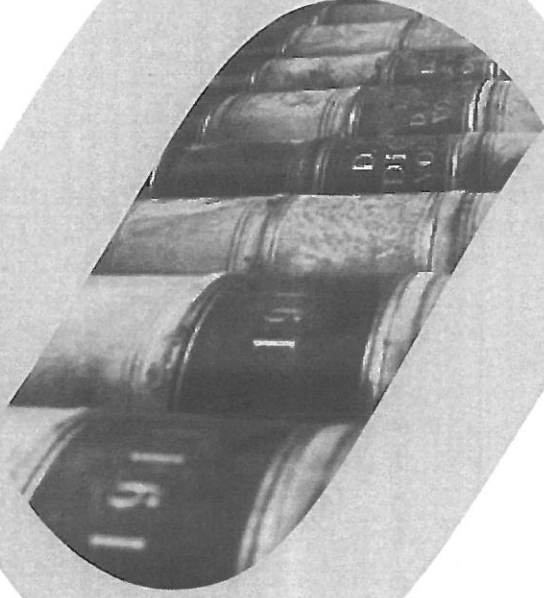


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The Development of Czechoslovak, Polish and Hungarian Foreign Affairs Administration between the Two World Wars (1918 – 1939)

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Abstract

After the short introduction to the history of Austro-Hungarian foreign affairs administration the paper focuses on the administrative development of the Central European countries in the period between the two world wars. The Czechoslovak and Polish foreign affairs administration has formed dominantly on the basis of political emigration and diaspora communities during the first world war. The Hungarian ministry of foreign affairs was established directly after the end of this war in december 1918, but the often changing governments reorganised this organ many times in unquiet 1919. The paper deals not only with the central level of foreign administration, but with the structure of the diplomatic and consular missions abroad too. Czechoslovakia and Poland had very good structure of the missions, because they were very active on the field of international relations in this time. These countries played important role inside the League of Nations too. The Post-Trianon Hungary needed the effective apparatus too, but the foreign affairs administration was not very popular this time inside the country and its political life. Hungary was very active on the field of cultural diplomacy.

Key words: *administration; Czechoslovakia; diplomacy; foreign affairs; Hungary; missions; Poland; world war.*

It is a well-known fact that in 1918, the map of Central Europe was redrawn significantly. Several independent successor states were formed on the ruins of the tsarist Russian Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which had to establish their central administrative structures quickly. Czechoslovakia and Poland, as well as Hungary, which had lost a significant part of its territory – the subjects of the present study – were among them. Among other things, each of those states had to organise their foreign affairs administrations quickly, too, and they were more or less forced to do so from scratch, although the process did have some resources to work with, as the sons of those nations had always served in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and many of them joined the administrations of the successor states.

The Austro-Hungarian Empire

Between 1720 and 1742, the foreign affairs of the Habsburg Monarchy were managed by the Court Council (Hofkanzlei). Between 1742 and 1848, the professional preparation and execution of foreign policy decisions was the job of the Secret House, Court and State Council (Geheime Haus-, Hof- und Staatskanzlei). During the terms of first Wenzel Anton Eusebius von Kaunitz (1753-1792) and then Klemens Wenzel Lothar von Metternich (1809-1848) as chancellors, that latter body developed into a real office of foreign affairs. During the years, the name of the *Ballhausplatz*, the building used by the foreign

affairs apparatus, became a metonym for Austro-Hungarian foreign policy.¹ However, the real ministry of foreign affairs was only established in 1848, during the heated months of the revolutions. In Vienna, the decision to create a responsible government was made as early as March, and it included a minister of foreign affairs. The organisation previously known as the State Council (Staatskanzlei) was renamed the Ministry of the Empire and Foreign Affairs (Ministerium des Kaiserlichen Hauses und des Äusseren). Naturally, the Austro-Hungarian Commission of 1867 also had an impact on the management of foreign affairs – from 1869, the ministry was called the Imperial and Royal Ministry of the Empire and Foreign Affairs.

The Austrian, later Austro-Hungarian ministry of foreign affairs was a well-organised authority of long-standing traditions. In line with the conservative character of the Monarchy, most of its workforce was still drawn from the aristocracy and the gentry, and the system also made efforts to ensure that staff was suitably trained. The senior officials generally expected applicants to have qualifications in political science and law along with good language skills and an in-depth knowledge of history and international law.² In the case of consuls, economic knowledge also became increasingly important. It was a great advantage of Viennese diplomacy that it also had a well-organised system for training diplomats – new professionals were being trained by the Oriental Academy that had been founded by Maria Theresa, and later by the *k. und k.* Consular Academy,

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1 Diószegi, István: A külpolitikai ügyintézés struktúrája és a döntéshozatal mechanizmusa az Osztrák-Magyar Monarchiában. www.grotius.hu.

2 Diószegi, István: op. cit. p. 6.

which, later still, became the Diplomatic Academy, today a venerable institution.³

The corps was open as regards nationality and territories, but due to geographical proximity and the empire's focus on the capital, most of the people who made careers there were Germans from Vienna, Upper Austria, Bohemia and Moravia.⁴ Nevertheless, there were no obstacles to a Polish count (Goluchowski) or a Hungarian nobleman (István Burián) rising to the position of minister of foreign affairs. Anyway, the titular and land-owner Hungarian aristocracy (counts, barons) had a significant representation in the joint ministry of foreign affairs, as evidenced, for instance, by Gyula Andrássy senior and junior.⁵ The real weight of the aristocracy is evidenced by the following numbers: between 1720 and 1918, only about 10% of those in charge of foreign representations were not aristocrats, but even among them, most had the prefix *von*, indicating noble birth, in their names. Among the ambassadors of the period 1867–1918, there were only three diplomats who were not princes, counts or barons.⁶

Within the joint Austro-Hungarian foreign service, three classes of officials were distinguished rather rigidly: officials belonging to the central apparatus, those in the diplomatic service, and persons in various consular positions. Transition between the three groups, however, was always possible.⁷ The numbers are interesting: in 1914, the Vienna Ministry of Foreign Affairs had 850 employees, of which 232 were employed at headquarters, 155 in the diplomatic service and 463 at consulates.⁸

Despite regular reorganisations, the Vienna Ministry of Foreign Affairs maintained a relatively stable internal structure, whose individual components were later implemented by a number of successor states. The central administration was divided into four sections, or departments. The first one dealt with political affairs, the second one was responsible for administrative tasks, the third one operated as the cabinet for the minister in charge, while the fourth one was a sort of support office. It was responsible for encryption, translations and registration. The political section, which was considered the largest one, was subdivided into units, which always reflected the preferences of the age and the major powers concerned as well. Accordingly, Unit 1 handled eastern affairs, Unit 2 maintained relations with the Vatican, Unit 3 was in charge of relations with Germany and Scandinavian countries, while Unit

4 worked on Southwest European and overseas relations. The leaders of the units had significant influence on the administration of foreign affairs and the shaping of foreign policy. The heads of department (*Sektionschef*) above them were considered rather high-ranking state officials. The first among them was in control of the entire apparatus of the ministry when the minister was absent.⁹ The diplomats who were later employed by the governments of the new states obtained their initial experiences of foreign affairs within that organisation.

Organisation of an independent Hungarian foreign affairs administration after World War I

The foundations for an independent Hungarian foreign affairs administration were laid by 5th People's Law of 13 December 1918,¹⁰ which was still passed under the government of Mihály Károlyi.¹¹ However, due to the communist dictatorship and the cleansing that followed, the organisation of the Hungarian foreign service only really began in the autumn of 1919. Although the counterrevolutionary system that succeeded the defeated communist Soviet Republic did not consider itself a successor of the regimes between the autumn of 1918 and the summer of 1919, a number of initiatives from that period did remain in place, including the organisation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The short-lived Hungarian People's Republic (November 1918–March 1919) attempted to fill positions within the foreign affairs administration using partly the staff of the joint foreign ministry of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and partly officials transferred from other areas of public administration.¹² Many of the 'Viennese' served there not only during the democratic revolution but also during the period of the Soviet Republic, until Commissar for Foreign Affairs Béla Kun, who was deeply mistrustful towards most of them, dismissed them, and established the Department of International Propaganda within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Within that unit, he appointed trusted Communist officials from his own circles.

It is an interesting fact that the conservative right-wing opposition government in exile, which was set up first in Arad and then in Szeged, had its own ministry of foreign affairs, headed by Count Pál Teleki, between the end of May and August. It was a small organisation, with a total of eight staff members, most of whom were officials who had resigned voluntarily or were

³ For the history of that institution, see Pfusterschmied-Hardenstein, Heinrich: A Short History of the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna (Training for International Careers Since 1754) Diplomatische Academy Wien, 2008.

⁴ Diószegi, István: *ibid.* p. 6.

⁵ In order to render the description even more nuanced, we should add that in exceptional circumstances, even a person who was not a born aristocrat could become the minister: Heinrich Karl von Haymerle, the excellent official who spoke a total of eight languages, was such a man. *Ibid.* p. 7.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 9.

⁷ Márffy, Ede: *ibid.* p. 710.

⁸ Diószegi, István: *ibid.* p. 5.

⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 2–3.

¹⁰ For the text, see www.1000ev.hu.

¹¹ Count Mihály Károlyi was the country's prime minister between November 1918 and March 1919, when he became its first president. The Western-oriented, large landholder politician assumed power as a result of the bourgeois-democratic revolution that broke out in response to the collapse caused by the war, but he was later exiled and he could only return to his homeland in 1945. He emigrated again after 1948, due to the Communists.

¹² [http://www.herder-institut.de/startseite/dokumente-und-materialien/moduleubersicht/ungarn-in-der-zwischen/textquellen.html?tx_himmat_pi1\[showUId\]=1027&cHash=d494aca6ad2bab2ba63b8bbab5257d9b](http://www.herder-institut.de/startseite/dokumente-und-materialien/moduleubersicht/ungarn-in-der-zwischen/textquellen.html?tx_himmat_pi1[showUId]=1027&cHash=d494aca6ad2bab2ba63b8bbab5257d9b) (Date of last download: 18 April 2012).

dismissed by the Soviet Republic from the Budapest ministry.¹³ Of course, employment there became a great reference during their successive careers. However, with the victory of the counterrevolution in the summer, the focus returned to the tried and tested Budapest headquarters, in particular Dísz Square within the Buda Castle, which soon became the metonym for the Hungarian foreign affairs administration of interwar period.

A number of leading politicians played definitive roles in shaping the Hungarian foreign service between the two world wars. Prime ministers István Bethlen, Pál Teleki and Gyula Gömbös played particularly important roles. The first two were aristocrats from Transylvania, while the third was a professional military officer. They had their task cut out, as the lost war, the massive loss of territory and population, and the previous chaotic political and social conditions had seriously eroded the international weight and prestige of the country. What's more, the major failures had also damaged the popularity of the ministry of foreign affairs and the foreign affairs profession in Hungary, too. In addition, most prime ministers wanted to control the most important foreign policy decisions directly, so it was not in their interest to appoint strong personalities with their own ideas to the head of the ministry. This was particularly true of István Bethlen, but also later of Gyula Gömbös. Also Pál Teleki micromanaged both foreign and internal affairs policy. As a result, the position in Dísz Square saw rather a lot of comings and goings. The six-year term of Kálmán Kánya¹⁴ as minister of foreign affairs (1933-1938) was the exception – and, in fact, he was a strong minister who was able to create an autonomous image for his ministry within the structure of government as a whole.¹⁵

The scholar and politician Pál Teleki,¹⁶ who headed the ministry in the early 1920's, relied more on the old professionals and procedures. He summarized his requirements in a circular letter dated 26 April 1921. He emphasised that a great sense of responsibility was required for the work, that secrets were to be kept strictly, and that older, senior officials had to cultivate responsibility and obedience in their younger colleagues. In accordance with the old traditions of Vienna, he advised senior staff to establish social ties as well with the younger officials. Those working abroad were required to spend the time outside their official working hours extending their knowledge thoroughly, and particularly on studying issues of economics with a view to improving the situation of the country. A polite and obliging manner was advised with clients. Hungarian diplomats were required to adopt a self-respecting, yet unassuming manner in the official and social circles of foreign capital cities.¹⁷

During the 1930's, the attitudes described above, and the attitudes towards the old traditions of Vienna underwent some changes. They largely coincided with the term of Gyula Gömbös as prime minister and as acting minister of foreign affairs.

The prime minister, who was used to having his own way, aimed to assign a much greater role than before to the Hungarian interests he envisaged, and even more so, Hungarian appearances in the foreign service. He was more reserved with respect to earlier traditions, and expected even greater commitment from officials to the National Work Plan (i.e. the government's programme). All officials were required to be familiar with the programme and to act in its spirit. Gömbös, who had a military background, saw the foreign affairs organisation – similarly to the general staff – as a tool in the hands of higher authorities. He expected the service to be highly active in the economic and the political arenas, and to represent the interests of Hungarian nationals. Hungarian diplomats were required to wear their Hungarian nationality with pride, to use their free time to promote their homeland, while their households abroad were expected to function as little islands of Hungarian culture. Naturally, Gömbös also laid great emphasis on the requirements of loyalty and discretion.¹⁸

The composition of Hungarian foreign service staff took an interesting turn between the two world wars. During the 1920's, it was composed of the two groups already mentioned above, the 'old guard', who had had experience in Vienna, and the 'new people', who had arrived after 1920. Initially, the most important positions were mostly held by the 'old guard'. The proportion of aristocrats also changed in the independent Hungarian foreign ministry. Despite the fact that the traditional aristocracy still played an exceptionally large role in Hungarian society, their proportion at the ministry and to a lesser degree in the foreign missions decreased somewhat. In 1921, 7% of all the people employed by the ministry were aristocrats, although the ratio was 14.9% among clerks (i.e. actual administrators). By 1938, the proportions dropped to 4.9% and 14.1%, respectively. That was a significant change relative to conditions prior to 1918, when 26.6% of clerks had been aristocrats.

According to Pál Pritz, a scholar researching the topic, the reduction was the result of a number of factors. On the one hand, most of the large landholder aristocrats in Hungary held legitimist views and found it hard to accept the 'kingdom without a king' headed by a member of the Protestant gentry (i.e. Regent Miklós Horthy). They also did not consider the much diminished state to be a successor to the once powerful empire. The aristocratic families that had been in the diplomatic service before were less prone to thinking in terms of estates and the nation, instead, their attitudes were based on loyalty to a dynasty and a Central European, supranational approach. The prestige of diplomacy was reduced as a result of World War I, anyway. What's more, during the Horthy era, the Christian nationalistic middle-class groups that were mostly distrustful of the landholder aristocracy – who, in turn, kept their distance from them – came to the fore. They wanted to place their

¹³ Pritz, Pál: *A magyar külügyi szolgálat keletkezése és története 1930-ig*. In: Pritz, Pál: *Magyar diplomácia a két világháború között*. Magyar Történelmi Társulat, Budapest, 1995. p. 40.

¹⁴ Kálmán Kánya actually also came from the joint Austro-Hungarian foreign service – he had been the Monarchy's last emissary to Mexico.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 75-76.

¹⁶ His biography see Ablonczy, Balázs: *Teleki Pál*. Osiris, Budapest, 2005.

¹⁷ Pritz, Pál: *cit. op.* pp. 15-16.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 17.

own children in public administration jobs, including those at the ministry of foreign affairs. So, while Hungary remained ultraconservative in appearances, it actually underwent a certain degree of reorganisation, and an increasing number of middle-class people of bourgeois extraction were employed in the foreign service. On the other hand, the aristocracy often withdrew voluntarily – either due to lack of interest, or having had enough of the occasional attacks, or because they had formed a precise assessment of the risks of the strong orientation towards Germany and the assumption of excessive military roles.¹⁹

According to Pál Pritz, despite the many reorganisations and reforms, the basic components of the Royal Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs actually exhibited a rather large degree of stability during the interwar period. It is an interesting fact of history that the person with a defining influence on the 'administrative' or organisational aspects of the independent Hungarian foreign ministry was a talented administrative organiser who had originally been an official of the capital city. It was Ferenc Harrer, previously a deputy mayor of Budapest during the period of Dualism, who was requested by Prime Minister Mihály Károlyi to organise the first independent Hungarian foreign mission, the Hungarian embassy in Vienna. However, the talented manager was recalled relatively soon from that post, because the previous top officials were struggling with getting the new ministry up and running. Harrer, who had never had a particular interest in foreign policy, was up to the job. He established five separate sections, supplemented with an audit office and an office of auxiliary services. The sections covered the following areas: political affairs, economic affairs, legal affairs, and the press and propaganda. He also set up a separate section called the presidential or administrative department, which actually managed human resources.²⁰

The next longer-term structural transformation took place after Horthy gained power, i.e. in November 1919. The departmental structure, which put all the sections at the same level, was introduced then. The minister's cabinet was one of the most stable structural components of the system. Traditional, bilateral foreign affairs were relegated to the remit of the political department, composed of regional units. The press department was considered another constant feature. A number of departments were formed to handle legal matters: a department of public law, a department of private law, a department of criminal law, and also a department of legal assistance. Economic policy, the economy, and transport matters also had their own separate departments at that time. The presidential department continued to play a key role in the internal life of the ministry, as it managed personnel matters. That department had a gen-

eral scope of authority, i.e. all matters that were not specifically assigned to the competency of a different department landed there.²¹

By the end of the period under review, in addition to the units dealing with foreign affairs in the narrow sense, the ministry still had 11 additional departments. They were mostly based on functional principles. The minister had a single permanent deputy – who had the rank of an ambassador – who controlled the minister's cabinet, composed of a few people, directly. In 1941, the cabinet had three members: the third member was the minister's personal secretary.²² Separate departments were in charge of human resources, protocol, and press matters. During that period, economic diplomacy became quite emphatic within the ministry. Abroad, it was managed by the consulates, while at headquarters, the Department of Economic Policy was in charge of it. The affairs of Hungarian citizens living abroad, along with cultural relations were also given their own departments.²³

Poland

In Poland, modern foreign affairs administration was established in the final year of World War I. Politicians with hopes for the restoration of an independent Poland had formed various social committees and organisations right at the beginning of the war, hoping to use them to restore the sovereignty of the Polish state – lost in 1795 –, with the assistance of one or the other military alliance.²⁴ One of the strongest initiatives – a rather anti-Russian one – cooperated with the Central Powers, and attempted to make use of the fact that the majority of core areas of Polish ethnicity came to be controlled by the German and Austrian armies. Accordingly, the first seeds of the later independent foreign affairs apparatus were sown within the framework of the Provisional Council of State established in the end of 1916, which cooperated with the Central Powers. It was within that organisation that the Department of Political Affairs was established in the winter of 1917, which, among other things, processed foreign policy matters and managed consular protection. Eight months later, the body dissolved itself and transferred power to the three-person Regency Council.²⁵ In February 1918 (that is to stay, still under German occupation), the first Council of Ministers was formed under that body. At that time, the country had no minister of foreign affairs – the tasks were performed by the director of the state secretariat. The first three embassies were set up in Vienna, Berlin and revolutionary Moscow.²⁶

The independent Polish ministry of foreign affairs was established by a decree of the Regency Council on 26 November 1918, at that time without consultation with the German oc-

¹⁹ Ibid pp. 26-29.

²⁰ Ibid. p. 38.

²¹ Ibid. p. 42.

²² *Kültügyi évkönyv 1941.* (Ed.) Drucker, György: *Királyi Magyar Egyetemi Nyomda*, Budapest, 1941, pp. 382-385.

²³ Ladić, Gusztáv: *Tételes közigazgatási jogunk alapjai*. third, fully revised edition. Attila-Nyomda Rt. Budapest, 1941, p. 90.

²⁴ Davies, Norman: *Lengyelország története*. Osiris, Budapest, 2006, p. 719.

²⁵ Ibid. p. 722.

²⁶ *Szczępanik, Krzysztof: Dyplomacja Polski 1918-2005*. Struktury organizacyjne. Warszawa, 2005, p. 27.

cupying force. Interestingly, that legal act took place two weeks before the official declaration of independence. Nevertheless, most researchers believe that the Polish ministry of foreign affairs was born on that day.²⁷ The only problem was that in parallel, there also existed a prestigious Polish centre of foreign affairs, which, from the very beginning, had sought assistance not from the Central Powers but from the Allied Powers, and therefore, in the autumn of 1818, it found itself in a much more advantageous position than the previous 'Germanophile' initiatives. The organisation in question was the Polish National Committee (KNP), which had been established by the national democratic politician Roman Dmowski and a few other émigrés to the West,²⁸ which, though it had been originally founded to create a Poland with significant autonomy within tsarist Russia, had quite early on moved its headquarters to Lausanne in Switzerland, and which had a Western rather than Russian orientation by 1917.²⁹

The Polish National Committee, which recognised neither the earlier Regency Council, nor the later Warsaw temporary government, which it considered to be pro-German and left-wing, already had its own network of foreign missions, as it had delegations working in London, Rome, Washington and finally in Berlin, too. They all made every effort to prevent the temporary government in Warsaw from establishing its own missions in those (and other) countries. That, however, engendered a truly risky situation, which was thankfully appreciated by many people at both centres of power. Finally, in January 1919, the new – compromise – government was formed, headed by the pianist and composer Ignacy Jan Paderewski, who had returned from emigration in the West, and who soon also became, with Roman Dmowski, the leader of the joint peace delegation representing the new country in Paris.³⁰

So, in 1919, the organisation of the Polish foreign affairs apparatus could begin. The Polish foreign service essentially attempted to follow the French model, while, in line with the zeitgeist, also aimed to maintain focus on economic matters. It was a manifestation of those intentions that one of its most important organisational units was called the Division of Politics and Economy for a long time. The other main unit dealt with legal and administrative matters.³¹ It was one of the characteristics of the interwar period that within the ministry, the unit liaising with international organisations – in particular, the League of Nations – also played a weighty role. For Poland, a presence in Geneva was very important, and Warsaw had some major successes there. In 1925, a scientific council was established alongside the ministry, which endeavoured to liaise with various

research institutes and to coordinate research that concerned foreign affairs.³²

The internal regulations of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs changed several times between the two world wars, but no major conceptual transformations took place. In effect, the structure adopted after the coup of 1926 remained operable with a series of various modifications until 1939. In fact, the coup itself didn't represent a particularly sudden change of direction, either – its effect was limited to the minister's cabinet increasing its influence and the human resources department becoming stronger.³³ In the months before the attack of Nazi Germany, the ministry was composed of the following main organisational units: divisions articulated into units, the minister's cabinet, the human resources department and the diplomatic protocol. The structures of the other divisions were more articulated, as they were divided into departments, which in turn consisted of units. But in actual fact, the following large – in effect, division-level – units formed the backbone of the ministry: the Division of Politics and Economy, the Consulates Division and the Administrative Division.³⁴

Poland had an extensive network of diplomatic missions. The structure established in 1919-1920 officially distinguished six types of foreign missions: embassies, divided into three categories depending on the number of diplomats serving there, permanent missions, delegations, and finally special missions. There were only a few of the first category of embassies, with a large number of staff: only the London, Paris, Rome, Washington and Madrid units fell in that group. Those organisations had a minimum of seven people of diplomat rank working there.³⁵ As there were a great many Polish people living abroad already at the time, the young state devoted a great deal of attention to the creation of an extensive, articulated network of consulates.

Poland was the only new state in Central Eastern Europe that, beginning in 1924, was able to establish not only consulates but embassies. The first foreign missions to achieve that elevated rank were in Paris and the Vatican, followed by Ankara, London, Rome and Washington in 1933. Embassies in Berlin, Bucharest, Moscow and Tokyo were added later. By 1938, Poland had 9 foreign missions at the rank of embassies and 41 permanent missions. In addition, there were also a total of 203 Polish consulates around the world.³⁶ The special missions and the delegations were created to represent Poland at the League of Nations, and in addition in the Free City of Danzig, at the Klaipėda Directorate, the Sublime Porte in Istanbul, in Harbin in Eastern China and at the Joint Committee of Upper Silesia, although some of those missions operated during different periods.³⁷

²⁷ Ibid. p. 28.

²⁸ The Polish National Committee was established in August 1917 during the Russian Revolution. Kovács István: *Csoda a Vízszulánál és a Balti tengernél. Európa, Budapest, 2006.* pp. 64-65.

²⁹ Davies, Norman: *op. cit.* p. 719.

³⁰ Szczepanik, Krzysztof: *op. cit.* p. 28.

³¹ Ibid. p. 28-29.

³² Ibid. p. 32. The prestigious Polish Foreign Affairs Institute, which still exists, was only established after World War II.

³³ Ibid. pp. 32-33.

³⁴ Ibid. p. 35.

³⁵ Ibid. p. 37. The missions in the second category had four diplomats each, while those in the third category only had two posts each.

³⁶ Ibid. p. 38.

³⁷ Ibid. p. 39.

The diplomatic apparatus was recruited from a number of sources. Initially, the foreign officials of the Polish National Committee played an important role, many of whom retained their senior positions after the merger with the apparatus in Warsaw in some locations, particularly those associated with the Allied Powers. However, in the long term, the Warsaw ministry of foreign affairs laid greater emphasis on the recruitment of young officials, and showed a preference for the ex-legionnaires who had taken up arms to fight for independence. Among those with previous – i.e. pre-1914 – experience in diplomacy, the diplomats and consuls of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire stood the best chance of joining the foreign missions of the new republic, while people of Polish descent who had once served as Russian or German diplomats could only achieve such a feat occasionally.³⁸ Actually, among the ‘Viennese’ there were a few people who were graduates of the famous Consular Academy of the dualist Monarchy.³⁹

The personnel policy of the foreign ministry was accompanied by political disputes and rivalries from beginning to end, which by and large reflected the internal power structure of Polish society. The Polish National Committee was essentially backed by the national democratic right, while the centrist and left-wing factions of society tended to favour the ‘founder of the state’, General Józef Piłsudski, who had been a Polish socialist as a young man. When the general – by then a marshal – became a sort of ‘quiet dictator’ in 1926,⁴⁰ he attempted to balance the Polish foreign service by appointing centrist and right-wing people to be the deputies of left-wing senior officials, and vice versa. In the longer term, part of his aim with those measures was to depoliticize the Polish foreign service and to turn it into a more professional organisation.⁴¹

However, stabilising personnel at the foreign ministry proved to be a difficult task, between 1919 and 1926, a total of 11 ministers took turns being in charge of Polish foreign affairs. It is true that after the 1926 coup d'état, there were only two more ministers at the head of the ministry – between 1926 and 1932, August Zaleski, followed by Colonel Józef Beck, who remained in charge of Polish foreign affairs until 1939. Although Zaleski had more of a liberal's reputation, it was under him that the peculiar militarization of the staff of the foreign ministry began – Piłsudski, who was actually the man in control of the country, sent more and more ex-legionnaire officers to the ministry.⁴²

Naturally, the ministry's number of employees increased continuously: while in 1918, only 252 people worked there, by 1933/1934, the ministry employed about 1200 people – 500 of them held actual jobs at the foreign ministry while another

670 were contract workers. 330 people were working at headquarters while 850 were at the foreign missions. Those were imposing figures for Central Eastern Europe. Incidentally, in the 1930's, 60% of the staffers were still members of the ‘old guard’, and they were complemented by the 40% who joined the ministry after the 1926 coup.⁴³ 1938 was the last year of peace, soon to be followed by the German (and the Soviet) attack, which crushed the Polish state. Polish diplomats played their parts in the Polish independence movement both at home and in emigration, but that's another story.

Czechoslovakia

The seeds of the independent Czechoslovakian foreign ministry were also sown during the years of World War I. Czechoslovak émigrés were particularly active in two capitals: London, where it was Tomáš G. Masaryk who had good contacts, and Paris, where Edvard Beneš and Milan Rastislav Štefánik were more at home. But that proved too little, so relatively early on they were forced to extend their activities to Russia, Italy, and finally to the USA as well. Initially, those were single-person missions, but the arrival of an important personage was generally soon followed by the development of mission apparatus.⁴⁴

After the decision made in 1916 that the National Council would be seated in Paris, the Czechoslovakian leaders also decided that a major mission would have to be maintained in London, too. The mission there cooperated closely with the national (diasporic) society called the Czech National Alliance. This reflected the fact that the Czech and Slovakian diasporas played a definitive role in launching the foreign affairs activities of the émigrés. This was all the more the case in the USA.⁴⁵

The mission in Russia represented the most complex issue, and that country was of key importance from the perspective of later developments. The Czechoslovakian movement also fell prey to the dissent and internal conflicts that usually characterise such organisations, and the resulting establishment of parallel and alternative institutions. In 1916, the Czechoslovak National Council operating in Paris decided to set up a branch office in Saint Petersburg. They sent Josef Dürich, previously a member of parliament, to Russia to get the work started. Dürich, however, fell under the influence of the Russophile Czech and Slovakian circles there, and at the end of 1916, began to organise an alternative Czechoslovak National Council in Russia, which was more to the liking of the tsarist government. The total internal schism within the Czechoslovakian émigré community was only prevented by the outbreak of the Russian revolution in March 1917, which swept away tsarism. The first consulates of the country, which didn't even exist officially, were established

³⁸ *Ibid.* p. 40.

³⁹ For more details about that institute, see Halász, Iván: *Diplomácia és diplomaták*. Aula, Budapest, 2010, pp. 239-243.

⁴⁰ For more details about the character of his ‘Sanation’ regime, see Davies, Norman: *op. cit.* pp. 748-751.

⁴¹ Szczepanik, Krzysztof: *op. cit.* p. 40.

⁴² *Ibid.* pp. 41-42.

⁴³ *Ibid.* pp. 42-43.

⁴⁴ About the beginning of Czechoslovak foreign activities during the First World War see Rychlík, Jan: *Češi a Slováci ve 20. století*. Česko-slovenské vztahy 1914-1945. AEP, Bratislava, 1997, pp. 43-46.

⁴⁵ The Slovak League working among the Slovaks living in the USA achieved in 1916 the change of the name of Council from Bohemian to Czechoslovak. *Ibid.* p. 46.

in civil-war Russia (1917-1920), led by the Russian branch of the Czechoslovak National Council.⁴⁶ It was true that those missions could not yet call themselves consulates, at least not when they began to operate. That was how the Irkutsk, Tomsk and Krasnoyarsk missions were created. For a relatively short time, until the summer of 1919, a similar Czechoslovakian 'consulate' also operated in Yekaterinburg.⁴⁷

There was an interesting interlude during the organisation of the new Czechoslovakian foreign affairs apparatus. In the autumn of 1918, the Czech politicians who had remained at home and who had led the takeover in Prague agreed with the government in exile that the latter would retain primacy as regards the management of foreign relations. Nevertheless, the National Committee⁴⁸ that had perpetrated the Czech coup took a few steps in October and November 1918 that did concern foreign affairs. Actually, most of those steps were necessitated by day-to-day practicalities, and the fact that the National Committee was geographically closer to the states that had lost the war, with which diplomatic relations had to be resumed sooner or later.

The National Committee, which had issued a declaration to the effect that it was taking over the historically Czech parts of the country, informed the Swiss consulate in Prague of that fact on 29 October, i.e. one day after the event itself. The board of the Committee began to organise a Foreign Affairs Committee in November, which was the initial predecessor at home of what would later become the foreign ministry. One of the most important people active at that time was Ferdinand Veverka, who was not only a qualified jurist, but had also graduated from the famous Vienna Consular Academy. However, the socialists soon co-opted Veverka to the Temporary National Assembly, so he was unable to continue the work of organising the ministry.⁴⁹

The first Czechoslovakian government in Prague, headed by Karel Kramář, issued a resolution in which it established the Office of Peace Conference Preparations, which provided many services to the Czechoslovakian peace delegation negotiating in Paris.⁵⁰ At the same time, they also began to send emissaries to the neighbouring states that, until a few days previously, had been parts of the same state as the Czech territories. Vlastimil Tusar, a former deputy chairman of the earlier Imperial Council

with socialist leanings, became the first diplomatic emissary of the young republic to Vienna. His strong political connections in Vienna probably played a role in his appointment.⁵¹

Actually, the post of Czechoslovakian diplomatic emissary to Budapest was filled in a similar manner. Initially, the new state was represented in the Hungarian capital by the jurist Emil Stodola⁵², who was 'only' appointed by the Slovakian National Council at Turčiansky Sv. Martin – he had already lived in Hungary before World War I. He received his appointment on 31 October 1918. Stodola was the one who made the first attempt to establish official relations with the Hungarian National Council. Yet by the middle of November, it was not him, but the somewhat younger, but politically more experienced Milan Hodža who represented Czechoslovakia in Budapest,⁵³ and he had been appointed by Prime Minister Karel Kramář.⁵⁴

While the centre of power in Prague made efforts to provide official representations in 'nearby' capitals and regional centres in the late autumn of 1918, the 'big guns' of the new state's diplomacy were spending their time in Paris. That was particularly true of the minister of foreign affairs, Edvard Beneš, who was completely occupied by the preparations for the peace conference, as evidenced by the fact that the minister only returned to Prague in the second half of 1919. That was perhaps part of the reason why the organisation of the Czechoslovakian foreign ministry took such a long time.⁵⁵ Anyway, Prague was also short on officials with significant foreign service experience. Most of those people were in Paris, and they did not come from the old Austro-Hungarian diplomatic apparatus but from the Czechoslovakian diaspora and the more educated circles of legionnaires (most of whom had been prisoners of war). Nevertheless, some old Austro-Hungarian diplomats did join the organisation of the Czechoslovakian state in 1918.⁵⁶ Their roles were largely important in the field of organising staff, they were given less opportunities at foreign missions, because not many of the émigrés trusted those old Austrian officials. In actual fact, with just one or two exceptions, officials with that type of background only achieved lower positions within the diplomatic corps later on, too.⁵⁷

For a long time, the ministry of foreign affairs in the Prague Castle (i.e. Hradčiny)⁵⁸ consisted of the minister's cabinet plus

⁴⁶ Dejmek, Jindřich: op. cit. pp. 22-23.

⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 23, footnote 9.

⁴⁸ See Rychlík, Jan: cit. op. pp. 55-56.

⁴⁹ Dejmek, Jindřich: cit. op. p. 25.

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 25.

⁵¹ Ibid. pp. 25-26.

⁵² For more about him, see Krajčovičová, Natália: *Džentlmen slovenskej politiky*. Kalligram, Bratislava, 2007, p. 232.

⁵³ About his negotiations in Budapest, see for instance Hronský, Marián: *Rokovania Dr. Milana Hodžu koncom novembra a začiatkom decembra 1918 v Budapešti a postoj pražského centra*. In: Milan Hodža štátnik a politik. Ed. Pekník, Miroslav. VEDA, Bratislava, 1994, pp. 85-90, or in Hungarian Szarka, László: *Szlovák nemzeti fejlődés – magyar nemzetiségi politika 1867-1918*. Kalligram, Pozsony, 1995, pp. 216-219.

⁵⁴ Dejmek, Jindřich: op. cit. p. 26 and Szarka, László: op. cit. p. 216.

⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 27.

⁵⁶ Two groups should be considered separately here: the aristocrats from Bohemia and Moravia with close ties to the emperor, many of whom had served the Monarchy in higher diplomatic positions, and the officials with Czech bourgeois backgrounds who were more Czech nationalists in sentiment and who very rarely reached the higher ranks. Most of them served as consuls, but only very rarely in major European cities (the only exception was Germany). Most of them were stationed in the Balkans and the Middle East. For details, see Županič, Jan – Horička, Václav – Králavá, Hana: *N rozcestí – rakousko-uherská zahraniční služba v posledních letech existence monarchie*. Praha, 2009, p. 106.

⁵⁷ Dejmek, Jindřich: op. cit. p. 27. Those people could most often make careers in the consular service. Ibid. p. 31.

⁵⁸ The foreign ministry only moved to the Czernin Palace, which became famous later, in 1934-35.

six sections (divisions): the presidency, which operated as the organisational centre of the ministry (it handled, among other things, finances, human resources, the archives, etc.), the political section, which was considered the most important unit, and the legal section, the national economy section, an administrative section and finally the information and intelligence section. The last of those provided information to Czechoslovakian leaders about what was happening abroad, while also attempting to deliver targeted information abroad about life in Czechoslovakia. In effect, the section also operated as a press and propaganda unit. The Czechoslovakia of the time, similarly to the country's émigrés during the war, was very good at building a positive image for the country. As a result, the sixth section was especially important within the Czechoslovakian foreign service apparatus. Most of its leaders had been experienced journalists in their previous lives and were closely allied with the foreign minister, Edvard Beneš.⁵⁹

During the 1920's, the network of Czechoslovakian foreign missions also acquired its final shape. Although, unlike Poland, Czechoslovakia failed to achieve ambassador status for the leaders of its most important foreign missions, that did not have a significant effect on the efficiency of their diplomacy. Štefan Osuský, the head of the key Paris mission also worked as an emissary, from his appointment in 1921 until 1938! That was an exceptionally long term. In addition, that outstanding diplomat also represented his country in Geneva, at the League of Nations. He also held some important positions within that organisation, for instance he played a large part in the construction of the Palace of Nations in Geneva.⁶⁰

Czechoslovakia had embassies in most European and independent overseas states. In some smaller countries that were less significant from the Czechoslovakian perspective, it only had representations at the *chargé d'affaires en pied* level (they included Portugal, Albania and the Baltic states). In other lands, it had chief consulates (for instance in the British dominions) or consulates. It is true that the consulates in Argentina and Mexico soon became full embassies.⁶¹ The only European country where there was never a real Czechoslovakian foreign mission of any sort was Norway, which was particularly interesting in view of the fact that prior to 1914, Norwegian intellectuals had raised their voices in the interest of forcibly Hungarianized Slovaks. Czechoslovakia maintained a presence in Norway through its mission in Stockholm.⁶²

From Prague's perspective, the Berlin ambassador was another key figure, and the post was always filled by experienced diplomats. Czechoslovakia actually had numerous chief consulates (Dresden, Frankfurt am Main, Hamburg, Köln and Munich) and consulates (Bremen, Nürnberg, Breslau, Stuttgart, Dortmund, etc.) in Germany.⁶³

In Moscow, for a long time Czechoslovakia only had the temporary semi-diplomatic mission established in 1922, which was only transformed into a real embassy after the Soviet Union was officially recognised (1934). The Soviet Union had a similar mission in Prague. Czechoslovakia opened its full embassy in the United States, in Washington, quite early, and in addition – mainly in the interest of the large Czech and Slovakian diasporas – it also had seven consulates. It is an interesting fact that for a long time, the Pittsburgh consuls actually came from the large Slovakian community of the city.⁶⁴ In Asia, Czechoslovakia first established missions in Tokyo, Beijing, Shanghai, Harbin, Istanbul, then Ankara, Tehran, Beirut, Jerusalem and the British-Indian Mumbai. In Africa, there was only a single Czechoslovakian embassy in Cairo, along with a full consulate in South Africa. Other countries only had honorary consulates. There was a single chief consulate in Australia, in Sydney.⁶⁵

The senior level of foreign affairs officials was highly stable during the interwar period. Edvard Beneš remained the minister of foreign affairs from the beginning until his election to the post of president, when he was replaced by the historian Kamil Krofta in 1936. Krofta, who had previously represented his country in Vienna and Berlin, and had also headed the crucial political section, was an old hand at the ministry by then, and in effect he had been the ministry's second in command for over a decade. Krofta resigned in 1938 after the adoption of the Munich Agreement, and retired. At that time, the previous ambassador to Rome, František Chvalkovský became the foreign minister for a short while: contrary to his ambitious predecessors, he believed that under the changed international circumstances, the mutilated Czechoslovakia had to conduct "the politically resigned foreign policy of a small, neutral state". His reserve, however, proved to be in vain, as on 15 March 1939, Nazi Germany occupied Bohemia and Moravia.⁶⁶

Staff stability was not simply a characteristic of the ministerial level during the interwar years, it extended to the entire apparatus. The Czechoslovakian administration of foreign affairs during that period was basically characterised by cooperation between two groups. On the one side, there were the so-called legionnaires, i.e. persons who had joined the armed movement against the Monarchy during World War I. The group also included those from the earlier Czech and Slovakian diaspora. The second group consisted of old Austro-Hungarian consular officials, who continued to be employed as professionals after 1918. That group was extended by other home specialists in 1919. Some others got positions at the foreign ministry as a result of deals between the political parties that were practically omnipotent during the interwar years. Although tensions did exist between the two groups, they always remained manageable.

⁵⁹ Ibid. pp. 32-36.

⁶⁰ Králík, Juraj: *Karierný diplomat*. Iura Edition, Bratislava, 2006, pp. 190-192.

⁶¹ Dejmek, Jindřich: op. cit. pp. 37-38.

⁶² Ibid. 43. o.

⁶³ Ibid. 42. o.

⁶⁴ Ibid. p. 44.

⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 46.

⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 71.

In terms of ethnicity, most of the foreign service officials were Czechs: in 1937, among all the 37 chiefs of mission, there were only 4 Slovaks, 1 German and 1 Hungarian, although the Slovakian emissaries served in prestigious locations (Paris, Geneva, Washington and Warsaw), but the underrepresentation of Slovaks was in fact politically problematic. The first emissary of German descent (Robert Feitscher) headed the Shanghai mission opened in 1930.⁶⁷ The Hungarian, Benjamin Szalatnay-Stachó, became the chief of the Cairo mission in 1938. The majority of the diplomats heading foreign missions were jurists (18 people), a few of them were graduates in the humanities (6 people) while a few more had come from the Vienna Consular Academy (4 people). The others had various other qualifications, mostly technological, military or economic ones. As regards the proportion of 'legionnaires', 14 of the 37 chiefs of mission working in 1937 came from those circles.⁶⁸

The Czechoslovakian foreign ministry had no separate state secretary's post until 1938, when, after the adoption of the Munich Agreement (29 September 1938), it was only established due to pressure from the Slovakian people's autonomist

movement. And yet, during those months, the post was not occupied by an experienced foreign service official of Slovakian extraction (because most of them were of a Czechoslovakian democratic orientation), but by a politician of the previously opposition Slovakian People's Party (Jozef Miloslav Zvrškovec), who had no experience of foreign affairs.

When, in March 1939, the German army put an end to Czechoslovakian independence and territorial integrity, the dissolution of the foreign ministry began. The process lasted almost two years, which could be seen as a *tour-de-force* in procrastination by the officials involved in the self-dissolution. In the meantime, organisation of an independent Slovakian foreign ministry was begun in Bratislava, whose new leader, Ferdinand Ďurčanský, was open to accepting officials of Slovakian descent who had worked at Prague, particularly because the Slovakian People's Party, now in power, hardly had any foreign service professionals. Actually, several of the officials thus transferred later maintained intense relationships with the domestic resistance and Czechoslovakian émigrés abroad.⁶⁹ But – as with the Polish foreign ministry in exile – that's a part of a different story.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 55-56.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.* p. 56.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 77-78.