

## **Trianon: An Eighty Year Tragedy and Obstacle to Regional Stability**

Frank Koszorus, Jr., *Hungarian American Coalition*

Eighty years ago this month in the Palace of Trianon outside Paris, vengeful peacemakers at the end of World War I laid the groundwork for future conflict in the center of Europe -- one that is still with us today. They did so by dismembering the thousand-year-old Kingdom of Hungary, a large, self-contained, geographically and economically coherent and durable formation in the Carpathian Basin, ostensibly in the name of national self-determination. But, instead of facilitating its transformation into a natural, more democratic anchor of the region, the peacemakers carved out of it a string of smaller, weaker, and ultra-nationalistic states which, because of the ethnic heterogeneity of the region, were also multi-ethnic. Even more problematic for the region's future stability, these successor states patterned themselves after the centralized nation-state model and proved unwilling to accept ethnic pluralism.

The Treaty of Trianon, which was imposed on Hungary without any negotiation, tore that country apart. In their rush to create new or enlarged states, the peacemakers forgot or ignored that Hungary itself had been oppressed by the Habsburgs and fought two wars of independence against them. They also ignored the efforts of Hungary's Prime Minister Tisza to prevent the outbreak of the First World War.

Trianon turned out to be the most severe of all post-war settlements - even more so than the German and Bulgarian settlements. By drawing artificial borders in gross violation of the ethnic principle, it also transferred over three million indigenous ethnic Hungarians and over 70% of the country's territory to foreign rule. Following the war to make the "world safe for democracy," the treaty even denied the affected populations the right to choose under whose sovereignty they would live. Only the city of Sopron in western Hungary was allowed to decide its future in a plebiscite, and it opted by a large margin to remain in Hungary. When they were through, the architects of the punitive Treaty of Trianon dismembered a geo-political and economic unit which had exhibited remarkable stability for centuries and thereby made a mockery of the much heralded principle of self-determination.

Instead of solving the "nationalities" question, the peacemakers created a host of additional ones. The new states (Czecho-Slovakia and Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (later Yugoslavia), or the enlarged one (Rumania), acquired large national minorities who quite naturally resented the harsh treatment that was meted out to them. Conflict also quickly developed between the victorious parties. The Slovaks felt discriminated against by the Czechs, while the Croats resented Belgrade's domination. Stjepan Radic of the Croatian Peasant Party was interned for petitioning the peace conference for Croatian autonomy and was later shot in parliament. Czecho-Slovakia was indicative of the multi-ethnic composition of the newly created states. Its population of 13.5 million in 1919 included millions of Germans, Slovaks, Hungarians, Ruthenians, and Poles.

The new European Order created in 1920, reiterated in the post World War II peace arrangements, unceremoniously and almost instantaneously collapsed with the end of the Cold War. Thus, for example, Croats, and Slovenians seized the moment to escape Belgrade's stranglehold, albeit only after military conflict. Slovaks declared their independence from Prague in the peaceful velvet divorce of 1993.

While these other nations of the region exercised the right of self-determination, the Hungarian minorities in the newly divided successor states are still living with the stifling status quo that threatens their culture. They are denied a host of minority rights, among them cultural autonomy. In Rumania, for example, even the current post-communist government refuses to restore the Hungarian language university in Cluj (Kolozsvar) that had been forcibly eliminated by Ceausescu. The Hungarians of Vojvodina, Yugoslavia, face mounting pressure from Serb extremists, especially after Milosevic eliminated that province's autonomy which he did even before he destroyed Kosovo's autonomy.

Eighty years after, the tragedy of Trianon lingers; and it will linger until all parties recognize the inextricable link between true democracy and the right of ethnic minorities to exercise collective or minority rights, whereby they are able fully to

preserve their unique historical and cultural characteristics. The United States should take the lead in defusing tensions in the region first, by recognizing the legitimacy of minority rights and, second, by vigorously and judiciously promoting the development and implementation of minority rights, the absence of which constitutes the primary source of regional instability. Once a comprehensive new arrangement in the relations between states, nations, and national minorities in Central and Eastern Europe is accepted, stability will follow. That, in turn, will forestall the need for the United States to militarily intervene in the region and commit troops to costly and lengthy peace-keeping missions. Such an arrangement will lead to the realization of the principle of self-determination that was proclaimed by the peacemakers in Paris eighty years ago.

## **The Republic of Vojvodina**

Janusz Bugajski, *Center for Strategic and International Studies*

A new state may be emerging in Central Europe and with the coming disintegration of Serbia, Croatia could soon have a sixth neighbor. For the first time in many years, observers and activists are now seriously considering a future Republic of Vojvodina.

Ultimately, the Serbian "province" of Vojvodina has as much right to independence as Kosova, having constituted one of the eighth federal units in the failed Yugoslavia. However, unlike in Kosova or the four republics that escaped from Belgrade's control during the 1990s, Vojvodina has not possessed a critical mass supporting statehood.

Despite Belgrade's policies, Vojvodina remains the most ethnically diverse region in Yugoslavia. At the beginning of Milosevic's wars, Serbs formed a narrow majority in a region that contained sizable minorities of Hungarians, Croats, Slovaks, Romanians, Ukrainians, Ruthenians, Vlachs, Romas, Muslims, and a host of smaller nationalities.

During Yugoslavia's collapse tens of thousands of Serb refugees from Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina swarmed into Vojvodina and thousands of Croats and Hungarians were forced to abandon their homeland. In this way, Belgrade sought to prevent any possibility of autonomy or secession for this agriculturally rich territory.

Vojvodina was deliberately kept tense through the activities of bandit militias promoted by the Yugoslav security services. They harassed opposition activists, attacked Croatian and Hungarian villagers, and maintained constant pressure against any organized opposition to Milosevic's rule. The regime sought to manufacture ethnic tensions and conflicts in a region that was traditionally tolerant, multi-ethnic and multi-confessional. Indeed, many of the original Vojvodina Serbs resented Belgrade's interference and the influx of many radicalized and embittered Serb racists from Bosnia and Croatia who settled in the province at Belgrade's instigation.

Throughout the past decade, some local political activists have called for the reinstatement of Vojvodina's autonomy, which was extinguished by Milosevic during 1989-90. Their voices have been lost in the thunder of war raging around the region. Indeed, it is largely because of the lack of any significant bloodshed in Vojvodina that international attention has failed to focus on the territory and assumed that it would always remain as an integral part of Serbia. But with the accelerated collapse of the Belgrade Imperium, the Vojvodina question is now increasingly coming to the fore.

Leaders of Vojvodina's minorities and representatives of the Serbian opposition recently met to discuss the future of the territory. They generally agreed on the necessity of establishing a Vojvodina parliament and a regional executive authority as part of the process for decentralizing Serbia and recreating Vojvodina's autonomy. However, disagreements were also evident as to the long-term solution for the province given Serbia's political morass, economic collapse, and international isolation.

In reality, there are three possible solutions for Vojvodina's future: as a district of Serbia, as an autonomous entity in a federalized Serbia, or as a fully independent state. The first scenario envisages the legitimization of Vojvodina's current status essentially as an appendage of the central government with the maintenance of the present administrative municipalities and no significant regional decision-making powers.

Whether under Milosevic or his successor, Vojvodina would lose its distinct identity and its citizens and political parties would have no major voice in official policies that directly affect the province. Furthermore, the region's minorities would be gradually absorbed and assimilated under the cover of Serbian citizenship and "national integrity." No doubt, thousands would choose to leave for Hungary, Croatia, Slovakia, and Romania, to avoid the process of ethnic homogenization. This would further overburden the fragile economies in these countries.

In the second scenario, Vojvodina would again gain large measure of regional autonomy and establish its own decision-making bodies within a wider Serbian state framework. The regional government would then be responsible for such matters as finance, education, culture, and economic development. Some Vojvodinian activists, including the leader of the

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League of Social Democrats, Nenad Canak, have indeed called for the federalization of Serbia into six administrative units to include Vojvodina, Sandjak, and Kosova.

Such a proposal would clearly have advantages in a democratic and decentralized country that is developing its contacts and integration with international institutions. But in a centralized, authoritarian, kleptocratic, and self-isolated state such as Serbia, autonomy on a paper has little meaning in practice. Milosevic and his henchmen are well aware that any compromises on centralism would precipitate the regime's downfall.

The only viable short and long-term solution, which few in the international arena would currently favor, is sovereignty, independence, and statehood for the Republic of Vojvodina. With Kosova already on its way to full independence, why should a rich and productive territory such as Vojvodina remain bound and gagged to backward Belgrade?

Several valid arguments can be posited to support Vojvodinian independence. It would further undercut Milosevic's room for maneuver and eliminate potential Serb military threats and provocation along the Hungarian and Croatian borders. It would help install a pro-Western Vojvodinian government that would promote vital infrastructural projects across the Vojvodinian plain. This would help the Central European economies to link up more effectively with the Balkans.

Vojvodinian independence would also promote the principle of multi-ethnicity in all governmental and public institutions, thereby reversing the trend visible over the past decade. Indeed, unlike Kosova (and because of Milosevic's atrocities there) Vojvodina can serve as a model of inter-ethnic tolerance and as an important bridge linking all the region's states. It would also ultimately help Serbia to realize the limits of its power and influence in a diverse region that is striving for NATO and EU membership.

Of course, our policy makers will find a hundred objections to Vojvodinian statehood, much like the ones we hear over Kosova or Montenegro. Regardless of the current international posture and the pathetic fears of some decision-makers over upsetting Belgrade, the Vojvodinians themselves must begin to articulate their goals and aspirations and to decide whether they want to be a part of Europe or remain a decaying province of Europe's biggest "black hole."

## COALITION PROJECT UPDATE

### The White House Internship Program by Ameritech-SBC Communications

While the Coalition's request for continued funding of this special project is pending, the White House has accepted an outstanding candidate for the Summer Session, **Steven Gyeszly** of College Station, Texas. Please note: The Fall Internship Session lasts from September 4 to December 22, 2000. **Application deadline: July 15, 2000.** If interested, please call the Coalition office at (202) 296-9505.

### The 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Political Action Conference and Workshop "Promoting Human and Minority Rights in a Presidential Election Year"

The Political Action Conference and Workshop entitled "**Promoting Human and Minority Rights in a Presidential Election Year**" was held on June 5, 2000, in Letts Hall at the main campus of The American University in Washington, DC. Within the context of the former autonomous province of Vojvodina the participants examined the ways the Hungarian American community can more effectively access decision-makers and influence policy.

"No one model fits Central Europe or the Balkans" said **Julie Mertus**, Professor at the School of International Service of American University, "...other options, including legal systems for minority protection and autonomy must be considered for the region". The Washington correspondent of the daily *Magyar Szó* of Novi Sad, **Tibor Purger**, examined the situation of Vojvodina a year after the NATO air war saying that "while there is no significant support for Vojvodina's independence, most Belgrade-based democratic Serbian opposition parties play only lip service to the autonomy of the province, and it is only the local Vojvodina parties that advocate a significant level of autonomy. The Hungarian minority seeks a three-tiered personal, local and cultural autonomy as a guarantee for its survival in a Serb-dominated state."

**Laszlo Hamos**, President of the Hungarian Human Rights Foundation, gave the audience an overview of the situation of the Hungarian minorities in Romania and Slovakia, focusing on the upcoming elections. The final sessions of the Conference included a discussion of the role of human and minority rights in the Democratic Campaign 2000, which was presented by **Tom Albert** of the Democratic National Committee. **Bela Liptak** explored practical ways to communicate more effectively with the Hungarian American community to advance our common goals.

**Hungarian Embassy and Hungarian American Coalition  
Co-sponsor Historic Seminar:  
"Hungary and the Fall of Communist Dominoes"**

Ten years to the day of the first free elections in a Warsaw Pact country, the Embassy of the Republic of Hungary and the Hungarian American Coalition held a seminar in the Dirksen Senate Office Building in Washington, DC. "The Hungarian people made a historic decision in free elections, which resulted in the establishment of a democratic Parliament," recalled Hungarian Foreign Minister, **Janos Martonyi**, in his opening remarks.

The seminar, entitled "Hungary and the Fall of the Communist Dominoes," consisted of two panels. First, the focus was on *The Events of Transition to Democracy in Central Europe and Hungary, 1989-1990*. The panelists, all involved in the democratic changes in Hungary, included **Ambassador Mark Palmer** U.S. Ambassador to Hungary between 1986-90; **Col. (Ret.) Ruth Anderson**, Defense and Air Attaché at the U.S. Embassy in Budapest from 1988-91; and **Geza Jeszenszky**, Ambassador of Hungary to the U.S. since 1998, who served as Foreign Minister of Hungary between 1990-94. This panel was moderated by **Mrs. Edith Lauer**, Chairman of the Board of the Hungarian American Coalition.

In the second panel the perspective shifted to *U.S. Foreign Policy Towards Central Europe and Hungary*, with insights offered by American policy experts: **Mr. Lawrence S. Eagleburger**, former Secretary of State, Deputy Secretary of State during the events of 1989-90; **Mr. Robert L. Hutchings**, Director for European Affairs at the National Security Council from 1989-92; **Mr. Stephen J. Flanagan**, Associate Director and Member of the Policy Planning Staff at the Department of State between 1989-95; and **Mr. Thomas O. Melia**, who served as Program Director of the National Democratic Institute between 1988-92. The panel was moderated by **Mr. Frank Koszorus, Jr.**, member of the Board of the Hungarian American Coalition and attorney at Collier, Shannon, and Scott of Washington, DC.

The seminar, which was attended by approximately 80 people, was followed by a reception. Oklahoma Congressman, **Ernest Istook**, offered short remarks about the remarkable contributions of Hungarians to freedom, science and the arts.

(PHOTOGRAPH)

Amb. Geza Jeszenszky and Janos Martonyi,  
Foreign Minister of Hungary.

From left to right: Lawrence Eagleburger, Thomas Melia, Frank  
Koszorus Jr., Robert Hutchings and Steven Flanagan.

**Hungary 2000 Conference  
Hosts Outstanding Hungarians From All Over the World  
Hungarian American Coalition Members Participate**

On May 19-20, political and community leaders of Hungarian communities from 28 countries were invited by Prime Minister Viktor Orban to discuss: "**Challenges for Hungarians at the Turn of the Century.**" Among the two hundred guests who attended the Conference, were Coalition members **Laszlo Bojtos, Robert Gabor, Laszlo Hamos, Peter Kurz, Edith Lauer, Laszlo Papp, Ilona and Janos Szablya, Zsolt Szekeres and Sandor Taraszovics.**

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Conference sessions focused on the following topics: "National culture in the world of globalization; "National political expectations and the future of the Hungarian diaspora;" and "The Hungarian economy in Europe - and in Central and East Europe." Hungarian Human Rights Foundation President, **Laszlo Hamos**, proposed the establishment of a Council for Diaspora Hungarians. **Edith Lauer**, Coalition Chairman, spoke to the closing plenary session about the challenges the dwindling Hungarian community faces in the U.S. She advocated the satellite broadcast of DUNA TV's programs in the U.S., where they could play a crucial role to strengthen Hungarian ethnic identity and appreciation of Hungarian culture and history. Both proposals were included in the final document of the conference.

Standing (from left to right): Laszlo Papp, Laszlo Hamos, Sandor Taraszovics and Peter Kurz. Seated (from left to right): Helen Szablya, Edith Lauer, Zsolt Szekeres and John Szablya.

#### Coalition Scholarship Fund

Congratulations to **Ms. Aniko Kukla**, one of the recipients of last year's Coalition Scholarships, who was awarded a Merit Scholarship for outstanding achievement at University of Akron, OH. Congratulations are also in order for **Mr. Kornel Romada**, of Sturovo, Slovakia, who graduated from Northwest Missouri State University in late April. As a result of his academic and graduate examination results, he has been offered a full scholarship by the college to earn his Master of Business Administrations degree. Presently the Scholarship Committee is considering applications from eight candidates.

### NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERS

#### George Dozsa Accepts Coalition Presidency

Due to the resignation of Peter Ujvagi as President, members of the Executive Committee asked Coalition Vice President, **George Dozsa**, to serve as President until the election of new officers scheduled for the December Board Meeting. Mr. Dozsa is President of the respected fraternal organization, the Hungarian Reformed Federation of America, one of the founding members of the Hungarian American Coalition.

#### Reception by APIC and Minnesota Hungarians for Visiting Healthcare Professionals

The **Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology** and the **Minnesota Hungarians** gave a reception on June 17, 2000 for **Dr. Zsuzsanna Peczy**, head of Department of Anesthesiology and Intensive Care in National Institute for TB. and Pulmonary Diseases in Budapest and **Dr. Karolina Borocz**, an epidemiologist with the Hungarian National Health Department. The two visiting doctors participated in conferences and courses at the University of Minnesota and visited hospitals in the Twin Cities for two weeks observing methods and techniques of their U.S. colleagues. The reception was organized by **Barbara Bor**, a member of APIC's International Committee and a Board Member of the Minnesota Hungarians, and was held in the home of **Tibor and Olga Zoltai**. This is the third year that the Minnesota chapter of APIC International Committee has invited Hungarian physicians, nurses and other health care administrators to observe and experience U.S. methods in infection prevention. The Minnesota Hungarians assisted APIC in providing interpreters and sightseeing services.

## **Sarasota Celebrates the Millennium: Hungarian Days Are a Resounding Success**

The Hungarian American community, which numbers nearly 30,000 in the Sarasota area, held a five day-long millennial celebration on **April 8-12, 2000**. Under the leadership of **Eva Kisvarsanyi** and her excellent committee, the **Kossuth Club** joined the **1956 Hungarian World Council**, the **Petofi Cultural Association**, the **Sarasota Visual Arts Center**, and the **New College of the University of South Florida** to present a rich and varied celebration of Hungary's Millennium. Programs included a Banquet and Coronation Ball, an Art Exhibit, an Organ Concert and a Millennial Concert at the Sarasota Opera House, and a lecture by Ambassador Geza Jeszenszky, which provided a historic overview of the Hungarian Millennium. Congratulations to all those who organized this impressive and memorable program!

## **ITT-OTT Conference at Lake Hope, Ohio, to be held August 12-19, 2000**

"Tradition and Culture," will be the theme of this year's Itt-Ott Conference. Speakers and special guests are: **Laszlo Imre** (Debrecen), **Janos Horvath**, Member of Parliament (Budapest), **Karoly Jokay** (Budapest), **Kalman Bela Borsi** (Paris), **Janos Bathory** (Hungarians Abroad Office, Budapest), **Jozsef Jankovics** (Budapest), **Aniko Szantho Harrington** (Sepsiszentgyorgy, Romania), **Balazs Somogyi** (Connecticut), **Maria Friedrich** (Ohio), Gabor Tarjan (New Jersey). Two groups will provide musical entertainment: the **Sandorfalvi Ifjusagi Citera Zenekar**, (Zither Youth Band of Sandorfalva), and the **Okros Nepi Egyuttas** (Folk Ensemble) of Budapest.

Come and be part of the special family atmosphere celebrating Hungarian tradition and culture! For those with young children there will be daily child-care service available. For information on the program and reservations, please contact: **Mr. Istvan Hargitai**, 27643 Laurell Lane, North Olmsted, OH. 44070. Tel: (440) 779-7791, E-mail: [1Hargitai@aol.com](mailto:1Hargitai@aol.com).

## **Prof. Edward Chaszar Publishes Book on National Minorities**

**The International Problem of National Minorities**, is the revised edition of studies on minority rights published by **Prof. Edward Chaszar**, Professor Emeritus of Indiana University of Pennsylvania. The unifying theme of the studies which focus on East Central Europe and the Middle East, is the issue of granting rights to minorities to preserve their identity, and the international protection of these rights. In the appendix the book includes a number of major documents and declarations by international institutions such as the United Nations, CSCE, and the Council of Europe on minority and human rights.

## **National Committee of Hungarians from Slovakia Acts as Sponsor**

As in the past, the **National Committee of Hungarians from Slovakia** continues to sponsor the attendance of Hungarian NGO representatives from Slovakia at the **U.N. Working Group on Minorities** in Geneva, Switzerland. Convening yearly at the end of May for a week, the Working Group has a mandate from the Commission on Human Rights to scrutinize and promote the implementation of the 1992 U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Minorities. Prof. Edward Chaszar, Secretary of NCHS, attends the meetings of the Working Group regularly as a scholar specializing in minority rights, and acts as a mentor to the Hungarian NGO representatives in Slovakia.

## **Calvin Synod**

The Calvin Synod held a meeting in Cleveland on May 23-26, 2000, when the **one hundredth anniversary** of their publication, **Calvin Synod Herald - Reformatusok Lapja** was observed. Between June 30 and July 12, 2000, Synod members will participate in the **Fourth Hungarian Reformed World Federation** program. The Millennial Celebrations will begin in Hungary and then move into Transylvania, Romania, Carpatho-Ukraine, the Highlands of Slovakia, and end in the Vojvodina region of former Yugoslavia.

## **Hungarian Reformed Federation of America Will Hold Quadrennial Convention in Toledo, Ohio**

**Mr. George Doza**, President of the **Hungarian Reformed Federation of America** has issued an invitation to Constituent Members, Board Members and Delegates to the Convention to attend its 36<sup>th</sup> Quadrennial Convention at the **Wyndham Hotel, Two Seagate, Summit Street, Toledo, OH, on September 25-28, 2000**.

The Convention will honor the memory of **Mr. Istvan Molnar**, one of the early immigrants who made outstanding contributions to the institutional development of the Hungarian Reformed Federation of America, and also had a defining role in shaping the Hungarian community of Toledo from 1902 to 1943.

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS OF MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

- June 30** *Magyar Oregdiak Szovetseg - Bessenyei Gyorgy Kor, Hungarian Alumni Association* lecture series. Reports on Budapest conferences (Magyarország 2000, Educator's Association, World Federations of Hungarians) by participating members: Karoly Balla, Laszlo Hamos, Janos Horvath, Istvan Nyiri, Laszlo Papp, Peter Pastor and Miklos Ruszcsak. Contact: **Karoly Nagy, Tel. (732) 699-1483 or [ktnagy@aol.com](mailto:ktnagy@aol.com)**
- July 8 - 29** *Hungarian Scouts Association Abroad.* School Camp (Iskolatábor) for children, Fillmore, NY. For information, **please call (973) 772-8810 or fax to (973) 772-5145.**
- August 6** *Geauga Magyar Cultural Society* will hold the Club's picnic. For more information please call: **Maragaret Gorta at (216) 255-8571 or [MRG3410@aol.com](mailto:MRG3410@aol.com)**
- August 10 - 20** "Szent István" Jubilee Camp of the *Hungarian Scouts Association Abroad*, with participants from North and South America, Europe, and Australia. Fillmore, NY. For information, please call (973) 772-8810 or fax to (973) 772-5145.
- August 25** *Magyar Oregdiak Szovetseg - Bessenyei Gyorgy Kor, Hungarian Alumni Association* lecture series. Dr. Laszlo Imre literary historian, Vice President of Debrecen University: "Hungarian Literature and Mission." Contact: **Karoly Nagy, Tel. (732) 699-1483 or [ktnagy@aol.com](mailto:ktnagy@aol.com)**
- September 10** *Geauga Magyar Cultural Society* will hold the Club's Fall Festival. For more information please call: **Maragaret Gorta at (216) 255-8571 or [MRG3410@aol.com](mailto:MRG3410@aol.com)**

### SOME FACTS ABOUT THE COALITION

The Hungarian American Coalition is a not-for-profit 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization, registered in Washington, DC on August 20, 1991.

**OUR MISSION:** The Coalition was established to mobilize and coordinate the talents and resources of its members and to promote the interests of Hungarian-Americans.

#### OUR GOALS

1. To identify and promote the concerns and interests of the Hungarian-American community;
2. To foster interest and appreciation in the United States for the history, education, and culture of Hungary, including its literature, arts, and scientific achievements;
3. To encourage cultural and educational interaction between the people of the United States and Hungary;
4. To protect and preserve the human and minority rights and cultural heritage of Hungarians throughout the world;
5. To support democratic institutions and economic development in Hungary.

**ORGANIZATION AND MEMBERSHIP:** The Coalition consists of organizational and individual members and operates in accordance with its Articles and Bylaws, under direction of its Board of Directors. (These documents are provided upon request).

For additional information, please visit our homepage at: <http://www.hungary.com/hac>

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