

Great Britain to Hungary, 29-11-1941

Alongside two other ultimatums presented to Finland and Romania (see cases Great Britain to Finland, 28-11-1941 and Great Britain to Romania, 29-11-1941), Great Britain issued an ultimatum (in nearly identical terms) to Hungary on 29 November 1941. In the previous year, the German government had started using Hungarian territory to transport German troops to Rumania. It had also been progressively putting pressure on the Hungarian government to join the German led axis (between Germany, Italy and Japan) which Hungary did in November 1940. In April 1941 the Hungarian government facilitated and partook in the German invasion and occupation of Yugoslavia. In June 1941 it joined Germany in declaring war on the Soviet Union.¹ Soviet leader Stalin had repeatedly asked British Prime Minister Churchill to exert pressure on Hungary to get out of the war effort.² Churchill eventually yielded to Stalin's demands and issued the following ultimatum through the US diplomatic representative in Budapest:

The Hungarian Government has for many months been pursuing aggressive military operations on the territory of the USSR, ally of Great Britain, in closest collaboration with Germany, thus participating in the general European war and making substantial contribution to the German war effort. In these circumstances His Majesty's Government in Great Britain finds it necessary to inform the Hungarian Government that unless by December five the Hungarian Government has ceased military operations and has withdrawn from all active participation in hostilities, His Majesty's Government will have no choice but to declare the existence of a state of war between the two countries.³

The Hungarian government expressed surprise to the American representative denying that any Hungarian forces were fighting on Soviet soil.⁴ In subsequent days it did not offer any other response to the British ultimatum, and on 6 December Great Britain declared war. The direct military consequences of the war declaration were limited other than that it entrenched Hungary closer into the German sphere of influence by dividing the world further in two opposing camps.⁵ In the period thereafter Great Britain did not deploy any forces immediately against Hungary. After the attack on Pearl Harbor and the German war declaration against the United States, Hungary was pressured by Germany into breaking of relations with the United States and declaring war in April 1942.⁶ The Allied side, including Great Britain, eventually prevailed in 1945.

¹ John F. Cadzow, Andrew Ludanyi, and Louis J. Elteto, *Transylvania: The Roots of Ethnic Conflict* (Kent State University Press, 1983), 194–95.

² Government of the USSR, 'Correspondence between the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR and the Presidents of the USA and the Prime Ministers of Great Britain during the Great Patriotic War of 1941 - 1945', 1941, n. 20 esp., <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/correspondence/01/41.htm#15b>.

³ Stephen Kertesz, 'The Plight of Satellite Diplomacy', *The Review of Politics* 11, no. 01 (1949): 41, fn.34, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034670500044673>.

⁴ Stephen Kertesz, *Between Russia and the West* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1986), 119. John F. Cadzow, Andrew Ludanyi, and Louis J. Elteto, *Transylvania: The Roots of Ethnic Conflict* (Kent State University Press, 1983), 196.

⁵ Craig Thompson, 'Britain, Canada Declare War on Finns, Hungary, & Rumania, London, Special Cable to The New York Times, Sunday, December 7, 1941', *Axis History*, 7 December 1941, <http://forum.axishistory.com/viewtopic.php?t=50450>.

⁶ Kertesz, *Between Russia and the West*, 119–20. Cadzow, Ludanyi, and Elteto, *Transylvania*, 1983, 196–202.