

## HUNGARY'S NEW NORTHERN FRONTIERS

The Four-Power Agreement concluded on September 29th. accepted the ethnographic basis as decisive in respect of the German, Polish and Hungarian territories to be re-incorporated in the mother countries. In respect of the Sudeten German territories to be surrendered to Germany by Czecho-Slovakia the 1910 Census was accepted as decisive evidence, with the proviso that the territories inhabited predominantly by Germans were to be incorporated in the German Empire, a plebiscite to be taken in the "doubtful" areas. In any disputes that might arise the decision was to rest with the German-Czecho-Slovak Commission established in Berlin for that purpose. The principles governing the awarding and the annexation of the territories to be ceded to Poland were the same. No plebiscite was held anywhere, the Prague Government not being prepared to undertake the risk involved.

As is well known, at the outset Hungary was not granted possession of even the undisputed territories; and it was only after the finding of the Foreign Ministers of the German Empire and of Italy sitting as arbitrators in Vienna that Hungary was enabled to take possession of these territories.

The Four-Power Agreement concluded in Munich made no difference in principle between the procedure to be followed in deciding the question of the territories to be surrendered to Hungary, Poland and the German Empire respectively. Consequently the ethnographic principle should have been applied to the Hungarian territories and those areas with a predominantly Magyar population — i. e. areas in which the Magyars represented more than 50% of the total number of inhabitants — should have been incorporated in Hungary without delay, the inhabitants of the disputed territories being left to decide for themselves by plebiscite.

Unfortunately the criteria employed in respect of the territories to be adjudged to Hungary differed from those enforced in the other cases; a procedure which has inflicted heavy penalties, not only upon the inhabitants of the territories re-incorporated in Hungary, but also upon the Slovak and Ruthenian peoples, For, apart from their running counter to the ethnographic principle,



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RAILWAY-MAP OF RUTHENIA

the new northern frontiers of Hungary have been demarcated without regard for economic interests and have therefore brought about a situation which must sooner or later involve whole districts in economic phthisis.

In agreeing to accept a decision by arbitration the Hungarian Government not only made an enormous sacrifice to save peace, but at the same time undertook an exceptionally heavy responsibility towards the inhabitants of the re-incorporated territories. For the unsatisfactory demarcation of the new frontiers places the Hungarian Government under an obligation to provide new possibilities of economic subsistence in particular to the towns which have been deprived of their hinterland. In all probability the only way to solve this problem will be by means of a scheme of industrialisation carried into effect very rapidly.

Equally great are the disadvantages involved by the Slovak regions having been cut off from the Hungarian economic centres, — the serious consequences of this procedure being already in evidence. A mere cursory glance at the railway system of Slovakia and Ruthenia shows beyond doubt that the railway lines of the Slovak and Ruthenian territories (in particular of those adjoining the new Hungarian frontiers) almost without exception converge on towns incorporated in Hungary. The *Leopoldov Vág-szered—Galánta, Nitra* (Nyitra)—*Nagysurány—Érsekújvár, Hroskáb-Breznica* (Garamberzence)—*Léva (Levice)—Párkány-Nána* (Parkan), *Zvolen* (Zólyom)—*Krupina* (Korpona)—*Ipolyság* (Sáhi) lines all alike pass through Hungarian towns before joining the old trunk lines. The situation is the same in the case of the *Zvolen* (Zólyom)—*Losonc* (Lučenec), *Losonc—Romavszká-Kokova* (Rimakovka), *Feled—Tisovec* (Tiszolc)—*Pelsőc* (Plešivec)—*Murán* (Murány), *Pelsőc—Slavošovce* (Nagyszlabos) und *Pelsőc—Rozsnyó—Dobsina* railway lines. The only railway connection between Mecenzéf, a township in Slovakia inhabited by Germans, and the outside world is via the Hungarian township of Sepsi; and the situation is the same in the case of practically all the railway lines in Ruthenia.

The town of Léva is so near the frontier that the boundary of Slovakia actually touches one corner of the cemetery: at Ipolyság the frontier is within a few hundred yards, while at Losonc the frontier line actually crosses the courtyard of one of the houses, the well being on the Hungarian and the house on the Slovak side. At Rimaszombat the town park and the cavalry barracks are in Slovak territory; while the northern boundaries of Kassa, Ungvár and Munkács are only a few hundred yards distant from the town.

The demarcation of the new frontiers must necessarily involve a set-back in the trade between these towns and their hinterland, even in the event of both Hungary and Czecho-Slovakia showing the greatest generosity in respect of the provision of transport facilities. As a consequence of the new political frontiers the customs formalities in force on both sides of those frontiers must naturally prevent



the trade in goods being carried on on the scale postulated by the natural interests of the inhabitants. There are territories which have no outlet at all except by way of Hungarian territories. In these areas there has already ensued a noteworthy slump in the prices of certain agrarian products. There are Slovak villages in which milk is sold at 10 Czech fillér a litre, this being due to there being no possibility of disposing of the milk elsewhere: and so far the price of milk has been about 1 Czech crown. Phenomena of a similar character are in evidence, not only in the case of other agrarian products, but also in that of the raw materials required by agricultural and industrial plants.

Although only a few days have passed since the demarcation of the new frontiers, yet we already see that the ignoring of economic considerations has not only inflicted serious material losses on the persons concerned, but has also in many cases made it doubtful whether they will be able to maintain a standard of life ensuring a merely human subsistence.

It would appear as if the Slovak and Ukrainian Governments were making the same mistakes as were made by Prague in the days following the Great War. Prague too left out of account Czecho-Slovakia's economic interests in order to dazzle foreign countries with a parade of political vitality. It is by mandate from Prague, not as trustees of the Slovak people, that the Tiso-Volosin Government is controlling the destinies of Slovakia and Ruthenia. That circumstance explains why they are not making any effort to serve the economic interests of the Slovak and Ruthenian peoples by a *rapprochement* with Hungary, but are actually sacrificing those whose interests it is their duty to defend in an endeavour to maintain their power.