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Trianon borders

The issue of state borders and their recognition by other states was of primary importance for the new state – the Czechoslovak Republic, to which Slovakia belonged. These cardinal issues were solved at the international peace conference, which began on 18 January 1919 in Paris. The Czech-Slovak delegation was in the position of a victorious state at this peace conference. It was comprised of Prime Minister K. Kramář as its leader, Minister of Foreign Affairs Edvard Beneš, Czech and Czechoslovak ambassador to the United Kingdom Š. Osuský, and a Slovak, as its general secretary. Several Slovak figures cooperated with the Czechoslovak delegation at the Paris peace conference. This mainly involved professional consultations and the amassing of documentary material. The following Slovaks were officially present at the peace conference: Jozef Škultéty, Fedor Houdek, Igor Hrušovský, Marián Blaha, Viliam Černo and Helena Turcerová-Devečková. In addition, many services were provided by Milan Hodža, Milan R. Štefánik, Emil Stodola, Ignác Gessay and others.



The borders between the Czechoslovak Republic and Germany were defined in the Treaty of Versailles with Germany of 28 June 1919, while the borders of the Czechoslovak Republic with Austria were defined in the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye of 10 September 1919, and the borders of the Czechoslovak Republic with Hungary were defined in the Treaty of Trianon of 4 June 1920. All three peace treaties included an article on the recognition of the Czechoslovak Republic as an independent state as well as its borders. The preparation of the peace treaty with Hungary, which was of the greatest importance for Slovakia, was the most difficult. While the Czechoslovak Republic with the Czechs and Slovaks asserted the inevitability of Slovakia and Bohemia merging into one state, the Hungarian delegation insisted on the organic unity of the old Hungarian Lands.



Negotiations with Hungary took place as with a defeated state. The movement of Hungarian delegates and their contacts in Paris were limited. Only the delegation head, Albert Apponyi, could orally address the conference. In his address he strove to prove that the ‘residue of the Hungarian Lands’ i.e. Hungary, would be a non-vital and geographically, historically and economically artificial state. He also warned that if the peace conference did not change its decision, Hungary would strive for its revision.

The final decision on the borders of Hungary was adopted on 4 June 1920 in the Great Gallery hall of the French Grand Trianon palace. The Hungarian delegation had to sign the peace treaty that contained

conditions determined by the allies. Therefore the peace treaty was signed at Trianon on behalf of Hungary by minister August Benárd and by ambassador Alfréd Drasché-Lázár. E. Beneš and Š. Osuský signed on behalf of the Czechoslovak Republic. Osuský understood the act of concluding the treaty as of historical significance: 'I will never forget one thing. When I wrote my name under the Trianon Treaty at a quarter to five p.m. on 4 June 1920, I knew that I had undersigned the accounting of the Slovak nation with the former Hungarian Lands, a clearing of accounts signed from top to bottom by the blood, suffering, and misery of my nation. And this clearance is eternal.' Other Slovak politicians also thought of the treaty in this way. In contrast, Hungarian politicians saw the treaty as an injustice.

The Treaty of Trianon defined fixed state borders between Hungary and its neighbours. It was especially important for the Czechoslovak Republic, mainly for Slovakia, as its borders with Hungary were now defined, something which had not previously been the case. The ethnic factor was used, although not exclusively, for the determination of state borders with Hungary. Its application was based on the principle of equilibrium in the number of minority members in both states, i.e. the size of the Hungarian minority in the Czechoslovak Republic should approximately correspond to that of the number of Slovaks in Hungary. In this way, almost half a million members of the Hungarian minority remained in Slovakia, and a Slovak minority of over 300,000 remained in Hungary. In addition to ethnic factors, economic, military-strategic, geographic and communication factors also played an important role in determining the borders.

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References: