

The activity of Polish diplomatic post in Hungary (1946–1956)

The main goal of the PhD thesis is to present the activity of Polish diplomatic post in Budapest in the first post-war decade. Polish historiography lacks the monograph concerning the history of diplomatic posts during the communist period. It was the most important reason why I have decided to study this topic. After the end of II World War, Polish diplomacy was dependent on the decisions made in the Soviet Union and such a state was maintained until 1956. Despite this fact, the research conducted in the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Warsaw provided much valuable information about the situation of diplomatic post in Hungary.

The first post-war Polish diplomatic post in Budapest was founded in 1946. It was crucial to send there the representatives of Poland due to the presence of Polish refugees in Hungary who had to be repatriated. What is more, someone had to control potential supporters of legal opposition in Poland and the Government in Exile in London.

In 1946–1948 Polish diplomats Piotr Szymański and Alfred Fiderkiewicz tried to influence the development of Polish-Hungarian relations for the first time. Piotr Szymański had to solve the problem of conflict between both countries which was caused by the behaviour of Polish peace delegation in 1946, who had demanded the compensation from defeated Hungary. Both diplomats were responsible for propaganda action whose goal was to gain Hungarian support for new Polish Western border. They both took part in preparation of political, economic and cultural agreements in 1948.

After the consolidation of communists' rule in Poland and Hungary in 1948, the role of diplomatic posts in the creation of bilateral relations was limited. The most significant decisions were made by communist party authorities, not by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The tasks of diplomatic posts were changed. Polish diplomats stationed in Hungary had to collect information about political, economic, cultural and social aspects of life in this country. One of the most important elements of their reports was the description of the struggle between communists and Catholic Church. The diplomatic post took also an important part in the organisation of the Polish diaspora's life in Hungary. When it succeeded in concentrating one Society of Polish Civilians in Hungary, its next step was to liquidate "the question of Hungarian Polish diaspora". The existence of national minorities' communities was perceived by the communist regime as a threat.

The death of Joseph Stalin triggered political changes in Hungary. Polish diplomats observed them and described carefully, but they did not support the reforms which took place in Hungary. It was the consequence of Polish authorities' attitude to that situation – regime in Poland did not change considerably until 1955–1956. The strikes of workers in Poznań in 1956 were the first moments when Polish diplomats started to comment on Hungarian reforms in more positive way.

The events of "Polish October" and Hungarian Revolution in 1956 influenced the attitude of Polish representatives in the most significant extent. Polish ambassador Adam Willmann supported Hungarians and Polish citizens fighting against Soviet invasion. The embassy became a shelter for those who were afraid of repressions (it concerned both communists and their opponents). The behaviour of Soviet soldiers was the reason of deterioration of good relations between Willmann and the ambassador of the Soviet Union Yuri Andropov.

Polish diplomats in Budapest had to control not only members of Hungarian Polish diaspora. The heads of diplomatic post were responsible for indoctrination of their subordinates. It took place during the meetings of Polish Workers' Party (Polish United Workers' Party). The reports were the source of information for party authorities in Warsaw about the attitude of diplomatic post's workers towards communist regime.

Despite the fact that Polish diplomacy was dependent on Soviet directives, diplomatic post in Budapest played an important role in post-war policy of Warsaw. Its reports delivered information not only about the situation in Hungary but also about the way the Hungarian communists struggled with opposition, which could be useful in Polish case. Diplomats controlled and indoctrinated all Polish citizens living in Hungary. They were also responsible for propaganda addressed both to Hungarian society and members of Hungarian Polish diaspora. The situation changed in 1956 when Władysław Gomułka became the First Secretary of Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party. It was the beginning of regaining limited autonomy by Polish authorities in foreign policy.

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