrés and their supporters at home were elated, believing that Beneš would not agree to a loan unless the exiles were allowed to return.

Radicals on the right, by contrast, were offended, convinced that Bethlen was ready to tolerate interference in Hungary's internal affairs just to get the loan. They insisted that in return Prague needed to agree to a repatriation of Slovakia's refugees, of whom there were 150 thousand in Hungary. Vavrečka added that Bethlen's own reaction to Beneš' speech was remarkably calm. Prime Minister assured the public that he had not made any promises in Geneva regarding internal policy or the émigrés' return, and that Beneš had not even made such demands. At the same time, while speaking with Vavrečka in private, Bethlen noted that some exiles could safely return to the country.⁸³

The issue of the Magyar emigration was indeed raised during the Czechoslovak-Hungarian negotiations in 1923. However, just as before, Prague was leaning towards a compromise in return for political concessions. The talks between Bethlen and Beneš in Geneva took place largely thanks to the assurances given by one of Bethlen's close associates, a banker Filip Weiss. Weiss told to the ČSR Legation Counselor in Budapest, Jaroslav Novák that Prague had to cease its support of the MSZDP – which had no chance of obtaining power in the country anyway. In contrast, Weiss advised to start supporting Bethlen instead, who allegedly acted in full accordance with the Treaty of Trianon, kept the Hungarian army numbers low, and was prepared to curb the influence of Gömbös and his racist followers. In his report to Prague, Novák agreed that it would be worth helping Bethlen if such was indeed his policy and wrote in his report, 'Hungary is so soft now that you can mould it as you wish'.⁸⁴ In August 1923, as the technical details of the Hungaro-Czechoslovak negotiations were being settled, Gömbös left the Unified Party and moved into open opposition to the government.⁸⁵

Bethlen and Beneš began discussing the issue of repatriation of the Magyar exiles at their very first meeting on 6 September 1923 in Geneva. According to Beneš, the return of the leftist émigrés to Hungary would make it easier for Prague to agree to a loan for Hungary, since the Czechoslovak socialists maintained strong ties with the exiles.⁸⁶ Bethlen took a few days to consider the matter and finally replied to Beneš on 9 September that he could not approve an amnesty for the émigrés without them first being tried in court. Still, Bethlen offered an alternative solution: if Hungary was to put a stop to irredentist propaganda, then the neighbouring states – including the ČSR – would need to limit the émigrés' propaganda against the Hungarian government. Beneš agreed and guaranteed that the Czechoslovak gov-

ernment would take measures against the Magyar exiles as soon as friendly relations were established between Budapest and Prague.⁸⁷

The democratic opposition's hopes that the matter of the international loan would weaken the Horthy regime did not materialise: the negotiations were proceeding successfully without any significant softening to the counter-revolutionary regime. After the Bethlen-Beneš talks in Geneva, Krofta explained to Jászi that 'we had to reach an agreement with Bethlen, because that is what the Allies and the League of Nations wanted.'⁸⁸ In spite of such statements, the émigrés felt that Beneš had 'allied' with Bethlen and that 'the Little Entente seemed more eager to deal with Horthy than with the Magyar democrats'.⁸⁹ Although as late as January 1924 Károlyi was still convinced that 'with French help, Beneš managed to postpone the matter (the loan – A.P.) indefinitely',⁹⁰ he subsequently changed his view. Thirty years later, Károlyi wrote in his memoirs that Beneš did not protest against issuing a loan to Budapest, which presumably proved that Prague was not truly opposed to Horthy's regime.⁹¹

However, when the UK Labour Party (which had led the international campaign against the 'white terror' in Hungary in 1920) formed the cabinet in January 1924, the Hungarian dissidents were once again filled with hope: perhaps the proposed international loan could still be used as a way to bring down the counter-revolutionary regime. On 1 February, the influential socialist Gyula Peidl told the official Czechoslovak newspaper *Prager Presse* that he was planning to hold talks with Ramsay MacDonald's cabinet about reversing the counter-revolution and allowing the exiles to return.⁹² Thanks to mediation by Czechoslovak diplomats, a Hungarian leftist delegation soon arrived in London (Garami and Peidl from the MSZDP, and Rusztem Vámbéry from the Kossuth Party). The democrats insisted on the need to restore universal secret suffrage in Hungary, revoke the *Numerus Clausus Act* that limited the admission of Jews to universities, and ensure civic liberties.⁹³ Károlyi and Jászi made similar suggestions to MacDonald in the summer of 1924. Nonetheless, the wishes of both delegations were largely ignored.⁹⁴

On 14 March 1924, Hungary and the Little Entente members signed two protocols in Geneva, confirming their acceptance of the Trianon terms, pledging to respect their mutual sovereignty and territorial integrity and not to interfere in each other's internal affairs. Based on these agreements, the Little Entente states agreed to an international

loan of 250 million gold korunas for Hungary; Budapest received the first installment in summer 1924. Although Bethlen reassured the Hungarian parliament that the terms of the loan did not contain any internal policy stipulations, he still unexpectedly promised democratic reforms.⁹⁵ Soon the Horthyist internment camps were dissolved, and the 'least important criminals' among the exiles were allowed to return and granted an amnesty.⁹⁶ Nevertheless, this limited democratisation could not satisfy the leftist and liberal circles, which started to regret counting not only on Prague, but also on London. After the anti-Horthyist oppositionists found themselves unable to gain reliable support over the course of the loan negotiations either in Czechoslovakia or in Labour-led Britain, they focused their hopes on France.⁹⁷

A great opportunity to test the opposition's pro-French orientation came in 1926, when it was uncovered that several of the top Horthyist officials were involved in counterfeiting French francs and Czechoslovak korunas.⁹⁸ The ČSR tried to blow out of proportion the 'counterfeiters affair' in the media and at various political forums. In June 1926, Beneš admitted to his Czech colleagues that he considered the talks that followed the discovery of the counterfeiting operation a political success.⁹⁹ Indeed, Bethlen almost resigned under the burden of evidence.¹⁰⁰ As reported to Budapest by the Hungarian envoy in Paris, Baron Frigyes Korányi, 'the Little Entente, the Second International, and the League for Human Rights, together with certain international Jewish circles, are doing their best to discredit the current regime in the eyes of the whole world and to install a Károlyi-style republic in Hungary.'¹⁰¹

In January 1926, Garami arrived in Paris together with another important MSZDP member, József Diner-Dénes. During their visit to the Ministry of the Foreign Affairs, both politicians tried to persuade the Quai d'Orsay officials to take harsh measures against Budapest in order to bring a new, 'unstained' government into power. This new cabinet, as they saw it, had to be led by János Hadik, who had already been suggested for the role in 1921. According to Garami and Diner-Dénes, Hadik's cabinet, although composed of legitimists, would immediately introduce a universal secret ballot. Furthermore, the government of Hadik would include proponents of a reconciliation with the Czechs and the Serbs. Diner-Dénes added that since Beneš had a good grasp of Hungarian internal policy, the ČSR could be very useful in putting pressure on the Horthy regime.¹⁰² However, the intrigues of the Magyar émigrés did not lead to Bethlen's resignation. In August

1926 Garami, distraught by this new failure, informed the Hungarian envoy in Paris of his desire to return to Budapest and participate in the work of the parliament.¹⁰³ The December 1926 elections in Hungary proved that the influence of the democratic opposition had diminished: their number of seats fell, while that of the Unified Party rose to 170.¹⁰⁴

The period 1926–1928 saw a significant improvement in the international standing of Horthy's regime. After the League of Nations lifted the financial and military restrictions imposed on Hungary, Budapest signed friendship treaties with Rome, Ankara, Warsaw, and Sofia and launched a so-called 'active diplomacy'. Bethlen managed to ameliorate his relations not only with Great Britain, but also with France and even the ČSR. The strengthening of Horthy's regime pushed the émigrés to change their tactics. Garami and Buchinger – the leaders of the international branch of the MSZDP – sent out feelers to Budapest, hoping to arrange a compromise for the exiles' return to Hungary. This initiative was apparently supported by the ČSR. In reaction to the new position of the MSZDP, which had started to insist more actively on a revision of the Trianon peace terms, the influential Czech newspaper *Národní politika* wrote on 8 August 1929 that Prague's leftist sympathies remained unchanged: 'It is in our best interest to have Garami or Jászi rule in Hungary instead of Bethlen'.¹⁰⁵ Bethlen's government seriously considered the international potential of the MSZDP and in September 1929 decided to lift criminal charges against important social democrats.¹⁰⁶ As a result, the ten-year exile of several leading members of the MSZDP finally came to an end: in November 1929, Garami and Buchinger safely returned to Hungary. As a proof of the new relationship format between the government and its opponents, Bethlen temporarily recognized the need for a 'democratisation' and agreed to local elections based on a secret ballot.¹⁰⁷ At the same time, as the Hungarian democratic core abroad melted away, Horthy's regime reached the peak of its stability.

The economic crisis and the renaissance of secret collaboration between the Hungarian opposition and Czechoslovakia (1930–32)

Several months after the Wall Street crash of October 1929, the global recession reached Europe. The Great Depression disrupted international trade and finance and threatened not only to ruin the shaky Hungarian economy, but to undermine the power of the Horthy-Bethlen tandem. Conscious of the scale of the upcoming stagnation, Jászi (who had been living in the U.S. since 1924) wrote to Vámbéry on 12 November 1929, 'the Hungarian counter-revolution may turn into chaos... The October programme is more timely today than it was in 1918.'¹⁰⁸

Jászi's forecast was quite correct. As the prices for agricultural produce (which constituted the main Hungarian export) fell rapidly and foreign investment dried up, the Horthyist economy found itself in deep crisis. This was a perfect moment for a new mobilisation of the democratic opposition. In 1930, the social democrats annulled one of the compromise points of the 1921 Bethlen-Peyer Pact, which prohibited public protests, and organised one of the largest manifestations of the interwar period: on 1 September 1930, circa 100 thousand people gathered in protest on the streets of Budapest.¹⁰⁹ After the demonstration, Bethlen became convinced that the ČSR had been instigating the opposition against Horthy's regime.¹¹⁰ The Hungarian envoy in Prague, Szilárd Masirevich, also concluded that Beneš – contrary to his proclaimed desire for a rapprochement with Hungary – was secretly plotting to 'hang a so-called democratic government around our neck'.¹¹¹ The Hungarian authorities suspected that Czechoslovakia's main objective was to suppress the revisionist campaign in Hungary and to 'democratise' Horthy's regime.¹¹² In the spring of 1931, international newspapers reported that Beneš had expressed a desire to see a more 'accommodating government' in Budapest – one that would not press for a revision of the Treaty of Trianon but rather endorse Garami's position on the future of the Hungaro-Czechoslovak relations.¹¹³

Whilst Hungary's economy managed to endure the Great Depression with difficulties, Prague did not miss the opportunity to apply pressure to the beleaguered counter-revolutionary regime. In June of 1930, the ČSR announced its intention to terminate the trade agreement in Hungary; this gave rise to a customs war between the two states, which began in 1931 and lasted for five years,¹¹⁴ catastrophically damaging the Hungarian economy. Moreover, Prague expanded its connections on the Hungarian political scene. The Czechoslovak envoy in Budapest, Václav Pallier, named among open promoters of Hungaro-Czechoslovak reconciliation the social democrats, the liberal democrats, some legitimists (especially ex-Prime Minister István Frie-

drich and ex-Foreign Minister Gusztáv Gratz) and an economist Elemér Hantos.¹¹⁵

Unable to reckon with the economic crisis in Hungary, István Bethlen resigned on 19 August 1931. Bethlen's resignation was met with jubilation in the Czechoslovak press: almost all newspapers wrote that the only way Horthy's regime could deal with the crisis was to introduce a democratic form of government and reconcile with neighbouring countries.¹¹⁶ The new Prime Minister Count Gyula Károlyi was more amenable to a rapprochement with the ČSR, and even listed it as one of his foreign priorities in his first speech in the parliament.¹¹⁷ Károlyi hurriedly engaged into broad-scale diplomatic exchanges with the Czechs.¹¹⁸

The economic hardships (budgetary cuts, failing earnings, and growing unemployment) undermined the Horthyist stabilisation. The opposition political parties recruited masses of new members. The widest popularity was enjoyed not by the MSZDP but the Independent Smallholder's Party, which reportedly had 500 thousand followers.¹¹⁹ Fearing the explosion of public discontent, a state of emergency was declared in September 1931 in the country. This measure did not preclude the spread of the idea of the overthrow the Horthy regime by force if necessary. Most often calls for the use of weapons were heard from the nationalists and the Smallholders.¹²⁰

The Hungarian socialists and the legitimists also intensified their activity, but did not plan to overthrow Horthy through an armed insurrection. First of all, they strove to create a united front that would be able to push through democratic reforms.¹²¹ Additionally both the legitimists and the MSZDP demanded the government in Budapest to initiate a rapprochement with the ČSR.¹²² One of the first coordinated actions carried out by the new democratic anti-Horthyist front was to organise an international congress on Danubian cooperation in Budapest. The goal of the congress was to popularise the idea of removing the high customs barriers that existed between the smaller states in the Central Europe and to bring them closer together politically. Czechoslovak envoy Pallier was approached with the idea for such an event by representatives of the Kossuth Party Pál Auer and Vámbéry in late November 1931.¹²³ The conference – which took place in Budapest on 11–12 February 1932 under the auspices of the Pan-European Movement – was attended by delegates from Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Yugoslavia, and Poland.¹²⁴

Throughout the winter of 1931–1932, the social democrats Garami and Buchinger, as well as the legitimists Gratz, Friedrich, and an economist Hantos made numerous trips to the ČSR.¹²⁵ While Gratz, together with Hantos, became the most visible propagandists of the economic cooperation among the Danube nations (especially among Hungary, Austria and Czechoslovakia), their first discussions with Beneš did not bear fruit. On 19 September 1931 in Geneva, Hantos handed to Beneš, Krofta and the French diplomat André François-Poncet a memorandum with a plan of economic rapprochement between Hungary, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. Hantos assured his interlocutors that he acted in accordance with the influential Defence Minister, General Gyula Gömbös. As Hantos explained, the general, in case he would be appointed Prime Minister, would proceed to the creation of a ‘democratic parliament’ in Budapest (but only if the regional trade will be restored and the Czechoslovak-Hungarian frontier will be modified).¹²⁶ However, even though Hantos’ pronouncements were positively covered by almost all Czech newspapers,¹²⁷ he failed to gain much confidence in Prague. One member of the Czechoslovak intelligence service described him as a clever ‘political opportunist’ who did not have substantial backing in Hungary.¹²⁸

What was probably more important is that the general Gömbös, a well-known chauvinist, could hardly inspire the Czechoslovaks as a negotiating partner. However, as Gömbös’ position was reinforced by the resignation of Bethlen, the prospects of collaborating with him needed examination. In 1931, the Czechoslovak government learned with satisfaction that Gömbös consented to the reduction of the governmental financial aid to the Magyar parties in Slovakia and even prompted the dismissal of its leaders (such as OKSZP President Géza Szüllő).¹²⁹ Moreover, Gömbös, like Beneš, was an ardent opponent of the Habsburg restoration and, apparently considered the economic cooperation among Hungary, Austria and Czechoslovakia as ‘natural’.¹³⁰

When Gratz went to see Beneš in Prague on 12 December 1931 (following a trip to Paris), the results of discussion were limited. The Czech leader rejected the project of the Upper Danube ‘triangle’ of Vienna-Budapest-Prague, stating that he preferred the rapprochement that included the five regional states: the Little Entente members plus Austria and Hungary. Once such a union is realised, Beneš said, the revision of Hungary’s frontiers could be discussed.¹³¹

In the meantime, Prague maintained more cordial relations with its old left-wing partners. Among their exchanges, the case rec-

orded in most detail is that of Garami's visit to Prague in early December 1931, followed by one to Paris. The central topic of his talks with Beneš was a plan of democratisation of Horthy's regime. Garami hoped – just like he did in 1926 – that with French and Czechoslovak help he would be able to force Horthy to approve a transitional government, which was to be led by Hadik. János Hadik had pledged that if he was appointed Prime Minister, he would reform the counter-revolutionary regime and build stronger economic and political ties with the ČSR. Beneš approved of the plan. Garami also reassured him that the new government would dissolve paramilitary organisations and pursue a demilitarisation of Hungary. However, in order to make this 'peaceful revolution' a reality (Garami insisted that Horthy would not leave 'without spilling blood', so he 'had to stay'), Hadik's cabinet would require the funds necessary to lift Hungary out of the financial crisis.¹³² On 21 December 1931, Garami, accompanied by the French socialist Léon Blum, were received by Prime Minister Aristide Briand who promised he would take the same position towards the Garami-Hadik plan as Beneš.¹³³

The conspiratorial activities of the Hungarian opposition and their relations with the Czechoslovak Republic did not go unnoticed by the Budapest government. On 4 February 1932, Gyula Károlyi said in Parliament that he had no objections to the foreign travels of Friedrich and Gratz, but did not support them.¹³⁴ Nevertheless in practice, while the foreign activities of Gratz were indeed tolerated, the Friedrich audience with Beneš cooled down the Czechophile sentiments in the Unified Party circles.¹³⁵ As one party member confessed to the Czechs later that Friedrich's meeting with Beneš might be compared with the potential reception in Budapest of the Czechoslovak general Radola Gajda,¹³⁶ who was accused in 1931 of preparing a putsch.

By spring 1932 it had become clear that most of the initiatives that had been proposed by the advocates of democratisation in Hungary had failed: both the Danubian integration project and that of a transitional government of Hadik were not realised. Although Prague maintained its contacts with the MSZDP and the legitimists, the recent reconciliation between the left and right branches of the anti-Horthyist opposition was bursting at its seams. In order to clarify the situation in Hungary, the Czech journalist Hubert Ripka – a trusted associate of the *Hrad* – made a visit to Budapest from 30 April–2 May 1932. He met with both dissident politicians and members of the Unified Party. In

his report Ripka concluded that 'the militant spirit of the opposition has dwindled' and that a fall of the regime seemed unlikely. 'A revolutionary coup is hardly imaginable', stated Ripka, adding that the Hungarian *frondeurs* placed excessive hopes in Beneš.¹³⁷

It seems that Prague abstained from further involvement into the struggle among different political groups in Hungary. Perhaps Hrad leaders viewed their old left-wing partners too weak, perhaps the personality of right-wing leaders aroused distrust. In any case, according to Hungarian Foreign Ministry data, the ČSR began to cut its financial aid to the 'parasitic Magyar exiles' starting in May 1932, while visits of non-governmental Hungarian politicians to Prague became ever more rare.¹³⁸ It looks quite credible that Prague once again preferred to come in terms with the official Budapest, scarifying the interests of the Hungarian democrats.

It could be speculated that the two governments – in Prague and Budapest – simultaneously agreed to cut their contacts with the opposition movements across their common frontier. Not only did Beneš refrain from further interference into Hungarian politics but also the Károlyi cabinet calmed down the Magyar opposition in Slovakia.¹³⁹

Contemporaneously with the diminution of assistance of each other's opposition circles, Hungary and ČSR were steadily improving their economic relations. A symptom of this was the fact that the ČSR and Hungary signed a compensation trade agreement.¹⁴⁰ On 23 August, giving a press conference, Prime Minister Károlyi presumptuously predicted that this freshly signed agreement 'broke the ice' between Hungary and Czechoslovakia and constituted a first step towards restoring the normal trade relations between them.¹⁴¹ Nevertheless, the ice was not broken on the Danube, and no significant revival of mutual trade happened. Facing failures in his foreign and internal politics, Károlyi resigned in September 1932, leaving the office to the general Gömbös. The new PM strengthened the regent's rule, overcame the acute crisis of the counter-revolutionary regime, and annulled the state of emergency. During the Gömbös era (1932–1936), collaboration between the Hungary's democratic opposition and Prague greatly diminished.

The convoluted and asymmetrical relations that were established between Hungarian democratic circles and the ČSR in 1919 can create an impression that the opposition naively hoped for Prague's altruistic assistance against the regime of Miklós Horthy. Nonetheless,

faith in Czechoslovak democratic principles was not universal among the Hungarian opposition: seeing the oppression of the Magyar minority in Slovakia, they suspected that behind Prague's grand words of civic liberties and people's rule stood the strategic and economic interests of the ČSR. Correspondence, diaries, and memoirs written by the Magyar émigrés demonstrate that whenever Prague hesitated to show full support of the Hungarian democratic project, the exiles would take it as a sign that Beneš and Bethlen were secretly colluding behind the democrats' backs. Their opponents, the followers of Horthy, also doubted Prague's desire to install a democracy in Hungary – and so did a number of independent observers. For instance, as the fake franc scandal unfolded in January 1926, the Foreign Office official Miles Lampson wrote that 'the Little Entente was undoubtedly out for Bethlen's blood': the military bloc was unwilling to see a strong personality at the head of the Hungarian government, since that would interfere with the Little Entente's plans to spread chaos in Hungary. Lampson concluded that all talk of democratisation in Hungary was nothing more than an 'ideal mischievous proposal', which Prague never meant sincerely.¹⁴² Finally, the opponents of Horthy could not consider the democratisation as a panacea for all Hungarian troubles. For example, seeing the scale of Great Depression in his country, Mihály Károlyi wrote to Jászi in July 1932 that "it does not matter if Hungary is ruled by Horthy, Otto or a republican regime like in Czechoslovakia", because a fairer political system would not assure much better economic situation".¹⁴³

After the demise of Bethlen in 1931, Prague seemed to abandon its intensive cooperation with the Hungarian democratic movements for the sake of winning the goodwill of official Budapest. In any case, Hrad had no serious partner among its old anti-Horthyist acquaintances: while the leftist emigration lost much of its previous influence, its home wing was not powerful either. Another of the opposition groups – the legitimists, such as Friedrich or Gratz, also possessed no real influence in Hungary. On the contrary, the new Prime Minister Gömbös, proved to be a popular politician and showed some inclination towards cooperation with Prague. But the following years proved that Gömbös was more disposed towards collaboration with Berlin and Rome.

NOTES

This article was translated from the Russian by Alice Orlova

¹ *Böhm Vilmos. Válogatott politikai levelei. 1914–1949*, eds. Éva Szabó, and László Szűcs (Budapest: Napvilág, 1997), 92.

² *Károlyi Mihály levelezése. IV, B kötet (1940–1944)*, eds. Tibor Hajdu and György Litván (Budapest: Napvilág, 2015), 705.

³ One of the most radical conceptualizations of this approach was developed by Rogers Brubaker who proposed a ‘triadic nexus’ model comprised from three actors (categories): ‘national minority’, ‘nationalising state’, and ‘external national homeland.’ See Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Re-framed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 4.

⁴ See Juraj Kramer, *Iredenta a separatizmus v slovenskej politike* (Bratislava: Slovenské vydavateľstvo politickej literatúry, 1957), and Béla Angyal, *Érdekvédelem és önszerveződés. Fejezetek a csehszlovákiai magyar pártpolitika történetéből 1918–1938* (Galánta–Dunaszerdahely: Lilium Aurum, 2002).

⁵ Connections between the Octobrists and Prague in 1919–1923 have received the most attention. See, László Szarka, “Dunai konföderáció. Egy álom realitása. Jászi Oszkár csehszlovákiai kapcsolatai és a magyar kisebbségi kérdés 1919–1939,” *Századvég* 1 (1986): 52–66; György Litván, *A Twentieth Century Prophet: Oscar Jászi (1875–1957)* (Budapest–New York: CEU Press, 2006); György Litván, “Jászi’s Viennese Years: Building Contacts with the Democratic Left in the Successor States,” *Hungarian Studies Review* 18, no. 1–2 (Spring–Fall 1991): 43–50. A special mention should be given to Zsuzsa L. Nagy’s study of the liberal opposition in Hungary during the 1920s. See, Zsuzsa L. Nagy, *Bethlen liberális ellenzéke. A liberális polgári pártok. 1919–1931* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1980).

⁶ The investigation of relations between Budapest and the Magyar parties in Czechoslovakia face the same problem. The archives of the Magyar parties are unknown, and the historians mainly consult the Budapest documentation gathered by the Hungarian state officials (see: *Dokumentumok az Országos Keresztényszocialista párt történetéhez. 1919–1936*, ed. Angyal Béla (Dunaszerdahely: Lilium Aurum, 2004), and the reports of the Czechoslovak special services, see: *Maďarské politické strany (Krajinská kresťansko-socialistická strana, Maďarská národná strana) na Slovensku v rokoch 1929–1936. Dokumenty*, eds. Mária Ďurkiovská, Soňa Gabzdilová, and Milan Olejník (Košice: Spoločenskovedný ústav SAV, 2012).

⁷ *Dokumenty československé zahraniční politiky. T. A/2 (Československo na pařížské mírové konferenci. 1918–1920). Č. 2 (červen*

1919– červenec 1920), ed. Jindřich Dejemek (Praha: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů, 2011), 83.

⁸ For example, in February 1930 the Hungarian social-democrat Illés Mónus contacted his exiled in Vienna comrade Vilmos Böhm mentioning ‘very important for us financial questions.’ Mónus explained that this issue shall be discussed with Böhm by their fellow Manó Buchinger upon his visit to the Czechoslovak social-democrats. See, *Böhm Vilmos. Válogatott politikai levelei*, 124.

⁹ Naturally, Garami and the Czech social democrats refuted this claim (“Peníze čs.sociální demokracie do Pešti?,” *Lidové noviny*, 7 December 1930, 4).

¹⁰ *Böhm Vilmos. Válogatott politikai levelei*, 91–92.

¹¹ Hugo Vavrečka, “Madarsko. Poměry,” 24 November 1924, kardon 37, fond ZU Budapest, Archiv Ministerstva zahraničních věcí České republiky (Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, hereafter AMZV ČR).

¹² Ignác Romsics, *Magyarország története a XX. században* (Budapest: Osiris, 2010), 222–235.

¹³ György Litván, “Irányzatok és viták a bécsi magyar emigrációban,” *História*, 11, 6 (1989): 25–30.

¹⁴ Henrietta Kiss, “Páneurópa-szekció Magyarországon (1926–1932),” Part 1 and 2, *Valóság* 4–5, 46 (2003).

¹⁵ Bela Bodo, “Hungarian Aristocracy and the White Terror,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 4/45 (2010): 704.

¹⁶ *Dokumenty československé zahraniční politiky*. T. A/2/2, 255.

¹⁷ Juraj Benko, “Maďarská komunistická emigrácia a jej posobenie v rokoch 1919–1921,” *Historický časopis*, 63, 4 (2015): 605–628.

¹⁸ Бела Й. Желицки, and Чилла Б. Желицки, *Венгерские эмиграционные волны и эмигранты. Сер. XIX-конец 50-х годов XX века* (Москва: Индрик, 2012), 189–211. The same motive – creating Czechophile Russian elite – underlay Prague’s decision to offer asylum to Russian exiles after the Civil War. See, Т.Г.Масарик и ‘Русская акция’ Чехословацкого правительства: К 150-летию со дня рождения Т.Г.Масарика. По материалам международной научной конференции. Москва: 2005.

¹⁹ Szarka, “Dunai konföderáció,” 52–66.

²⁰ Varga Lajos, *Garami Ernő. Politikai életrajz* (Budapest: Napvilág, 1996), 301.

²¹ Varga, *Garami Ernő*, 342–343. The Horthyist circles also believed in the economic need for a rapprochement with the ČSR. But the most ardent champions of the idea for the Danubian reconciliation, especially in the form of a Vienna-Budapest-Prague triangle, were the legitimist politicians like Gusztáv Gratz and Tibor Eckhardt, or the economist Elemér Halmos. The

Danubian triangle concept was intensively discussed in the years of the Great Depression.

²² Romsics, *Magyarország története*, 226–227.

²³ Zsuzsa Nagy, 86.

²⁴ Тибор Хайду, “Съезд объединенной партии и принципиальные проблемы рабочей партии в Венгерской Советской Республике,” *Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 15 (1969), 4.

²⁵ Nagy, *Bethlen liberlális ellenzéke*, 57.

²⁶ As reported by the newspaper *Pesti Hírlap*. See, Vacláv Pallier, “Zpráva běžna č.10,” Budapest, 16 April 1932, karton 183, fond Edvard Beneš 1, Archiv Akademie věd České republiky (Archives of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic; hereafter AAV ČR).

²⁷ Data of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Hungary. See, Nagy, *Bethlen liberlális ellenzéke*, 72.

²⁸ *Dokumenty československé zahraniční politiky v roce 1937*. T. A/19/1 (*leden – červenec 1937*), ed. Jindřich Dejemek (Praha: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů, 2007), 257.

²⁹ Zsuzsa Nagy, 84.

³⁰ Nagy, *Bethlen liberlális ellenzéke*, 80–83.

³¹ Litván, *A Twentieth Century Prophet: Oscar Jászi*, 203.

³² “Dr. Fényes Samuel – měsíčník Uj magyarok,” Vienna, 7 October 1932, karton 70, fond KPP. T, AKP ČR.

³³ Pallier to Beneš, copy, Budapest, 5 December 1931, karton 70, fond Kanceláře Prezidenta Republiky. Tajné (the fond of the Office of the President of the Czech Republic. Classified; hereafter KPP. T), Archiv Kanceláře Prezidenta České republiky (the Archives of the Office of the President of the Czech Republic; hereafter AKP ČR). Two weeks after this request *Pesti Napló* editor Rudolf Szántó was invited to meet Beneš in Prague to discuss the financial aid, and the newspaper published his interviews with Beneš and another ČSR Minister Juraj Slávik. The sensational character of these interviews and their deep effect on the Hungarian public was highlighted by the press analysts at the French Foreign Ministry. See, *Bulletin périodique de la presse hongroise*. No 138, 1–2.

³⁴ *Dokumenty československé zahraniční politiky*. T. A/2 (*Československo na pařížské mírové konferenci. 1918–1920*). Sv. 2 (*červen 1919–červenec 1920*), ed. Jindřich Dejemek. (Praha: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů, 2011), 52.

³⁵ Přemysl Šamal, a report on the conversation with Gusztáv Gratz, Prague, 24 July 1932, karton 70, fond KPP. T, AKP ČR.

³⁶ Ates Uslu, “Nous sommes les amis de l’Entente. Le comte Mihály Károlyi dans les années de la Grande Guerre,” *Öt Kontinens* 5 (2007): 263–287.

³⁷ Manó Buchinger, *Tanúvallomás. Az Októberi forradalom*

tragédiája (Budapest: Népszava, 1936), 79–90.

³⁸ Tibor Hajdu, *Ki volt Károlyi Mihály* (Budapest: Napvilág, 2012), 128–130; Mihály Károlyi, *Hit, illúziók nélkül* (Budapest: Magvető, 1978), 208; *Jászi Oszkár naplója*, ed. György Litván (Budapest: MTA TTI, 2001), 67.

³⁹ Milan Hodža headed the Czechoslovak mission at Budapest in November 1918–March 1919.

⁴⁰ Rezső Krejcsi, Unnamed document. Report on a meeting with the ČSR Prime Minister Vlastimil Tusar (August 1919), cs. 1/1919, 2 tétel, fond K 96, Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára (National Archives of Hungary; hereafter MNL OL)

⁴¹ *Francia diplomáciai iratok a Kárpát-medence történetéről, Vol. 2* (1919–1920), eds. Magda Ádám and Mária Ormos (Budapest: Akadémiai, 2004), 43–44; *Dokumenty československé zahraniční politiky. T. A/2/2*, 63.

⁴² *Dokumenty československé zahraniční politiky. T. A/2/2*, 77–78, 83, 89–90. The participation of the democrats in the Friedrich government was not approved by all Octobrists. In early August 1919, Jászi tried to persuade Garami and other moderate socialists to keep distance from the ‘clerical-militarist-royalist’ government in Budapest. See: Litván, *A Twentieth Century Prophet: Oscar Jászi*, 196.

⁴³ *Dokumenty československé zahraniční politiky. T. A/2/2*, 83.

⁴⁴ Robert Pejša, *Vztahy Československa a Maďarska v letech 1918-1939* (Praha: Karolinum, 2017), 173.

⁴⁵ Zsuzsa Nagy, *Bethlen liberlális ellenzéke*, 11–13.

⁴⁶ *Dokumenty československé zahraniční politiky. T. A/2/2*, 90.

⁴⁷ *Jászi Oszkár naplója*, 67–68; *Jászi Oszkár válogatott levelei*, ed. György Litván (Budapest: Magvető, 1991), 230–231. In October 1919, the Magyar left-wing exile agreed on the formation of the liberal-democratic coalition government for Hungary under the leadership of István Bárcza, Lovászi and Garami. Jászi obtained the promise of support for this government from the Austrian Chancellor Karl Renner. See: Litván, *A Twentieth Century Prophet: Oscar Jászi*, 201.

⁴⁸ *Francia diplomáciai iratok, K. 2*, 108–109; on 27 September 1919, Garami sent a letter to the French socialist Jean Longuet, in which he also suggested the idea of a foreign intervention in Hungary and a forced removal of Friedrich from power in order to ‘protect the democracy and the republic in Hungary’. See, Sándor Vadász, “Garami Ernő publikálatlan levele Jean Longuethoz a demokratikus intervenció ügyében (1919 szeptember 27),” *Történelmi szemle*, 1 (1979): 101–104.

⁴⁹ Milan Hodža, “Referat z Madarska,” 17 December 1919, fond Edvard Beneš 1, AAV ČR.

⁵⁰ *Dokumenty československé zahraniční politiky. T. A/2/2*, 207–209.

⁵¹ *Jászi Oszkár naplója*, 97–98; Litván, *A Twentieth Century Prophet: Oscar Jászi*, 209–210.

⁵² Желицки, Желицки, *Венгерские эмиграционные волны*, 195–96.

⁵³ *Jászi Oszkár naplója*, 117.

⁵⁴ *Dokumenty československé zahraniční politiky. T. A/3 (Československá zahraniční politika a vznik Malé dohody. 1920–1921). Č. 1 (4. červen 1920–31. květen 1921)*, ed. Jindřich Dejmek (Praha: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů, 2004), 205–206.

⁵⁵ *Jászi Oszkár naplója*, 135, 142.

⁵⁶ Litván, *A Twentieth Century Prophet: Oscar Jászi*, 222–223.

⁵⁷ In February 1921, the ČSR Foreign Minister Beneš declared in parliament that Prague wished to see a republic installed in Hungary; in March 1921, he repeated this statement to the Hungarian Prime Minister, Pál Teleki. See, Lajos Geceşenyi, and Péter Sipos, “Gratz Gusztáv emlékiratai,” *Történelmi szemle* 3–4 (2000): 336–337; “Bruck a/d Leitha, Feljegyzés. II ülés,” 15 March 1921, Filmtár. 808. Res.Pol. 1921. tet. 4, MNL OL.

⁵⁸ *Jászi Oszkár válogatott levelei*, 257.

⁵⁹ *Dokumenty československé zahraniční politiky. T. A/3/2*, 595. In April 1921, the ČSR *chargé* in Budapest, Lejhanec, recommended to Prague to soften its attitude on the governance type in Hungary. The diplomat wrote that even if foreign states would have managed to exert more influence on Hungarian internal policy, it would be difficult to introduce ‘real republican democracy’ at Budapest (Václav Lejhanec. “Demise mad.ministra věcí zahraničních Dr. Grätze“, Budapest, 9 April 1921, karton 37, fond ZU Budapešt, AMZV ČR). However, a desire to have a republic in Hungary was still alive in Prague. At least until the next autumn, the ČSR intentionally avoided calling Hungary ‘a kingdom’ (“Madarsko – otázka vládního režimu”, 2 November 1922, karton 37, fond ZU Budapešt, AMZV ČR).

⁶⁰ *Jászi Oszkár naplója*, 225–228.

⁶¹ No 2525/21, 29 October 1921, karton 175, fond EB 1, AAV ČR.

⁶² *Dokumenty československé zahraniční politiky. T. A/3 (Československá zahraniční politika a vznik Malé dohody. 1920–1921). Č. 2 (1. červen – 31. prosinec 1921)*, ed. Jindřich Dejmek. (Praha: Ústav mezinárodních vztahů, 2004), 266–267.

⁶³ Beneš to London. No 6640/204. 29 October 1921, karton 175, fond EB 1, AAV ČR; British Foreign Office analysts could not agree on the veracity of this information. While it was considered true in the British mission in Budapest, the British Commercial Secretary in Prague, Bruce Lockhart, found it amusing: he could not imagine Masaryk, the university professor, ‘plotting in the recesses of his library’. See, Dragan Bakić, *Britain and Interwar Danubian Europe: Foreign Policy and Security Challenges* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 41.

⁶⁴ Feistmantel to the Czechoslovak MFA, Budapest, 5 November

1921, karton 175, fond EB 1, AAV ČR.

⁶⁵ Kamil Krofta, *Diplomatický deník. 1919–1922* (Praha: Karolinum, 2009), 236–237.

⁶⁶ *Jászi Oszkár naplója*, 253.

⁶⁷ *Jászi Oszkár naplója*, 282.

⁶⁸ Krofta, *Diplomatický deník*, 259.

⁶⁹ *Jászi Oszkár naplója*, 263–264; Litván, *A Twentieth Century Prophet: Oscar Jászi*, 239. In spite of the cooling off between the Magyar émigrés and Prague, their collaboration was not over, and Jászi remained a Czech ‘trusted person’. For example, the Czech authorities conditioned the removal of the Slovak ban of the *Bécsi Magyar Újság* by the appointment of Jászi at the head of its editorial board (Litván, *A Twentieth Century Prophet: Oscar Jászi*, 227). Moreover, as the newspaper continued to struggle with financial difficulties, Beneš granted a loan to Jászi to keep the newspaper alive (*Jászi Oszkár naplója*, 349, 353). Later, as Jászi’s financial situation in Vienna became more difficult, Masaryk proposed to allow the Hungarian newspaper *Világ*, where Jászi anonymously published his articles, to be distributed in Slovakia. Also, Beneš supported Jászi’s application for an American visa. Even Jászi’s move to the Oberlin College, Ohio in 1925, where he taught for the rest of his life, could be related to the Czech assistance. The head of the Hungarian mission in Washington reported to Budapest that this appointment was negotiated by an Oberlin professor of Czech descent who was a close acquaintance of Masaryk (Litván, *A Twentieth Century Prophet: Oscar Jászi*, 307).

⁷⁰ *Dokumenty československé zahraniční politiky*, T. A/3/2, 49–53.

⁷¹ *Dokumenty československé zahraniční politiky*, T. A/3/2, 90–91.

⁷² *Dokumenty československé zahraniční politiky*, T. A/3/2, 148.

⁷³ Maria Ormos, *Magyarország a két világháború korában, 1914–1945* (Debrecen: Csokonai, 1998), 100–101.

⁷⁴ Nagy, *Bethlen liberális ellenzéke*, 52–55.

⁷⁵ Ernst Oltó, “Beneš nyilatkozik a magyar demokrácia jövőjéről. Beszélgetés a csehszlovák miniszterelnökkel,” *Bécsi Magyar Újság*. 11 June 1922, 1.

⁷⁶ Miklós Lojkó, *Meddling in Middle Europe. Britain and the “lands between”. 1919–1925* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2005), 167–168.

⁷⁷ Zsuzsanna Boros and Dániel Szabó, *Parlamentarizmus Magyarországon (1867–1944): parlament, pártok, választások* (Budapest: ELTE, 2014), 236–237; Nagy, *Bethlen liberális ellenzéke*, 91.

⁷⁸ *Jászi Oszkár naplója*, 291.

⁷⁹ Nagy, *Bethlen liberális ellenzéke*, 58.

⁸⁰ Lojkó, *Meddling in Middle Europe*, 168.

⁸¹ Árpád Hornyák, *Hungarian-Yugoslav diplomatic relations. 1918–*

1927 (East European Monographs: New York, 2013), 166.

⁸² Nagy, *Bethlen liberlális ellenzéke*, 113.

⁸³ Hugo Vavrečka, “Otázka mad.emigrantu v exposé ministra Beneš,” Budapest, 6 November 1923, karton 177, fond EB 1, AAV ČR.

⁸⁴ “Hlášení leg.rady Dr. Jar. Nováka,” karton 177, fond EB 1, AAV ČR.

⁸⁵ Nagy, *Bethlen liberlális ellenzéke*, 102.

⁸⁶ “Protokol o schuzce Dr. Beneše s Bethlenem a Daruváry ve dne 6 září 1923,” karton 177, fond EB 1, AAV ČR; Memo “A miniszterelnök és külügyminiszter uraknak Benešsel folytatott beszélgetése,” Geneva, 6 September 1923, Cs. 38, 1923, tétel 7/4, fond K 96, MNL OL.

⁸⁷ “Protokol o schuzce Dr. Beneše s Bethlenem a Daruváry ve dne 9 září 1923,” karton 177, fond EB 1, AAV ČR; Memo “A miniszterelnök és külügyminiszter uraknak Benešsel folytatott második beszélgetése,” Geneva, 9 September 1923, cs. 38, 1923, tétel 7/4, fond K 96, MNL OL.

⁸⁸ Quoted from Nagy, *Bethlen liberlális ellenzéke*, 114.

⁸⁹ From letters written by Lajos Bíró (1 February 1924) and Pál Szende (2 October 1923) to Oszkár Jászi. Quoted from Nagy, *Bethlen liberlális ellenzéke*, 113–114.

⁹⁰ From a letter written by Mihály Károlyi to Oszkár Jászi (18 January 1924). Quoted from Nagy, *Bethlen liberlális ellenzéke*, 114.

⁹¹ Károlyi, *Hit, illúziók nélkül*, 250–251.

⁹² Magyar Távirati Iroda (The Hungarian Telegraph Agency). Napi hírek (Daily news). 1924.02.10, 21–22.

⁹³ Ignác Romsics, *Bethlen István. Politikai életrajz* (Budapest: Osiris, 2005), 234–235.

⁹⁴ Jindřich Dejmek, *Nenaplněné naděje: politické a diplomatické vztahy Československa a Velké Británie od zrodu První republiky po konferenci v Mnichově (1918–1938)* (Praha: Karolinum, 2003), 101.

⁹⁵ Nagy, *Bethlen liberlális ellenzéke*, 118.

⁹⁶ Romsics, *Bethlen István*, 236.

⁹⁷ Nagy, *Bethlen liberlális ellenzéke*, 127.

⁹⁸ As stated by Edvard Beneš, the total damage caused by the counterfeiters to the Czechoslovak economy in 1921–1922 amounted to 6 million korunas; a further 25 million in fake notes were confiscated by border police. See, *Edvard Beneš, Cirkulární telegramy. 1920–1935*, ed. Jindřich Dejmek (Praha: Společnost Edvarda Beneše, 2002), 106.

⁹⁹ *Edvard Beneš, Cirkulární telegramy*, 114–115.

¹⁰⁰ *Horthy Miklós titkos iratai*, eds. Miklós Szinai and László Szücs (Budapest: Kossuth, 1962), 72–77.

¹⁰¹ Quoted from Nagy, *Bethlen liberlális ellenzéke*, 160. Mihály Károlyi indeed used his connections with the Foreign Ministry of France. The former President of Hungary petitioned the French to threaten Horthy and his

Prime Minister with a lawsuit unless they agreed to introduce universal secret male suffrage and create a coalition cabinet in cooperation with the opposition (*Francia diplomáciai iratok a Kárpát-medence történetéről*. K. IV (1922–1927), eds. Magda Ádám and Mária Ormos (Budapest: Gondolat, 2010), 255–257).

¹⁰² *Francia diplomáciai iratok*. K. IV, 269–270.

¹⁰³ Romsics, *Bethlen István*, 249.

¹⁰⁴ Nagy, *Bethlen liberális ellenzéke*, 179.

¹⁰⁵ Magyar Távirati Iroda. Napi hírek, 3 August 1929.

¹⁰⁶ Minisztertanácsnak Jegyzőkönyve, No 1, 27 September 1929.

Fond Miniszterelnökség, K. 27, MNL OL.

¹⁰⁷ Romsics, *Bethlen István*, 296–297.

¹⁰⁸ *Jászi Oszkár válogatott levelei*, 315.

¹⁰⁹ Ormos, *Magyarország a két világháború korában*, 130.

¹¹⁰ *Iratok az ellenforradalom történetéhez*. K. IV (*A magyar ellenforradalmi rendszer külpolitikája. 1927. 1 január–1931. 24 augusztus*), ed. Elek Karsai (Budapest: Kossuth, 1967), 443–447.

¹¹¹ Szilárd Masirevich, Pol. jelentés No 144/1930 “Beneš-féle laphangok Magyarországról,” 27 May 1930, cs. 41, 1930, tétel 7/7, k. 96, MNL OL.

¹¹² Magda Adám, “A magyar-csehszlovák államközi kapcsolatok a két világháború között,” in László Szarka, ed., *Szomszédok hármastükörben. A magyar-csehszlovák történelem egyesbizottság negyedszázada (1959–1984)* (Budapest: Akadémiai, 1987), 247.

¹¹³ Magyar Távirati Iroda. Napi hírek, 19 March 1930.

¹¹⁴ Marta Romportlová, *ČSR a Madarsko. 1918–1938. Bezprostřední vývojová báze a průběh obchodně politických vztahů* (Brno: Univerzita J. A. Purkyně v Brně, 1986), 83–84.

¹¹⁵ Václav Pallier, “Zpráva běžná č.4,” Budapest, 16 January 1932, karton 183, fond EB 1, AAV ČR.

¹¹⁶ At least as claimed in the Czech press analysis at the French Foreign Ministry. See, *Bulletin périodique de la presse tchécoslovaque*. No 38 (6 juin–2 octobre 1931) (Ministère des Affaires étrangères (hereafter MAE), 1931).

¹¹⁷ *Képviselőházi napló, 1931. K. I* (Budapest: Ahtenaem, 1931), 357.

¹¹⁸ Romportlová, *ČSR a Madarsko*, 85–86.

¹¹⁹ Václav Pallier, “Zpráva běžná č.10,” Budapest, 16 April 1932, karton 183, fond EB 1, AAV ČR.

¹²⁰ On 28 November 1931, the Hungarian police arrested a group of conspirators from the ultra-right-wing radicals who were preparing a putsch (*Bulletin périodique de la presse hongroise*. No 137 (1 novembre–17 décem-

bre 1931) (MAE, 1932), 6). In the summer of 1932, foreign diplomats in Budapest commented that the position of Károlyi's cabinet remained shaky, while the 'desperate heads' like the Defense Minister Gyula Gömbös and the Smallholder deputies Gáal and Tibor Eckhardt could venture to seize power by armed means (*Francia diplomáciai iratok*. K. V, 344–346.).

¹²¹ *Bulletin périodique de la presse hongroise*. No 138 (18 décembre 1931–6 février 1932) (MAE, 1932), 6.

¹²² *Bulletin périodique de la presse hongroise*. No 138, 2.

¹²³ Václav Pallier, "Sbližení s Madarskem. Snahy Auer-Vambery," Budapest, 28 November 1931, karton 37, fond ZU Budapest, AMZV ČR.

¹²⁴ *Bulletin périodique de la presse hongroise*. No 139 (7 février–20 mars 1932) (MAE, 1932), 7; Václav Pallier, "Zpráva běžná č. 6," Budapest, 18 February 1932, karton 183, fond EB 1, AAV ČR.

¹²⁵ "Összefoglaló politikai jelentés az 1932-ről," cs. 46, 1932, tétel 7/1, K. 96, MNL OL. Elemér Hantos was an economic expert hired by the League of Nations. From the mid-1920s he had been actively popularizing the idea of the economic cooperation in Central Europe.

¹²⁶ Bohumila Ferenčuhová, "La Tchécoslovaquie et le plan Tardieu," *Revue d'Europe centrale* 2 (5) 1997: 21.

¹²⁷ *Bulletin périodique de la presse tchécoslovaque*. No 39 (3 octobre–17 décembre 1931) (MAE, 1931), 5.

¹²⁸ "Informace. Hantoš Elemér," 18 December 1931, karton 70, fond KPP. T, AKP ČR.

¹²⁹ Béla Angyal, *Érdekvédelem és önszerveződés. Fejezetek a csehszlovákiai magyar pártpolitika történetéből 1918–1938* (Dunaszerdahely: Lilium Aurum, 2002), 177.

¹³⁰ Marta Romportlová, and Zdeněk Sládek, "Integrační středoevropský plán A. Tardieua a československá a maďarská politika," *Sborník prací Filozofické fakulty Brněnské univerzity* 25/26 (1978–1979): 89.

¹³¹ Edvard Beneš, *Cirkulární telegramy*, 180–181.

¹³² *Francia diplomáciai iratok*. K. V, 304–307; Catherine Horel, "La Hongrie et le plan Tardieu," *Revue d'Europe centrale* 5, 2 (1997) : 73–85.

¹³³ Stefan Osuský, "Garami u Brianda," 23 December 1931, karton 156, fond EB 1, AAV ČR.

¹³⁴ *Bulletin périodique de la presse hongroise*. No 139, 5.

¹³⁵ Václav Pallier, "Zpráva periodická č.1 za leden a únor 1932," Budapest, 16 March 1932, karton 183, fond EB 1, AAV ČR.

¹³⁶ Hugo Ripka, "Informační zájezd do Pešti ve dnech 30 dubna až 2 května 1932," karton 183, fond EB 1, AAV ČR.

¹³⁷ Ripka, "Informační zájezd do Pešti." Among different opposition leaders in Budapest, Ripka found István Friedrich the most interesting person to cooperate with (Letter of István Friedrich, 22 May 1932, karton 183, fond EB 1, AAV ČR). However, Prague hesitated to favour the right radicals.

When in July 1932, Friedrich and Gratz arrived to Prague, hoping to meet Masaryk and Beneš, they waited in vain for a couple of weeks. Finally Friedrich was granted audience at the Hrad on 23 July, where he told Chancellor Přemysl Šamal that his supporters were preparing a coup for the autumn of 1932. After the seizure of power, Friedrich promised to introduce general and secret vote (Přemysl Šamal, a report on the conversation with István Friedrich, Prague, 23 July 1932, karton 70, fond KPP. T, AKP ČR).

¹³⁸ “Összefoglaló politikai jelentés az 1932-ről.”

¹³⁹ Czechoslovak intelligence reported in April 1932 that Hungary’s Foreign Minister Lajos Walkó had warned the OKSZP long-standing leader Szüllő that there was no money in Budapest to finance the Magyar parties in Slovakia (*Maďarské politické strany*, 44–51). Another Czechoslovak report recorded the birth of an ‘activist movement’ within the OKSZP which aimed at replacing Szüllő as the party president by the young and moderate Count János Esterházy (“Blok maďarských opozičních stran na Slovensku,” Prague, 7 April 1932, karton 19, fond ZU Budapešt, AMZV ČR). On 18 August 1932 Szüllő indeed resigned from the Presidency of the OKSZP.

¹⁴⁰ *Bulletin périodique de la presse tchécoslovaque*. No 43, 6.

¹⁴¹ Václav Pallier, “Zpráva period. č.4 za červenec a srpen 1932,” Budapest, 5 September 1932, karton 183, fond EB 1, AAV ČR.

¹⁴² Quoted from Bakić, *Britain and Interwar Danubian Europe*, 47.

¹⁴² *Károlyi Mihály levelezése*. IV, A kötet (1930–1940), eds. Tibor Hajdu and György Litván (Budapest: Napvilág, 2015), 134, 138.