

# Diplomatic Tolerance: Estonian-Hungarian Relations between the World Wars

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Mõiste tolerants võib tähistada väga erinevaid asju. Tolerantsi (või ka mittetolerantsi) võib leida kahe inimese omavahelistest suhetest. Sama tõdemus laieneb ka erinevatele gruppidele, institutsioonidele, parteidele jne. Tolerantsi mõistet kuuleb kõige sagedamini kui räägitakse erinevatesse rahvustesse ja kultuuridesse kuuluvatest rahvustest ning nende omavahelistest suhetest. Eriti siis, kui tegemist on vähemusrahvustega või emigrantidega.

Tolerants ei tähenda aga ainult sallivust ja erineva talumist või väljakannatamist. Mitte ka ainult leppimist ülekohtuga ja lootust paremate aegade tulekule. Kindlasti pole tolerants sama, mis ükskõiksus ja hoolimatus või koguni teadmatus. Kerge on olla tolerantne, kui sul puudub igasugune otsene kontakt teise poolega või sa temast ei hooli, temaga mingit suhet ei oma. Kas on aga võimalik rääkida tolerantsist ka rahvusvahelistes suhetes? Kas tolerantsil võib olla mingi koht kahe riigi omavahelistes suhetes? Kas seda võib leida isegi väikeriigi välissuhtlemisest?

I maailmasõja lõpp tähistas huvitava perioodi algust Eesti-Ungari suhetes. Kumbalgi poolel polnud mingit erilist vajadust suhete järele teineteisega. Pigem vastupidi, sest Eesti ja Ungari asendid sõjajärgsel Euroopa poliitilisel maastikul olid kardinaalsed erinevad. Eesti pidas maha küll suhteliselt raske Vabadussõja, kuid võis tulemusega rahul olla. Kõige enam tehti sõjajärgset rahvusvaheliste suhete süsteemi üles ehitades ülekohtu Ungarile. Ülekohtu tehti nende jõudude poolt, kes sõnades pidasid oma eesmärgiks demokraatiat ning sealhulgas rahvaste enesemääramise õigust. I maailmasõja järel ootas Ungari õigustatult ülekohtu heastamist ja temast sai riik, kes kõige aktiivsemalt tegutses Pariisi rahukonverentsi töö tulemusel väljatöötatud rahulepingute revideerimise nimel. Põhimõtteliselt erinevasse leeri kuulumine vajutas tugeva pitseri ka Ungari ja Eesti omavaheliste diplomaatiliste suhetele kahe maailmasõja vahel. Samas pakkusid just omavahelised suhted teistsugust diplomaatiat – kohustuste ja pingevaba vaheldust karmile reaalsuhtlusele, millega mõlemad paratamatult pidid arvestama. Eesti ja Ungari omavahelises läbikäimises segunesid omavahel peaaegu lahutamatuks tervikuks nii hõimuliikumine kui ka poliitilised suhted ning riigijuhtide personaalsed sidemed.



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The concept of *tolerance* can denote very different things. Tolerance (or intolerance) can be found in relations between two people. The same also applies to various groups, institutions, parties, etc. The concept of tolerance is encountered most often in the context of nations that consist of different ethnic groups and cultures, and the relations between them, especially in the case of minority nationalities or immigrants. Tolerance does not only mean the toleration of difference, or the acceptance of injustice in the hope that better times will come. Tolerance is definitely not the same thing as indifference and lack of concern or even ignorance. It is easy to be tolerant if you lack any contact with the other party, or do not care for or have any relations with it. Is it, however, also possible to speak of tolerance in international relations? Can tolerance have a place in the relations between two states? Can it be found even in the foreign affairs of a small state?

Estonia, which became independent in 1917-1918, fought a war of independence with Soviet Russia. Estonia later had close relations with a kindred people to the north – the Finns. It concluded defensive and political unions with Latvia and Lithuania. It hoped for support from Britain and France in the event of danger. Its relations with Germany were not particularly good, due to Estonia's radical land reform. Former landowners wielded a certain influence in Berlin, and that was reflected to a certain degree in relations between Estonia and Germany. Later Estonia attempted to keep its relations with Nazi Germany polite if not downright friendly.

One may note that all of these relations involve certain self-seeking interests. Of the countries with which Estonia had diplomatic relations one can, however, distinguish one with which relations were developed without any particular ulterior motive. The main motivation for the cultivation of such relations was the uncertain knowledge that Hungarian was a distantly related kindred language known by only a few specialists.

The end of the First World War heralded the arrival of an interesting period in Estonian-Hungarian relations. Neither party had any particular need for relations with the other. On the contrary. The positions occupied by Estonia and Hungary in the European political landscape could not have been more different. Estonia had fought a relatively difficult War of Independence, but could be satisfied with the outcome. Even after the declaration of independence on 24 February 1918, only a few Estonians believed that such a small country could actually remain in existence alongside a hostile great power. This was not to mention the sceptical attitude of other countries. The miracle happened, however, and the Estonian state endured. Of course the whole of Estonia's still nascent foreign policy apparatus was then oriented primarily towards the solution of the main problem – how to strengthen and secure the nation's independence. All means, both military and indirect, were to be used for that purpose. The main method was to be the creation of friendly relations with all the powers that could be encouraged to express a favourable attitude towards Estonia. The securing of the international relations that had developed after the First World War was, however, considered especially important. Estonia did not want the situation that had developed after the war to be revised, although it acknowledged that this situation in certain cases involved injustice towards the countries that had lost the war. In fact, Estonia should have been thankful to the vanquished countries, because it was they

who had been able to weaken the Russian Empire to such an extent that it was no longer able to retain control over its peripheries. It would only be a slight exaggeration to say that the Hungarians sacrificed themselves in the interests of Estonian independence. They did not do this consciously, however, and not out of a desire for great self-sacrifice.

The greatest injustice that arose in the construction of the post-war system of international relations was visited on Hungary. This injustice was executed by those forces that stated their objectives to be democracy and the right of national self-determination. After the First World War, Hungary justifiably hoped that this injustice would be amended, and it became one of the countries that fought most actively for the revision of the peace treaties concluded as a result of the Paris Peace Conference. The fact that Estonia and Hungary held fundamentally different positions on this issue left its imprint on the diplomatic relations between Hungary and Estonia in the interwar period. Without such a paradoxical situation, the diplomatic relations between Estonia and Hungary would certainly have been much more active than they proved to be.

## **PROBLEMS RELATED TO THE FIRST WORLD WAR**

The first contacts between independent Estonia and Hungary are connected with the issue of Hungarian prisoners of war in Russia. Tens of thousands of Hungarians fell prisoner to the Russians during the First World War. Their fate was extremely complicated. The majority of Hungarian prisoners of war were able to return to their homeland after the peace treaties concluded between Soviet Russia and the Central Powers in spring 1918.

The process began, but it soon became clear that it was not possible for many Hungarians to be repatriated, because their homes now lay in the territory of neighbouring countries. At the same time, the economic situation in the remaining part of Hungary became more complicated day by day. Some Hungarians also found themselves on Estonian territory in 1919. They were initially placed in quarantine camps and later sent home on an Estonian ship.

In a telegram sent to the Estonian government in April 1919, Béla Kun, the Foreign Minister of the Soviet Hungarian government, proposed an end to the bloodshed that had lasted for the past 5 years. He confirmed that Hungary was prepared to mediate the conclusion of a peace treaty between Estonia and Soviet Russia. The same message was repeated in a telegram that arrived via Moscow. This was the first attempt to establish some kind of contact between the governments of Hungary and Estonia. Nevertheless, Estonia was eventually able to conclude a peace treaty with Russia without the assistance of Béla Kun. It must be acknowledged, however, that Béla Kun's proposal was viewed without prejudice, because his government initially appeared to support solidarity between all political forces, and the entire Hungarian government apparatus also supported the new authorities.

In Estonia it was thought that the overthrow of the constitutional government of Hungary and the creation of a right-wing nationalist government had taken place largely due to the involvement of Romanian forces. Nevertheless, Estonia was willing to enter into official relations with the new regime led by Miklós Horthy. Official contacts were not, however, established until after Hungary agreed to the terms of the Treaty of Trianon and Estonia had concluded its own Tartu Peace Treaty.

## THE PRISONERS OF WAR ISSUE

The reason for this was the issue of the prisoners of war. The Tartu Peace Treaty granted Estonia the right to create in Russia so-called repatriation commissions that began to repatriate Estonians who had previously been living in Russia or had fled to Russia during the war. Soviet Russia also established a centre in Tallinn that dealt with the repatriation of Russian prisoners of war from Estonia, but also from Germany and elsewhere. Estonia, the other Baltic States and Poland now became an important channel through which hundreds of thousands of people were transported from east to west and vice versa. Hungary and Soviet Russia also managed to conclude an agreement concerning the exchange of prisoners of war, despite the absence of official relations. Estonia was selected as the location for the meeting, and Maksim Litvinov, plenipotentiary envoy accredited to Tallinn, was selected as the negotiator for the Russian side. This was completely acceptable to the Hungarians, since there was no cause to doubt the Estonians' complaisance. Moreover, the previously active movement for the promotion of closer ties with kindred peoples was being revived in Estonia, and an Academic Kinship People's Club was established here. Finland had also set a good example by recognising Estonia *de jure*.

In January 1921 a four-person official Hungarian delegation led by Dr. Mihály Jungerth arrived in Tallinn via Germany for negotiations with the Russians. The main result of the negotiations between Hungary and Soviet Russia was the conclusion in 1921 of an agreement for the exchange of prisoners of war. After its first months, the activities of Jungerth's delegation assumed the character of a diplomatic mission. This was soon followed by Hungary's *de facto* recognition, and *de jure* recognition was granted on the 24th of February 1921, the anniversary of the declaration of Estonian independence. The matter of the repatriation of the few Estonians who were prisoners of war in Hungary was also resolved. For its part, Estonia agreed to help Hungarians in need of assistance in Moscow and elsewhere in Soviet Russia.

In summer 1921 caring for Hungarian former prisoners of war and Hungarians arrested by the Chekists had become quite a burden for the Estonian missions in Moscow. Voluntary donations were received from Estonians returning to the homeland and embassy employees. In addition, prisoners were assisted with food, medical aid, etc. Nevertheless, this activity soon became too much of a burden. On 10 June 1921 an official diplomatic note was sent to the attention of the Hungarian mission in Tallinn, drawing attention to the fact that Estonia's missions in Russia had already spent thousands of marks in caring for Hungarian prisoners of war. Hungary naturally recompensed the direct costs, but the issue remained open for over ten years.

Since diplomatic relations had not been concluded between Hungary and Soviet Russia, the question of the prisoners of war became an opportunity for Moscow to exert pressure on Budapest. Thus the Bolsheviks were not pleased that Estonia or any other country would attempt to serve as mediator in this situation.

The question of the Hungarians in Russia became surprisingly acute in 1925-1926, when several hundred Hungarians who remained there attempted to return home from Russia. The Estonian Legation received information these were people who had voluntarily decided to stay in Russia, but had subsequently changed their minds. Hungarians began to approach the

Estonian Legation both in person and in writing. The secretary complained that they were forced either not to respond to the appeals or to request that cases be explained and settled. He also confirmed that “at the present moment the legation is unable to assist the Hungarians”<sup>1</sup>.

Hungary attempted to make the request for assistance more official with the request that the Estonian Legation nevertheless take upon itself the protection of the Hungarian prisoners of war. The document mentioned the prisoners’ feelings towards Estonia as a kindred nation, etc. A. Birk, the Estonian envoy in Moscow, did not take a favourable view of this request. He did not rule out the possibility of Estonia becoming involved in some sort of provocation that would endanger the good name of the legation and Estonia. It also became clear that the Hungarians’ affairs were subject to the People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs, as opposed to the People’s Commissariat for External Affairs. That meant that Estonia required official authorisation to continue dealing with this matter. The Estonian envoy warned that the absence of such authorisation could lead to the same situation as arose in Karelia. Namely, in 1921-22 Estonia had attempted to act as an impartial mediator in the tensions that had arisen between Finland and Soviet Russia in connection with the Karelians’ uprising of autumn 1921. That was followed by accusations and threats against Estonia by Moscow. In addition, the Bolsheviks announced that since Hungary had not officially approached Moscow, they could not satisfy Estonia’s requests to assist the Hungarians. The People’s Commissariat for External Affairs made it clear that the Estonian Legation would be best advised not to deal with the Hungarians at all.

It was later confirmed to the Estonians that Moscow indeed wished to fulfil its obligations under its agreements and exchange prisoners, but that it did not wish to entrust their protection to the representative of a foreign country. The Russians expressed the desire that these matters be dealt with directly through the delegations of the Red Cross. From this Estonia deduced that Moscow was determined to send any possible mission to Budapest, and it used the same method that had worked effectively in Bulgaria and earlier still in Czechoslovakia, namely the Soviet Russian Red Cross and trade missions sent to Prague soon became centres for espionage and propaganda.

It soon also became clear to Estonia why the topic of the Hungarians had so suddenly once again risen to prominence. The initiative apparently came from the Russians so that they could organise the exchange of Communists who had been imprisoned in Hungary. Hungary had promised to do so, but upon the exchange in April 1925 it had become clear that the persons released were not those expected by the Soviet Union. Now the NKVD began to suspect that Hungary had no intention of releasing the desired Communists. Therefore Moscow also began to delay the granting of permission for the repatriation of the Hungarians. No satisfactory solution was found. Estonia agreed to continue to serve occasionally as an intermediary for letters, documents and other parcels to Moscow for Hungarian prisoners and other people in need, and if possible offer diplomatic assistance. The officials of the Estonian Legation were still dealing with the same issue in 1930.

The problem was indeed complicated, and Estonian sincerely wished to help. For its part, Hungary sought to recognise Estonian diplomats regularly at the Moscow Legation and in the Foreign Ministry in Tallinn by granting them various high-level Hungarian decorations.

The granting began in 1923 and continued until 1940.

## **THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DIRECT RELATIONS**

The co-operation that took place in a few capitals of foreign countries was inevitably sporadic and depended mainly on the specific individuals who represented Estonia and Hungary in the particular country. What is naturally more important in relations between the two countries is how direct relations between them are organised. It is in these direct contacts that the distinctiveness of Estonian-Hungarian diplomatic relations is expressed.

The establishment of the Hungarian Legation in Estonia and the other Baltic States on the one hand, and the development of Estonian missions in Hungary and elsewhere in Central Europe on the other hand, were influenced by similar circumstances. The first of these was the size of the country and its resulting economic possibilities. Estonia, for instance, was unable to maintain more than 10-11 legations during the interwar period, and placed the greatest emphasis on honorary consulates. Hungary's economic position was no better.

Secondly, the establishment of representations was influenced by the need to take into consideration the interests of the great powers, and for both countries the priority was to establish legations in the capitals of the more important countries. Thirdly, both countries devoted their main attention to regional problems. That meant that Estonia developed closer co-operation with the Baltic and Scandinavian countries. Hungary's situation was somewhat more complicated, and friendly countries such as Italy and Germany were located somewhat farther away, but as a result all the more attention was devoted to the diplomatic and military combinations that developed in the so-called Donau region in the 1920s and 1930s.

One cannot overestimate the contribution made by the jurist Professor Stefan v. Csekey towards the development of Estonian-Hungarian cultural relations and jurisprudence in Estonia, and especially work in the area of the presentation of Hungary. In the nearly ten years he spent in Estonia, he published numerous scientific and popular scientific works and participated in almost all of the work connected with associations involved with the Finno-Ugric movement and the events they organised. Csekey was the long-time director of the Hungarian College that was established at the University, and consistently came to be referred to as an institute.

In addition to Csekey, all of the lecturers teaching the Hungarian language at the University of Tartu in the 1920s and 1930s developed into professors with broad specialities, who were quite likely able to do more for the presentation of Hungary in Estonia than many official envoys would have been capable of doing. Particularly deserving of recognition is Elemér Virányi, who entered the University of Budapest in 1919, visited Estonia in 1922 and was selected as lecturer of Hungarian in Tartu in the autumn of the same year, at the age of 25. He later admitted quite honestly that when he entered university, he knew nothing at all about the Estonians as a kindred people. By 1923, however, he had become probably the most vocal Hungarian in the Estonian press. One must mention Virányi's long series of articles, which appeared in spring 1923 in the newspaper "Päevaleht", but he also wrote for other publications.

His work was successfully continued in 1931-1934 by Joseph Györke and later by Jenő Fazekas. The latter worked in Tartu from 1934, and was selected as lecturer of Hungarian in 1937. The active movement for the promotion of closer ties with kindred peoples that developed in Tartu, and later also in Tallinn, was mainly connected with these men.

## **ESTABLISHMENT OF AN OFFICIAL LEGATION**

One of the first concerns of chargé d'affaires M. Jungerth in Tallinn was to establish a mission, and also to find an honorary consul. On 17 June 1921 he approached Estonian Foreign Minister Ants Piip with a request in which he announced that Hungary wished to establish an honorary consulate in Tallinn.

In accordance with the customs of diplomatic relations, he affirmed that he was not well enough acquainted with the Hungarians living here, and asked that Ferdinand Virro, a not particularly well-known businessman, be appointed the first honorary Hungarian consul in Tallinn. The latter was granted the official authority of honorary consul, and his name bore the title of honorary Hungarian consul until March 1927.

Jungerth's status changed in March 1923. At that time his status changed from envoy ad interim to envoy plenipotentiary. Apart from him, the legation consisted of an advisor and a secretary, who were soon joined by the position of attaché and bureau official.

In August 1929 an excellent new honorary consul was found, namely Märt Raud, founder and manager of the Estonian oil shale industry. M. Raud, who officially assumed his duties on 4 February 1930, remained in that position until the occupation of Estonia in 1940. It appears that both the Hungarian Legation and Budapest were satisfied with his work. In 1935 he was granted the title of honorary consul general, and Raud participated as actively as possible in the movement for the promotion of closer ties with kindred peoples in northern Estonia.

## **THE ENVOY MOVES TO HELSINKI**

Hungary's decision to move the envoy's permanent residence to Helsinki in 1928 was a somewhat painful one for Estonia. The background and real reasons for this remained a bit of a mystery, especially because the Hungarian envoy was also at the same time accredited to Latvia and Lithuania. Tallinn was situated directly at the centre of the above-mentioned countries, and thus it seemed logical for the envoy to reside there. At the same time, Estonia accepted the Hungarian explanation that the move was necessary for economic reasons, because Hungarian-Finnish relations were even closer than those between Hungary and the other Baltic States. In addition, Jungerth announced these plans one year in advance, and he was replaced in Tallinn by a diplomat bearing the title of advisor. Estonia had no reason to be offended; its own representation in Budapest was even more problematic at that time. Foreign Minister Friedrich Akel attempted to establish a permanent legation there in 1924, but that plan was not realised.

Jungerth's relationship with diplomats of the Baltic States remained warmly personal until his departure in October 1933. The sending off of the envoy from Tallinn to Ankara

proved to be a grand event.

The following envoy Sándor (Alexander) Kiss de Nemeskér was also posted to Helsinki, and he represented Hungary in the other Baltic States. His time in office fell during the period in which several important treaties between Estonia and Hungary were prepared and signed. These were, for instance, the Judicial Assistance Agreement, agreements for the establishment of visa-free travel and, most importantly, the Cultural Cooperation Convention in 1937.

From August 1937 to June 1940 Estonia received three more Hungarian envoys. Of these envoys, one might especially mention Béla Török, the former Hungarian envoy in Greece, in whose time one could particularly emphasise the organisation of Estonia's long-planned, impressive art exhibition in Budapest in spring 1939.

Relations between Estonia and Hungary possessed a distinctive tone in March 1939. They included several high-level visits, the exchanging of very high decorations between political and military leaders, the organisation of the art exhibition and the relatively grand celebration of the anniversaries of Estonian (24 February) and Hungarian (15 March) independence. At the same time, almost nothing was said of the alarming events in Czechoslovakia or incidents in Ruthenia. Only a few articles appeared that attempted to analyse Hungarian foreign policy, and these indeed expressed a somewhat negative tone. The opinion in Estonia was that Hungary was renouncing its independent foreign policy, and allowing itself to be led by Rome and Berlin. Unfortunately Estonia's own situation was no better, and not only independent foreign policy but even national independence itself were vanishing.

Báró Villani Lajos, who was chargé d'affaires from November 1939 to February 1940, had also earlier had an interest in Baltic affairs, but he was hardly able to becoming familiarised with his new post when he was forced to leave. The term of the last Hungarian envoy, Dr. Lajos Kuhl de Borshoshát, however, was incredibly brief. Kuhl arrived in Estonia on 3 June 1940, and was received by the president on 7 June. Within two months Estonia had been incorporated into the Soviet Union, and foreign envoys had to leave fast.

## **THE ESTONIAN MISSION IN BUDAPEST**

The birth of the Estonian mission in Hungary proved to be a long-lasting and unexpectedly painful process that only reached its natural conclusion in the second half of the 1930s with the establishment of a legation with a permanent staff.

After the timid attempt by famous Estonian writer and journalist Eduard Vilde to establish a first mission in 1920, Budapest as if of itself came under the control of Estonia's Legation in Berlin. That meant that Karl Menning, who was sent there after Vilde, was given the task of presenting his credentials in Hungary as well. Menning had presumably had some unpleasant experiences with Hungarians, because he travelled to Budapest with clear pre-conceptions<sup>2</sup>. The smallest friction caused him great pain, and he blamed all of these on the Hungarians' indifference. One cannot rule out the possibility that the antipathy was mutual.



**Fig. 1**  
Eduard Vilde.

In 1922 Menning was replaced for a short time by lawyer Aleksander Hellat, a very capable diplomat and former Minister of Internal Affairs. Hellat reached Budapest in September 1922, and his assessments of the future of Estonian-Hungarian relations were much more optimistic. He also saw opportunities for economic co-operation. One of Hellat's services was the selection of Estonia's honorary consul in Budapest, namely the chemical industrialist, banker and government advisor Gabriel Žsilinszky, who held the position until 1940. The grand presentation of his credentials was unfortunately the main diplomatic act of Aleksander Hellat in Budapest. Less than two months later he became Foreign Minister. From 1924 Hungarian affairs were once again the responsibility of the Estonian Legation in Berlin and Karl Menning.

The standstill that had meanwhile taken place in relations was, however, compensated several-fold by an interesting gesture on the part of the Hungarian head of state. It is not known who may have been the initiator of the idea of giving the Estonian head of state a gift of two Hungarian horses and a coach. The idea was probably conceived in Tallinn, and Jungerth was requested to look into the matter in Budapest. The matter was essentially decided by Horthy in November 1922. The selection of the horses and their transportation

to Estonia took some time, however, and they only eventually arrived just before Christmas of the next year.

The arrival of the horses was followed by several important steps in the Finno-Ugric movement. The regular Hungarian-Finnish-Estonian Educational Congresses began to be referred to as Finno-Ugric Conferences. In this atmosphere of enthusiastic kinship spirit, nothing seemed amiss in the fact that A. Hellat, the Estonian Envoy in Helsinki, was once again also appointed Estonian envoy in Budapest. At the end of June Hellat indeed travelled to Budapest with his credentials, and at the same time awarded Horthy the Estonian Cross of Liberty. One of the culminations of the movement for the promotion of closer ties with kindred peoples in the 1920s was the Third Finno-Ugric Conference held in Budapest in 1928, which in Hungary smoothly developed into a celebration of Horthy's 60th birthday. The Congress had more than 340 Estonian participants and 497 delegates from Finland. In addition to that, delegations from the Finnish *Eduskunta* and Estonian *Riigikogu* [parliaments] travelled to Budapest on a shared train. The 13-member Estonian parliamentary group was led by Ants Piip. This was a return visit after the Hungarian parliament's tour of Estonia and Finland in summer 1926. After that point diplomatic relations and the movement for the promotion of closer ties with kindred peoples began to diverge. The latter, however, continued to flourish. The Fourth Finno-Ugric Congress held in Helsinki in 1930, for instance, had over 600 Estonian participants, about 400 Hungarians and the work took place in 17 groups for various fields.

An important step towards the establishment of a permanent embassy was taken by Estonia in spring 1935, when young career diplomat Richard Jõffert was sent to Budapest as chargé d'affaires. He had studied in Budapest for three years, which meant that he knew Hungarian well enough and was sufficiently familiar with local ways. Bearing the title of First Secretary, he was the first Estonian government official who actually remained to work in Budapest. Jõffert was surprised by the chaos that by that time existed in Estonian-Hungarian diplomatic relations. The frequent exchange of envoys had caused a situation in which even the Estonian Foreign Ministry was uncertain as to whom its representative in Budapest was at the time <sup>3</sup>.

It was finally decided to announce the foundation of an independent embassy in Budapest, but now this decision was not followed faithfully. Namely, Julius Seljamaa, who had been Estonian Foreign Minister from 1933-1936, expressed in early 1936 the desire to leave his previous position, and selected the usual means, of going through an embassy. He wished to serve as envoy of Estonia, and hoped to improve his ailing health while there.

Budapest announced its willingness to receive Seljamaa, and on 2 June 1936 he formally became the next Estonian envoy in Hungary. Seljamaa was never able to present his credentials, however, as he died in Tallinn before he could do so. Jõffert continued to serve in Budapest, essentially fulfilling the position of independent envoy.

His reports of the situation in Central Europe were analytical and objective. Problems in this region were also becoming increasingly important in the development of international relations in Europe. Tallinn therefore gave increasingly serious consideration to the plan of establishing an independent legation in Budapest. Despite the tense war situation, or perhaps because of it, and the fact that Poland had already been occupied, the President of

Estonia issued a decree on 24 October 1939, appointing Johan Markus consul in Budapest. markus was a very experienced diplomat, whose career in the Estonian Foreign Service had begun in 1921. He had risen to the level of Director of the Political Department in the Foreign Ministry and had served in Estonian legations in several countries. His last posting had been in Poland, from which he was forced to depart after its partition by Germany and the Soviet Union. The last Estonian diplomats in Hungary risked their lives by coming to Budapest through Poland when hostilities were already under way. They remained in Budapest until the occupation of Estonia in the summer of 1940, which signalled the beginning of a nearly 50-year hiatus in diplomatic relations between Hungary and Estonia.

The relations between Estonia and Hungary, however, offered a different sort of diplomacy – free of obligations and tension and a change from the hard *realpolitik* that both inevitably had to reckon with. The relations between Estonia and Hungary represented an almost inseparable blend of the movement for the promotion of closer ties with kindred peoples and political relations and the personal ties between heads of state.



## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Ado Birk to Karl Tofer 20. June 1925, Estonian State Archive 957, 12, 729, 45-45.
- <sup>2</sup> Karl Menning to Jaan Tõnisson 4. June 1931, Estonian State Archive 957, 13, 283, 48-49.
- <sup>3</sup> Richard Jöffert to foreign ministry 23. April 1935, Estonian State Archive 957, 8, 458, 132.



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## SOURCE

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Moskvas, 15. okt. 1930.

Armas Hellat,

Nagu teada on Moskva saatkonna ajada ka Ungari sõjavangide asjad. Neid on siia jäänud tuhandeid ja nad on põllumeesteks hakanud. Tööd oli nendega rohkeste, aga kui saatkonna koosseis oli suurem siis ei olnud väga viga. Möödaläinud talvel, ühes kollektiviseerimisega tõusis aga järsku nendega kõik see asjaajamine, sest ka nemad kipuvad ära. Muidugi teada, et

meie asunikud siiski palju rohkem neile tööd annavad. Kuid samal ajal vähendati meil koosseisu ja nagu ma juba paar korda olen nii Tallinna (ka Sulle) kirjutanud, on see töötegemine siin meil peale selle väga raske. Ungari asjad annavad 1/2 - 2/3 inimese tööjõudu meie saatkonnas. Mõnes suuremas saatkonnas, kus tööd vähem tehakse, oleks selle peal vähemalt 1-2 inimest. Kuulsime siin, et paljud ungarlased on oma küsimustega pööranud provintsis Poola konsulite poole, kus on nende asjaajamine, passid jne. Lahkelt Warssavi Ungari saatkonda edasi saatnud. Arvestades sellega, pöörasin Tallinna sooviavaldusega et seal Jungerthiga selle üle saaks räägitud ja ungarlaste asjaajamine kas poolakatele saaks üle antud ehk meile Ungari riigi armul üks ametnik juurde saaks võetud (esimene on mulle vastuvõetavam). Poola presidendi külaskäigu ajal oli Jungerth Schmidtiga kõnelnud ja ütelnud, et asi nõnda kaugel, - Eesti saatkond Moskvas võib anda ungarlaste asjaajamise Poola saatk. Moskvas üle. Poola saatkond siin aga ei tea sellest midagi. Oleme telegrafeerinud (viimase kahe kuu kestel) sellest Tallinna, Warssavi (sealt tulevad meile Ungari asjad), mitu korda kirjutanud. Kuid poolakad siin ei ole veel mingisugust korraldust saanud. Ungari saatk Warssavis on meile kirjutanud ja paluvad ülevaateid tehtud töö üle, see on praegu pooleli ja nii pea ei saa meie seda lõpetada sest tööd on tehtud mitmed aastad, vahepeal tulevad aga uued asjad ühtesoodu juurde...

Ühte asja lisan veel juurde. Kui Norra saatkond 1927-1929 a. ajas inglaste asju, oli neil Briti valitsuse poolt ametis üks sekretäär ja paar kantsleijõudu. Kui uus saadik 1929 a. lõpus määrati, sai Norra saadik Sir'i tiitli, mingisuguseid aumärkisid jne. Mind isiklikult need asjad ei huvita, aga ma ei tea kas see õige on; Tallinnast on mulle teatatud, et nii Lattik kui ka Schmidt olla selle eest Ungari ordenid saanud, et Moskva saatkond ungarlaste asju ajanud. On see tõsi? Lisatakse juurde, et meie inimesed on Poola ordenid vastuvõtmata jätnud, kuid päeval pärast presidendi ärasõitu on nad Ungari ordenid siiski vastu võtnud. Seda kuulen Poola allikatest.

Parimate tervitustega  
Julius Seljamaa

Estonian State Archive 4388-1-66-11.  
Moscow, 15 October 1930.

Dear Hellat,

As is generally known, the Embassy in Moscow is also responsible for the affairs of the Hungarian prisoners-of-war. Thousands of them have remained here, and they have become farmers. They necessitated a lot of work, but it was no great problem when the embassy's staff was greater. Last winter, in connection with collectivisation, all of this paperwork concerning them became necessary, because they too wish to leave. It is clear, of course, that our repatriates cause them much more work. At the same time, however, our staff was reduced, and as I have written to Tallinn (and to you also) on a couple of occasions, this work has been very difficult for us since then. Hungarian affairs occupy one half to one third of the time of one staff member at our embassy. In a larger embassy, where less work is done, at least 1 or 2 people would be appointed to this task. We have heard here that many Hungarians have taken their matters to the Polish consuls in the provinces, where their affairs, passports, etc. have kindly been forwarded to the Hungarian Embassy in Warsaw. Taking this into consideration, I approached Tallinn with the request that this matter be discussed with Jungerth there, and that either the Hungarians' affairs be entrusted to the Poles or an additional official be granted by the Hungarian government (in my opinion the former is more acceptable). During the Polish president's visit, Jungerth spoke with Schmidt and said that matters had advanced to the point where the Estonian Embassy in Moscow could entrust the management of the Hungarians' affairs to the Polish Embassy in Moscow. The Polish Embassy here, however, knows nothing about this. We have telegraphed Tallinn (during the last two months) and Warsaw (the Hungarian matters arrive from there), and also written several times. The Poles have not, however, received any instructions. The Hungarian Ambassador in Warsaw has written to us and requested an overview of the work we have done, this is presently underway and cannot be

completed very soon, because this work has been done for several years, and meanwhile new work continues to arrive...

I will add one more thing. When the Norwegian Embassy managed the affairs of British citizens in 1927-1929, they had one secretary and a couple of clerical assistants provided by the British government. When a new ambassador was appointed at the end of 1929, the Norwegian ambassador was granted a knighthood and received various orders, etc. I personally am not interested in these matters, but I am not certain if that is the correct attitude; Tallinn has informed me that both Lattik and Schmidt received decorations from the Hungarian government for the Moscow Embassy's work administering Hungarians' affairs. Is this true? It is also mentioned that our representatives have not gone to receive their Polish decorations, although they accepted their Hungarian decorations the day after the president's departure. I heard this from Polish sources.

Best regards,  
Julius Seljamaa



pp. 10-23.

Id., *Before and During the Year 1939. Foreign Policy at the Cross-Roads*, Helsinki 2002, pp. 93-112.