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Hugh S. Gibson's diplomatic service in Poland after the First World War*

Hugh S. Gibson was a career diplomat who had gained experience from 1908 at several diplomatic posts in Tegucigalpa, London, Havana, and Brussels, as well as at the State Department. He marked himself as a diplomat and humanitarian activist during World War I by being closely associated with Herbert C. Hoover and the Commission for Relief in Belgium. In Paris in 1918–1919 he became acquainted with many European politicians and several leaders from Central Europe. At the end of World War I, because of his plans and expectations, he was firstly considered as the chief of the U.S. diplomatic post in Prague. From the autumn of 1918 he became involved in contacts with Edvard Beneš and Emanuel Voska and became more and more involved in the problems of Czechoslovakia. He was also a member of the Coolidge Mission to the countries of the former Austria-Hungarian Empire dealing with the economic and political problems of Central Europe¹.

According to his correspondence it looks that there were some plans (probably of his mentor and supporter, and later close friend, Hoover) to send him to the newly established U.S. diplomatic post in Prague. On December 14, 1918 in Diary (in the form of “letters to mother”) he mentioned, “It would be most interesting job to our first representative to Bohemia but I don't imagine it will be done”².

Till mid-March, 1919 Gibson, cooperating with Coolidge Mission, was sent six times to Vienna, three times to Prague and two times to Budapest to study the economic and food situation in the countries of the region. He talked to various

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¹ H. Parafianowicz, *Czechosłowacja w polityce Stanów Zjednoczonych w latach 1918–1933*, Białystok 1996, pp. 92–94, 120–125.

² Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace (HI), Stanford, Hugh Gibson Papers (HGP), Box 69, f. Diaries and Notes, December 1919.

politicians and important people in Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary and regularly reported to Hoover on their condition and needs for a better solution of their various problems. He became involved in the internal problems of newly born countries, the controversies, and developing conflicts between them and their expectations and hopes for American assistance³.

After the dismemberment of Habsburg Monarchy, the newly born national states with rapidly emerging new problems became a “constant problem” for the allies searching for a stable peace and the reconstruction of the whole region. These countries, heavily damaged by war, revolutions, famine, and political disorder, were struggling and fighting each other. According to American visitors and observers, the post-war, Central Europeans states were in quite different shapes and conditions. As one concluded, “Vienna gayer than Paris, with lots to eat and amusements in full swing. Budapest and Hungary is dead, famine in Slovakia. The neighbors of Hungary keep pushing in the boundary line, as they get a chance to strike it, because Hungary has demobilized the army. The Poles and Czechs fighting for coal fields”⁴. Certainly, the unstable situation, political turmoil, wars, and revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe raised more attention of Americans involved in policymaking and business, even though Americans in general were quite hesitant about the future of such unstable and unsettled region⁵.

From the beginning, Poles had tried to keep the attention of friendly Americans and getting their support in Polish matters (e.g., borders, financial aid, diplomacy). The U.S. diplomatic post in Warsaw, according to Polish expectations and occasionally used in their arguments, became even more prestigious and important because of its location. Poland, a “land between” defeated Germany and revolutionary Russia or “borderland between the East and West,” was considered as a significant player in the actual and forthcoming policymaking in the region⁶.

Gibson’s association with Herbert C. Hoover and the activities of American Relief Administration (ARA) became quite significant not only for his lifelong friendship but also for his future service and blooming diplomatic career. Hoover then was extremely powerful man, a sort of magic and legendary person, especially in heavily devastated Central Europe desperately in need of food and vari-

³ HI, HGP, Box 69, f. Diaries and Notes, March 1919.

⁴ J. Shotwell, *At the Paris Peace Conference*, New York 1937, p. 158.

⁵ More on it see, F. Costigliola, *Awkward Dominion: American Political, Economic and Cultural Relations with Europe, 1919–1933*, New York 1984; E. S. Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890–1945*, New York 1982.

⁶ There are some interesting reports on it in Instytut Polski i Muzeum im. gen Sikorskiego (IPMS), Londyn, in collections of: Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych (A.11), Ambasada RP w Londynie (A.12.P) and Kolekcja Jana Ciechanowskiego (82).

ous products for rehabilitation and economic reconstruction. As one of Hoover's collaborators and friends remarked later:

Mr. Hoover at once went abroad with two points of view in mind. One was to find a market for the American producer and the other was to see that Bolshevism did not spread through Europe because of starvation The activities of ARA and the American uniform became the symbol of reconstruction in Europe In broad lines as we can say that our country under Mr. Hoover's guidance came to the rescue of the disorganized and tarnished peoples who had been crushed by Germany in the war and brought to them not only food, but hope⁷.

In mid-March 1919, after the congressional approval of establishing the new diplomatic posts in Warsaw and Prague, Gibson was still waiting for the final decision about his assignment. As protege of Hoover who talked to Joseph C. Grew about sending him to Prague, he was bit surprised by the note of Colonel Edward M. House on April 11, 1919 informing that he was going to Warsaw and Richard Crane to Prague. The next day he was introduced by House to Ignacy Paderewski to whom he talked about the situation in Poland. A week later at a dinner organized by Hoover in honor of great musician and Polish Prime Minister, Gibson talked to him about "the Polish problems that have been explained over and over the months"⁸.

A few days later on April 19, 1919 Gibson mentioned that he is satisfied with the assignment to Warsaw. He put it this way,

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 do it as a great opportunity to do constructive and helpful work.

Gibson started to prepare himself for his new assignment, getting instructions from the Department of State and talking to American and Polish colleagues in Paris. He was thrilled and challenged by the perspective of the forthcoming service in Poland. The diplomatic post there was considered as a quite important although from the beginning he probably realized that Warsaw was not an easy post. In a letter on April 19, 1919 to Cullen Dennis in Peking, Gibson briefly

⁷ Herbert Hoover Presidential Library (HPL), West Branch, Herbert Hoover Papers (HHP), Box 261, f. "Herbert Hoover – A Personal Sketch" by Ray Lyman Wilbur, 1938.

⁸ HPL, HGP, Box 2, f. Diaries and Notes, April 1919. According to various sources it looks that, above all, Colonel House influenced on Wilson's decision to send Gibson to Poland.

remarked, "I shall probably spend the next few years in the fierce endeavor to maintain the requisite amount of human life in my system between the insults of Bolsheviki on the one side and the Huns on the other"⁹.

Gibson 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 assignment. Then 36-years old, he was the youngest minister at the U.S. Foreign Service but was well prepared for his duties. He was professional, already introduced to Central European situation and well equipped by useful connections with many politicians and diplomats. He arrived in Warsaw from Paris by train on April 28, 1919, cordially welcomed by Poles¹⁰.

The assignment at Warsaw's diplomatic post was quite tempting and challenging, because it was needed to have a professional diplomat with a good command of a few foreign languages, including French and German. This was difficult to fulfill and discouraging enough since English, although introduced to diplomacy by President Woodrow Wilson, was not yet a useful or significant language for the communication and contacts at the region. So Gibson's fluency in French became very useful indeed.

Diplomatic relations and the American Legation in Warsaw were established on May 2, 1919, when the first U.S. Minister to Poland presented his credentials to Marshal Józef Piłsudski¹¹ who talked "in general way about his 14 months in a German prison, about the work of construction; what had been done and what remained to be done"¹². Actually, Gibson had never been in close or familiar relationship with Piłsudski, whom he recognized as Polish national hero, yet did not understand well and perceived as a "military men." In reports to Washington he presented Piłsudski with a harsh criticism¹³.

The U.S. legation in Warsaw was located at Senatorska 37. The First Secretary was John (Jack) Campbell White, professional and helpful to fulfil expanding duties in this difficult period. There was also Arthur Bliss Lane, the Second Secretary, beginning his diplomatic career, who in 1920 was transferred to London¹⁴.

⁹ HPL, HGP, Box 2, f. Diaries and Notes, April 1919.

¹⁰ J. Cisek, *American Reports on the Polish-Bolshevik War, 1919–1920*, Warszawa 2010, p. 45. A day after Gibson's arrival in Warsaw in a short letter to Colonel House on April 29, 1919 he mentioned about the Polish attempts to get an American loan, which would help the industries. He added, "I know how anxious you are to do anything that will help Poland."

¹¹ http://warsaw.usembassy.gov/poland/previous_amb.html (accessed on September 10, 2012). Appointed on April 16, 1919, presented his credentials on May 2, 1919, presented recall on May 3, 1924.

¹² HPL, HGP, Box 3, f. Diaries and Notes, May 1919.

¹³ J. Cisek, op. cit., p. 28.

¹⁴ Soon after he was transferred to Berne, where working with Joseph C. Grew. Since May 1924 he worked under Grew, the Undersecretary of State as his assistant.

From November 1919 Jay Pierrepont Moffat¹⁵ was added as the Third Secretary to the small group of staff and in the near future a few more officers were sent to Warsaw's post¹⁶. Colonel Elbert E. Farman, military attaché in Poland with a couple of assistants rounded out the main embassy staff¹⁷.

In Warsaw from the very first day Gibson faced many problems and obstacles. He had to organize the new diplomatic and consular posts under extreme conditions, particularly because of the unstable situation and the war with the Soviet Russia. The small staff of the U.S. legation would be challenged in months to come also because of the rapidly growing number of applicants for U.S. visas, the Jewish problems etc. Gibson was not happy about the increasing demands and expectations of his superiors from the Department of State. From the beginning of his service he reported to Washington and repeatedly asked his superiors to send to Warsaw a few more people experienced in consular and diplomatic service, as well as for the additional clerks needed to overcome the expanding problems, matters and obstacles¹⁸.

Jay Pierrepont Moffat, who spent two years in Warsaw (November 1919 – March 1921) recalled his first chief very warmly and with admiration. He remembered with gratitude the evening and dinner with Gibson who talked about Poland, its history and political situation, giving a brief introduction to him on the job awaiting him at this diplomatic post. Moffat recollected that after his arrival Gibson and Arthur Bliss Lane took him to Fukier's restaurant, one of the fancier places in Warsaw: "We sat late into the night before an open fire, sipping the Tokay, while Hugh Gibson talked to us about Poland. He wove a veritable tapestry with pictures of war and famine and plague slowly fading into the task of reconstruction. Two central figures dominated this theme: Pilsudski and Paderewski"¹⁹.

¹⁵ *The Moffat Papers. Selections from the Diplomatic Journals of Jay Pierrepont Moffat, 1919–1943*, ed. by Nancy Harvison Hooker with a foreword by Sumner Welles, Cambridge 1956, pp. 1–2. Jay Pierrepont Moffat was son of well-known lawyer, educated at Groton and Harvard. In 1917 he worked as a private secretary of John W. Garrett, the American Minister at Hague. Next year he took examinations and after the short training in the Department, he was assigned to Warsaw, where he arrived on November 6, 1919. Poland was his first assignment as Foreign Service Officer (FSO) where he spent quite interesting and busy time till March 1921, also important and fruitful for his further blooming career.

¹⁶ There were also Reggie Foster (since September 1920) and Hermann U. Sartorius (arrived on June 23, 1920) and latter came a few more.

¹⁷ J. Cisek, op. cit., p. 29. Farman was married to a Polish aristocrat, Anna Bohomolec. He served in Poland since spring of 1919 to June 1923.

¹⁸ R. D. Schulzinger, *The Making of the Diplomatic Mind. The Training, Outlook, and Style of United States Foreign Service, 1908–1931*, Middletown 1975, pp. 62–63.

¹⁹ *The Moffat Papers...*, pp. 11–12.

Soon Moffat acknowledged Gibson's professionalism and understanding of European policymaking. He appreciated also his fluency in French and various personal connections with American and European officials. Years later, Moffat wrote, "I was lucky in drawing Hugh Gibson as my first chief. He knew Europe as did few Americans; he was on terms of intimacy with the key men in a dozen Foreign Offices; his use of French was not only fluent, but so accurate that he could convey shaded meanings"²⁰.

Since the beginning of his service Gibson was engaged in many Polish matters dealing mostly with the internal problems of the newly rebuilt country heavily destroyed by wars, politically unstable, with unsettled borders, and various ethnic and minority problems etc. The stories about the pogroms and slaughter of Jews circulated in 1919 with constant denials from Polish officials. Gibson's reports to the State Department were full of detailed information about the problem. 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"²¹. His similar public comments had raised infrequent criticisms and attacks on him from Jewish leaders, particularly presented in American newspapers. Louis Marshall, a prominent lawyer, attacked him in *New York Times* on June 12, 1919. For couple of weeks Gibson – on order of Department – had to search and explain the conflict. He became very busy and preoccupied with the whole subject, talking to Polish and Jewish leaders. He traveled to Paris to consult with American officials on such a boiling and timely problem²².

The U.S. government and diplomats, influenced by the Jewish-American leaders and public opinion, were quite concerned about the situation of the Jewish population in Poland. In June 1919, Joseph C. Grew noticed in his "Diary" about the Polish-Jewish tensions and arousing problems. He wrote, "On the 24th Hugh Gibson and Reggie Foster turned up from Warsaw and I spent most of the day going over the Jewish situation in Poland with Hugh and particularly Louis Marshall's attack on him in the 'New York Times'; also discussed the proposed commission of investigation into the alleged Jewish pogroms, the chairmanship of which I am trying to persuade Henry Morgenthau to accept"²³.

In response to the immense agitation in the U.S. over mistreatment of Jews in Poland, the Polish Prime Minister Ignacy Paderewski asked President Wilson to

²⁰ *The Moffat Papers...*, pp. 10–11.

²¹ Cited after *Herbert Hoover and Poland. A Documentary History of a Friendship*, compiled and with an introduction by George J. Lerski, Palo Alto 1977, pp. 15–16; HPL, HGP, Box 2, f. Diaries and Notes, June-July 1919.

²² B. Winid, *W cieniu Kapitolu. Dyplomacja polska wobec Stanów Zjednoczonych Ameryki, 1919–1939*, Warszawa 1991, pp. 39–40; R. D. Schulzinger, op. cit., p. 62.

²³ J. C. Grew, *Turbulent Era. A Diplomatic Record of Forty Years, 1904–1945*, ed. by Walter Johnson, v. I, New York 1952, p. 390.

appoint a commission to investigate the problem. On July 10, 1919 such a group of dozen people headed by Henry Morgenthau and General Edgar Jadwin was sent to Poland to investigate and report on the controversies²⁴.

The reports of Morgenthau and his final description were rather traumatic, yet he also tried to be unprejudiced and fair on this matter showing not only the violence against Jews but also the general disorder, tensions, and frictions between different groups of citizens in the newly restored country. He remarked about quite difficult living conditions of Poles themselves, limits of food, fuel, trained officials etc., which seriously influenced the general mood and therefore the hostilities between people in various places. The controversies over Jewish-Polish relations preoccupied Gibson very much indeed for several more months. He thus tried to fulfill his diplomatic duties and solve the existing controversies in the best possible way²⁵. He established regular contacts with Polish officials and became a well-informed on many aspects of the condition and political situation in Poland. American envoy, closely associated with Ignacy Paderewski, showed on many occasions understanding of his and Poles' dilemmas and controversies.

Since the beginning of his duties in Poland Gibson became involved in the preparation of Herbert C. Hoover's visit to Poland during his summer journey in Central Europe in 1919. It was a sort of semi-official visit ("instead" of President Wilson, as it was commented in media) to recognize the condition of the country and identify its needs. In Poland Hoover stayed for a few days (August 12–17, 1919), visiting Warsaw, Lvov and Cracow and talking to the Polish officials²⁶. Gibson attended many of these meetings and talks, focusing mostly on Polish economic needs and getting more of American aid, mostly distributed by ARA. The American visitor talked with Poles about the programs for the economic and financial reconstruction of the country and the prospects for the future assistance of the United States²⁷. Gibson carefully observed Hoover's visit and reported constantly to Washington about the growing needs of the country of his assignment and expectations of Poles for the closer cooperation. He played quite an active role in shaping some American decisions on several Polish issues.

Gibson, above all thanks to Paderewski, established quickly and easily quite close and friendly relations with Polish politicians and influential figures. Stanisław Patek, Minister of Foreign Affairs, frequently dined at the legation, openly

²⁴ HPL, HGP, Box 3, f. Diaries and Notes, July 1919.

²⁵ For more see, A. Kwapiszewski, *Hugh Gibson and a Controversy over Polish-Jewish Relations after World War I*, Kraków, 1991; R. D. Schulzinger, op. cit., p. 6; *Herbert Hoover and Poland...*, p. 15.

²⁶ H. Hoover, *The Memoirs*, v. I, *Years of Adventure 1874–1920*, New York 1951, pp. 355–362.

²⁷ H. Parafianowicz, *Zapomniany prezydent. Biografia polityczna Herberta Clarka Hoovera*, Białystok 1993, pp. 58–59.

and sincerely discussed various important matters of Polish-American relations, mostly commercial and financial, and the situation at Central Europe. Also his successor, Minister Austachy Sapięha, declared benevolent cooperation and friendship towards America. In reports to Washington Gibson tried to present the full picture of the Polish matters. It is another question if such detailed information was understandable and/or needed for the officials in the Department of State.

Gibson worried about the possible resignation of Prime Minister Paderewski, whom he visited and with whom he talked quite a lot on internal Polish problems, various political frictions, and growing danger of governmental crisis. His sympathies were strongly with Paderewski with whom he had quite close and friendly relations. The great pianist had been fascinated by America, American values, and its democratic system and introduced various American experts to work with the Polish matters²⁸. Paderewski's American connections and Americanization of the country were under criticism of some Polish politicians from the governmental circles. Finally he gave up the office and signed resignation on December 9, 1919 and soon after left Poland²⁹. Gibson missed a truly good friend, whom admired and defended and who was also very supportive toward him. Paderewski's absence in the Polish government also affected in some way the envoy's approach towards Polish officials and Polish-American relations, which would never be again so close.

It is worth noticing that Poles expected to have American sympathy and understanding of geopolitical location of Poland, as well as its political role in the region. Since the beginning of its existence, the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs "anticipated that the American republic would take an important part in European political affairs and would exert her influence on behalf of republican Poland and against Germany and Bolshevik Russia"³⁰. On many occasions Poles declared a country's special role as a "bulwark against Russia and Germany," as well as "a most profitable investment ground for British, American and French capital"³¹.

Polish officials endorsed the establishment in Warsaw of a sort of information center about the region, its economic and political conditions. Such a center became more needed, although the realization of the concept became quite challenging, because of many obstacles. Warsaw was also competing for such a role

²⁸ For more on American involvement in Poland see, W. R. Grove, *War's Aftermath*, New York 1940; H. H. Fisher and S. Brooks, *America and the New Poland*, New York 1928.

²⁹ B. Winid, op. cit., p. 48.

³⁰ Quoted after, N. Pease, *Poland, the United States, and the Stabilization of Europe, 1919-1933*, New York 1986, p. 5.

³¹ HPL, Pre-Commerce Papers, Box 9, f. Vernon Kellogg, 1918-1919. Correspondence.

in the region particularly with Prague (as a Slavic center, sometimes linked with the previous Panslavism) and to less extent to Vienna or Budapest³².

After the dissolution of Habsburg Empire and the decline of the role of Vienna and Budapest, Czechoslovakia intended to play a significant position at the region. The director of War Trade Intelligence E.M. Rodman wrote to Richard Crane on April 19, 1919 about the importance of Prague as the “outpost” and “the most important protecting barrier for Western civilization The Czechs will have to play a very important part in rolling back the tide of Bolshevism which threatens everyone of us”³³.

Interestingly enough, as Gibson sympathized with Polish issues, so did Crane with Czechoslovak. They saw quite similarly a very special place of both countries as base for the reconstruction and consolidation of Central Europe, a barrier against Bolshevism, and a bridge between the East and West, etc.³⁴

The dissemination of appropriate and suitable information about Poland and its internal as well as foreign policy was especially needed, also because foreigners, including Americans did not obtain complete, current, or well-founded information about the new country. From the Polish perspective it became even more timely and important in years to come because of the anti-Polish propaganda, mostly German, about the “seasonal state,” “dangerous spot” and “trouble maker” in Europe etc. Many American correspondents from European capitols were strongly influenced by such opinions of German journalists. They published in American press quite often comments and articles on Polish temporary and unstable borders, the wars with neighbors, and the “French-oriented militaristic clique” ruled the country, etc. Some of the internal problems (e.g. the situation of the Jewish community, ethnic problems) had been given permanent international publicity, also in American media³⁵. Such a constant object of harsh criticism and propaganda of enemies and haters and negative image of country became quite dangerous for Poland struggling indeed with many difficulties and obstacles.

Polish officials, especially immediately after the World War I, devoted a lot of attention to get support and attract Americans and its capital. But it did not work well. Moreover, the tensions between Polish and Jewish communities and accusations of discrimination against American business impacted on the quietly recall of Gibson for four months from Warsaw³⁶.

³² For more see, H. Parafianowicz, *Czechosłowacja...*, pp. 87–93, 103, 126–129.

³³ Lauinger Library (LL), Washington, D.C., Richard Crane Papers (LCP), Box 6, f. 15. Letters of congratulations, 1919.

³⁴ LL, RCP, Box 18, f. Departure from Prague.

³⁵ IPMS, A59. Jan Ciechanowski occasionally wrote about it in his reports.

³⁶ N. Pease, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

Early in April 1920 Gibson was called back to Washington and stayed there till August. Publicly it was announced that the reason of the recall was his health condition. But some speculated that he came back home to support Herbert C. Hoover in his political career. Some Poles expected that he would get diplomatic support of Americans and the financial aid of Polonia for the war with Bolsheviks.

In the end of April 1920 Gibson had a few meetings with Hoover and some Polonia's leaders. He talked to them about the situation and war with Soviet Russia and the loan to Poland. In months to come, thanks to reports from Warsaw, mainly from Moffat and White, Gibson was informed on the changing situation at the front and the tremendous danger for Poles and independence of their country. He had also been in contact with the Department of State searching for better understanding of its officials of the actual position of Poland. On July 14 he noticed: "Poland is keeping me about as busy as though I were in Warsaw"³⁷.

During these traumatic times, especially in July-August, 1920, the U.S. Legation in Warsaw reported fully the developments of the moving front-line and the condition of Polish society. Moffat was in constant contact with Gibson, sending him regularly reports and letters from Poland in which he informed about the nervous meetings and talks to Polish officials desperately looking for the substantial support of its allies in so dangerous and devastating war with the Bolsheviks³⁸. Gibson, cautiously observing the conflict from Washington, occasionally commented the Polish-Soviet war in American media.

The military attaché Colonel Farman, who established immediate and useful connections with the Polish military staff, reported also regularly to Washington about the changing situation at the front-line and the real danger of Bolsheviks moving toward West. As Moffat recollected, "We had instructions from Washington not to risk capture by the Bolsheviks for fear we might be held as hostages. On the other hand, our mere presence in Warsaw after the others had left, was an encouragement to the Poles, and we felt that American prestige would be enhanced by our remaining until the very last moment"³⁹. And they did so, hoping for the truly expected Polish victory.

On July 31, 1920 Prime Minister Wincenty Witos sent a cable to President Wilson expressing

the Polish Government's deep and sincere gratitude for America's generous help and continuous sympathy extended to this country. Poland, for her part, not only has American welfare and American interest strongly at heart, but the entire Polish

³⁷ HPL, HGP, Box 3, f. Diaries and Notes, April-July 1920; J. Cisek, op. cit., p. 203.

³⁸ HPL, HGP, Box 54, f. Jay Pierrepont Moffat, 1919-1920.

³⁹ *The Moffat Papers...*, p. 38.

people consider Polish American friendship to be one of the greatest assets in the future prosperity of both countries. Let me add, Mr. President, that you having been the most staunch promoter and defensor of Polish Independence are at this hour of country's greatest need nearer and dearer than ever to every Polish heart⁴⁰.

In August 1920 Gibson started his journey from the U.S. to Poland. He had stayed a couple of days at Paris where met twice Paderewski (according to his notes on August 15 and 23) and heard the good news about the Polish victory over the Bolsheviks. Then he immediately decided to go to Warsaw, where he came on September 1, 1920⁴¹.

The American envoy was not present during the most perilous time during the Polish-Soviet war and the crucial battle of Warsaw, the so-called the miracle on Vistula. This was truly ominous time for the re-born country, as well as for all of Europe because of the real danger of Bolshevism spreading West. Lord Edgar Vincent D'Abernon, a member of Inter-Allied Mission to Poland in July 1920, recognized the battle of Warsaw as one of the most important battles in the history of world⁴².

Gibson, after coming back to Warsaw, became entangled in urgent talks with Poles on the prospects of closer cooperation and American more substantial aid. William R. Castle, the assistant chief of Division of Western Europe, with whom he had been in close and frequent contact, visited him briefly in Warsaw. On September 4, 1920 Gibson commented on the visit, "It has been a comfort to have him here, and more especially, to have him go home with some real ideas as to the situation here so that he can help keep the Department on a straight course"⁴³.

The American legation in Warsaw, particularly in these dreadful years of 1919–1920, did not have enough personnel, and Gibson complained and constantly requested more professionals to strengthen the staff and activate the expanding role of the post. Soon after the agreement in Riga, ending the Polish-Soviet war, in June 1921 Castle informed him about the appointment of Commander Hugo William Koehler as the navy attaché in Warsaw and observer of Baltic States.⁴⁴ He wrote about the expecting prospects of his assignments and future goals connected with Russia. He noticed, "There is also a large field

⁴⁰ J. Cisek, op. cit., p. 228.

⁴¹ HPL, HGP, Box 3, f. Diaries and Notes, July-August 1920.

⁴² *The Eighteenth Decisive Battle of the World: Warsaw, 1920*, London 1931.

⁴³ HPL, HGP, Box 3, f. Diaries and Notes, June-October 1920. He also noticed, *I am trying to maintain a steady flow of people through here and back to the Department and to other missions. Reggie Foster is coming next week and very soon I expect either Fred Sterling or Leland Harrison.*

⁴⁴ There is interesting book on Koehler's naval career and activities: P. J. Capelotti, *Our Man in the Crimea: Hugo Koehler (Studies in Maritime History)*, Columbia, S.C. 1991.

for gathering information right here in Warsaw, where all Russian factions are represented”⁴⁵.

Gibson had played very active and important role in the bilateral relations between Poland and United States, as well as in the reconstruction of the region, especially in the early 1920s. His reports on Polish and Central European situation were considered at the Department of State as informative, professional and very useful in terms of needed information there. In Warsaw, thanks to his abilities and personal connections, Gibson with colleagues from several U.S. diplomatic posts soon established a sort of network in Central Europe, exchanging among them information and opinions on the region. He exchanged his views on various political problems of the region with Richard Crane, particularly on the Czechoslovak-Polish relations and the place of both countries in Central European policy. They wrote to each other quite often, presenting their own perspectives on internal situations of both countries, conflict over Cieszyn Silesia (Śląsk Cieszyński), approach to Germany and Russia etc.⁴⁶ They established quite friendly and cordial relations, which were shown by the remarks and tone of their correspondence. Later Gibson was not so close to his successor in Prague, Lewis Einstein.

Gibson also participated in the conferences organized in one of the capitals in Central Europe. In October 1922 in Berlin such meeting was hosted by Ambassador to Germany, Alanson B. Houghton. The main goal was to discuss the situation of the region. U.S. envoys from Poland (Gibson), Austria (Albert Washburn), Hungary (Theodore Brentano), and Switzerland (Joseph C. Grew) were present. William R. Castle, the new chief of Division of Western Europe came also to Berlin to get a full and detached information about the economic and financial situation of the region. Minister Grew wrote that, “It was intensely interesting and gave us a fairly comprehensive picture of Central European affairs”⁴⁷. Such conferences of American diplomats and consuls were occasionally organized later and were considered by them as a beneficial and fruitful for their service. All participants had an opportunity to get a first hand of serviceable information from their colleagues, and exchange their views on the contemporary situation at the region. They also may get (and usually got) some direct instructions from the Department of State on the current guidance and directions of the U.S. policy towards particular countries and the entire region.

Gibson became quite popular diplomat in Warsaw and influential figure, closely connected to well-informed officials there. Moffat acknowledged that the U.S. Minister was pretty much involved in the life of Polish society and

⁴⁵ HPL, William R. Castle Papers, Box 11, f. Countries. Correspondence, Poland.

⁴⁶ HI, HGP, Box 19, f. Richard Crane.

⁴⁷ J. C. Grew, *The Turbulent Era...*, v. I, p. 471.

improvement of bilateral relations. Latter he remarked: "Many times 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"⁴⁸.

Professional diplomat, quite friendly yet not uncritical, Gibson was sending reports to Washington informing regularly about the political and financial situation in Poland, its border problems with neighbors and perspectives for the further, mostly commercial, cooperation with the U.S. He argued with over estimated misinformation in American media about "Polish militarism, anti-Semitism and expansionism." In his enormous correspondence to the officials at the Department and particularly to Castle, Gibson reported very often and exchanged views on the current situation in Poland and Central Europe. He became – according to Castle – "the great expert on Poland" for him and colleagues in the Department of State⁴⁹. It is another question to what extent Gibson was successful (rather not) in the development of American trade and investment in Poland or in changing the opinions about the region of Castle (who was rather perceived as pro-German) and his colleagues at the Department of State⁵⁰.

Gibson's diplomatic position in Poland was positively evaluated by officials in Washington, although in the correspondence of his colleagues we might find some sarcastic comments about his close and friendly relations with Poles who named him "Dear Pan Gibson"⁵¹. Sometimes he was criticized by officials at the Department of being pro-Polish or "Polonized," although there is no reason for such opinions. It shows rather some tendency because diplomats at the certain posts sometimes were more sympathetic to the country of their assignments (Crane for Prague, Gibson for Warsaw). Gibson, especially at the beginning his service in Warsaw observed with sympathy and understanding of various Polish matters.

But in 1922–1923 Gibson became increasingly more critical about Polish matters and personally more disappointed because of unsuccessful attempts to establish closer, mostly financial and commercial relations with U.S. In regular reports to Washington he showed more criticism, and added more often some bitter remarks and reflections on Polish internal policy. After the recognition of

⁴⁸ *The Moffat Papers...*, pp. 10–11. Moffat in his reports named him sometimes "Pan Gibson", what was kind, familiar and sympathetic.

⁴⁹ HI, HGP, Box 17, f. William R. Castle, 1920.

⁵⁰ HPL, HGP, Box 56, f. William Phillips, 1915–1929. On December 11, 1922 William Phillips informed Gibson that in October of 1922 was established, on the base of the Russian Division, a new unit – Division of Eastern Europe, where Poland was transferred. He noticed: "From the point of view of departmental administration, the change was necessary."

⁵¹ HI, HGP, Box 17. f. William R. Castle, 1920–1921; Box 19, f. Archibald Cary Coolidge, 1921–1928.

the Polish borders in March 1923 by the Council of Ambassadors he reported that political situation at the whole region is pretty stable. He used it also as an argument (or excuse) that his mission in Warsaw is completed. In months to come he became more involved in discussions on the reform of U.S. consular and diplomatic service, looking hopefully for a more interesting and prestigious diplomatic post.

Archibald C. Coolidge in a letter to Gibson on March 24, 1924 wrote, "Indeed you were just the person who should have been sent to Poland when you were and, as you know, I much rejoiced that. 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"⁵².

In the end of April 1924 President Stanisław Wojciechowski and the members of Polish government organized a special lunch in honor of Gibson and recognition of his service and achievements in Poland. He was quite pleased by honors and dedications presented to him by grateful Poles for his service "in Poland and for Poland." In a letter to Castle he mentioned that "the Polish Army desired to offer me some recognition of what I had done to help them clean up all their enemies, and handed me the enclosed little box and documents certifying that I am a valiant citizen"⁵³. Poles were truly grateful for America and Americans for their friendly approach towards Poland and understanding of its needs and substantial help in distressing time. In the 1920s the names of President Woodrow Wilson, Herbert C. Hoover, and Hugh S. Gibson were willingly and emotionally connected with the United States and friendship between both countries⁵⁴.

Gibson, together with some close companions, such as Joseph C. Grew, William R. Castle, Hugh R. Wilson, had been a strong supporter of professionalism of U.S. Foreign Service based on merit rather than the spoils system. During his years in Warsaw he had corresponded with other members of the diplomatic branch on the plan of reform and the Rogers Act⁵⁵. He contributed a lot in recruiting new members to the diplomatic duties and the improvement

⁵² HI, HGP, Box 19, f. Coolidge Archibald Cary, 1921–1928

⁵³ HPL, William R. Castle Papers, Box 11, f. Countries Correspondence, Poland. Gibson's letter to Castle on April 30, 1924. He added a brief remark, "This is so comic."

⁵⁴ For more see, H. Parafianowicz, *The Legend of Herbert C. Hoover in Poland in the Period Between the Two World Wars*, (in:) *In the European Grain. American Studies From Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. by Orm Øverland, Amsterdam 1990, pp. 159–168; H. Parafianowicz, *Restoration of Poland and Czechoslovakia in Woodrow Wilson's Policy: The Myth and the Reality*, (in:) *From Theodore Roosevelt to FDR: Internationalism and Isolationism in American Foreign Policy*, ed. by Daniela Rossini, Staffordshire 1995, pp. 55–67.

⁵⁵ R. D. Schulzinger (op. cit., p. 62) wrote that Gibson became very active and devoted to the reform of American Foreign Service, also because of "dreadful working conditions of the first years of his Warsaw ministry".

of the U.S. Foreign Service. In the mid-1920s Gibson became an accomplished, highly evaluated and recognized diplomat⁵⁶.

Hugh Gibson, after five years in Poland was ready for changes and the new diplomatic assignment. On May 3, 1924 he was recalled and was optimistically looking for his post in Switzerland⁵⁷. His successor, Alfred Pearson arrived to Warsaw in June 1924.

The first U.S. Minister to Poland, Hugh S. Gibson, a career diplomat, perfectly qualified and prepared for the service was personally receptive to the Polish affairs, especially at the beginning of his assignment. He was sending regularly reports to Washington informing about the political and financial situation in Poland, its border problems with neighbors, perspectives for the stabilization and reconstruction of the region etc. He became quite close with some Polish officials (above all with Ignacy Paderewski) and showed many times understanding of Poles' dilemmas and controversies. His service was recognized by Poles who appreciated American help and friendship in extremely difficult and testing time for the independence of their country.

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"⁵⁸. And he did skillful and fruitful job there for the United States, as well as for Poland and Central Europe.

Hugh S. Gibson i jego praca na placówce dyplomatycznej w Warszawie po I wojnie światowej

Hugh S. Gibson był pierwszym przedstawicielem dyplomatycznym Stanów Zjednoczonych w Polsce po I wojnie światowej. Jako poseł kierował amerykańską placówką dyplomatyczną w Warszawie w latach 1919–1924. Był profesjonalistą, dobrze zorientowanym – o czym świadczą jego raporty dyplomatyczne – w realiach polityczno-gospodarczych II RP oraz Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej. Nawiązał i rozbudował kontakty z polskimi elitami rządowymi,

⁵⁶ Gibson's pictures were on a cover page of the "Time" three times (November 26, 1923, July 18, 1927, February 8, 1932).

⁵⁷ J. E. Findling, *Dictionary of American Diplomatic History*, Westport, 1980, p. 191. In Geneva Gibson served as U.S. Minister in 1924–1927 and later was assigned as Ambassador to Belgium and Minister to Luxembourg. Franklin Delano Roosevelt sent him to Brazil in 1933.

⁵⁸ G. E. Swerczek, *The Diplomatic Career of Hugh Gibson, 1908–1938* (Ph.D., unpublished, University of Iowa, 1972), pp. 113–114.

zwłaszcza z Ignacym Paderewskim. Odegrał ważną rolę w tworzeniu zespołu poselstwa i rozwoju stosunków polsko-amerykańskich w szczególnie trudnym okresie powojennym. Amerykański dyplomata wykazywał sporo zrozumienia i życzliwości wobec Polski, choć z czasem rozczarował się i zdystansował wobec wielu spraw kraju swego urzędowania.