

Attempts to Form Antirevisionist Alliances inside the Axis: Croatian, Slovak and Romanian Collaboration against Hungary (1941–1943)

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Modern history of Central and South-East Europe is filled with numerous integrating processes, which are the more numerous the more unrealistic they were in their conception. Perhaps it was a reaction to a gradual disintegration of the three great empires spreading across the territory, i.e. the Ottoman, the tsarist and the Austrian-Hungarian Empires. In this region, a mosaic of small opposing nations, which almost always demanded neighbouring territories from each other, was created.

The system of the Versailles Treaty somehow arranged the space between Germany and Italy on the one side, Russia (which had by then become the Soviet Union – nevertheless still imperialistic) on the other. This system, however, concerned both the victors and the defeated, thus handicapping the former over the latter and, as a result, initiating future disputes. Consequently, dreams of the democrats Masaryk, Paderewski and Ionescu regarding one “Zwischen-Europa” which would span the Baltic and Aegean Seas, quickly dissolved when the nations of this European territory divided into two camps. The first camp included the winning parties, which profited at the expense of the defeated parties and significantly extended their territories. The second camp included the defeated parties, which lost a great part of their territories. Certain facts, which these large, multinational nations had hitherto ignored (i.e. the unprecedented ethnic mixture unseen in other European regions) now appeared in full nakedness. As a result, the former of the above mentioned nations focused their policies on maintaining conditions stipulated by the system of the Versailles Peace Treaties, while the latter desired its revision. And since the great powers had been divided by the outcomes of World War I too, they looked for support primarily from the winning Entente Powers and then from the defeated powers or powers discontented with the new establishment. Subsequently, Central, East and South-East Europe received new protectors – France from one side and Germany from the other side (the Soviet Union arrived in the 30s).

In the interwar period and during World War II, small and middle-sized nations in both “camps” were pushed by the above-mentioned sense of threat or injustice to look for a great-power protector and power for safeguarding the acquired territories or acquiring the lost ones.

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The Little Entente and later the Balkan Pact present a typical example of pacts of nations threatened by (border) revisions. Nations, which demanded revision of peace treaties, were represented by countries united under the so-called Roman Protocols. If we omit various schemes of “regional collaboration”, the above-mentioned projects were the only ones more or less vital (at least in certain periods of time or particular spheres of activity). In other words, they were the sole concepts, which had a certain historical significance and left behind concrete traces, perhaps in people’s subconsciousness.

Desperate efforts on the eve of World War II to create a kind of neutral bloc under the auspices of Italy or Great Britain were doomed from the very beginning because they wanted to unify the non-unifiable in a time of general danger of war (e.g. partners who were unable to yield a mere few kilometers of their territories to their neighbors even if collective interest demanded it).

During the war, there were numerous attempts to create blocs and alliances in both anti-Hitler coalitions and countries united under the Fascist Axis (many of them ended as mere projects or ideas). The objectives were traditional: the former desired a return to the pre-war status quo, while the latter wanted to keep what they had acquired with the help of the Fascists. Some “salvage” projects appeared in the second stage of the war. All governments within this territory more or less accepted the necessity of defeating Hitlerism and searched for their collective salvation, f.e. by creating a Catholic bloc led by Italy, which was anxious to break away from the corrupt Axis.

The rather uncharacteristic relationship between Slovakia, Romania and Croatia stood slightly aside. These three satellite nations of Nazi Germany were united by territorial losses on behalf of Hungary (and of course a desire to regain these territories), and concerns about other Hungarian territorial demands. However, there was no desire to revert to the pre-war condition (at least as regards juridical standpoints); the idea of a return to pre-war unitary states was unacceptable for the Slovak and Croatian separatists. However, these schemes share an unrealistic and even lofty stance with the above-mentioned plans.¹

¹ J. A. LUKACS was the first to point out this issue in his work *The Great Powers and Eastern Europe*, New York 1953, pp. 464ff. The Slovak historian Ľubomír Lipták paid interest to while it in two essays published in the second half of the 1960’s, utilising materials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. See L. LIPTÁK, *Maďarsko v slovenskej politike za druhej svetovej vojny*, in: *Historický časopis* 1, 1967, pp. 1ff; L. LIPTÁK, *Slovákija i strany Centralnoj Jevropy v period 1939–1944gg*, in: *Studia historica slovacae* VI, 1969, pp. 119–150. An essay by Miroslav Tejchman was based on Slovak and Rumanian archive materials. It was published in *Slovanský přehled* 2, 1992, pp. 158ff. A study

The independent Czechoslovak state disintegrated in March 1939 and Yugoslavia disintegrated in April 1941. The “independent” Slovakia, i.e. the Slovak Republic, arose on the ruins of Czechoslovakia, while the “independent” Croatia arose on the ruins of Yugoslavia.²

Both Slovakia and Croatia were mere satellites. Slovakia was internally more stabilized and more or less resembled a nation. In the initial stages, the ruling “*ľudáci*” managed to create a relatively stable and prosperous society and nation, which was initially able to protect itself from internal enemies. This was never achieved by Pavelić’s government in Croatia, which originated two years later.

Royal Romania did not disintegrate, but experienced significant changes as well. It lost some territories during the summer of 1940, but acquired others one year later, when it entered the war. Thus the only aspect, which connected Romania with the above-mentioned countries, was the fact that it also was a satellite, though undoubtedly more “independent”.

Each of these satellites lost something on behalf of Horthy’s Hungary. Slovakia lost its southern territory after Munich and part of its eastern territory after March; Romania lost the northern part of Transylvania and Croatia lost Medjumurje. Now these three states had a common interest in getting back their territories and losing no other territories to Hungary. At the same time, each state had its own maximalist plans, i.e. Great-Croatian, Great-Romanian and Great-Slovakian programs, which were based on revenge against Hungary. They involved not only regaining what had been annexed, but also acquiring further “national territories”.

That the countries mentioned so far, i.e. Slovakia, Croatia, Romania and Hungary were in fact allies is another paradox. They all signed the Anti-Comintern Pact and the Tripartite Pact, which aspired to unify pro-Fascist Europe under the Nazi leadership.

The foreign policy of Horthy’s government cherished the idea of restoring Hungary’s former regional supremacy. M. Kozma, Horthy’s private

published in 1996 by Bucharest historian Florin Anghel was based entirely on Rumanian materials. F. ANGHEL, *O alternativă de colaborare în interiorul Axei. Spre o nouă Mică înțelegere, 1941–1944*, in: *Revista istorică* II, No. 3–4, 1996, pp. 233ff. The Prague historian Jan Rychlík was particularly concerned with Croatian-Slovakian relations during the World War in his latest study published in the magazine *Slovanské historické studie* 2000, pp. 265–283. He used both Slovak and Croatian archive materials.

² These quotation marks are not pejorative; rather they are skeptical because the independence of both Slovakia and Croatia was strongly controversial. The former enjoyed a “protective agreement” with Germany and the latter had even two “protectors” – Italy and Germany. Just to be sure, the Italians militarily occupied half of the “Croatian independent state”, which was included into the Italian protectorate by several bilateral agreements.

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palatine, acknowledged in a letter dated April 1939 that the chief objective was restoration of Great Hungary over the entire Carpathian basin. “*For us, who adhere to the principles of St. Stephen’s ideas, who are not willing to sacrifice our one-thousand-year-old task in the Danube basin and who are predestined to lead foreign nations because we have all the potentials to achieve that, it would be murderous to give up this idea because it would consequently restrict Hungary on the Alföld territory and its Hungarian population..., the revision would not continue...and this would be suicidal for us, because the natural boundary lies along the Carpathian Ridge.*”³

The Hungarian policy continuously ensured the Germans that Hungary was the only guarantee of order in the Danube area and the only reliable barrier against potential penetration by the Soviet army. When the Soviet-Romanian conflict about Bessarabia threatened to break out into open war in summer 1940, the idea of occupying east Slovakia and thus preventing the enemy from penetrating into the Danube basin appeared for the first time.⁴

From the onset of the Slovak state, the Hungarians searched for proofs of pan-Slavism in Bratislava and tried to persuade the Germans that Hungary was the only guarantee of order in the Danube region.⁵

The new borders of 1938–1941 constituted a starting point for Budapest; for Slovakia, Romania and Croatia they represented more than the tolerable maximum. By decree of the first and second Vienna Award (i.e. southern Slovakia and north-western Transylvania) and by means of simple annexing acts (i.e. Croatian Međimurje, Vojvodina, Carpathian Ruthenia) Hungary achieved a significant portion of its revisionist program. However, Budapest was still hungry for further territories. It “showed interest” in Serbian Banat after the defeat of Yugoslavia.

³ Quotation from: J. FABIAN, *Slovensko v strednej Europe*, in: *Slovensko v rokoch druhej svetovej vojny*, J. SKLADANÁ (Ed.), Bratislava 1991, p. 63.

⁴ *Diplomáciai iratok Magyarország külpolitikájához 1936–1945*, IV, Budapest 1962, No. 583 and 583b. At the end of previous December, the leader of the Italian military intelligence service Carboni warned Minister Ciano that Budapest was preparing military actions concerning Transylvania, which it would potentially justify by a Soviet attack or communist unrests in Transylvania. *Documenti diplomatici italiani*, IX, 9, No. 715, report dated 25th December 1939. In spring 1940, the Hungarians declared that only strong Hungary in control the Carpathians could create a reliable barrier separating the Slavs. LIPTÁK, pp. 119–150, 178.

⁵ Bárdossy claimed in the *Donauraum* magazine that “*the Hungarians were to be a stronghold against the east and west and were to maintain equilibrium in that space*”. Politisches Archiv des Auswärtiges Amtes (hereinafter PA AA), Büro des Staatssekretär (St.), Diplomatischen Besuche, R 29835, Bd. 10, Nr. 1563, verbal note of the Romanian government.

Romania demanded the return of its territory and the Slovak government anticipated a revision of the arbitration, which would ensure recovery of at least some of the territory (the remaining territory would be resolved by exchange of population). The Zagreb government was hoping to get back Međimurje County, where the Croats constituted 97 per cent of the population.⁶

This situation suited the Germans. All the nations were obliged to surpass each other in loyalty. The German government thus applied identical tactics of “partial satisfaction” to each satellite. Each satellite gained something from assisting the Germans – part of a territory demanded from a neighboring country, independence, etc. However, nobody was absolutely satisfied in his or her demands and nobody was supposed to have a feeling of total conclusiveness of the acquired advantage. Thus the Germans continued disputing the validity of the arbitration before the Romanians and, conversely, promised Serbian Banat to the Hungarians after the war.⁷

Nevertheless, this double-dealing policy by Berlin did not prevent the allies from separating into those who felt aggrieved and those who believed that the former were preferred (even though they also felt “injured” by insufficient satisfaction of their demands – see Hungary and Bulgaria).

The Third Reich had its own ideas about the future of the New Europe, which were not always identical with ideas of the governments in Bucharest, Budapest, Sofia, Zagreb and Bratislava. German schemes imagined a predominantly German Europe and if anything, they allowed just small obedient satellites in the broad area of Central-East Europe (alongside extensive strong points of German colonization on the Danube River). Strong, quarrelling states would have resulted in an unstable region. But stability in the region was important for the Reich as it supplied them with food and strategic materials and was important for the communication with Asia (via the Ukraine), the Middle East and Africa (via Thessaloniki).

It was clear that both Slovakia and Croatia, which completely depended on a foreign protector (i.e. Germany or Italy) and which were endangered by Hungarian territorial appetite, searched for allies from the beginning of their existence. Bratislava did not much improve its relation

⁶ A territory along the Mura River on the Slovenian-Croatian border (Međimurje) was occupied by the Hungarian army during the April war against Yugoslavia under the pretence of “keeping order”. By a unilateral treaty, it was connected to Hungary (it had been part of Hungary until 1918) in early July. The Hungarians also showed interest in the local oil resources, which yielded twenty-five tank cars of oil per day.

⁷ I. CHIPER, *Obiective, mijloace și metode ale diplomației române în anul 1941*, in: *Revista Istorică II*, No. 3–4 1991, p. 7.

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towards Yugoslavia, which disintegrated in April 1941. Its orientation towards Poland, which was represented by Sidor, was even shorter and ended in September 1939. A more “logical” potential ally emerged with the creation of the “independent” Croatian state. Zagreb politicians were of a different nature than the politicians preceding them, who were often influenced by the “Czechoslovak spirit” and were more ideologically and politically acceptable for the new Slovak leaders.⁸

Even the new Slovak and Croatian establishment objected to the newly implemented “European order”. Hitler brought them to power, but constantly threatened them with his halfway decisions. Neither Bratislava nor Zagreb had enough power (or courage) to try and do something about it. They lacked any remedial concepts.

The third country was Romania, which was larger and militarily and economically more important. It lost Bessarabia in the summer of 1940, then northern Transylvania to the second Vienna Award and finally south Dobruđa. Up to this national catastrophe, which deprived the Romanian state of a great territory and large population, the Romanian king Carol II had been trying in vain to get a favorable response from the Nazis. His past association with the Little Entente made him an unacceptable partner for Hitler and Mussolini. However, when the Fascist-eager general Antonescu gained power, supported by the powerless new king Michael and a large portion of Romanian society who were eager to repair the “national catastrophe” of 1940, Hitler decided to grant guarantees to this curtailed country because he needed its food, raw materials and its large army.

At the turn of the year 1940, Bucharest realized that currently it could only “settle up” with Hungary. In spring 1941, the new Romanian leader attempted to drag Slovakia into anti-Hungarian activities.

Foreign minister Mihai Antonescu invited the Slovak envoy Milecz for 13th January 1941 to inform him about their “*common interest against Hungary*”. He received Slovak foreign minister Tuka’s reply that said that it was too early since the time was totally unfavorable for any actions aimed at regaining their territories.⁹

Furthermore, a war on the Balkans was breaking out and Bratislava became concerned with speculations about its “neutrality”. Up to now, nobody has studied potential Hungarian contra-measures.

⁸ The Croatian policy was governed by the agrarian party, which was linked with Czechoslovak agrarians until April 1941. Its leaders refused to collaborate with the new Ustaše and their foreign protectors.

⁹ Slovenský národný archív (hereinafter SNA), MZV, 192, political report No. 10 of 14th February 1941; 116, Zahranično-politické záležitosti 1939–1944, 302239/II-1941; LIPTÁK, p. 12.

Hungary confirmed its loyalty to Germany by promptly joining the war against the Soviet Union. At the start of July, Prime Minister Barossy proclaimed that Hungary would once again be able to fulfill its historical role of a defendant of order of the Carpathian territory.

The Hungarian regent Horthy demanded a supervising role over the Danube territory during his visit to Hitler at the end of the year. He claimed that Hungary was “*the only orderly and trustworthy nation in South-East Europe*”.

With such proclamations, the Hungarians practically disputed the national existence of the Slovaks, Croats and Romanians and challenged national social principles. This statement appeared in a Romanian memorandum to the German government in October 1941. Unsurprisingly, these endangered parties responded again, once more prompted by Romania.

In early July 1941, the Romanian foreign minister Mihai Antonescu informed the Slovak envoy Milecz that it was necessary to create a sort of “cultural coalition” between both countries. He added that similar relations should be established with Croatia, too, but “*without restoration of the Little Entente*”.¹⁰

Antonescu informed the Zagreb government somewhat later. On 7th August, he told the Croatian envoy Bulat that it was necessary to immediately start working on mutual “*cultural approximation*” since “*identical interests of the Romanian and Croatian population*” demanded preparation of a future protection of their common interests.¹¹

The Croatian government was the first to agree to establish firm relations and preparation for “unity of interest” in early September. The Slovak government followed seven weeks later. In this way, concrete Romanian – Croatian – Slovakian negotiations about trilateral collaboration commenced. For the public, the collaboration lay in the cultural and athletic spheres.

Trilateral negotiations were held in Bucharest in October 1941. They continued in Berlin, where leaders of the satellite countries gathered to sign the Anti-Comintern Pact.

The participants continuously ensured each other that they acted in their common interests; they did not wish to resolve any old issues and, in particular, did not want to inflame enmity towards Hungary at any cost.¹²

¹⁰ Biblioteca Centrala de Stat (thereinafter BCS), f. Sfântul Gheorghe (SG), LV, do 7, Convorbiri diplomatice 1–25 iulie 1941, 9-10, 9.7.1941.

¹¹ BCS, SG, LV, dop.7, Convorbiri diplomatice 28 iulie–25 august 1941, pp. 8–9.

¹² On 5th November 1941, Anton Pavelić proclaimed in his dialogue with the Romanian envoy D. Buzdugan that “*interests of our nations are identical and we have a common enemy*”. Arhiva Ministerului Afacerilor Externe, Bucharest, Fond 71/1920–1944, Croația, vol. I, f. 13.

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They merely argued that dealings about trilateral collaboration did not reproduce the “*old ideals of the Little Entente*” and were not in the least aimed against German interests. The three nations just wanted to reach a consensus on their common problems.¹³

It was impossible to conceal the negotiations. Even before they commenced, Mihai Antonescu had informed Ribbentrop that the three governments desired a “*mutual cultural exchange*”. This cultural collaboration was not seen as a political step against anybody or an attempt to breach the international obligations of Romania, Slovakia or Croatia.¹⁴

Berlin was informed about the conspired approximation of the three countries several weeks later by Councillor Stelzer. Antonescu never forgot to point out that it represented a mere “*operational unity aimed at defending their common interests and regional approximation*”. Berlin initially assured him that it would remain strictly neutral towards a potential regional alliance; it would neither support it nor publically reject it.¹⁵

The Hungarian foreign ministry informed Berlin about a “*proposition to create a new Little Entente between Romania, Croatia and Slovakia*” directed against Hungary.¹⁶

Unlike Berlin, which assumed a rather neutral and seemingly appeasing attitude, the Italian government strongly protested. It was concerned with Croatian participation in the conspired regional alliance. In a protest note addressed to Berlin, the three governments were directly accused of “*restoration of the spirit of the Little Entente and starting a new Little Entente, though with a different character*”.¹⁷ Besides its traditional interest in a strong Hungary, Italy was probably worried about a potential increase of power in Croatia, which it considered to lie in its sphere of interest.

All this became evident in Budapest. The Hungarian government accused Romania, Slovakia and Croatia of “*restoration of the Little Entente’s spirit*” and reported it to Berlin.¹⁸

When the leader of the Romanian state Marshal Antonescu approached Hitler with a question concerning the fate of small countries af-

¹³ BCS, SG, LV, dop. 7, Convorbiri diplomatice 1–25 octombrie 1941.

¹⁴ BCS, SG, LVd, dop. 7, Convorbiri diplomatice, 12th July 1941.

¹⁵ BCS, SG, LXXVIII, Instrucțiuni date, 6 octombrie 1941.

¹⁶ PA AA, St.P., R 29665, 162025, Erdmannsdorf N.777 z 9. 7. 1941. Likewise R 29666, 161412, Nr. 473 gRs, Berlin 20. 8. (delegate’s report from Pest).

¹⁷ SNA, MZV, 192, Political report No. 16/1942 dated 17th January 1942.

¹⁸ Quoted report by envoy Milecz dated 17th January.

ter the war and even demanded a clear reply to his question,¹⁹ Berlin's patience seemed to run out.

When a Slovak military delegation appeared in Bucharest in March 1942, the envoy Killinger inquired whether this policy meant fulfillment of a kind of *Einkreisungspolitik*²⁰. This resulted in the Slovak government's retreat, which left Romania disappointed. The Slovaks were accused of pro-Hungarian policy by certain Romanians. The minister Tuka became very busy clearing up the Romanian doubts in several internal notifications.

Romanian-Croatian and Slovakian-Croatian negotiations had a similar course. The *Nezavisna država hrvatska*, however, was a weak partner. Pavelić's regime was not respected at home, let alone abroad. Consequently Zagreb dropped out of further considerations although it was far more disposed to regional collaboration.

This does not, however, mean that Bratislava started ignoring Croatia. Ostentatious fraternizing celebrations were organized between the *ľudáci* guardsmen and the Croatian Ustaše; there were certain military contacts (supplies of weaponry and outfits from Slovak army warehouses to the Croatian militia), but the southern flank of the conspired trilateral agreement practically failed.

Further dealings, held in May 1942, were initiated by Mihai Antonescu. He claimed that even the small Axis states must make ready for the future peace in the framework of regional alliance. He even claimed that the Reich Minister Dr. Goebbels regarded his scheme favorably. Initially, they were supposed to coordinate propaganda and promote and exchange confidential information. Similar schemes stemmed from the conviction that the upcoming German offensive on the Eastern Front would lead to the final defeat of the Soviet Union and end of the war.

It seems, however, that Bratislava was not so optimistic. It certainly did not hurry and wanted to proceed with this restricted form of alliance. The Zagreb government showed great interest, but it was a partner too weak for any final settlements.

¹⁹ In his memorandum, Antonescu pointed out the great losses of the Romanian army on the eastern front and enquired why "*the purely intellectual fraternisation*" between Romania, Croatia and Slovakia was regarded with such cool reservations. Cf.: minutes from discussions between Ion Antonescu and Hitler on 11th February 1942. In.: A. HILGRUBER, *Staatsmänner und Diplomaten bei Hitler*, II, Frankfurt a. M. 1970, p. 44. About the memorandum's content: SNA, MZV, 192, political report No. 59/42/pol dated 10th March 1942.

²⁰ SNA, MZV, 192, political report No. 64/42 dated 16th March. A. Hitler enjoyed using the mentioned term when he attacked British efforts between 1939 and 1940 regarding a joint front against Fascist aggressors.

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In early February 1943, the Romanian government urged Bratislava to restore Romanian-Slovakian collaboration, which “*started in such a promising way*”. Minister Antonescu only added that he did not understand why Germany feared political collaboration between both nations because “*such regional alliance was in German interest*”.²¹ Shortly afterwards, Antonescu received a letter from his Slovak colleague Dr. V. Tuka, who regarded Romania the only nation (except for Germany, of course) from which Slovakia could expect “*fundamental and effective assistance*”.²²

In September 1943, initiative arrived from Bratislava for the first time. The envoy Milecz turned to M. Antonescu with a request in which he asked Romania for help if Hungary attempted to occupy Slovakia. He received a positive answer.²³

Budapest’s reaction was swift again. At the end of January 1943, the Hungarian envoy delivered a memorandum to Berlin in which he informed about Romanian efforts to create a new Little Entente (“*einer kleineren Entente*”) between Romania, Slovakia and Croatia. He claimed that a historic partnership (“*Schicksalsgemeinschaft*”) between the Romanian and Croatian nations was emphasized in all the media and that in certain Slovak circles “*prospects were awoken for the creation of a Little Entente*” (“*zur Errichtung einer kleineren Entente*”).²⁴

A memorandum of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs dated 16th April stated: “we are feeling threatened by enemies – the spirit of the Little Entente haunts our population. It is our mission to safeguard the Carpathian territory (Karpatenraums), which also forms an economical unity. We have the following tasks in the area:

- 1) to act as Ordnungsstaat in the heart of Europe,
- 2) to achieve historical boundaries by peaceful means,
- 3) to support economically the fighting Axis in its war against the Soviet union,
- 4) to develop a diplomatic activity in the interest of the Axis and its war against communism and fulfillment of our historical mission”.²⁵

Bi- and tri-lateral Slovakian-Romanian-Croatian contact was realized in three stages.

²¹ SNA, MZV, 193, political report No. 41/43/pol dated 3rd February 1943.

²² Tuka’s letter to Mihai Antonescu dated 17th February 1943. ANGHEL, O alternativă de colaborare în interiorul Axei. Spre o nouă Mică înțelegere, 244.

²³ SNA, MZV, 193, political report No. 173/43/pol dated 8th September 1943.

²⁴ PA AA, fond Unterstaatssekretär (U.St.S), 184118, Pol. Nr. 72, 28. 1. 1943.

²⁵ *Allianz Hitler, Horthy, Mussolini. Dokumente zur ung. Aussenpolitik (1933–1944)*, Budapest, 1966, No. 118, pp. 336–339.

The first, from summer 1941 until winter 1941/42 was characterized by permanent collaboration in political, economical and cultural spheres, which ended after the German intervention.

The second stage (1942 until well into the second half of 1943) was represented by intense Romanian-Croatian solidarity. In late 1942 it seemed that the alliance would really be signed, but Rome intervened, because it traditionally considered Hungary the number one in the region and regarded Croatia its own territory.

In the final stage (autumn 1943) collaboration floundered and mutual relations cooled. It was partially caused by the German intervention in Croatia, the collapse of Italy and most importantly the changing course of war in Europe.

It must be pointed out that the policy of mutual fraternization of the three Central-East European satellites never disputed the Axis. The protagonists of alliance policy in Bratislava, Bucharest and Zagreb never impeached affiliation of their nations with the Fascist Axis. They always acted within its framework and respected potential German or Italian grudges.

The conspired tripartite fraternization never had an offensive character or intention to surround Hungary (it was even impossible because they did not share any boundaries with the country). They desired territories, which Hungary had annexed with the help of the Axis and protection from further Hungarian demands.

The fate of the wartime flirt with Romanian-Slovakian-Croatian alliance was much like the fate of the Little Entente. It was spurred by its fear of Hungary (and a common effort to regain territories which Hungary had taken with the help of Germany). What remained was failure, inability to create an alliance in defending their mutual interests and an episode of the satellites' desire to do more independent policy. Some terminology still survives: firstly, the moment a hint of trilateral collaboration appeared, the afflicted party immediately condemned the three states of "*restoration of the Little Entente spirit*".²⁶ Secondly, the moment trilateral negotiations commenced, tradition of former collaboration was pointed out in salutary notes.

Just as the Little Entente fell in a series of more or less successful events and integrating experiments in the interwar period, so the Romanian-Slovakian-Croatian collaboration efforts fell in a long series of similar

²⁶ A similar situation was last repeated in 1968. After Tito's and Ceausescu's visit to Prague, the term Little Entente appeared not only in Czechoslovak media, but also in accusations against reformers from East Germany and some other countries of the Warsaw Pact.

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experiments and projects of World War II. There were a large number of them in both the winning and the losing camps. Concerning the former, we can mention federalization projects promoted by Great Britain, which disintegrated into a torso of a Czechoslovak-Polish and Yugoslav-Greek treaties; concerning the latter, there were various speculations concerning the creation of a Catholic bloc under the auspice of Italy.

Abstract

The revisions of Hungarian borders in the years 1939–1941 caused considerable dissatisfaction among the countries which had to cede considerable territories to the government in Budapest. Therefore these states (Rumania, Slovakia and Croatia) attempted to resurrect the idea of the Little Entente which sought to prevent Hungarian revisionism in the interwar era. However Budapest had German support – therefore the efforts of the countries to form some sort of anti-Hungarian block came to nothing.

Keywords

Slovakia, Roumenia, Croatia, Hungary, Little Entente, Diplomacy