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# Teleki, Trianon, and Transnational Map Men 100 Years After

Experiences and Expressions through the Lens  
of Oral History

*“We have broken our word out of cowardice –  
in contradiction with the eternal agreement based on the Mohács peace.  
The nation feels it, and we have thrown away its honour.  
We stand on the side of villains because of trumped-up atrocities.  
No word is true, neither against the Hungarians, nor against the Germans!  
We will be grave-robbers of bodies. We are the nation’s worst.  
I did not hold you back. I am guilty.”  
Count Pál Teleki, 1941*

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## Abstract

The lecture focusses on the life and death of Count Pál Teleki (1879–1941) – twice prime minister of Hungary – in relation to the Treaty of Trianon (1920) and its legacy after a century. Teleki developed his reputation as a professional geographer, among Europe’s prominent ‘map men’ of his generation. Through scholarship in critical geography and cartography, this lecture examines Teleki’s gendered fantasies of North American frontier space; the origin and significance of his anti-semitism and anti-communism; his subtextual grasp of post-World War I symbology and territorial revisionism; the cultural significance of the famous Carte Rouge map; his efforts at Transatlantic diplomacy; his family’s contacts with Transatlantic geographers and his eventual suicide in April 1941; and the long legacy of illiberal politics in Hungary and Europe since the Treaty of Trianon.

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## Introduction

On the early morning of 3 April 1941, Count Pál Teleki ended his life in Budapest. Many details remain unknowable from the prime minister’s last words to Admiral Miklós Horthy, but powerful twentieth-century affects live on. The count, it seems, died with a profound sense of disappointment and shame. His death happened shortly after Hitler directed the use and occupation of Hungary’s territory for the Luftwaffe to attack Yugoslavia. Having failed to chart out an independent foreign policy, Teleki’s suicide note expressed the failures of a country he professionally and emotionally embodied. As he had put it in a confidential letter one year earlier to one of his oldest friends, the American geographer Isaiah Bowman, then president of Johns Hopkins University, the count was “nailed to Hungary”. Hungary’s most famous geographer would not live to see the rest of World War II, or the Holocaust of European Jewry.

I want to broaden our context for transnational map men here. Critical geographers, among which I count myself, have interrogated the layering of pseudoscientific cartograms. We, a collective we, grow wary of narratives of victimhood buried inside nation-state cocoons. My lecture transports Teleki into the lost *Ostmittel-europa* worlds of a generation of colonial men of empire, who made and utilised maps from the 1870s to the 1950s. Experts included, inter alia, Albrecht Penck of Germany, Eugeniusz Romer of Poland, Isaiah Bowman of the United States, Emmanuel de Martonne of France, Jovan Cvijić of Serbia, and Stepan Rudnyts'kyi of Ukraine. Teleki found in maps a weapon for the weak, a comfort for the scientist, and much emotional sustenance. His death was deeply spatial; his life was that of an aspiring bourgeois geographer, in a fractious twentieth-century world. His identity was Hungarian with a Transylvanian asterisk. Teleki's self was rife with fantasy, not merely conservative or modern or national. Like everyone else in motion, he was everywhere unsettled.

### Fantasies before Trianon

Because maps are distorted models, copies of copies, it seems doubly useless to call them 'constructed'. By whom, for what, in which milieu? Few men carried more baggage than Count Pál Teleki, born in Budapest on 1 November 1879. He belonged to a multigenerational clan of Transylvanian landholders in the Habsburg-Ottoman borderlands. Of varying piety, the Telekis were a mix of Calvinists and Roman Catholics. Mihály II Teleki (1630–1690), the clan's most famous ruler, supported Poland under the rule of King Jan Sobieski (r. 1674–1696). Mihály II negotiated for Transylvania's autonomy; in 1685, he received the title of count from the Habsburgs, after Sobieski's 1683 defeat of Ottoman forces in the battle of Vienna. He had 13 children. Count Sámuel Teleki (1739–1822) established the Bibliotheca Telekiana in 1802 as a public library in Marosvásárhely. József (1790–1855), Pál's paternal uncle, became a prominent historian and jurist, the first president of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, and also governor of Transylvania. Pál's cousin Sámuel (1845–1916) was credited with 'discovering' Lake Rudolph in northern Kenya and Lake Stefanie in southern Ethiopia. He inspired Pál's expeditions in the grand explorer tradition of Humboldt, Livingstone, and Rhodes.

Academics attack myths in defence of truth, but myths are needed for human folly. Critical cartographers interrogate geo-bodies, the graphic worlds of misremembered childhood and emotion. The geo-body, a felicitous term coined by the Thai dissident Thongchai Winichakul in his *Siam Mapped* (1988), is furthered by authors Sumathi Ramaswamy and Raymond Craib, to name a few, who delve into *subtexts* of rivalry, exchange, and jealousy.<sup>1</sup> I argue that geographers' critical worlds – their epistolary worlds and multisensory moods – can be explored even more between disciplines.<sup>2</sup> My aim through the illiberal 2010s has been to urge others to rethink grievances in what John Pickles calls geo-coded worlds: through schools of

1 I draw from thinkpieces by Raymond B. Craib, *Cartography and Decolonization*, and Sumathi Ramaswamy, *Art on the Line. Cartography and Creativity in a Divided World*, in: James R. Akerman (ed.), *Decolonizing the Map. Cartography from Colony to Nation*, Chicago 2017, 11-71, 284-338.

2 See my work in *Map Men. Transnational Lives and Deaths of Geographers in the Making of East Central Europe*, Chicago 2018, and *Any Lessons Learned? Echo Chambers of Staged Geopolitics and Ethnocentricity in Maps of the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict in February-March 2014*, in: Sabine von Löwis (ed.), *Umstrittene Räume in der Ukraine/Controversial Spaces in Ukraine*, Göttingen 2019, 125-149.

national indifference,<sup>3</sup> mental maps and multiple modernities,<sup>4</sup> as well as through trauma discourse,<sup>5</sup> including deeply held generational myths of a Whiggish 1989.<sup>6</sup> Mosaic maps of East Europe are banal tools for nationalist intent, prejudice and functional content, lobbying and con artistry, and border violence – sounds of a dehumanising silence, of autocritical deafness to race, Roma legislation, LGBTQ+ communities, and especially people of colour.<sup>7</sup> I have relied on new decolonisation and globalisation work by Franck Billé, Sunnie Rucker-Chang, Theodora Dragostinova, Bill Rankin, and Zoltan Ginelli to reframe anxieties of phobia and penetration, lines of maps extending into the atmosphere, beneath the soil, into our bodies.<sup>8</sup>

Nationalists and sundry culture warriors who use maps to privatise and fragment civic space and foment electoral division would have use chopped into little pieces. Maps can chain us into systems, even while they still symbolise a profession and inspire new designs. Map men eliminate: they aspire to everyday bourgeois bohemianism, to enjoy fruits of consumption and comfort. Or a good café. Maps *exclude* others from the “outerskin”, as Tony Judt put it before he died, an imagined body politic. Count Teleki in Christian national Hungary silenced the voices of women, Romanians, Jewish professionals, and rural peoples (these categories are not mutually exclusive) while claiming to act in their interests. If you read your Larry Wolff, following from Bowman, Woodrow Wilson, and other supposed arch-missionaries of democracy in Paris in 1919, they promoted some Slavic pet-majoritarian nations, while info-filtering out far more people than they included.<sup>9</sup> If there is any lesson of partition, it is to be on alert for how bodies are flattened, borders are

- 3 For this approach, see: Martin Van Ginderachter/Jon Fox (ed.), *National Indifference and the History of Nationalism in Modern Europe*, London 2019; Brendan Karch, *Nation and Loyalty in a German-Polish Borderland. Upper Silesia, 1848–1960*, Cambridge 2020; James E. Bjork, *Neither German Nor Pole. Catholicism and National Indifference in a Central European Borderland*, Ann Arbor 2008; Tara Zahra, *Imagined Noncommunities. National Indifference as a Category of Analysis*, in: *Slavic Review* 69 (2010) 1, 93–119.
- 4 Modernity (ir)rationalised, as in Rok Stergar/Tamara Scheer, *Ethnic Boxes. The Unintended Consequences of Habsburg Bureaucratic Classification*, in: *Nationalities Papers* 46 (2018) 4, 575–591; Ricardo Padrón, *Mapping Plus Ultra. Cartography, Space, and Hispanic Modernity*, in: Martin Jay/Sumathi Ramaswamy (ed.), *Empires of Vision. A Reader*, Durham 2014, 211–245. For imperial state-led ethnoschematisation, see my *Mapping Europe's Borderlands. Russian Cartography in the Age of Empire*, Chicago 2012, 133–157.
- 5 Éva Kovács, *Overcoming History through Trauma. The Hungarian Historikerstreit*, in: *European Review* 24 (2016) 4, 523–534. On memory strategies of Trianon and their national posturings, I call this pattern “melotrauma” in *Map Men*, 86–89.
- 6 As in transnational borderland histories of the Baltics and the Balkans. See: Catherine Gibson, *Shading, Lines, Colors. Mapping Ethnographic Taxonomies of European Russia*, in: *Nationalities Papers* 46 (2018) 4, 592–611, and *Borderlands between History and Memory. Latgale's Palimpsestuous Past in Contemporary Latvia*, Tartu 2014; Vedran Duančić, *Geographical Narration of Interwar Yugoslavia. Serbian, Croatian, and Slovenian Perspective, 1918 to the Mid-1920s*, in: *East Central Europe* 43 (2016) 1–2, 188–214, and *Nationalist Geographies in Interwar Yugoslavia: Manoeuvring between National and Transnational Spaces*, *European Review of History* 25 (2018) 3–4, 588–611; Tomaš Nenartović, *Kaiserlich-russische, deutsche, polnische, litauische, belarussische und sowjetische kartographische Vorstellungen und territoriale Projekte zur Kontaktregion von Wilna 1795–1939*, Munich 2016; and Vasilijus Safronovas, *The Creation of National Spaces in a Pluricultural Region. The Case of Prussian Lithuania*, Boston 2016.
- 7 Without vast nationalist selectivity, I would argue that it is impossible to ‘imagine’ Europe’s East as a pure postcolonial space for victimhood and resistance. Here I recall some of J. Brian Harley’s conceptual keywords (silences, secrecies, ideology, power) in the essays collected after his death in 1991, *The New Nature of Maps. Essays in the History of Cartography*, Baltimore 2001.
- 8 Franck Billé, *Skinworlds. Borders, Haptics, Topologies*, in: *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 36 (2018) 1, 60–77; Franck Billé, *Introduction to ‘Cartographic Anxieties’*, in: *Cross-Currents. East Asian History and Culture Review* 6 (2017) 1, 1–19; Franck Billé (ed.), *Voluminous States. Sovereignty, Materiality, and the Territorial Imagination*, Durham 2020.
- 9 For my review of Larry Wolff’s *Woodrow Wilson and the Reimagining of Eastern Europe*, see: *Journal of Historical Geography*, 68 (2020), 86–87.

violated, and sensible ecologies are turned into expropriated two-dimensional forms.<sup>10</sup>

Pál dreamt of becoming an explorer. A son of homosocial empire, Pál hated to have a day job. While politics and jurisprudence were his father Geza's preferences, Pál was drawn by his bookish habits toward geography. It was Karl May's stock tales of the West, cowboys and Indians, that became Teleki's favourite comfort read, a guilty pleasure into his adult years. Once at the University of Budapest, Pál took formal courses by the Hungarian geographer Lajos Lóczy (1849–1920), a natural scientist, professor of geology, and chair of the geography department. Educated in the German tradition, Lóczy in Hungary was a successor to Janos Hunfalvy (1820–1888), who had studied under Karl Ritter in Berlin. Lóczy, a geomorphologist, became a kind of father figure for Teleki. Lóczy earned memberships in geographical societies in Berlin, Leipzig, Vienna, and Bern. Elected by his peers in Budapest, he became the president of the Hungarian Geographical Society (Magyar Földrajzi Társaság, or MFT) in 1891–1892 and from 1905 to 1913.

Out of Ostmitteleuropa's earth sciences, Teleki found a way to parlay the explorer's life into a career. The recent work of Balázs Ablonczy, Maciej Górny, Catherine Gibson, and Vedran Duančić on contested borderland geography and cartography is seminal to my thinking here. The MFT's membership had doubled in size by 1900. Patriotic researchers focussed on geography, ethnography, statistical demography, cartography, geology, climatology, and many other disciplines. Under Lóczy's influence, Teleki turned quickly toward the writings of Friedrich Ratzel. In fin-de-siècle Europe as the world's lands were coloured in, Pál developed a passion for maps. At a December 1898 meeting of the MFT, he presented a study of early European cartography in East Asia. Teleki did not know any Asian or African languages. Academe fit badly, but in 1903 he completed his dissertation thesis, *The Question of Primary State Formation*, under Lóczy's direction in Budapest. In it, the Transylvanian argued that "the state was the result of national development" within the historical lands of the Crown of St. Stephen. Teleki assured others that the Magyar nation, due to the fact it was "rational", rightly strove for independent statehood. Casting out Romanians and Ruthenians from Europe, he wrote, "[w]e don't even have to go so far afield. The Moldavian Romanian or the Máramaros Ruthenian would be equally incapable of ... abstract reasoning".

Every Eurocentric map represents a coming-of-age tale. For the not yet technocrat, maps were blueprints for a future that safeguarded past privilege. In spring 1908, on his way from the Sudan, Teleki conducted research at the Royal Geographical Society and the British Museum in London, the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, and the Rijksarchief in The Hague. He buried himself in maps of Japan and wrote up the project on the family's estate. Pál sent his scholarly manuscript to Jenő Cholnoky, his confidante in Koloszvár/Cluj, another of Lóczy's students, and Pál's co-traveller in 1912 to the United States. Cholnoky was impressed. The 1909 *Atlas of the History of the Cartography of the Japanese Islands* was a historical atlas of 168 pages and 20 maps, based on representations by Europe's travellers.

<sup>10</sup> With over 100,000 followers, the legendary Twitter character 'The Irish Border' @BorderIrish, the avatar of David Phinnemore, professor of European politics at Queen's University in Belfast, retired in January 2020 when Brexit sealed his fate. Its obituary: "I'm seamless and frictionless already, thanks. Bit scared of physical infrastructure. Don't like the sea." Two-edged borders to keep others out were impossible and mythic: Annemarie H. Sammartino, *The Impossible Border. Germany and the East, 1914–1922*, Ithaca 2010; Kate Brown, *A Biography of No Place. From Ethnic Borderland to Soviet Heartland*, Cambridge 2005; Vejas Gabriel Liulevicius, *The German Myth of the East, 1800 to the Present*, Oxford 2011; Gregor Thum, *Mastering the East. German Visions for East Central Europe*, Princeton forthcoming 2022.

The atlas was published in Leipzig, in German and Hungarian. The Geneva International Geographical Society elected Teleki to its old map and chart committee. The historical rub: there is no evidence that Teleki travelled to Japan or held a conversation at any time with a Japanese scholar. In fantasy spaces, the aristocrat knew no Japanese, and like his cousin Samuel, he had zero familiarity with African indigenous languages. He claimed a Eurocentric civiliser's natural model of the world. In 1911, the Paris Geographical Society, the oldest of its kind in the world, awarded Teleki its prestigious Jomard Prize. Merits came at home, too: Lóczy got Teleki nominated for general secretary of the MFT, at which point Teleki reached out to a Hungarian public for old maps, charts, and manuscripts. He worked toward a Magyar world atlas. At the tenth International Geographic Congress in Rome from 27 March to 3 April 1913, Teleki lavished praise on Hungary's explorers and its global progress in geography. Back in Budapest, he got his first academic position, as geographer at the Budapest College of Commercial Studies. On the eve of World War I, the Transylvanian count even envisioned a shrine to geographical science in Budapest, modelled on the Museum for Comparative Regional Geography (Museum für Vergleichende Landeskunde) established in Leipzig in 1892.

When the war began, Teleki's map man dreams took a new turn. He was unable to secure funding for the museum from the monarchy, which obviously had more pressing concerns. On 18 July 1914, three weeks after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, Teleki was drafted into the army. On 31 July, he took leave of Budapest for Sarajevo and onto the Serbian and Romanian fronts. In December 1914, he received a promotion to first lieutenant in the Irregular Volunteer Service. When Italy entered the war in May 1915, he was sent to the south-eastern front to serve as a command officer. As the war dragged on, the Hungarian's enthusiasm for a German-led effort waned. The smallish Teleki – sickly, bored, and ill-equipped for combat in the east – was thrilled when the military's general staff ordered him in the fall of 1915 away from the battlefields. What was his job? To prepare maps. War made room for boyish fantasy. Albert Apponyi (1846–1933), the minister of education and a respected figure in Hungary (nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize), selected Teleki as his leading geographic expert for the post-war Hungarian delegation.

### Carte Rouge and Trianon

The Great War was hardly the death of civilisation for Teleki. War presented opportunity. In his April 1918 MFT address, Teleki bemoaned Hungarians' lack of self-confidence, scarce resources, and sparse support for research. Germany was the model, for it had “organised now a network [of scientists] all over the empire” and set the standard due to its “influence and willpower ... [and] intellectual cross-fertilisation”, as well as developed broad programmes for research in statistics, geology, cartography, and geomorphology. Teleki's crowning achievement was the “Carte Rouge” – *The Ethnographical Map of Hungary According to Population Density* – made from September to December 1918. It depicted the Magyar population in a bright red (*voros*, and whence its informal name, “Carte Rouge”), moving into Europe and settling into a central area in Budapest and the Danubian Basin. Let me return to this in a moment. First, some context.

War proved to be a mother-courage boon for map men, an opportunity for empire and emotional release. Teleki had scarce hope that settler-colonial Slav states would be arranged in Austria-Hungary's favour by Paris in 1919. So, he kept watch

on what lobbying Czechs, Poles, and others were doing, all the way to Upper Manhattan. Trying to ground a place, leaders like Tomáš Masaryk, friend of the United States' President Wilson and Robert Seton-Watson in England, or Polish geographer Eugeniusz Romer, passed along maps.<sup>11</sup> Masaryk – to take an example – and the Scotsman Seton-Watson, who favoured federalism for Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, hardly thought that all nationalities were on the same level. In the Balkans or south-eastern Europe, the geographer Jovan Cvijić in Belgrade, who set up the Serbian Geographical Society in 1910, was also adept at this type of backchanneling and monitoring, of maps in letters, as Maciej Górny and Mirela Altić have shown.<sup>12</sup> Ethnic lobbying and electoral geography grew in the United States.<sup>13</sup> Stakes were raised as support grew in France and England for Masaryk and Seton-Watson, who were allies in London and publishers of maps in the *New Europe* periodical since 1915. End-of-war Hungarians like Teleki and Polish elites like Romer were aware that others' national maps could be used against them and all their historical and ethnographic claims in 1919.

Losers and winners held Europe's maps in common. The "Carte Rouge" was printed in English, French, and Hungarian, and prepared on a scale of 1:200,000, adjusted to 1:300,000 for the February 1919 version. Teleki solicited the assistance of Baron von Nopcsa, whom he needed along with men from the MFT, the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, the Bureau of Statistics, and the Ministry of Commerce. The sources and design rebuked Emmanuel de Martonne (1873–1955), the leading expert of France's delegation in 1919, who skilfully used a similar technique for showing population density in competing pro-Romanian maps of Transylvania. Martonne favoured Romanian statehood across "eastern Hungary" (what Teleki called it), while insisting French sponsorship of the Little Entente. Martonne essentially concurred against Hungarian designs and with the Czech patriot Masaryk and Seton-Watson. Teleki had probably realised the collusion earlier when Masaryk turned to his ally in London in 1915 to publish maps in the *New Europe* periodical, against the Central Powers and Hungary in particular. Masaryk and the Scotsman who supported federalism in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia considered Magyars low on a racial totem, among so-called 'nationalities', with peoples of Africa.

Teleki's cross-border paprika geography was profoundly revisionist.<sup>14</sup> Almost 3D or, dare I say, GIS. From the hard-digging work of Dániel Segyevy, we know how Teleki and his compatriot Baron von Nopcsa devised the "Carte Rouge" clandestinely – therefore transnationally.<sup>15</sup> It betrayed fears of "Judapest" and modern urban diversity. As a conservative, he had scarce hope that post-war democratic Slavic settlements would be arranged in Hungary's favour. In early October 1918, Teleki worked to form a league for Hungary's territorial defence, a carbon copy of the Germans' revisionist Deutsche Schutzbund (German Protection League). As Austria-

11 Reassessments of the staginess of these friendly diplomatic emancipators and their American relationships are in Andrea Orzoff, *Battle for the Castle. The Myth of Czechoslovakia in Europe*, Oxford 2009; Wolff, *Woodrow Wilson and the Reimagining of Eastern Europe*.

12 Jeremy W. Crampton, Jovan Cvijić, in: Mark Monmonier (ed.), *History of Cartography 6. The History of Cartography in the Twentieth Century*, Chicago 2015, 294-296.

13 Brendan Karch, *Plebiscites and Postwar Legitimacy*, in: Marcus M. Payk/Roberta Pergher (ed.), *Beyond Versailles. Sovereignty, Legitimacy, and the Formation of New Politics after the Great War*, Bloomington 2019, 16-37.

14 See: Judith A. Tyner, *Persuasive Cartography*, in Monmonier (ed.), *The History of Cartography*, 1087-1095.

15 Segyevy's work is the best single analysis of the map. Dániel Segyevy, *Carte Rouge 100 – Teleki Pál vörös térképének hatástörténeti elemzése [Carte Rouge 100 – An Analysis of the Historical Impact of Pál Teleki's "Red Map"]*, *Regio* 26 (2018) 4, 114-179. Segyevy also runs a fascinating *Pangea* blog on maps in German, Hungarian, and English at [pangea.log.hu](http://pangea.log.hu).

Hungary dissolved in November–December 1918, dozens of experts, geographers, and statisticians rushed to collect census data. Teleki took part, gathering up more maps of Hungary in November, illustrating districts with Magyar speakers, distribution by confession, and levels of literacy. This was the context in which a new Hungarian state was cobbled together.

When the armistice was signed on 11 November, Teleki fell ill with a serious case of influenza. On 13 November, Romanian, Czechoslovak, and Serbian forces invaded Hungary with France's support. On 16 November, a government under Count Mihály Károlyi (1875–1955) was hastily established and Hungary's post-war republic was declared. On the defensive at his Pribékfalva estate in December 1918, Teleki asserted population density ahead of nationality. His maps tended to follow a linear logic of modernisation, that the density of assimilated Magyars increased as peasants moved to the city, became literate, and settled naturally into St. Stephen enclaves. Magyars were a privileged norm. Entire districts were shown bereft of populations that were actually present. One square millimetre equalled 100 inhabitants. Teleki and Baron von Nopcsa thereby proved that nationalities could be measured by density, all in the same way. As if one were mapping the Balkans and Asia Minor in the 1870s and 1880s, or the United States west of the Mississippi (recall: the Indian Removal Act of 1830), they left deserted the uplands, mountainous areas, plains, and 'Carpatho-Rusyn' white spots with few inhabitants.

On 24 December 1918, Romanian troops occupied the city of Koloszvár/ Cluj, including the university where Teleki's compatriot Cholnoky taught. On 1 January 1919, the same day the Red Army took over Minsk in Belarus, Czechoslovak legions occupied Pozsony/Bratislava. On 11 January, one week before Paris, Károlyi became president of Hungary's republic. Oszkár Jászi (1875–1957), the historian and minister of nationalities, tried in vain to persuade the Romanians to remain in Romania, under a revised election law. In Budapest on 21 March, Béla Kun's communists seized power and, for 133 days in the capital, a Hungarian Soviet Republic was set up. The anti-communist Teleki appealed to the science he learned under Lóczy. To make 'historic' claims, Teleki faced competing graphic arguments by Czechs, Romanians, Poles, Ukrainians, South Slavs, and others, which added to the obliviousness of the Great Powers.

Revisionist map men like Teleki in 1919 fit badly between the thick, bold lines of new nation-states. Really, none of the delegations or politicians of Washington, Paris, or London in 1919 favoured any nuanced treatment for Hungary or the 3.3 million Magyars dispersed across new borders after World War I. Lacking objective science or a useful court of appeal, Teleki called for justice in the nationalist language of a pro-Western, but not quite Wilsonian or Leninist, self-determination. The last choice was revisionism as an ideology. In the *Short Notes on the Economic and Political Geography of Hungary* in 1919, which served as a first draft for lectures on American economic geography in 1921, Teleki redrew Hungary against "primitives". He stressed Magyar high culture and those who now distanced the country in 1919 from past "German" (and Austrian) influence. Transylvania was Europe's bulwark. He wrote that "[t]he temperament of the Hungarians resembles that of the Southern people, his comprehension is quick, his speech laconic ... Hungarian culture has had its best individual and national development when it met with the culture of people having the same temperament." Furthermore, he stated that "Budapest is situated on a spot of exceptional geographical weight ... Amongst all capitals of Europe, Budapest stands almost unrivalled as to her strength of centralisation. This is a law of nature." In defence of unity, he appealed to natural ecology. He wrote: "The division of

Hungary would separate geographical regions which are dependent on each other. It would create boundaries where nature laid down the foundations of commercial intercourse and mutual economical life.” The Danube and Tisza rivers were interlocked, as were trade networks of interconnected roads and railways.

Teleki hesitated to apply nationality or self-determination, but his maps made little sense for early modern pasts. Maps are propaganda, aspirational, and, in grand form, *futurist*. Maps appeal to futures: Far too many of Europe’s political futures are mapped to exclude others. Although ethnomaps raised geographers’ expertise in academies of science (and, of course, we are academics), the Parisian world of 1919 did not rule out minority claims and future dreams for self-determination.<sup>16</sup> The count privileged Euro-Magyars against Jews, Czechs, Slovaks, Romanians, Yugoslavs, and Germans. He backed anti-semitic parties of unity. As Horthy’s prime minister, he restricted Jewish university enrolment in the numerus clausus of 1920, the first of its kind in Europe. The lands of St. Stephen were a body dismembered, anti-Slav, *mutilató*, overtaken by Jews demoted out of professions in the heart of Europe.<sup>17</sup> He referred to the problems of Hungary as a “Jewish question” (*zsidókérdés*), playing the xenophobia card.<sup>18</sup> Shrunken Hungary in caged Europe, like Lesser Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria before it, was intolerant in this wedge-map regard.<sup>19</sup> Violence, normalised. Teleki and his compatriot Professor Cholnoky, who was from the city of Koloszvár/Cluj that was now occupied by Romanian troops, had been mental mappers out to Santa Fe and the Grand Canyon, on the American Geographical Society’s (AGS) fiftieth anniversary expedition across North America in 1912. On 11 January 1919, a week before Paris, Count Károlyi became the Hungarian republic’s president. In Budapest, Kun’s communists came to power for 133 days in the capital. In red followed by white terror, Teleki feared loss of control. Actually, he feared for his life. He advanced the 1919 idea that the Little Entente of Czechoslovaks, Romanians, and Yugoslavs (for him, principally Serbs) were geopolitical threats.

Allied victory was retrograde and immoral. In a thinly veiled anti-semitic speech in Szeged (it was published by the League for the Protection of Hungary’s Territorial Integrity) on 14 December, Teleki appealed to the new Christian Unity party, announcing that “we will fight for the hegemony of the Hungarian nation”. Maps preceded territory (the French philosopher Jean Baudrillard rehashed this East European cliché as a grand postmodern insight in 1981) toward the century’s end. Though he had thought to show himself as European, civilised and not chauvinist, the Europe he imagined was surely an intolerant place. It cast out ‘others’, including non-Christian migrants. Teleki fixed on the idea that the Little Entente presented grave threats.

Somehow in post-empire, maps always seem hot. This litany is familiar: with the treaty signed on 4 June 1920, Hungarians commonly saw it as a diktat. In Teleki’s

16 Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire. The Rise and Fall of National Self-Determination*, Princeton 2019; Erez Manela, *The Wilsonian Moment. Self-Determination and the International Origins of Anticolonial Nationalism*, Oxford 2009.

17 On varieties of anti-semitic prejudice associating Jews with communism, in Hungary and Europe, see: Paul Hanebrink, *A Specter Haunting Europe. The Myth of Judeo-Bolshevism*, Cambridge 2018, and *In Defense of Christian Hungary. Religion, Nationalism, Antisemitism, 1890–1944*, Ithaca 2006; Robert Nemes, *The Once and Future Budapest*, Evanston 2005.

18 Seegel, *Map Men*, 85–86. To my mind, the best study of minority protection under international law remains Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others. The Great Powers, the Jews, and International Minority Protection, 1878–1938*, Cambridge 2006. On rhetorical formulations of minority questions, see: Holly Case, *The Age of Questions*, Princeton 2018.

19 For this Southeastern/East-Central/Central trajectory, see: Timothy Snyder/Katherine Younger (ed.), *The Balkans as Europe, 1821–1914*, Rochester 2018.

conservative, victim-centred narrative of trauma, Hungary was encircled, occupied, and “dismembered” after World War I. The terms for the defeated are visible today. The country lost roughly two-thirds of its population, one-third of its territory, half of its most populous cities, and its access to the sea. Reduced from 282,000 square kilometres to 93,000 square kilometres, its population decreased from 18.2 million to 7.9 million, making it Central Europe’s smallest country. Its army was limited to 35,000 men. The country paid reparations. Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Romania, which fought against a Greater Hungary and Habsburg legitimists, became home to 3.3 million Hungarians. Containment logic followed from indelicately applied self-determination: that Magyars were the country’s titular nationality and they, like colonists, would repopulate into cities and the Budapest-centric space of the Danubian Basin. Calls for justice and revenge had lasting effects. Reactions ranged from nonviolent diplomatic revision and reform to the paramilitary reconquest of Hungary’s lost territories. Geographers failed spectacularly when the country lost all its ‘historic’ and ‘ethnic’ claims.

Count Teleki took the shrinkage of Hungary’s geo-body personally, as if he had lost an internal organ. Geography was his 1920s new spatial science in a new, sharper, transnational key. The Ministry of Commerce, together with the MFT and MTK, published his *The Economies of Hungary in Maps*, a vast oeuvre, early that year. There would be many editions, enlarged with more sophisticated maps by Francis de Heinrich, the minister of commerce, and compiled by Aladár Edvi Illés, the artist, ministerial councillor, and chief of the department, along with Albert Halász, a chemical engineer, trade inspector, and Teleki’s friend. When the count returned to cartography, the *Ethnographical Map of Hungary Based on the Density of Population in 1920* was based primarily on the “Carte Rouge”. He issued a series of maps on Hungary’s frontiers, including *La Hongrie du Sud: Questions de l’Europe Orientale* (Southern Hungary: Eastern European Issues) and *La Hongrie Occidentale* (Western Hungary). With Cholnoky and Ferenc Fodor (1887–1962), he put together the *Economic-Geographical Map of Hungary* in Hungarian, English, and French. Along with the “Carte Rouge”, it is one of two of Teleki’s maps displayed for the public in the permanent gallery of the Hungarian National Museum.

### Revision in the 1920s and 1930s

In April 1921, Charles IV von Habsburg made the first of two failed attempts to regain the throne of Hungary. In Austria, the king had been delegitimised by the Habsburg Law, passed by the new republic’s parliament in 1919. Teleki’s government did not survive the first restoration coup, though Admiral Horthy defeated both attempts at restoration in April and November 1921, when he refused to back royalists with the armed forces. On 14 April, Teleki resigned. He returned to working as a geographer in the Department of Economic Sciences at Budapest University. As a geographer, Teleki sought to continue lobbying for Hungary’s struggling institutions in Budapest. He also served as the head of irredentist organisations, which disseminated maps for education in the early 1920s to promote “justice for Hungary”.

To this end, from 1 to 29 August 1921 he was in the United States, invited by Colonel Lawrence Martin in Washington, D.C., to give eight lectures at Williams College in Massachusetts. He addressed an audience of eager geographers, including his friend Bowman (U.S. Inquiry). The new Republican president Warren G. Harding (in office from 1921 to 1923) invited him to the White House. He met with the Unit-

ed States' Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes (1862–1948), the candidate who had opposed Wilson in the 1916 election. This second trip in the United States turned out to be another formative event of Teleki's life.

When he got back to Budapest, Teleki published *The Nationalities Question from a Geographer's Point of View*, which was important in three respects. First, he highlighted population density as a marker of civilisation, since Magyars in "various natural landscapes" had "adapted to economic realities", a mentality that was ideal for frontier exploration and colonial settlement. Second, Teleki defined Hungarian unity by race, region, language, culture, and religion – above all, religion. Hungarians could be Roman Catholics, Calvinists, Unitarians, and Lutherans "without exception". He prioritised his baptismal heritage but marginalised Jews, Muslims, and the Romanian Orthodox. Third, Teleki appealed to the canonical authority of Europe's geographers. Since the St. Stephen borders were "historical", they rested beyond ordinary politics. They permitted the count to blame anyone and anything but himself for Hungary's woes – the victors of World War I, self-determination, the Little Entente, Jews from the East, non-Magyar nationalities – updating the Transylvania of his family's heritage into dreams of future unity.

Pál's model for success was also across the Atlantic. In lectures back in Budapest, he enjoined students to "[a]lways study with a map by your side! Learn from the map! Practice map reading not just with one map but with several types of maps." Geographers had to know boundaries as well as the physical size, names, and form of settlements, routes, rivers, lakes, swamps, mountains, and all landscapes for economic development. Unity came by way of hydrography, geomorphology, and climatology. Knowledge of landscapes was essential. Cartograms aided the federal use of land in the south and west. For agriculture, industry, and commerce, one had to research how wheat, cotton, corn, and other major staples were all keys to expansion. Geographers were experts who served the state. A geographer's "human mind" by way of "synthesis" was responsible for integrating the physical, chemical, physiological, and social aspects of the earth. The earth's surface was "culture and civilisation" and the "geography of life sciences ... and geographer's thinking should be genetic". Teleki's moving fundament was *fold* (earth), in the gender neutrality of the Magyar language. Teleki published these thoughts together in *Economic Geography of America, with Special Reference to the United States*.

When German-American fantasies collided at the height of his diplomatic fame, Teleki resisted getting involved in geopolitics, at least at first. In 1926, he was instrumental in the establishment of the Institute of Political Sciences (Államtudományi Intézet), which reified Ratzel's organic state, an idea inherited from Loczy and which Teleki developed in his 1903 dissertation. The institute operated under the Central Statistical Committee in Budapest, which was responsible for the interwar census. Under Teleki's urging, the Institute of Political Sciences and the Hungarian Statistical Society completed a massive joint project in 1926, a giant 159-page atlas, *Magyarország a háboru előtt és után gazdaságstatisztikai térképekben* (Hungary before and after the War in Economic-Statistical Maps), with 119 maps. It was immediately sent to Bowman and the AGS in New York City. Teleki thought the institute could succeed where at Trianon he had failed, propagating maps to politicians and researchers involved in studying transnational Magyar rights and minority issues.

In January 1926, the count was allowed to lecture on geography at the Hungarian Institute of the University of Berlin. Teleki's arguments appeared in Karl Haushofer's *Zeitschrift für Geopolitik* in 1926. In the original German version, he stressed the geographical unity (*Einheit*) of Hungary. Teleki protested against the "worship of alien

ideologies, the economic downfall of the main pillars of support of the national intellectual world, the middle class, the penetration of our culture-bearing status with nationless and denationalising elements, and a false, international conception of liberalism [that] partly prepared souls for the ensuing radicalism". The psychosexual metaphor of "penetration" (*Durchdringung* in German, *beszivárgás* in Magyar) – one could translate it as impregnation as well as fusion, exploration, or saturation – suggested an illiberal understanding of difference. Teleki railed against Kun's appeals in Europe to peasants and workers. He criticised the hypocritical League of Nations. He called democracy "humbug" and Wilson's project a "degraded idealistic utopia". He appealed to the "historic" St. Stephen crownlands, Transylvania's past, the "defence of Europe" by Hungary and Poland in 1683, expulsions of the Ottoman Turks in the eighteenth century. He thought Hungarians "fought valiantly" in World War I and referred to the communist revolution and the Little Entente invasion as "two great national blows". Teleki defended a "strong Christian-national reaction" in 1919 for the creation of a Hungarian bourgeoisie, and against Bolshevism "whose radical leaders were predominantly Jewish" and "militant cosmopolitans ... having multiplied in the last decades". He paralleled Hungary's frontiers to the U.S. West, arguing that the Alps and Carpathians were akin to the Rockies and the Appalachians. He celebrated the Great Hungarian Plain (*Alföld*) with allusions to North American plains and prairies, comparing these areas to "Ohio, Kansas, the Dakotas, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan".

## The Eve of World War II

Count Teleki's lecture was a revisionist blueprint for the European anti-communism of the 1930s. As late as spring 1939, Count Teleki still believed Hungary's elites could deal with the Führer and achieve some of their post-World War I goals. Advantages seemed to lie ahead. On 14 April, Hungary withdrew from the League of Nations. When the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact was signed, Hungary stood to gain. But when Europe's interwar architecture collapsed, Teleki watched in horror as Poland's fate was sealed by plans for a two-front invasion. He averred Hungary's neutrality from the start of the Blitzkrieg, but by that point in the summer neutrality meant accepting Hitler's gains to the east. Teleki hoped to make gains against Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia. Teleki held desperately to a dying fraternity of Poland and Hungary through 1939. His European home(s) no longer existed. In an unpublished 12 February 1940 letter to Bowman, Teleki refused to part with his treasures:

"These world-war-times are quite terrible. I am nailed to Hungary or better said 23 hours out of 24 to this prison called the Prime Minister's Palace. It is still quite good that world wars, economic difficulties and the planning-out of territorial readjustments are not only political but geographical matters and so I remain a little inside my own business. But it is very sad not to be able to meet old friends as usual and not to be able to get personally a glimpse of the outside world ... I would like to see this whole mess finished soon".

Writing to America, he equated life with his precious maps – "nailed to Hungary". Teleki took advantage of the moment to do what Masaryk in Czechoslovakia and Romer in Poland were doing for decades: spamming the West with maps. He sent articles to Bowman from the *Hungarian Quarterly*, reports by Hungarians on the global dispersal of Magyars, "proofs" that stressed Magyar presence in Romania and Transylvania, and maps of Transylvania that he and András Rónai (1906–1991) had

prepared. Teleki and Rónai in 1937 affirmed Magyar population density along with various other documents offering proof of Hungary's vitality, totality, and need for revision.

### Death and Afterlife in Budapest

In these last nine months of his life, Count Teleki clung to the idea of revision and the old power of maps up to a fateful end. On 30 August 1940, Hitler granted the so-called 'Second Vienna Award' to Hungary, by which the country 'recovered' parts of Transylvania in interwar Romania. Lands included Szatmár (Satu Mare) County in which the Teleki clan's estates were located before 1914. Hungary's gains represented a partial reversal of Trianon. In December 1940, the prime minister signed the Mohács friendship treaty with Yugoslavia, but by March 1941, Hitler insisted that Hungarian territory be used for Germany's war aims. The Führer reshuffled fascist Europe's map by promising to 'transfer' parts of northern Yugoslavia to Hungary, but Teleki's breaking of the treaty would put an end to Hungary's brief neutrality. This breach signalled the demise of the count's credibility: Hungary would become a military outpost for the Third Reich's aggrandisement.

Such was a civiliser's afterlife: even the Trianoners – especially the Trianoners – were Europeans. They still are. Pál's suicide in Budapest in 1941 left behind a corps of disciple 'sons', but no discernible American sympathiser or West European ally in professional geography. The count's followers were left in Budapest, colleagues and former students such as Ferenc Fodor and András Rónai. His mental map was that of a rather oddball conservative, of Hungary as integral to Western civilisation against any reduction of 'historic' St. Stephen lands. Yet he reasoned that an Entente-led mandate system, guided by multilingual experts to redress grievances through the League of Nations and a Eurocentric neo-colonial trusteeship, was a generally *good* idea. Both leagues – one Wilsonian, one unapologetically protofascist – were useful for Teleki's ingenious Transylvanian balancing act, for they could ultimately salvage what remained of Ostmitteleuropa geographic science before 1914. In his version, anti-communist, anti-semitic Hungary looked like a protectorate of bourgeois Christendom and Western civilisation, in general conformity with his noble clan's Transylvanianism and its early modern history.

I might describe maps less as rational tools of nations than as flawed arguments. Or better suited to an imagined Greater Hungary in Central Europe, as Rorschach blots. In 1983, just outside Budapest, in the suburb of Érd, the Hungarian Geographical Museum (Magyar Földrajzi Múzeum) was founded. It may be even less frequented than the baroque-style Teleki-Degenfeld Castle (built in 1748, reopened as a hotel in 1985) in the tiny, picturesque village of Szirák in northern Hungary, not far from the Slovak border, or the Teleki Library (Bibliotheca Telekiana, built in 1802) in Târgu-Mureş, Romania, but it is no less significant. The museum is one of Teleki's other distant progeny, the fulfilment of a dream from before 1914 to build an institution for geography modelled on the 1906 Museum for Regional Geography in Leipzig. Today, it is the Leibniz-Institut für Landeskunde, a key research centre.

Teleki wanted maps to be part of an always bigger, broader enterprise. His son Géza carried on much of his legacy, working as a geologist in Washington, D.C., until his own suicide in 1981. Critical attention to the count's life and work is often reduced by Hungary's wars over memory and a fragile European future, involving the politics of anti-semitism, European Union enlargement, and the return to (and exit

from) a world after 1989. Controversial proposals were made in 2004 to erect a statue to Pál in Budapest, by activists on Hungary's centre-right and with support from the Teleki Memorial Committee and, at least initially, Gábor Demszky (b. 1952), the long-serving Hungarian liberal mayor of the city from 1990 to 2010. It drew attention from the Simon Wiesenthal Centre in Los Angeles, which admirably objected to its symbolic placement in the history and memory of European Jewry. Under international pressure by Hungarian liberals and politicians even in his own party, Demszky changed his mind. He decided that the Teleki statue had to be moved outside the city to the resort town of Balatonboglár, near Lake Balaton, in the courtyard of a Catholic church. After twenty years in office, Demszky was voted out of office. Today, his party, once a powerful strategic alliance of liberals and social democrats, has all but disappeared with the rise of Fidesz and Jobbik. Tensions of illiberalism are unresolved: Teleki's "Carte Rouge" still hangs prominently on display in the Hungarian National Museum in Budapest and the Hungarian Geographical Museum in Érd.

Stories of map men after a century define transnational life and death: the rivalry, pride, and revenge projects of a generation of European aspirational experts. A hundred years after the Trianon tragedy for Hungary, we remain captivated by talismanic powers, yet not adequately aware of the space/time channels of maps or their aesthetic dangers. Maps after empire tell tales of historic nations that can never return, or did not exist, or can never change, or never were. For Count Teleki, Hungary's prime minister from July 1920 to April 1921 and again from February 1939 to his suicide note on 3 April 1941, maps expressed revisionist anger. A monument to Wilson was unveiled in Prague in October 2011 at the site of the Main Railway Station. The revision of Hungary's borders is shaped now, more than ever, by neofascist politics and memory wars in the European Union. Viktor Orbán has an 1887 map of 'Greater Hungary' (this is one of my 'favourites') hanging for show in his office. Trianon maps appear on t-shirts at nationalist rallies. ESRI, GIS, and Google evangelists march on, but maps do not represent a Silicon Valley triumphalism of gadgets, much less nations and civilisations.<sup>20</sup> The absurdist Two-Tailed Dog Party, a joke party, was founded in Szeged in 2006, and registered in 2014 to "make Hungary smaller again".<sup>21</sup> But, as Holly Case has pointed out, can irony ever halt dictatorship?

The final hodgepodge of Teleki and Trianon, not without hackneyed ideas or prejudice draped in science, was the posture of an insecure, fragile man. If there is a final lesson to this brokenness geography through masks and ambitions, insecure men do not merely dabble in East Central European modern politics. They dabble in aesthetics – bad opera, failed theatre – the forms of petty anger and grievance that grow out of naïve curiosity. Maps are a symbology of belonging and a vernacular of prejudice. When Teleki read his Karl May, he drew gendered frontiers for white European colonial-settler conquest far afield into revisionist geopolitical worlds. Like other tight-rope statesmen in a fascist era, he sought help from Berlin and Rome when hopes in Paris, London, and Washington fell short. He failed at Trianon. Then again, he was never invited. And when he failed dramatically, much like Karl May's fateful Winnetou the chieftain, it was a failure to play all sides at once.

20 Work on the aporia of how border-makers elide and 'work around' communities includes Jessie Labov, *Transatlantic Central Europe. Contesting Geography and Redefining Culture beyond the Nation*, Budapest 2019; Evgeny Morozov, *The Net Delusion. The Dark Side of Internet Freedom*, New York 2011; Karl Schlögel, *In Space We Read Time. On the History of Civilization and Geopolitics*, Chicago 2016. On the 'nylon' curtain, see: Yuliya Komska, *The Icon Curtain. The Cold War's Quiet Border*, Chicago 2015.

21 Holly Case/John Palatella, *Is Humour the Best Weapon against Europe's New Wave of Xenophobic Nationalism?*, in: *The Guardian*, 6 January 2016, [www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/06/hungary-two-tailed-dog-viktor-orban](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/06/hungary-two-tailed-dog-viktor-orban) (accessed 6 April 2020).

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