

The Attitude of the Entente Powers to Gyula Peidl's Government in Hungary (August 1919) – in the Spirit of Distrust, Unwillingness and Information Disorientation¹

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On 1 August 1919 the top political officials of the Hungarian Republic of Councils (*Magyar Tanácsköztársaság*), at the joint session of the “soviet” government, the Revolutionary Governing Council (*Forradalmi Kormányzótanács*) and the leaders of the joint party of the Hungarian social democrats and communists, the Party of Socialist-Communist Workers of Hungary (*Szocialista-Kommunista Munkások Magyarországi Pártja*), recognized the hopelessness of the military and foreign political situation of the Republic of Councils and passed the government of the country to the oppositional right-wing and centrist social democrats. They created the unicolour social-democratic government, to be led by Gyula Peidl, the leader of the right-wing social democrats, former minister of labour and social affairs of Berinkey's² cabinet of “Károlyi's” republic, who had not agreed to the union of the Hungarian social democrats with the communists on 21 March 1919, which had declared the Hungarian Republic of Councils together on the same day. That was the end of the 133 days of existence of the Hungarian Republic of Councils. As Peidl's government consisted mostly of trade union leaders, it is also called “trade union” government.

The assumption of power by the right-wing and centrist social-democratic trade union leaders was also indirect result of the July negotiations of the opposition socialists with the Entente representatives in Vienna, aimed at peaceful removal of “Kun's” government and its substitution by the unicolour social-democratic government, i.e. by a left-wing, but standard, civic cabinet. The July negotiations of the Hungarian opposition social democrats with the Entente representatives in Vienna were held under the main leadership of Colonel Thomas Cuninghame, chief of the

¹ The article constitutes a part of solution of the Grant Project No. P410/10/P140, *Czechoslovak-Hungarian bilateral relationships on the background of home affairs development of Horthyian Hungary in 1919–1927*, funded by the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic.

² Dénes Berinkey's government ruled from 11 January 1919 to 21 March 1919.

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British military mission to Vienna, and Vilmos Böhm, social-democratic centrist, the Hungarian envoy to Austria.³

But the negotiations of the Hungarian “rebellious” socialists with the Entente representatives in Vienna did not gain confidence and direct international support to their project by the representatives of the Entente Powers. The result of the session of the Supreme Council of the Paris Peace Conference on internal development in Hungary at the very end of the Republic of Councils consisted only in adoption of a neutrally formulated declaration at its afternoon meeting of 26 July 1919. The top Entente officials at the Paris Peace Conference stated in their declaration that they did not wish to negotiate with a Budapest government that did not represent the Hungarian nation and violated the armistice and that the release of the blockage against Hungary together with food aid to the country and support to economic restoration of the country was only possible if Hungary was governed by a cabinet representing the Hungarian nation and not by a government whose authority was based on terror. Besides, it was for the first time after more than four months of the existence of the Hungarian Republic of councils that the Peace Conference declared categorically that it was definitely not willing to negotiate with the government of the Republic of Councils.⁴

So the declaration of the Peace Conference did not support any opposition direction against “Kun's” regime and did not offer any guarantee to the possible unicolour social-democratic cabinet of Hungary to be recognized by the Peace Conference. The neutrality of the declaration of the Peace Conference on the Hungarian issue, in response to the Vienna negotiations between the Entente representatives in Vienna and Böhm, the Hungarian envoy to Austria, was also confirmed in the telegram from 29

³ The Hungarian diplomatic representation to Vienna was the first diplomatic mission of Budapest, enjoying the statute of embassy even before entering into the Peace Treaty with Hungary on 4 June 1920. For the above stated negotiations of the Hungarian social democrats in Vienna compare A. TÓTH, *Úsilí opozičního křídla sociálních demokratů za Maďarské republiky rad sesadit „sovětský“ kabinet (1919)*, in: *Moderní dějiny*, Vol. 12, 2004 particularly pp. 97–109.

⁴ For the declaration of the Peace Conference see e.g. *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States. The Paris Peace Conference. 1919.* (Hereinafter referred to only as “FRUS PPC”.) Vol. VII. *The Council of Heads of Delegations: Minutes of Meetings July 1 to August 28, 1919*, Washington, United States Government Printing Office 1946, minutes on point 2 of the session of the Supreme Council of the Paris Peace Conference (hereinafter referred to only as “SC PPC”) on 26 July 1919 (*Hungarian Affairs*), pp. 317–322, or pp. 321–322. For the wording of the declaration of the Paris Peace Conference see also the Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic [hereinafter referred to only as “AMZV”], *Telegramy došlé [Delivered telegrams]*, 1919, (No. 1001–1200), No. 1037, circular from Paris from 27 July 1919; there the declaration wording in French.

July 1919 by Vlastimil Tusar, the Czechoslovak Prime Minister, to Edvard Beneš, the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister staying in Paris. Tusar communicated to Beneš with regard to the above stated declaration that “*the declaration of the Allied governments on Hungary and Kun’s government is vague.*”⁵ Nevertheless, the declaration of the Peace Conference granted some “mandate” to the efforts of the socialists to move the top political officials of the Republic of Councils to recognize the need to pass the government of the country in the interest of Hungary, and that “mandate”, although vague, could “legalize” their effort in front of die-hard advocates of the “soviet” regime.

Only Guido Romanelli, an Italian lieutenant colonel and head of the Italian military mission to Budapest, was available to Peidl’s government for direct contact with the Entente representatives. The other Entente representatives, except for the representatives of the Italian military mission, had left Hungary immediately after the Hungarian “soviet” Republic had been declared. But in spite of that, the Italian military mission to Budapest did not move the other Entente Powers to recognize it as the official representative of the Entente to Hungary, because they feared the possible growth of the power role of Italy in the region.⁶

Virtually immediately, on 1 August 1919, after the consultations with the new political representatives, Romanelli informed Georges-Benjamin Clemenceau, the president of the Supreme Council of the Paris Peace Conference, about the change of regime in Hungary based on the Vienna agreements between the Vienna Entente representatives, specifically between Prince Livio Borghese, the Italian Entente representative, and Sir Cuninghame, the head of the British military mission. Their merit was the deposition of the “soviet” system and its substitution by a temporary regime to lead the country until the composition of the governmental cabinet with the representatives of all social classes under the surveillance of an Entente commission and during which the Entente would release the blockade against Hungary and adopt immediate actions for delivery of food and coal to the country and restore the suspended Danube navigation. Böhm, the Hungarian envoy to Austria, was to assume the leadership of the temporary regime. But the proposals of the Vienna Entente representatives that would lead to normalization of relationships between Hungary and the Entente Powers had emerged without consulting the Peace Conference. Therefore the Conference did not adopt them as basis for solution

⁵ AMZV, Paris Archive [hereinafter “PA”], book No. 87 (No. 10281–10838), doc. No. 10401 [the same doc.: book No. 85 (No. 10034–10222), doc. No. 10099].

⁶ The issue of the activity of the Italian military mission to Hungary is studied in more detail by: Zs. L. NAGY, *Az olasz érdekek és Magyarország 1918–1919-ben*, in: *Történelmi Szemle*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 1965, pp. 256–274; see particularly pp. 263–273.

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of the Hungarian issue and at its above stated session of 26 July, it did not express addressed support to the rebelling Hungarian social democrats and grant them the necessary international political mandate to overthrow the socialist-communist government, in spite of the fact that the fragile internal situation of the Hungarian “soviet” Republic by the end of July seemed extremely convenient for liquidation of “Kun’s” regime from inside, without needing an external military intervention.⁷

The international political support to the new Hungarian Cabinet played a key role in it. Not only from the perspective of its internal situation. The primary and most delicate task of the new Hungarian Government was to stop the march of the Rumanian army to Budapest. Immediately before the fall of the Republic of Councils, on 30 July 1919, the Rumanians had crossed the Tisza River that had separated the Hungarian and Rumanian armies from the turn of April and May, near the town of Szolnok without authorization of the Entente Powers and had started advancing towards Budapest. As the Rumanian army was an allied army fighting against the Hungarian “soviet” government, it was necessary to gain foreign political support to the new Hungarian Cabinet as soon as possible, or to move the Supreme Council of the Paris Peace Conference to command Bucharest immediately to stop the advance of its army on the capital of Hungary. Romanelli’s telegram to Paris, informing the Peace Conference of the assumption of power by the new government in Budapest, included therefore the proposal of a bilateral armistice between the Hungarian and Rumanian army aimed at stopping mutual hostility, stopping the advance of the Rumanians towards the capital of Hungary and delimiting the temporary demarcation line between the two armies.⁸

Also the Vienna Entente representatives tried to help the new Hungarian Government to achieve international political recognition by the Peace Conference. The negotiations of Vilmos Böhm, the Hungarian envoy to Vienna, and Jakab Weltner, the opposition social democrat with the Vienna Entente representatives, took place in the evening of 1 August 1919 already. On the day of removal of “Kun’s” government, they met

⁷ For the agreed conditions of the possible agreement between the Entente Powers and the representatives of the rebelling Hungarian social democrats see FRUS PPC, VII., Annex A to point 3 of the morning session of SC PPC on 26 July 1919 (*Hungarian Affairs*), p. 310 or *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1910–1939*, First Series. Volume I–X, London 1947–1960 [hereinafter referred to only as “DBFP”], Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, Vol. IV., London 1952, doc. No. 57, p. 90.

⁸ Compare e.g.: FRUS PPC, VII., Annex A to point 1 of the session of SC PPC on 2 August 1919 (*Situation in Hungary*), pp. 489–490 (Romanelli’s telegram in English here) or DBFP, Vol. I., London 1947, p. 7930 (Romanelli’s telegram in French here). For Romanelli’s telegram see also AMZV, PA, book 41, microfiche No. 1 (No. 4489–4551), doc. No. 4534, fol. 2 (Romanelli’s telegram in French here too).

Colonel Cuninghame, the head of the British military mission to Vienna and Prince Livio Borghese, the Italian Entente representative. On 2 August, another meeting was held, that time only with Borghese. The talks resulted in intervention of Henri Allizé, the French envoy to Vienna, and Colonel Cuninghame, the chief of the Vienna British military mission at the Supreme Council of the Peace Conference in order to release the blockade of Hungary. Böhm, the Hungarian envoy to Austria, met, together with Weltner, also the representative of the United States to Vienna, Captain Thomas Gregory, authorized representative of the American mission for post-war help to Europe or the head of the Agency for Supply to Central Europe, respectively. But, according to Böhm's statement, they did not negotiate about political issues with him, but only about economic issues, or more exactly about the release of the blockade of Hungary. They asked him to assist the Hungarian Government in the issue of solution of the catastrophic supply of foodstuffs to the country.⁹

The Supreme Council of the Paris Peace Conference dealt with Romanelli's telegram at its meeting of 2 August. Both the Italian and the British Prime Minister, Tommaso Titoni and Arthur James Balfour, pointed out that the Supreme Council of the Peace Conference itself had not created any conditions to Hungary, and therefore had not committed itself towards Hungary in any way. Balfour stressed that the internal matters of Hungary should not be any of business of the Peace Conference, and therefore it should not set the condition that Hungary had an ordinary government, or how the Hungarian Government should look like, respectively. Also Clemenceau, the President of the Peace Conference, stressed that on 26 July 1919, the Supreme Council had agreed that the arrangements agreed in Vienna between Böhm and Prince Borghese did not commit the Peace Conference in any way. He reminded at the same time that the Entente had not recognized Böhm officially.¹⁰

⁹ B. KIRSCHNER, *A „szakszervezeti kormány“ hat napja*, Budapest 1968, pp. 172–173 and W. BÖHM, or V. BÖHM, *Im Kreuzfeuer zweier Revolutionen*, München 1924, p. 528. See also Böhm's private report from Vienna to Ágoston, the Hungarian foreign minister, from 5 August 1919 in Politikátörténeti Intézet Levéltára (hereinafter referred to only as “PIL”), 689. f. Ágoston Péter és Ágoston Péterné gyűjteménye [Péter Ágoston's and His Wife's Collection], 6. ő. e. Ágoston Péter külügyi megbízatásai idején keletkezett iratok. [Documents created during Péter Ágoston's activity in the services of the ministry of foreign affairs]. See Böhm's report from 5 August 1919: *Kibontakozási tárgyalások* [Negotiation aimed at solution of the situation in Hungary; the file includes three different summary reports by Böhm from Vienna, dated 5 August 1919] to Ágoston, the foreign minister (the report was sent also to Peidl, the minister president; compare *ibidem*, fol. 43) fol. 43–47, or 44–47.

¹⁰ FRUS PPC, VII., point 1 of the agenda of the session of SC PPC on 2 August 1919 (*Situation in Hungary*), pp. 480–483; see also DBFP, I./I., doc. No. 26, pp. 294–297.

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But the Entente representatives realized that, on account of the fall of the Budapest “soviet” government, the Rumanian military action became ungrounded. Both the British and the Italian foreign ministers expressed identically that the Rumanians had to be called by the Supreme Council to stop the advance of their army and that the Rumanians – as Balfour expressed it – “*must obey.*”¹¹ But Tittoni, the Italian foreign minister, proposed their stopping at the line achieved by them at the moment, and not their immediate withdrawal beyond the Rumanian-Hungarian border declared in June. Tittoni proposed to send the call of withdrawal of the Rumanian army beyond the Rumanian-Hungarian border to Bucharest only, “*if the Hungarians gave evidence of good behaviour.*”¹²

But the Supreme Council of the Paris Peace Conference refused Romanelli's demand on behalf of the new Hungarian Government to be allowed to make bilateral armistice between Hungary and Rumania. But the new armistice was refused not only by the British foreign minister¹³ but also by Clemenceau, the President of the Peace Conference. Clemenceau refused it with the substantiation that the only valid armistice was the armistice made between the Entente Powers and Hungary in Belgrade on 13 November 1918.¹⁴ The British foreign minister also stressed that “*he would adhere strictly to the armistice [understand as the Belgrade Armistice – A. T.], and call on the Hungarians to observe it.*”¹⁵ So the issue of stopping the Rumanian army, or the issue of their final withdrawal beyond the defined Hungarian-Rumanian border, promised by the Supreme Council to Garbai's “soviet” cabinet already, was unconditionally linked to the condition of disarmament of Hungary according to the provisions of Belgrade Armistice.

The answer of the President of the Supreme Council of the Paris Peace Conference to Lieutenant Colonel Romanelli, the head of the Italian military mission to Budapest, corresponded to the above stated moments of the Council negotiations from 2 August. Additionally to the formal introduction of the text of the telegram confirming that the Supreme Council of the Peace Conference had taken notice of the resignation of the “soviet” government in Hungary and the creation of the new government, the Council announced to the Hungarian Government through Romanelli: “*The Allied Council is of the opinion that it has no reason for interfering in the domestic politics of the Hungarian Republic and hence cannot take into consideration the proposals suggested by the two members of the Allied*

¹¹ FRUS PPC, VII., *ibidem*, p. 481.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 482.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 481.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 482.

Missions at Vienna.” The Peace Conference alerted the new Hungarian Cabinet that the base of the proportion between the Allied and Associated Powers and Hungary consisted of: “1) *the armistice of November 13, 1918, the conditions of which must be respected by the new Hungarian Government, particularly concerning the demobilization of the army; 2) the notification of the Peace Conference of June 13 for the establishment of a line on which the Hungarian troop must be kept in the direction of the Czecho-Slovak and Rumanian frontier.*” In case of requirement on stopping of the advance of the Rumanian army, Paris communicated the following to Budapest: “*The Allied Council will only ask the Rumanian Government to stop its troops in the positions that they now occupy by reason of the aggression on the part of the Hungarian Army, and it will not ask the Rumanians to withdraw until the new Government at Budapest has conformed strictly to the terms of the armistice.*”¹⁶

The Peace Conference did not support the new Hungarian Government. The supreme Entente representatives negotiating in Paris wasted, through their approach to the newly established internal situation in Hungary, another chance to finally correct the chaotic post-war development inside Hungary at the session of the Council on 2 August already. The conditions established at the end of July in Vienna between the local Entente representatives and Böhm, the Hungarian envoy, were not recognized as “Entente-like” by the Supreme council, although the Italian foreign minister reminded the Council that the Entente representatives in Vienna had in spite of that been instructed by the Supreme Council to continue the initiated July negotiations with Böhm, resulting in some proposals approved by Böhm.¹⁷ So none of the parties, i.e. neither the Hungarian nor the Rumanian government, lived to see a real conclusion of the Supreme Council with regard to the development in Budapest that would clearly define both the foreign political and the internal statute of the changes in Hungary. The existence of a stable Hungarian Government was unthinkable without the Entente’s blessing, not only from foreign political but of course also from internal perspective. The only “forthright” statement of the Peace Conference towards the new social-democratic government in Budapest said: “*The Allied and Associated Powers are waiting for the new Hungarian Government to prove itself by its acts, and they hope, that the ascendancy of a Government which will carry out its pledges and will represent the Hungarian nation will hasten the moment of the reestab-*

¹⁶ FRUS PPC, VII., Annex B to point 1 of the session of SC PPC on 2 August 1919 (*Situation in Hungary*), p. 490.

¹⁷ Compare FRUS PPC, VII., point 1 of the session of SC PPC on 2 August 1919 (*Situation in Hungary*), p. 483.

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lishment of peace and the resumption of regular economic relations.“¹⁸ Nevertheless, one party profited from the prejudiced attitude of the Supreme Council of the Peace Conference to the Hungarian issue. It was Rumania that could, thanks to the sluggishness of the Entente Powers, make use of the wait-and-see attitude of the Peace Conference as against the new government in Budapest and run a risk – keep advancing quickly towards the Hungarian capital and occupy it.

The Supreme Council of the Paris Peace Conference needed to be reproached that, after having received the telegram from Romanelli, the Italian lieutenant colonel, from Budapest from 1 August describing the internal changes occurred in Hungary, it did not take specific interest in the character and the composition of the new government and only sent a message to Budapest that it would await the first steps of the newly established cabinet. So the Supreme Council of the Peace Conference discussed the new situation in Hungary only based on very fragmentary messages distorting the new situation of Hungary. The Peace Conference was only notified of the establishment of the new government that wanted to establish negotiations with the Entente, with which, nevertheless, also the “soviet” government had tried to negotiate, not only through the Vienna Entente representatives. Only after the session of the Council on 2 August, the information of the personnel composition of the new government in Budapest arrived to Paris. It is however interesting that the Peace Conference was informed about the personnel composition of the new Budapest government not by Lieutenant Colonel Romanelli, but by the French command at Nagy Kikinda,¹⁹ or by General Paul de Lobit, commander of the French army in Hungary,²⁰ who had sent that information to Paris in his telegraphic message from 3 August 1919.²¹ But it is true that a relevant picture of the declared change of regime in Hungary was not provided to the Entente representatives at the Peace Conference even by the declaration of the Hungarian Government to the Hungarian people from 1 August 1919, although it had referred to the initiated negotiations with the Entente Powers; the declaration was available to the Supreme Council only at its

¹⁸ Compare FRUS PPC, VII., Annex B to point 1 of the session of SC PPC on 2 August 1919 (*Situation in Hungary*), pp. 490–491.

¹⁹ Contemporary *Kikinda* in Serbia.

²⁰ During the Hungarian “soviet” republic, a small part of today’s southeastern Hungary including the town of Szeged was occupied by French army.

²¹ Compare *Documents diplomatiques français sur l’histoire du Bassin des Carpates*. M. ÁDÁM, Gy. LITVÁN, M. ORMÓS (Eds.), Budapest, Vol. I–III, 1993–1999. [Hereinafter referred to only as “DDFBC”], Vol. II., Août 1919–Juin 1920, 1995, doc. No. 7 (telegram of General Paul de Lobit, the commander of the French army in Hungary, from 3 August 1919), pp. 10–11.

session on 4 August 1919, again thanks to the French command of Nagy Kikinda. The new Hungarian Government declared its establishment in charge of the central workers' council under support of the organized working class in it.²² But even though, the fact that the new Hungarian Government re-established the system of government of the country from 16 November 1918 in its first Government Decree No. 1/1919. ME. indicated relatively clearly a lot of things. The Government Decree determined that the system of government of Hungary was people's republic and reintroduced the official name of the country, People's Republic of Hungary.²³

The situation in Hungary, particularly with regard to the issue of the Rumanian military presence in the country, was discussed by the Supreme Council of the Peace Conference again at its subsequent session of 4 August,²⁴ i.e. on the day when the gradual capitulation of Budapest to the Rumanian army had started. Herbert Clark Hoover, the head of the American mission for post-war help to Europe and future president of the United States, informed at the very beginning of the session the Council about the current occupation of Budapest by the Rumanian army.²⁵ The current situation of Hungary caused by the quick advance of the Rumanian army towards the capital of the country was later confirmed also by Frank Lyon Polk, the chief of the American delegation to the Peace Conference. Based on the news about the situation in Hungary at two o'clock PM (4 August),²⁶ he informed the Council that 600 Rumanian cavalymen penetrated the western part of Budapest, cutting off all roads to Vienna there.²⁷ A thing not expected by the Entente representatives had occurred. Their ally, without their agreement, alone and on his own, advanced quickly with a clear goal, to occupy Budapest, the capital of Hungary. So the certainty of the Peace Conference believing that the Rumanians would not dare such step that would set their powerful friends against them, as had

²² See FRUS PPC, VII., Annex B to point 1 of the session of Supreme Council on 2 August 1919 (*Situation in Hungary*), pp. 516–517 or DDFBC, II., doc. No. 8, pp. 11–12 (here the declaration of the new Hungarian Government to the people in French).

²³ See Magyar Országos Levéltár [MOL], K 26, Miniszterelnökség [Government; hereinafter referred to only as "ME."], 1203. cs., 1919 – I. – 3887, fol. 2–3 (Government Decree of Peidl's government for the Official Bulletin) or *Hivatalos Közlöny* (Official Bulletin), No. 109 from 3 August 1919, front page.

²⁴ For the discussion of SC PPC on the situation in Hungary at its session on 4 August 1919 see FRUS PPC, VII., point 1 of the referred session of SC PPC (*Situation in Hungary*), pp. 504–511.

²⁵ In l. 1929–33.

²⁶ The session of SC PPC was started at half past three PM. Compare FRUS PPC, VII., point 1 of the agenda of the session of SC PPC on 4 August 1919, p. 504.

²⁷ *Ibidem*, point 1 of the session of SC PPC on 4 August 1919, p. 507.

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informed even his own government, Edvard Beneš, the Czechoslovak foreign minister staying in Paris, proved erroneous.²⁸

The Supreme Council of the Peace Conference had even the answer of the new Hungarian Cabinet to the telegram of the Council from 2 August, mediated by the Italian Lieutenant Colonel Romanelli, at its session of 4 August 1919 already. The new Hungarian Government committed itself at the Peace Conference to comply with the conditions of Belgrade Armistice in as short period as possible, asking the Peace Conference at that occasion that the Allied and Associated Powers assist Hungary at meeting the armistice conditions by sending the Entente army to the country including one regiment of each of the Allied Powers. Budapest did not consider that demand a request for intervention and alerted that it would only be a step allowing the country particularly free expression of its will.²⁹

The Supreme Council of the Peace Conference was put into a delicate situation by the behaviour of Bucharest. Although the head of the British diplomacy defended the Rumanians, he pointed out that the Hungarians had declared fulfilment of the conditions of the Belgrade Armistice, and therefore, as he expressed it, "*the Council was therefore bound to give them an opportunity of proving that they meant what they said.*"³⁰ And he even added: "*It was not giving them a fair chance to send Roumanians to plunder [! – A. T.] the suburbs of Budapest.*"³¹ Also Polk, the head of the American peace delegation, opposed the behaviour of Bucharest, stating that the Rumanians did not feel any respect towards the Peace Conference. Polk even reproached the Rumanians for not behaving in compliance with the generally valid laws of war in Hungary. He even warned that if the Supreme Council allowed the Rumanians to plunder Budapest, they would risk the loss of the positive response to Kun's deposition in the country. Polk invited therefore the Council to warn Bucharest that the Peace Conference would not tolerate any misuse of the position gained by them in Hungary. Balfour and Clemenceau expressed their consent to Polk. Therefore the Supreme Council finally warned the Bucharest government officially by telegraph against the undesirable impact of any

²⁸ Compare Beneš' telegram to Prague to Tusar, the Prime Minister, from 30 August 1919. AMZV, PA, book No. 83, (No. 9306–9690), doc. No. 9509.

²⁹ For the answer of the Hungarian Government to the telegram of SC PPC from 2 August 1919 through Lieutenant Colonel Romanelli compare annex A on the discussed point of the session of SC PPC on 4 August 1919, *ibidem*, p. 516 or DBFP, I./I., Annex A to doc. No. 27 (the same point of the same session of SC), p. 318 (here the document in French).

³⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 507–508.

³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 508.

possible incidents of the Rumanian units in Budapest or wherever else in Hungary on fast restoration of peace in Central Europe, which could deepen infinite suffering of their inhabitants and at the same time, delay markedly the economic reconstruction of the region. The Entente representatives placated Bucharest in that context that they had been assured by the Budapest Cabinet that it was ready to keep the disarmament obligation according to the Belgrade Armistice from November 1918 and that it looked with favour on the cooperation with the Entente and Associated Powers.³²

So the Supreme Council of the Peace Conference had the application of the Hungarian Government to send the Entente army to Hungary and the declaration of submission to the Belgrade Armistice on the table. Sending of the required military control to the country in the form of an Allied mission was supported immediately by Tittoni, the Italian foreign minister.³³ He was joined also by Polk, the chief of the American peace delegation.³⁴ But at the moment, the Entente was not able to send an inter-allied military force to Hungary consisting of one regiment from each Allied Power. Only an inter-allied mission composed of Entente generals, accompanied by one company per each Entente Power, as proposed by Tittoni, the Italian foreign minister, came into consideration. According to Marshal Ferdinand Foch, the proposed inter-allied mission should control the situation in the country firmly and restrict the impacts of the Rumanian occupation to the indispensable minimum.³⁵ The French foreign minister reminded, with respect to the status of the inter-allied military mission, that in such way, the situation before the assumption of power in Hungary by the socialist-communist cabinet would be restored. Then the Entente military mission, led by Ferdinand Vix, French lieutenant colonel, would operate in Hungary with the same goal, to control the observance of the Belgrade Armistice by the Hungarian Government.³⁶

But the representatives of the Entente Powers were aware, with regard of the arbitrary advance of the Allied Rumania, of the danger of ignorance of the planned inter-allied control military mission by the Rumanian Government and doubted the efficiency of the “moral influence” of the mission on the Rumanians in Hungary, as Clemenceau, the President of

³² Ibidem, pp. 508–509; for the telegram of SC PPC to the Bucharest Government see ibidem, Annex C to the discussed point of the agenda of the session SC PPC on 4 August 1919 In: ibidem, pp. 516 or DBFP, I./I., Annex C to doc. No. 27 (minutes of the session of SC PPC on 4 August 1919), p. 319.

³³ Ibidem, point 1 of the session of the Supreme Council on 4 August 1919, p. 507.

³⁴ Ibidem.

³⁵ Ibidem, p. 509.

³⁶ Ibidem.

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the Peace Conference, expressed with respect to the purpose of the inter-allied mission.³⁷ Therefore, when the Supreme Council informed Bucharest about its decision to send a mission of Entente generals to Budapest to supervise the promised fulfilment of the Belgrade Armistice by the Hungarian Government, it had to invite the Rumanian Government at the same time to order the command of its units in Hungary to respect the inter-allied mission that would represent the Peace Conference and act under its authority.³⁸

So the Hungarian issue after the fall of the “soviet” regime in the country and the accession of the new government in Budapest became the Rumanian issue, under the pressure of the current development. The precipitous course of events in Hungary was not favourable to fast stabilization of the country governed by the Hungarian social democrats. Also the restricted possibilities of communication with the top representatives of the Entente Powers at the Peace Conference in Paris constituted considerable flaw. “Credible” representatives of the Entente Powers as well as direct mediators and witnesses of current internal events were missing in the country.

The attitude of the Entente to the new Hungarian Cabinet was further waiting and neutral, although the Entente representatives had quite specific news on the composition of the new Hungarian Cabinet on 4 August 1919 already, also thanks to Hoover, the head of the American mission for post-war help to Europe, who passed the information on the new Hungarian Government at the beginning of the session of the Supreme Council, having received the information from the plenipotentiary of the American mission for post-war help to Europe, or the head of the Office for supply to Central Europe in Vienna, Captain Gregory. Hoover, in spite of the illegibility of the non-standard Hungarian “trade-union” government consisting also of former prominent persons of “Kun’s” regime, pointed out that the Cabinet was represented by the opposition trade unions, and that he thought in that context that the trade unions could succeed in eliminating Bolshevism from the country. In case that estimate of him corresponded to reality, he proposed the Council to support the new Hungarian government. But great importance had that part of Hoover’s speech in which he informed the Supreme Council, based on his news from Vienna that the new Budapest Cabinet could be extended with smallholders in short, transforming the new Hungarian Government into a coalition government that

³⁷ Ibidem, p. 509.

³⁸ Compare the telegram of SC PPC to the Bucharest Government, *ibidem*, see the above referred Annex C to the discussed point of the session of SC PPC on 4 August 1919, pp. 516 or DBFP, I./I., Annex C to doc. No. 27 (minutes of the session of SC PPC on 4 August 1919), p. 319.

would represent broader social classes. With reference to such expectations, Hoover pointed out that under such assumptions, the new Hungarian Cabinet could substitute a real deputy government.³⁹

The new Hungarian government headed by Gyula Peidl really started fulfilling promptly its declaration of its temporariness and its goal to create a temporary broader coalition cabinet. On 2 August already, the new Prime Minister invited István Szabó Nagtádi, the leader of the smallholders, to negotiations. On 3 August, the Prime Minister approached Károly Huszár, the Christian-socialist leader, future prime minister of the so called concentration cabinet, the first Hungarian government recognized by the Entente Powers. So the temporary unicolour socialist government wanted to strive to restore the civic democratic regime from the times of “Károlyi’s” republic, in cooperation with the smallholders and Christian socialists. At the same time, the envoy Böhm negotiated with the so called Anti-Bolshevik Committee (ABC) in Vienna. Márton Lovászy and Count István Bethlen from ABC asserted the negotiations with the diplomatic representative of the new Hungarian Government to Vienna. The meeting between Bethlen, the top representative of ABC, and Böhm took place under the auspices of Cunningham, the head of the British military mission to Vienna, and under participation of Reginald Gorton, a British general, future British representative to the inter-allied control mission of the Entente generals to Budapest, on 4 August 1919. But the talks did not lead to a satisfactory result. The seriousness of Peidl’s government regarding the democratic reconstruction of Hungary is evidenced also by the fact that, on 2 August 1919 already, Péter Ágoston, the Hungarian foreign minister, called the election of the constituent assembly of the country the first step towards the return of the country back to democratic principles. Peidl’s government really did not hesitate to prepare the first post-war parliamentary elections and informed even the Vienna Entente representatives about it (*see below*). Already at its session of 3 August 1919, it claimed allegiance to the modern election law of Berinkey’s Cabinet from Károlyi’s era, and at the same time the council of ministers authorized the minister of the interior to execute all actions needed to call the parliamentary election in the country.⁴⁰

³⁹ FRUS PPC, VII., point 1 of the agenda of the session of SC PPC on 4 August 1919, p. 504.

⁴⁰ Compare J. GERGELY, *A keresztényszocializmus Magyarországon 1903–1923*, Budapest, 1977, pp. 136–137; Böhm informed Budapest of the negotiations with Bethlen in Vienna in one of his summarizing reports from 5. 8. See PIL, 689. f., 6. ó. e., Böhm’s report from 5. 8. 1919: *Politikai ügyek* [Political matters] to Ágoston, the foreign minister (the report was sent also to Peidl, the minister president; compare *ibidem*, fol. 48), fol. 49–54; see also BÖHM, pp. 529–533; Gy. FÖLDES, L. HUBAI et al, *Parlamenti vála-*

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Nevertheless, although it was known at the scene of the Peace Conference already during the session of the Council on 4 August 1919 that the new Budapest Cabinet consisted exclusively of social democrats, the new Hungarian Government was further related to the Bolshevik regime and thus considered dubious, due to joint reign of the socialists with the Communists in the period of the Republic of Councils or rather due to the engagement of some members of Peidl's Cabinet in the "soviet" regime.⁴¹ That very simplified picture of the new Budapest Cabinet was supported in Paris by some Entente representatives. For example W. L. O. Twiss, a British lieutenant colonel,⁴² questioned in his report to Harold Nicolson, the secretary of the British peace delegation to the Peace Conference, completely the new Hungarian Government, based on the reports received by him, called it Bolshevik and stated literally: "*I do not believe that the Hungarian people wants Böhm, Peidl, Garami and their accomplices to govern them.*"⁴³ So Twiss tarred all members of Peidl's cabinet with the same brush as the communists, including the new Prime Minister.

With regard to the issue of the level of information of the Supreme Council about the form of change of regime in Hungary, it is surprising that it did not get the information about the new political course of Hungary in such extent as the Entente representatives to Vienna had it. The report sent to Budapest by Böhm, the Hungarian envoy to Vienna, shows us that after the creation of the unicolour social-democratic cabinet in Hungary, upon call of Peidl, the new Prime Minister and the foreign minister, the envoy gave the corresponding official news about the changes of the government in Budapest to the Entente emissaries.⁴⁴ The Vienna Entente representatives got, virtually immediately, clear information from Böhm, the Hungarian envoy to Austria, that the Revolutionary Governing Council in Hungary was substituted by a cabinet based on democratic principles that stopped political persecution from the era of the "soviet" regime and

szítások Magyarországon 1920–1998. Budapest, 1999 [2], p. 50; MOL, K 27, ME., Minisztertanács [Council of Ministers; MT.], 3 August 1919 (box No. 122), p. 3.

⁴¹ The new Hungarian Cabinet (consisting of twelve members including the Prime Minister) included four members of the top socialist-communist executive body, Revolutionary Governing Council in total. Five ministers of Peidl's Cabinet were members of the supreme "soviet" administrative body, Central Union Directory. Only three Cabinet members, including the Prime Minister, had not engaged in any way during the "soviet" regime.

⁴² Member of the British delegation to the Paris Peace Conference. He received the messages addressed to the British peace delegation, completed them with his own statements and passed them on. Compare L. ARDAY, *Térkép csata után. Magyarország a brit külpolitikában (1918–1919)*, Budapest, p. 142.

⁴³ From Twiss' message, quoted from *ibidem*, p. 261.

⁴⁴ Compare PIL, last quoted doc., fol. 44 and BÖHM, p. 527.

released its victims; cancelled all “terrorist orders”; stopped all Bolshevik propaganda both in Hungary and abroad; cancelled all contacts with Soviet Russia; considered it an obligation to hold ordinary parliament election based on free expression of political opinions of the citizens, which it also started preparing at the same time; recognized and claimed allegiance to the obligation to fulfil the provision of the Belgrade Armistice from 13 November 1918; had the only goal to keep order and peace in the country and restore economic life and therefore asked the Entente Powers primarily for political recognition and release of the blockade against Hungary.⁴⁵

But the Supreme Council did not grant political recognition to the Hungarian Government. The Peace Conference was forthcoming towards Hungary in only one essential thing. At Hoover’s request, it proceeded to release the blockade against Hungary, to reopen the Hungarian section of the Danube for international navigation and to supply Budapest with food from the Banat, the territory passed to the Kingdom of Serbians, Croats and Slovenians. Captain Gregory, the plenipotentiary of the American mission for post-war help to Europe to Vienna, who had been specially asked for the cancellation of the blockade by Böhm, the Hungarian envoy to Austria, had certainly considerably share in that request.⁴⁶ Hoover, at asserting the release of the blockade against Hungary and of the related further proposals at the Supreme Council, reproached the Peace Conference for not having released the blockade immediately. The head of the American mission for post-war help to Europe pointed out that it was just the release of the blockade, the restoration of the navigation on the Danube and the provision of supply of foodstuffs to Budapest that meant practical fulfilment of the policy of the Peace Conference towards the Budapest Government, declared in the answer of the Council to Romanelli’s telegram from 1 August 1919, because the Entente Powers would get an efficient tool to control the situation in the country in the possibility to threaten the Hungarian Government with restoring the blockade.⁴⁷

But what the Supreme Council underestimated considerably was the presence of the Rumanian army in Hungary. The Supreme Council of the Paris Peace Conference did not impose a ban on the occupation of Budapest by the Rumanian army; on the contrary, by inviting the Rumanian royal army to avoid any incidents during occupation of Budapest or Hungary and to submit to the control Entente mission, it agreed indirectly with actual occupation not only of the capital. That happened although Paris knew already about the inadmissible behaviour of the Rumanian units in

⁴⁵ Compare PIL, *ibidem*, fol. 44 or BÖHM, pp. 527–528.

⁴⁶ PIL, *ibidem*, fol. 44 and 46–47.

⁴⁷ FRUS PPC, VII., point 1 of the session of SC PPC on 4 August 1919, p. 505.

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Hungary in form of not only taking captives, but also wilful murdering of civil population, about which Entente circles were unformed already.⁴⁸

The fast move of events in Hungary confirmed very quickly the voices warning against the lack of controllability of the policy of the allied Rumania against Hungary. In the night from 4 to 5 August 1919, the Peace Conference already could learn from the report of the French command of Nagy Kikinda that in the evening of 4 August, at six PM, the Rumanian army had marched into the capital of Hungary under the command of General Gheorge D. Mărdărescu.⁴⁹ That means that on 5 August 1919, when the French *chargé d'affaires* to Bucharest finally conveyed the call of the Supreme Council of the Paris Peace Conference from 2 August to the Rumanian Government to stop immediately further advance of the units of the royal Rumania in Hungary, the resolution of the Council regarding the need to stop the Rumanian units was already meaningless. With regard to the situation, the sole representative of an Entente Power *in loco*, Lieutenant Colonel Romanelli, could only bitterly state in his telegraphic report to Paris that the occupation of Budapest by the Rumanian army made it already impossible for the Hungarian Government to manifest itself.⁵⁰ The status of Peidl's social-democratic government and the opportunities offered to it is documented by the official communication of the general staff of the Rumanian army stating: "*Our army has occupied Budapest for strategic reasons today. Due to it, the whole Hungary, if occupied by us, is considered occupation territory.*"⁵¹

The behaviour of the Rumanians certainly took the Peace Conference by surprise, although there had been some fears of similar development from the beginning. That is evidenced also by the reaction of president Clemenceau who, when discussing the Hungarian issue at the session of the Supreme Council on 5 August 1919, acknowledged that under the given circumstances, it was necessary to send a much more threatening note to Bucharest than the last one had been.⁵² Nevertheless, that did not

⁴⁸ Compare M. ORMOS, *Padovától Trianonig. 1918–1920*, Budapest, 1983 [1], p. 336 and S. KONRÁD, *Nemzeti önpusztítás. 1918–1920. (Forradalom–proletárdiktatúra–ellenforradalom)*, Budapest, 2001, p. 179. Other acts of violence by the Rumanian units in Hungary were confirmed e.g. by Deleigne, the British commander (2 August 1919) or by Colby, the American envoy to Belgrade (4 August 1919). Compare ORMOS, p. 426.

⁴⁹ The telegram was sent from the Nagy Kikinda French command half an hour before midnight on 4 August 1919 (ORMOS, p. 336).

⁵⁰ For Romanelli's telegram see FRUS PPC, VII., point 2 of the agenda of the session of SC PPC on 5 August 1919 [*Situation in Hungary*], p. 529.

⁵¹ See *Národný listy*, 59, issue 184 from 6. 8. 1919, front page (ČTK news from 5 August from Bucharest).

⁵² The minutes of the discussed session of SC PPC record the following with regard to Clemenceau: „... *under the circumstances it might be desirable to send a more threatening*

happen and, instead of the discussion about the form of vigorous diplomatic intervention of the Peace Conference at the Bucharest Government, the negotiations of the Council in the Hungarian-Rumanian matter focused only on final definition of the role of the inter-allied control mission of four Entente generals and agreement about its prompt sending to the venue, as the Italian foreign minister had urged the Council.⁵³ Even Polk, the head of the American peace delegation, did not induce a more specific and sharper debate on the Hungarian-Rumanian issue, or more precisely on the unacceptable behaviour of the allied Rumanian army, although it was he who, according to the records from the relevant sessions of the Supreme Council, warned the most against the Rumanians and their self-confident policy.

Only the effort of Rumania to conclude bilateral armistice with Hungary after the occupation of Budapest by the Rumanian army, based on uncompromising unilateral dictate to Hungary, provoked sharper criticism of the behaviour of the allied Rumania by the Supreme Council at its session of 6 August 1919. It was only then that the Peace Conference condemned for the first time clearly the occupation of Budapest by the Rumanian units and it was even the president of the Peace Conference, the French Prime Minister Clemenceau, who expressed it. Nevertheless, the originally impassively formulated protest note to the Bucharest government was stylistically moderated in the end, thanks to the lobbying of the Rumanian delegates to the conference, and even a reference to the legitimacy of the material demands of Rumania against Hungary, as compensation of the costs related to the intervention of the Rumanian royal army against the Hungarian Republic of Councils, was included into its text.⁵⁴

But the issue of recognition or non-recognition of Peidl's government soon became pointless to the Peace Conference. Before the Peace Conference managed to understand the political turnover occurred in Hungary under the leadership of the pro-Entente social democrats, it was confronted with another, even more unbelievable interior political twist in the country. At the next session of the Supreme Council held on the following day, 7 August 1919, the Entente representatives to the Peace Con-

message than the one sent on the previous day." Compare FRUS PPC, VII., point 2 of the session of SC PPC on 5 August 1919, p. 529.

⁵³ Tittoni should have stated the following in that connection: „... *the moral of this was that the Military Commission should reach Budapest as soon as possible.*“ FRUS PPC, VII., *ibidem*.

⁵⁴ For the session of SC PPC on the Hungarian issue on 6 August 1919 see point 2 (*Situation in Hungary*) of the minutes of its session on that day: FRUS PPC, VII. pp. 548–555. For the note of SC PPC to the Bucharest Government see FRUS PPC, VII., p. 555 or DDFBC, II., p. 43 (note in French), or doc. No. 21, p. 43 (variant sent).

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ference were informed already about the unexpected turn of the internal development of Hungary in form of the Palace Putsch headed by the national-conservative political forces, resulting in self-proclaimed ascension of the new Hungarian Cabinet lead by István Friedrich.⁵⁵ The sudden internal turn in Hungary was completed by the unexpected instalment of Josef Habsburg in the office of the head of state with the title *homo regius*, or more precisely by the appointment of the new Hungarian Government by the new head of the state, Archduke Joseph Habsburg. The new situation in Hungary offered a much more complicated puzzle to the Peace Conference, with regard to the question how to unravel the Hungarian issue in such a manner that the Peace Treaty could be concluded also with Budapest, because now the government of Hungary was headed by Friedrich, a die-hard legitimistic politician, who criticized virulently not only the “opposition”, the civic-liberal and social-democratic political spectrum in the country but also the policy of the Entente Powers against Hungary. So the Paris Peace conference wasted, due to its sluggishness, the last and unique chance to support the restoration of the efforts of count Mihály Károlyi, the first post-war prime minister and later the first Hungarian president from the period before the declaration of the Hungarian Republic of Councils on 21 March 1919 to lay the foundations of democratic civic society in post-war Hungary in the manner of western democracies, that was then wasted to high degree by the lack of conceptuality of the policy of the Entente Powers towards Hungary already.

Abstract

On 1 August 1919, the “soviet” government of the Hungarian Republic of Councils was substituted by standard civic cabinet consisting of opposition trade union leaders (so called Gyula Peidl's trade union cabinet) again. But its life was not long; it was in power only six days. The position of the cabinet was made difficult by the sluggishness of the Paris Peace Conference that did not want to recognize promptly the new Budapest Government and waited for its first steps. But the Entente Powers underestimated their ally, Rumania that made use of the chaotic situation in the country and occupied the capital of Hungary with its army during a few days, in spite of the disapproval of the Entente Powers of further military operations of the Rumanian units in Hungary after the fall of “Kun's” re-

⁵⁵ SC PPC in Paris had two telegrams informing about the internal turn in Budapest on 6 August 1919 on the table on 7.8.1919. See the minutes to point No. 1 (*Situation in Hungary*) to the session of SC PPC on 7 August 1919 In FRUS PPC, VII., pp. 603–607, or 604–605 or DDFBC, II., doc. No. 26 [the referred point of the session of SC on 7 August 1919 (*Situation en Hongrie*)], Annexes I and II, to the quoted document, p. 52 (General Gorton's telegrams to SC PPC).

gime. The insufficient foreign-political support of Peidl's government, together with the chaotic internal situation in the country, multiplied with the military presence of the Rumanian army in the country, decapitated the post-soviet government finally on 6 August 1919.

Keywords

Hungarian Republic of Councils, Supreme Council of Paris Peace Conference, Entente Powers, Hungarian Social Democracy, Gyula Peidl's Government

