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Tibor Gerencsér, Marcin Grad, Miklos Mitrovits, *Flaga węgierska nad Wisłą. Z dziejów placówki dyplomatycznej Węgier nad Wisłą* [The Hungarian Flag on the Vistula. From the History of the Hungarian Diplomatic Mission in Poland], Warsaw: Wydawnictwo MOST, 2017, 223 pp.

The book under review, although published several years ago, has attracted little attention in Polish historiography. This is somewhat surprising, given the scarcity of publications on the history of Hungary available in Polish, and the even smaller number written from a distinctly Hungarian perspective. It is precisely in this light that *Węgierska flaga nad Wisłą* [The Hungarian Flag on the Vistula River] should be approached. A further contribution of the volume lies in the perspective adopted by its authors: they examine Polish–Hungarian relations through the activities of Hungary's official diplomatic representation in Poland. While such relations cannot, of course, be analysed without reference to the broader historical context of Polish–Hungarian relations, this is not the authors' point of departure. Instead, they focus primarily on the

work and initiatives of Hungarian envoys and ambassadors to Poland between 1919–2017.

The book has a rather complex structure, and, in my view, this is its weakest point. It follows a seemingly chronological arrangement, which is at times disturbed by subchapters (themselves divided into smaller sections) dealing with selected issues within a given period. I understand that this helps readers locate specific topics more easily, but it also results in certain passages being repeated within the same chapter.

The titles of some sections are not always particularly well-chosen. For example, subchapter II.4 is entitled *Bez prawdziwych kontaktów (1948–1956)* [Without real contacts (1948–1956)]. This is misleading, as diplomatic relations can hardly be described as formally “false” or “unreal”. A more appropriate title could have been *W cieniu Moskwy* [Under the shadow of Moscow], or something similar, which would indicate that during the Stalinist period bilateral relations were effectively replaced by directives from the Soviet Union.

Subchapter III.2, *Brak przestrzeni* [The lack of space], discusses a highly interesting episode in the exceptionally strained Polish–Hungarian relations between 1957 and 1958, yet the meaning of its enigmatic title becomes clear only after reading it. The title does not refer to the lack of space for an embassy, but to the absence of room for an exhibition planned by the diplomatic post, which was intended to present selected examples of Polish–Hungarian friendship and which, in the end, was never organized, having been blocked by the Polish side.

It is also difficult to accept the title of subchapter III.5, *Lata 70.: dekada szarości* [The 1970s – a grey decade]; in Poland it was certainly not a “grey” period, and the choice of that color for describing Polish–Hungarian relations at the time does not seem particularly accurate either.

The whole discussion is preceded by a mere two-page Introduction, which presents the source base of the publication and its structure only superficially. The goals of the work can hardly be considered modest. As the authors state, “Our intention was to present the less known or hitherto unstudied chapters in the history of the Hungarian Legation in Warsaw from its establishment in 1919 up to 1989” (p. 5). They do not present the methodology they adopted. Instead, a rather substantial portion of the Introduction is devoted to acknowledgments to selected individuals and institutions without whose support the book would not have been published. What is even more surprising, however, is the complete absence of a concluding chapter. Were the authors truly unable to summarize their discussion in any way? One also looks in vain for an index of names. Nowadays, it is difficult to find a scholarly book that

lacks these components; both the conclusion and the name index are essential elements of any academic publication.

However, the main body of the book deserves to be rated highly. It consists of three chapters: I. *Zarys historii polsko-węgierskich stosunków dyplomatycznych w okresie międzywojennym* [An outline of the history of Polish–Hungarian diplomatic relations between the wars] by Tibor Gerencsér; II. *Działalność Poselstwa Węgier w Warszawie i Instytutu Kultury Węgierskiej w latach 1945–1956* [The activity of the Hungarian Diplomatic Mission in Warsaw and the Institute of Hungarian Culture between 1945 and 1956] by Marcin Grad; III. *Od rewolucji do transformacji* [From revolution to transformation] by Miklós Mitrovits. The discussion is supplemented by several additional parts: Chapter IV: *Zarys historii stosunków polsko-węgierskich po 1989 roku* [An outline of the history of Polish–Hungarian relations after 1989], pp. 183–187, with one page devoted to photographs); Chapter V: *Miejsca* [Places], pp. 187–201, offering descriptions of the buildings that officially housed the Hungarian mission and embassy; and Chapter VI: *Twarze* [Faces], which provides short biographies of the official representatives of the Hungarian government in Poland between 1919 and 1944 (pp. 202–208). Chapter VII serves as an Appendix, listing the representatives of the Kingdom of Hungary from the establishment of the diplomatic post until the year the book was published, along with the honorary consulates.

Polish-language readers have received a publication which not only presents the history of Hungarian diplomats in Poland, but also offers a substantial insight into Polish – Hungarian relations in the twentieth century. Thus, alongside matters already well established in historiography – such as Hungarian assistance to Poland in the face of the Bolshevik invasion in 1920, or the Polish demonstrations in front of the Hungarian diplomatic mission in Warsaw in support of the common border in 1938–1939 – the book also highlights important little-known episodes. By this I mean, for example, the work of the secret Hungarian collaborator in Cieszyn, Franciszek Unger, or the history of the making of the 1939 film *Áll a bál* (The ball is on), which was shot in part in Warsaw shortly before the outbreak of the September Campaign. The book also gives due credit to the activities of Pál Domszky, a Hungarian historian and count of Polish–Hungarian origin. Thanks to the Hungarian Association operating since 1942 in the General Government, Domszky offered considerable assistance to both Hungarians and Poles during the harsh years of the German occupation, and the reach of his efforts extended far beyond Warsaw, where the head office of the organization was located. The discussion of the mission of Pál Förtner deserves high

praise; Förtner, who headed the Hungarian Diplomatic Mission in Warsaw after the Second World War, resigned from Hungarian diplomatic service in June 1948 as a protest against the communization of Hungary and the anti-church policies of the authorities of that time. The fragments devoted to the discrepancies between Polish and Hungarian Communists in their assessments of the 1956 Hungarian Uprising are equally noteworthy. A careful reader will also find much of interest in the subsequent chapters, particularly those dealing with the relations between Wojciech Jaruzelski and János Kádár in the 1980s. The strong factual side of the book is hardly surprising, as it was written by two excellent Hungarian historians of the younger generation, Tibor Gerencsér and Miklós Mitrovits, as well as Marcin Grad, who works in Hungarian Studies at the University of Warsaw.

Despite the praise the three authors undoubtedly deserve, the book does contain certain shortcomings. In addition to those already mentioned, I would like to point out a few more, from the reviewer's perspective. What seems surprising in the Bibliography is the inclusion of only the names of archives, without specifying the individual units consulted by the authors. Of course, detailed information can be found in the relevant chapters of the publication, yet the Bibliography should include at least the names and numbers of the fonds. The selection of press sources appears to be impressive, however, here too the authors fail to specify even the particular annual volumes of journals they used. Close reading suggests, moreover, that the press was employed only marginally. Both the archival and the printed sources, as well as the studies used for the analysis, are drawn predominantly from Hungarian scholarship. Archival materials and studies of Polish origin, and in the Polish language, appear to have been used insufficiently. Had they been represented more extensively, the book could have shown, for example, how successive Polish governments assessed the work of the Hungarian diplomatic mission – at least in comparison with other missions and embassies. Unfortunately, the authors have made little attempt to employ comparative analysis; by contrast, their assessment of Poland's and Hungary's relations with their respective neighbours is much better developed and appears, as it were, as a consequence of their mutual relations in particular years.

Polish-language readers have been presented with a book that allows them to examine the activity of Hungarian diplomatic representatives in Poland in the twentieth century. Despite some critical remarks and a slight sense of lingering dissatisfaction, I do recommend the publication as one of few works of this kind. Given the limited knowledge of Hungarian language among Polish readers, a major advantage of the

book is that it provides the results of the research conducted in Hungarian archives, occasionally complemented by other sources. This is by no means a criticism. The authors have succeeded in reconstructing the image that Hungarian diplomats conveyed to their superiors in Budapest and, in doing so, have answered the question of how they depicted the situation in Poland in official reports across the decades. A careful reader may also draw conclusions about how these diplomats assessed the effects of their work among Poles, who their collaborators were, and which factors they believed strengthened – or weakened – Polish-Hungarian relations. In the discussions presented by Gerencsér, Grad and Mitrovits, we also find an attempt to illustrate attitudes toward Poland in Budapest and to show how successive Hungarian governments evaluated the work of their diplomats in Poland. Naturally, the activity of Hungarian diplomats in Warsaw (and in offices in other cities) constitutes merely a small section of the broader landscape of Polish-Hungarian relations. Nevertheless, the authors deserve credit for broadening the contexts wherever possible and for demonstrating both the challenges and difficulties, as well as successes and failures, of the diplomats' work. Given that the book has been neatly edited and translated into Polish, I have no doubt it is essential reading for anyone researching Polish-Hungarian relations in the twentieth century or the history of diplomacy in Central Europe in the period in question.

