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Between the Spoils System and Professionalism: U.S. Diplomats in Poland, 1919-1939

In the first quarter of the 20th century, and especially after the First World War, through the attempts of several diplomats, consuls, educators and businessmen, the United States initiated a movement for the reform and building of a professional Foreign Service. The reformers wanted to place diplomacy under the guidance of career diplomats, which challenged the previously practiced spoils system. They also tried hard to unite two branches (diplomatic and consular) in the U.S. Foreign Service and were searching for talented recruits. After 1915, the State Department began classifying ambassadors as career Foreign Service Officers (FSOs). Between 1914 and 1924, the Consular Service and Diplomatic Service went through an energetic transformation, growing in size and political weight, and gaining ever more Congressional support for the career rule. Another task was to find ways of defining the attributes of candidates for the diplomatic corps ¹.

The reformers (Wilbur J. Carr, Tracy H. Lay, Joseph C. Grew, Hugh S. Gibson, Leland Harrison Jr. and William Phillips to name only a few) insisted that international politics demands a certain type of expert who could understand it and implement that understanding in practice. They wanted to recruit men of various backgrounds whom they would educate and train to attain certain skills for diplomatic work and professional diplomacy. The study of international relations grew during the 1920s and became an academic field of specialization at more than 30 universities. Each school focused.

¹ For more see, Robert D. Schulzinger, *The Making of the Diplomatic Mind. The Training, Outlook, and Style of United States Foreign Service Officers, 1908-1931* (Middletown 1975); William Barnes, John Heath Morgan, *The Foreign Service of the United States. Origins, Development, and Functions* (Washington 1961).

on language tutoring, and some offered various courses in political geography, commercial and international law, consular organization and procedures etc., thus providing applicants with a certain attitude toward international relations².

In the 1920s Congress also approved a process of reform towards a trained and professional Foreign Service. As a consequence, the Rogers Act of 1924 reformed the whole system by establishing a unified career organization, based on competition and merit promotion³. But in the years to come there would still be, according to the traditional spoils system, many more political appointees.

The purpose of this article is to provide an overview and brief presentation of American diplomats in Poland as well as their attitudes and roles in Polish-American relations in the interwar period. My intention is to present the American approach towards Poland in the expanded context of East-Central Europe. It is worth noting Polish expectations and attempts to bring about American understanding of its geopolitical location as well as its political role in the region. The article may shed some fresh light, especially as it is based on various important, yet rarely used, archival sources, as well as the most useful literature on the subject.

After the end of the First World War, the dismemberment of the Habsburg Empire, the revolution in Russia, and the ensuing danger of spreading communism, Central-Eastern Europe became the focus of attention of many European and American politicians. Newly reborn Poland, the “land between” defeated Germany and revolutionary Russia, was being carefully observed by the American establishment. It could be a “useful bulwark between Russia and Germany” and a “most profitable investment ground” for friendly Allied capital⁴. So the post in Warsaw became quite important for acquiring sufficient information about the situation in the whole region. Poland was the most significant state bordering on revolutionary Russia and the State Department wanted to obtain regular reports and steady information about conditions there⁵.

The post in Warsaw was thus quite important in the whole East-Central Europe region, especially during the turbulent years immediately after the

2 Schulzinger, *The Making of*, 46-59, 68-78; Halina Parafianowicz, “Departament Stanu i narodziny profesjonalnej służby zagranicznej USA”, *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, 2004, no. 6, 65-82.

3 Barnes, Morgan, *The Foreign Service*, 210-229.

4 Jan Ciechanowski to Vernon Kellogg on January 8, 1919. Herbert Hoover Presidential Library (HPL), Pre-Commerce Papers, Box 9, f. Kellogg Vernon, 1918-1919.

5 Halina Parafianowicz, *Polska w polityce Stanów Zjednoczonych w okresie prezydentury Herberta C. Hoovera (1929-1933)*, (Białystok 1991), 12.

war, the Peace Conference, and the war against Bolshevism in 1919-1920. The Polish capital – because of the importance of its location, the role it had already played and would potentially continue to play – became in the eyes of not only politicians the most significant spot on the Central-Eastern European map. Poles since the beginning had tried to keep the attention of the friendly Americans and gain their support in Polish matters (e.g. borders, financial aid, diplomacy etc.). The American post in Warsaw, according to Polish expectations and the arguments occasionally used, became even more prestigious and important because of its location “between East and West”: clearly, there would be an actual and forthcoming role for Poland in policymaking for the region. Certainly, the unstable situation, political turmoil, wars and revolutions in Central-Eastern Europe gained greater attention from many Americans, but events there also directly influenced the more hesitant approach of many of them towards the region⁶. Assignment to the Warsaw post was thus quite tempting and challenging, because a professional diplomat there was expected to have excellent command of a few foreign languages. This was difficult to fulfill and discouraging enough for many potential candidates, who were predominantly political nominees.

There were seven U.S. Envoys and Ambassadors at the diplomatic post in Warsaw during the interwar period. The first three U.S. diplomats in Poland were Envoys Extraordinary and Ministers Plenipotentiary: Hugh S. Gibson, Alfred J. Pearson and John B. Stetson. From spring of 1930 till the Second World War there were four U.S. Ambassadors in Poland: John N. Willys, Ferdinand Lamot Belin, John Cudahy and Anthony J. Drexel Biddle, Jr.

Diplomatic relations and the American Legation in Warsaw were established on May 2, 1919, when the first U.S. Minister to Poland, Hugh S. Gibson, presented his credentials⁷. He was the first envoy in the history of Polish-American relations, quite a suitable and fortunate choice for many reasons, also for the country of his assignment⁸.

Hugh S. Gibson had been a career diplomat since 1908 and had gained experience at several diplomatic posts (in Tegucigalpa, London, Havana, Brussels), as well as at the State Department. He had marked himself as a diplomat

6 Janusz Cisek, *American Reports on the Polish-Bolshevik War, 1919-1920* (Warszawa 2010).

7 Appointed on April 16, 1919, presented his credentials on May 2, 1919, presented recall May 3, 1924. http://warsaw.usembasy.gov/poland/previous_amb.html (September 10, 2012).

8 Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace (HI), Hugh S. Gibson Papers, Box 19, f. Coolidge Archibald Cary, 1921-1928. In a letter on March 24, 1924 to Gibson, he repeated that: *Indeed you were just the person who should have been sent to Poland when you were and, as you know, I much rejoiced threat. Still now that Poland is on her legs, you must be about ready to bid good-bye to Warsaw and return to some more westerly home.*

during the First World War by being closely associated with Herbert Hoover and the Commission for Relief in Belgium. At the end of the First World War he was first considered, also because of his plans and expectations, as chief of the Prague post. Soon, because of the growing role of Warsaw and the support and pressure of Hoover and Colonel Edward M. House, President Wilson decided to appoint him the minister to Warsaw. On April 15, 1919 Gibson wrote:

I am still a good deal surprised and a little incredulous about the appointment. I had thought there was some chance of my going to Prague at least temporarily but as Poland is probably the most important legation we now have in view of its relation to Russia and Germany to say nothing of its own special problems I had thought the President would want to send somebody whom he knew well and in whom he had complete confidence. I look forward to it as a great opportunity to do constructive and helpful work⁹.

Polish officials preferred to establish in Warsaw a sort of information center about the region and its economic and political conditions. Such a center became more desirable, yet demanding. All the more so, Warsaw was challenging, competing for such a role with Prague and Vienna¹⁰.

The dissemination of appropriate and suitable information about Poland and its internal as well as foreign policy was particularly necessary, especially because Americans were not obtaining complete, objective, or valid information about it. From the Polish perspective this was becoming even more timely and important because of anti-Polish propaganda, mostly German, about the “seasonal state”, its temporary and unstable borders, the wars with its neighbors, the “French-oriented militaristic clique” ruling there, etc. It had become quite dangerous for the country, which was struggling with many difficulties and obstacles. Some of its internal problems (e.g. the situation of the Jewish community) had been given notorious international publicity, also in the U.S.

The immense agitation in the U.S. over the mistreatment of Jews in Poland, as well as news about pogroms there, had been founded to some extent on misinformation. A special committee headed by the outstanding American Jewish financier Henry Morgenthau was sent in August 1919 to investigate the problem and report on the condition of Jews in Poland. His account was rather dreadful, yet he also tried to be somehow objective on this matter,

9 HPL, Hugh S. Gibson Papers, Box, 2, f. Diaries and Notes, April 1919.

10 For more see, Halina Parafricanowicz, *Czechosłowacja w polityce Stanów Zjednoczonych w latach 1918-1933* (Białystok 1996), 87-93, 103, 126-129.

showing not only the violence against the Jews. He also reported on the general disorder in the newly restored country and the various obstacles for all its citizens. He repeated about the difficult living conditions of Poles themselves, shortages of food, fuel, trained officials etc.¹¹.

Gibson was personally sensitive toward Polish affairs, especially at the beginning of his assignment. He became quite close to Ignacy Paderewski, the Prime Minister, and showed many times an understanding of his and Poles' dilemmas and controversies. He kept reporting that *there was no evidence extant to sustain or verify allegations of widespread 'massacres' and there was no organized anti-Semitic movement in Poland*¹².

A professional diplomat, quite friendly yet not uncritical, Gibson sent many reports to Washington informing regularly about the political and financial situation in Poland, its border problems with neighbors, and the prospects for further, mostly commercial, cooperation with the U.S. He lamented much the over-estimated misinformation about "Polish militarism, anti-Semitism, and expansionism"¹³. It's another question to what extent he was successful in the development of American trade and investment in Poland, or in changing the opinions about the region of William R. Castle, chief of the Western European Division and his colleagues at the State Department¹⁴. But Gibson observed with sympathetic understanding Polish matters, and by occasional interviews and comments contributed to promoting a better image of Poland in the American press.

Gibson's biographer, Gerald Emil Swerczek, focused some attention on his enormously active role in Polish matters and its many solutions at the beginning of the existence of the Second Republic. According to him *Gibson stood ready to help point the way to rational, efficient, and democratic government in East Europe (...). His adaptability qualified him well for such a post as Warsaw*¹⁵.

11 For more see: Andrzej Kwapiszewski, *Hugh Gibson and a Controversy over Polish-Jewish Relations after World War I* (Kraków, 1991); *Herbert Hoover and Poland. A Documentary History of a Friendship*, compiled and with an introduction by George J. Lerski (Stanford, 1977), 15.

12 *Herbert Hoover and Poland*, 15-16; HPL, Hugh S. Gibson Papers, Box 2, f. Diaries and Notes, June-July 1919.

13 HI, Hugh S. Gibson Papers. There are plentiful of reports, memoranda and notes from the years of his assignment in Warsaw, 1919-1924, which proves his professionalism and engagement in diplomacy making.

14 There is interesting correspondence between Gibson and Castle in the early 1920s (HPL, Castle Papers-Poland, Box 11). They exchanged a lot of correspondence and according Castle, Gibson became "the great expert on Poland" for him and colleagues in the State Department (HI, Hugh S. Gibson Papers, Box 17, f. Castle William, 1920).

15 Gerald Emil Swerczek, *The Diplomatic Career of Hugh Gibson, 1908-1938* (Ph.D., unpublished, University of Iowa, 1972), 113-114.

Jay Pierrepont Moffat, who spent one and half year as a third secretary of legation at Warsaw (November 1919-March 1921), cordially recalled his first chief. He remembered with gratitude the evening of his arrival and the dinner with Gibson, who talked about Polish history and its political situation, giving him a brief introduction on his future job and functions at the diplomatic post. Moffat respected his professionalism, understanding of European policymaking, fluency in French, and his many personal connections with American and European officials. Soon he acknowledged that Gibson was fairly involved in the life of Polish society. Later he remarked:

Many a time he had to tell his Polish friends some unpalatable truth, but the happy knack of wrapping it up with a quip or a jest enabled him to convey his message without leaving a sting. He quickly became a prime favorite with Polish society, and no gathering was complete without "our dear Gibson" ¹⁶.

Gibson served five years at the Warsaw post, increasingly more critical about Polish matters and subsequently bitterly disappointed, mostly because of the unsuccessful commercial relations between Poland and America. He became more and more disillusioned and unsatisfied, looking hopefully for a more interesting and prestigious diplomatic post. Gibson, together with some close companions, such as Joseph C. Grew, William R. Castle, Hugh R. Wilson, had been a strong supporter of professionalism in a U.S. Foreign Service based on merit rather than the spoils system. During his years in Warsaw he corresponded with other members of the diplomatic branch on the planned reform and the Rogers Act¹⁷. He contributed greatly in recruiting new members to their diplomatic duties and the improvement of the U.S. Foreign Service. In the 1920s Gibson became an accomplished, highly valued and recognized diplomat¹⁸. After his Warsaw assignment, he served as Envoy to Switzerland in Geneva (1924-1927) and later as Ambassador to Belgium and Minister to Luxembourg. Franklin Delano Roosevelt would send him to Brazil (1933-1937)¹⁹.

Gibson's successor in Poland was Alfred J. Pearson, a non-career appointee, who served a year in Poland (June 1924-August 1925)²⁰. Born in 1869

16 Nancy Harvison Hooker, ed., *The Moffat Papers. Selection from the Diplomatic Journals of Jay Pierrepont Moffat, 1919-1943* (Cambridge, 1956), 10-11.

17 HI, Hugh S. Gibson Papers, Box 94, f. Rogers Bill, Correspondence.

18 Gibson's pictures were on a cover page of the "Time" three times (November 26, 1923, July 18, 1927, February 8, 1932).

19 John E. Findling, *Dictionary of American Diplomatic History* (Westport, 1980), 191.

20 Appointed on April 2, 1924, presentation of credentials: June 26, 1924, left post August 18, 1925. http://warsaw.usembassy.gov/poland/previous_ambs.html (September 10, 2012).

in Landskrona, Sweden, he moved as an infant with his family to Kansas. He was educated in America and earned his Ph.D. from Yale University. For several years he taught at Uppsala College in Kenilworth (New Jersey) and at the Gustav Adolphus College in St. Petersburg (Minnesota). In 1907, as a teacher of German language and literature, he joined the faculty at Drake University in Des Moines²¹.

Pearson's successful academic career raised some dreams in him and his associates about a diplomatic position in his native Sweden. There was even an attempt to install him in U.S. diplomacy. In March 1922 a delegation of his friends went to Washington to promote this idea and present Dr. Pearson's candidacy to President Warren G. Harding. According to one colleague, Dr. F. I. Herriott, they did not achieve their main goal because Dr. Pearson had been born in Sweden; in consequence, he could not be appointed to the diplomatic post there²². But this attempt perhaps helped him a few years later to get an assignment from President Calvin Coolidge, namely to the diplomatic post in Warsaw.

Pearson's short diplomatic service in Poland was unsuitable to him and – according to his friends – rather boring. The next step in his diplomatic career was an assignment in Helsinki as envoy to Finland (1925-1930). After diplomatic service he returned to Drake University where, as dean of the College of Liberal Arts, he worked until his death on August 10, 1939²³.

The next American Envoy to Poland, John B. Stetson was also a political appointee. He served five years as Minister to Poland from 1925 to 1929²⁴. He had flown in the U.S. Army Air Force during the First World War and was a businessman owning a brokerage firm. At the post in Warsaw, Stetson became quite familiar with Polish life and problems, reporting systematically to the State Department. He also sympathized with his Polish friends. One author wrote:

Although limited in capabilities, he threw himself into his work with gusto, and a few months in his new surroundings turned him into a zealous spokesman for Polish interests and an increased American economic presence in the country²⁵.

21 <http://drakepedia.drake.wikispace.net/Alfred+John+Pearson> (September 10, 2012).

22 <http://drakepedia.drake.wikispace.net/Alfred+John+Pearson> (September 10, 2012).

23 Ibid.

24 Appointed on July 3, 1925, presented of credentials: August 29, 1925, left post August 29, 1929. http://warsaw.usembasy.gov/poland/previous_amb.html (September 10, 2012).

25 Neal Pease, *Poland, the United States and the Stabilization of Europe, 1919-1933* (New York and Oxford 1986), 69.

Stetson was quite fond of Józef Piłsudski (“the father of the nation”, comparable in national stature to George Washington), and did not change his opinion after the May 1926 *coup d'état*. In his frequent reports to William R. Castle, he repeatedly acknowledged Piłsudski’s active and constructive role in the political readjustment of Poland²⁶.

In the years to come, Stetson would have a serious problem and personal conflict with the U.S. financial adviser to the Polish government, John Dewey, who, according to the stabilization loan in October 1927, had been sent to Poland for a 3-year assignment – and who quickly became “Polonized” and very popular among Poles (“Pan Dewey” or “Pan Deweski”) while the authority of both post and envoy were declining²⁷. On November 11, 1927 Castle warned Stetson about the “exceedingly ambitious” Dewey:

I am a little afraid that in his new position he will try to pose as both an American official and a Polish official. He said something to me about the Poles giving him diplomatic status in Poland and Mrs. Dewey said that he was to be given the status of an ambassador. I cannot believe that this is true and there must be no question whatever of his outranking you for example. You are the sole representative of the American Government in Warsaw²⁸.

In many reports to William R. Castle (as was later known at the State Department), Stetson bitterly complained about Dewey. He was harsh about the role played by the financial adviser who became, behind his back (or in his stead) a sort of unofficial U.S. representative²⁹. Their rivalry created a difficult task for Poles who wanted to set up friendly relations with both Americans, equally important.

In 1929 – on the occasion of the 150-year anniversary of Casimir Pułaski’s death – Poles and Polish-Americans (the so-called Polonia) successfully advocated raising the diplomatic post to the status of embassy. It is worth mentioning that at the time the U.S. had installed embassies only in 6 European states. So – as was presented in the media – the elevation of the post in Poland to the ambassadorial level was more than a merely symbolic gesture towards Polonia, but was also a visible recognition of Poland’s place and role in European policy. On December 12, 1929 *The New York Times* announced:

26 HPL, Castle Papers, Box 11, f. Poland, 1921-1929; Piotr S. Wandycz, *The United States and Poland* (Cambridge 1980), 202.

27 Parafianowicz, *Polska w europejskiej*, 27-28; Pease, *Poland, the United States*, 115-117.

28 Castle to Stetson on November 11, 1927. HPL, Castle Papers, Box 11, f. 90.

29 HPL, Castle Papers, Box 11, f. Countries Correspondence, Poland 1921-1929.

On account of the growing importance of Poland in Europe, and as a compliment to the large population of Polish extraction in the United States, President Hoover will shortly elevate the American Legation in Warsaw to the status of an embassy³⁰.

Upon the announcement of an embassy in Poland, Stetson resigned from his service in Warsaw because of the plan to install there Alexander P. Moore, an experienced Ambassador to Spain and Peru, who had left the latter post in July 1929. So the next and the first Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary was Moore, a distinguished career diplomat, appointed on January 31, 1930. However, he died suddenly in mid-February 1930 in the United States before taking his oath of office³¹.

To fill the vacancy President Hoover designated John N. Willys, an automotive pioneer and a wealthy chairman of the automobile business³². He had no diplomatic experience; his appointment to Warsaw was a typical spoils system nomination. He was a businessman who had helped Herbert Hoover during the presidential campaign and had got the support of Republican senators for this post. He was also a close friend of Robert Kelley, chief of the Eastern European Division at the State Department, which later influenced his dealings with Polish and Central-Eastern European matters³³.

During his two years in Poland (May 1930-May 1932) Willys focused most of his attention on the condition of his own automotive firm in the U.S. He impressed Poles by leasing a beautiful palace in Warsaw as his residence, but did not establish any closer relations with Polish officials. Nor did he enhance his own position or prestige, either in Warsaw or in the State Department. His periodic trips home and absence from Warsaw became a subject of inquiry at the State Department³⁴. The ambassador's absence in Warsaw was noticed and did not help to create a more positive image with Poles, especially within clerical-nationalist circles in Poland. Later, under the pressure of

30 *New York Times*, December 12, 18; Parafianowicz, *Polska w europejskiej*, 70-73.

31 http://warsaw.usembasy.gov/poland/previous_amb.html (September 10, 2012).

32 Appointed March 8, 1930, presentation of credentials: May 24, 1930, left post May 30, 1932. http://warsaw.usembasy.gov/poland/previous_amb.html (September 10, 2012).

33 Bogusław W. Winid, *W cieniu Kapitola. Dyplomacja polska wobec Stanów Zjednoczonych Ameryki 1919-1939* (Warszawa 1991), 152.

34 Secretary Henry L. Stimson wrote to President Hoover about lengthy (extended) absence of Ambassador in Poland. He attached the memo showing that in 1930 he spent 103 days outside of Poland, and until 24 May 1931 – 74 days. He wrote that “The Ambassador apparently does not like living in Warsaw”, so he should be recalled and substituted as soon as possible. (HPL, Presidential Papers, Foreign Affairs, Box 997, f. Diplomats – Willys John N.).

circumstances, he reported on Polish concerns about the so-called “Corridor campaign” and pushed towards a peaceful revision of the Versailles Treaty³⁵.

Ambassador Willys, as well as counselor John C. Wiley (in the absence of the ambassador, acting quite often as chargé d'affaires), in 1931 reported strong warnings from Poles and by Piłsudski himself to Americans as to the alarming danger of German revisionism to the security of European peace. In the autumn of 1931 many revisionist attempts in America deeply worried Polish officials. Pierre Laval's and Dino Grandi's visits to the U.S., senator William Borah's interview on the peaceful change of Polish borders, public and media discussions on the “Corridor” question in America etc., became for a while a grim fact of mutual relations. Polish officials and leaders of Polonia made many attempts and quite effective steps to stop the unfriendly, hostile discussion in the U.S. about the “Corridor”, which was dangerous for Poland and its borders³⁶.

Ambassador Willys resigned in the spring of 1932 and returned home to devote his full attention and time to his life and private business³⁷. The ambassadorship in Poland remained vacant for half a year before President Hoover appointed his successor – Ferdinand Lamot Belin, a Foreign Service officer and retired diplomat, related to the influential du Pont family. He served as ambassador in Warsaw for only three months (December 1932 to March 1933)³⁸, till the end of Hoover's administration after his unsuccessful bid for reelection.

The next American Ambassador in Warsaw, John Cudahy, nominated by Franklin D. Roosevelt (who often deliberately ignored career men) was also a non-career appointee. Cudahy, born in Milwaukee, graduated from Harvard, and attended the University of Wisconsin Law School. He served during the First World War as a Lieutenant in an Infantry Regiment. In the U.S. he headed his family's real estate company³⁹.

35 Pease, *Poland, the United States*, 137.

36 For more see, Parafianowicz, *Polska w europejskiej*, 102-103; 136-148; Pease, *Poland, the United States*, 146-150.

37 *The New York Times*, April 27 1932, 9. In the press announcement he says: *I shall leave my post as Ambassador to Poland with great regret because of many pleasant memories of hospitality and friendship which I have enjoyed there.*

38 Appointed on November 2, 1932, presentation of credentials: December 13, 1932, recess appointment expired March 4, 1933. http://warsaw.usembasy.gov/poland/previous_amb.html (September 10, 2012).

39 Appointed on June 13, 1933, presentation of credentials: September 6, 1933, left post on April 23, 1937. The President's first choice for the post at Warsaw was James Michael Curley from Massachusetts, who had not been commissioned and his nomination was withdrawn. http://warsaw.usembasy.gov/poland/previous_amb.html (September 10, 2012).

Cudahy's appointment to the post at Warsaw was his first step in the U.S. diplomatic service. But it should be mentioned that from the beginning of his service, he tried to be *au courant* on Polish matters and get more detailed information about the Central-Eastern European situation. He established some personal contacts with Polish politicians, including Marshall Piłsudski and Minister Beck. In December 1933 he visited U.S. diplomatic posts in Central Europe and exchanged with colleagues his opinions on the situation in Poland and the region. During his service at the post in Warsaw, he became increasingly familiar with the political problems and many tensions in Central-Eastern Europe⁴⁰. In the years to come he would become more and more upset because of his pessimistic vision concerning the lack of good prospects or solutions for the region.

Ambassador Cudahy was pessimistic about the future of Poland and was rather reluctant toward Beck and his policy. He didn't feel happy in Warsaw and dreamed of a better post where he could... hunt. It looks like his quite frequent reports to Washington were not necessarily studied carefully or with any special attention. Some of them he addressed not to the State Department but directly to President Roosevelt. After two years of service in Poland Cudahy – according to Ambassador William C. Bullitt – *had only one wish in life: to be appointed Minister to Ireland. He is anxious to get out of Poland and he has had more than enough of the physical disorder of Eastern Europe*⁴¹.

Bullitt also provided a suggestion to the President about the potential candidate for the ambassadorial position in Poland:

The man you send to Warsaw must know French and, if possible, should know German and, if you want to get any information from Warsaw, should also be very much of a gentleman and acutely intelligent⁴².

This was fairly difficult and a rather unrealistic wish – particularly because there were not many polyglots in the entire U.S. Foreign Service.

John Cudahy sent quite frequent and fairly long reports to Washington. He became more and more familiar with many aspects of Polish and Central-Eastern European policy as well. In a report on April 14, 1937, just before his

40 There is interesting, abundant and detailed correspondence between Ambassador Cudahy and State Department (National Archives (NA), Washington, D.C., Microfilm Publications, Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Poland, 1916-1944, Decimal File 860c, M 1197).

41 William C. Bullitt, Ambassador to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, to Roosevelt, April 12, 1935. Edgar B. Nixon, ed., *Franklin D. Roosevelt and Foreign Affairs* (Cambridge, 1969), v. II, 478.

42 *Ibid.*, 478.

departure from Warsaw, the Ambassador noted that the position of Poland was “increasingly difficult” because of the military power of Germany, which “grows stronger and stronger”. So he became even more pessimistic about the future of the region. In the same report he also referred to the U.S. embassy to Poland – which should have been playing an important role:

Warsaw should serve a highly significant purpose in supplying the State Department with valuable far-reaching information of the European scene (...). The embassy folk should be composed of the best trained, most efficient and effective officers and non-commissioned personnel ⁴³.

Ambassador Cudahy took many occasions to apply pressure, repeatedly requesting President Roosevelt for reassignment. Finally he was transferred to Dublin in May 1937⁴⁴ and continued his diplomatic service as Ambassador in Ireland (1937-1940), then both in Belgium and Luxembourg (1939-1940) until German troops entered those countries ⁴⁵.

In 1941, Cudahy published a book based on his personal diplomatic experience in European countries. The first chapter was focused on his recollections and reflections on the “relic of feudalism” in Poland. He repeated his pessimistic prognosis from the mid-1930s and added some harsh and demanding remarks about Polish politicians and, above all, the aristocracy, who:

lived in the grand manner, with sweeping, seigniorial gesture. They lived gallantly, gracefully, and with no sense of social or political responsibility (...) I predicted that in a few years these great shoots with their medieval magnificence would be a thing of memory⁴⁶.

The last U.S. Ambassador in pre-war Poland had been a previous Envoy to Norway, Anthony Joseph Drexel Biddle Jr. who spent in Warsaw somewhat over two of the most crucial years from 1937 to the outbreak of the Second

43 NA, Microfilm Publications, Records of the Department of State Relating to the Internal Affairs of Poland, 1916-1944, Decimal File 860c (M1197, 34, 860c.00/687).

44 Edgar B. Nixon, ed., *Franklin D. Roosevelt*, v. II, 206. On 22 February 1936 in personal and confidential letter to the president Bullitt wrote that when Cudahy learnt about his transfer to Dublin he “was in Paradise ()”. He is eager to come home to campaign and promises 3,000,000 Polish votes”.

45 Cudahy was forced by Germans to leave the post, yet before he left, personally interviewed Adolph Hitler. http://warsaw.usembassy.gov/poland/previous_ambts.html (September 10, 2012).

46 John Cudahy, *The Armies March. A Personal Report* (New York 1941), 7. The chapter entitled “Feudal Poland” speaks for itself.

World War⁴⁷. He was also a political appointee, although he soon came to be considered a “gifted amateur” in diplomacy.

On July 10, 1937 in a letter to President Roosevelt, Biddle declared his great appreciation for having sent him to Poland. He wrote:

I find the work tremendously interesting as well as Poland and its people. I am digging in fast and I hope to be able to send you a constructive summary of the situation in this part of Europe in the near future⁴⁸.

Biddle was quite active in diplomatic as well as social life in Warsaw. Soon he became a close friend and confidant of President Ignacy Mościcki and of many Polish officials, including Minister of Foreign Affairs Józef Beck. This gave him a very distinct position, all the more so as he entertained quite often, enjoying parties, and social gatherings. He became a good friend of many influential Poles and Polish aristocratic families. According to many witnesses, through these connections, he became a well-informed person and was thus quite popular in the diplomatic corps⁴⁹.

On November 10, 1937 in a cordial letter to Biddle, the President wrote

you are literally on the firing line – more so in many ways than if you were in Paris, Berlin or Moscow. If things get worse, Warsaw and Prague and Vienna will, one or all, become a focal point⁵⁰.

Biddle's reports to Washington, quite often directly to the President, showed his patient and understanding approach towards Poland and its policy. In his reports to President Roosevelt and Secretary Cordell Hull he presented Polish internal affairs and international relations in a quite sympathetic way, yet recognized a growing and truly grave danger for his country of assignment and the whole region. Biddle stayed in Poland until the very end, leaving Warsaw together with the Polish government during the September

47 Appointed on May 4, 1937, presented of credentials: June 2, 1937. Biddle left Warsaw on September 5, 1939 and followed the Polish government to France and later to England. He was also Ambassador to a number of governments in exile during the Second World War. He left London on December 1, 1943. http://warsaw.usembassy.gov/poland/previous_amb.html www.embassy.pl (September 10, 2012).

48 Biddle to Roosevelt on July 10, 1937. Roosevelt Study Center, Middelburg (RSC), Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Foreign Affairs, 1933-1945. Part 2: Diplomatic Correspondence File, Reel 27.

49 Winid, *W cieniu Kapitola*, 203.

50 Roosevelt to Biddle on November 10, 1937. RSC, Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Foreign Affairs, 1933-1945. Part 2: Diplomatic Correspondence File, Reel 27.

campaign in 1939. The Ambassador with his reduced staff crossed the Romanian border on September 15th ⁵¹.

During the whole interwar period, altogether there were seven envoys and ambassadors at the U.S. post in Warsaw. Only two of them were Foreign Service officers: Hugh S. Gibson, the first envoy who served there almost five years at the beginning of the existence of the rebuilt Polish Republic, and Ambassador Ferdinand Lamot Belin, appointed briefly for four months at the end of Herbert Hoover's administration. The remaining ones were non-career appointees who played more and less active roles in conducting bilateral Polish-American relations. Of all the interwar U.S. ministers and ambassadors to Warsaw, Gibson and Biddle, and to some extent also Stetson, seem to have been quite familiar with, and understanding of, Polish problems.

It is worthy acknowledging that Poland, at the beginning of its independence after the First World War had some good luck in having a professional and sympathetic diplomat like Hugh S. Gibson. His followers were typical political appointees, mostly businessmen with little interest in and/or familiarity with Polish matters. In the late 1930s and before the Second World War there was a non-career, "grand diplomatic amateur", oriented towards Poland and its problems, Ambassador Anthony Joseph Drexel Biddle Jr.

After the mid-1920s the Foreign Service finally set boundaries for the conduct of a more active U.S. foreign policy based on a merit system, promotion, and professionalism. The Rogers Act of 1924 and its reforms would slowly and gradually change the American diplomatic service. Actually, it took a few more decades to establish an efficient and professional U.S. Foreign Service. After the Second World War "this exclusive club" of diplomats or "elite profession" became more accessible to women as well.

The profiles of the appointees to the post in Warsaw after the Second World War also changed – all but five of the U.S. Ambassadors to Poland were career officers ⁵². This speaks for itself and confirms that the U.S. Foreign Service, based on a merit system, had become truly professional.

⁵¹ *Poland and the Coming of the Second World War: The Diplomatic Papers of A.J. Drexel Biddle Jr., United States Ambassador to Poland, 1937-1939*, eds., Phillip V. Cannistraro, Edward D. Wynot Jr., Theodore P. Kovaleff (Columbus, 1976), 149-151.

⁵² http://warsaw.usembassy.gov/poland/previous_amb.html (September 10, 2012). Interestingly enough two of the political appointees were of Polish descent (John A. Gronouski and Nicholas A. Rey). Stanton Griffis and the last two of recent Ambassadors were also the political nominees – Victor H. Ashe and Lee A. Feinstein. The next Ambassador is professional Stephen M. Mull, who was sworn by the Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on October 24, 2012.

STRESZCZENIE

**Pomiędzy systemem „łupów politycznych” a profesjonalizmem:
dyplomaci amerykańscy w Polsce (1919-1939)**

Pierwszym amerykańskim posłem w Warszawie był profesjonalny dyplomata Hugh S. Gibson, który spędził w Polsce blisko 5 lat, okazując sporo życzliwego zainteresowania krajowi urzędowania. Był on jednym z rzeczników reformy amerykańskiej służby konsularnej i dyplomatycznej, czego rezultatem była ustawa Rogersa z 1924 roku. Zapoczątkowała ona budowę profesjonalnej służby zagranicznej USA. Był to wszak proces powolny, który dopiero z czasem, wypierając tzw. system łupów (a więc nominacji politycznych), doprowadził do profesjonalizacji amerykańskiej służby zagranicznej.

Kolejni posłowie, a od 1930 roku ambasadorowie w Warszawie obejmowali to stanowisko, dzięki nominacjom typowo politycznym (z wyjątkiem Ferdinanda Lammota Belina). Spośród siedmiu kierowników placówki dyplomatycznej USA w Warszawie w okresie międzywojennym było tylko dwóch profesjonalistów, a pozostałych pięciu pochodziło z nominacji politycznych. Warto wszak podkreślić, że ostatni przedwojenny ambasador amerykański, Anthony Joseph Drexel Biddle Jr. wykazywał życzliwe zainteresowanie Polską i jej polityką, a jego praca dyplomatyczna spotkała się w przyszłości z pozytywną oceną badaczy.