

**REFLECTING UPON THE HISTORY OF BUKOVINA  
IN TERMS OF DIPLOMATIC SOURCES**

In addition to their multiple tasks, the consulates and embassies have the mission to inform national authorities on the processes that mark the evolution of internal and foreign policy of the state of residence. To a researcher, the reports, notes, evaluations and other documents drawn up by the staff of the diplomatic institutions are valuable sources, on one hand, regarding the respective state. On the other hand, those documents reflect the way diplomatic services or the signatories saw matters, bring to light the intuition, insight, and objectivity of the authors' memoirs, or clichés and the preconceived approaches that sometimes defiled reality.

During the inter-war years Chernivtsi used to be a city of many diplomatic institutions of some states that considered the region politically, economically, culturally or geopolitically important: Poland, Great Britain, Austria, Germany, Czechoslovakia, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland and France. A series of reports, notes, and correspondence that belong to a few consular institutions of Bukovina were included in the volume of documents, entitled *Bukovina: National Movements and Sociopolitical Processes in the Years 1918-1944. The Diplomats Perspective (Documents)*<sup>1</sup>, published with the financial support of the Government of the Federal Province of Carinthia (Austria). The two coordinators - Volodymyr Zapolovskyi and Serhii Osachuk - were, at the time of publication, researchers at the Bukovinian Research Centre of the National University, known in Ukrainian and German historiography for their lead volumes about the past of Bukovina during the Austrian period and the military events recorded in the province territory during the First World War.

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<sup>1</sup> В. М. Заполовський, С. Д. Осачук (упор.), *Буковина: національні рухи та соціально-політичні процеси 1918-1944 рр. Погляд дипломатів (Документи)* [Bukovina: National Movements and Sociopolitical Processes in the Years 1918-1944. The Diplomats Perspective (Documents)], Чернівці, Зелена Буковина, 2007, 228 с.

The sources gathered in those more than 200 pages of the collection had been obtained from different people (researchers, ambassadors, academics, archivists), a rather vulnerable method, in terms of extensiveness, of data collection from documents dated between the wars by the representatives of the Bukovina Consular offices. A systematic review of the diplomatic archives in Germany, Austria, Czech Republic, France etc. will definitely reveal an impressive number of new sources which will obviously contribute to a better understanding of the province history and consular officials' perceptions on the issues analyzed.

The above-mentioned volume of documents has been structured into five chapters which are unequal lengthwise due to the number of documents that the editors managed to acquire, *Introduction* and *Geographic Index*. The book contains a few past and contemporary photographs of persons and buildings, reproductions of documents from the Polish, Czech and Swiss Consulates in Chernivtsi. Each chapter, containing data that belongs to a diplomatic institution, organizes documents chronologically. They have been translated into Ukrainian (there are no documents reproduced in the original language) and the volume coordinators entered footnotes containing brief comments or notes.

The first chapter of the volume contains two reports prepared by the representatives of the Austrian Embassy in Bucharest, the first one in 1923, and the other one in 1930. The first one informs Vienna that the foreign ministers of Romania and of the USSR reached an "understanding" which provides that, in exchange for Bucharest giving up the National Bank treasure, which was used by the Bolsheviks in the Soviet interest and, therefore, could not be recovered, the USSR renounces its claims over Bessarabia. The author expresses his doubts to the fact that such renunciation of Romania would be, in the long term, sufficient to defend its eastern border. The second report addressed to the Federal Chancellor, addresses as well the Bessarabian matter. The Austrian diplomat presents the positions of the government and of the opposition in the matters of the province between Prut and Dniester, emphasizing the deficiencies of the Romanian administration and identifying solutions to remedy the situation, but which he classifies as unfeasible with reference to the political class and the Romanian economic reality. He also discusses the Soviet factor and assesses the chances of a war between the USSR and Romania, presenting the views of the governing power and of the

opposition on this issue, and analyses the strengthening measures of the Romanian military capacity, as well as the Bucharest government demarches delivered to the cabinets in Paris and London, as well as the Warsaw negotiations on increasing the resistance potential against Moscow's expanding influence and military capabilities in the Black Sea.

The second chapter, the largest, brings together documents issued by the Polish General Consulate in Chernivtsi. The first document, representing the Declaration of the Polish National Council in Bukovina (P.N.C.B.), made public at the General Council of Bukovina on November 28, 1918, was taken from the Romanian National Archives<sup>2</sup> and reproduced in full. The original was issued in Polish (the volume published its translation into Ukrainian), containing the signatures of 12 members of the (P.N.C.B.) and on the back of the page the notary authentication of the signatures and qualities of each signatory. It also mentions: "Number of participants: 12 252", a number representing, probably, the total members of the P.N.C.B. in November 1918 or at the date of the last court of law registration. In the first part of the declaration, emphasizing that "the owner from time immemorial" of "the lands south of Dniester" was the Romanian people, the signatories stated: "We, the nowadays Poles living in Bukovina, based on secular grounds, deserve to be in this region by the right of the shed blood and bones of the Polish knights, scattered throughout this territory, alongside the recent graves of the heroic legions from the bloody days of this war". Welcoming "the holy day of resurrection of the united Romanian state" the Bukovinian Poles acknowledged "the ancient right of the Romanian people over the entire land south of Dniester, in general, and of Bukovina, in particular". However, the signatories accentuated the conditions expected to be put into practice by the Romanian administration: "The Bukovinian Poles, presenting the proof of their national vitality, grounded in the particular proposals of the present Bukovinian Government, unwaveringly trust that our friend the Romanian people will allow, within the Romanian state, the liberty of preservation of the Catholic faith, [use of] Polish language in churches and schools, free settlement, [exercise] professions and participations, sanctioned according to the law, to the ruling of the new province. "

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<sup>2</sup> Central Historical Archives Department, *Presidency of the Council of Ministers* Fund, d. 17/1918, f. 27-28.

Many of the documents selected for publication in the volume, which were produced or intended for the Chernivtsi Polish Consulate, represent annual institutional reports (1922, 1928), instructions on coordinating the activity of the Polish representatives in Romania, syntheses about the situation in Bukovina, the communist movement, the matter of national minorities (with emphasis on the Ukrainian and German minorities), reflect the issue of conferences/ meetings of the Polish consuls in Romania, commercial trades, evaluate the establishment, mission and work of the Polish Inspectorate/ Committee for Physical Education in Romania. An important issue for the consular institution was the relationship with the Polish ethnic group in Bukovina, the subject being addressed by the reports on Polish Gymnastic Society "Sokół", Polish Scouts "Harcerstwo", Polish Academic Society "Lechia" as well as the Poland's Friends Society run, for that matter, by the Romanian academic Grigore Nandriș, known Slavicist and Polish speaker.

The third chapter presents 17 documents related to the Czechoslovakia Consulate in Chernivtsi. A first report briefly summarizes the activity of the Consulate from June to September 1921, and it reveals that on November 6, 1921 the capital of Bukovina used to have functioning Consulates of Great Britain, Austria, Poland and Czechoslovakia.

The memorandum addressed to the Foreign Ministry in Prague, signed on 15 March 1924 by the Chernivtsian Jan Koutny revealed that the Czechoslovak minority had got organized since 1920 in an apolitical association entitled the "Masaryk Circle", which initially enjoyed the support of the Czechoslovak consuls, an attitude that changed with the appointment of the vice-consul Borovec. Some documents refer to the way Czechoslovakia was represented in the local press, the position of various Bukovina periodicals towards this state, the Consulate involvement in promoting a positive image and in reducing the number of articles criticizing the country it represented.

One of the major issues was related to the transformation of the institution into an Honorary Consulate and the appointment of a suitable person among the Bukovinians to fill this position. Along with the closure of the Consulate in Chernivtsi (1932) the problems of Bukovina became a matter of the Czechoslovakia Consulate in Galati. The Honorary Consul Robert German was concerned about granting the name of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, Czechoslovakia's president (1918-1935), to a street in Chernivtsi, and the situation of the Polish and Czechoslovakian community. The authors of the

collection also published the Slovaks statement of Poiana Micului, Campulung County, addressed to the Minister of Religion and Arts in Bucharest, which presented the way Polish officials, were being treated in the county and in Chernivtsi. There are also two letters of the honorary consul Robert German to Professor Rudolf Kovalik, which include information as to the relation that must be followed by the Slovaks in dealings with the Polish community and the Romanian authorities.

Three documents presented in the fourth chapter of this volume are written by Nicolas Künzle, Swiss consular agent, and dated 1941, 1943, and, respectively, 1944. The first one is the memoir written by Nicolas Künzle on January 20, 1941, and contains his reports on the experience in the Soviet Chernivtsi, from 28 June to 18 December 1940. The author describes in detail the atmosphere set up by the Soviet regime, the local's fear of the communist authorities, the repressions against intellectuals and the bourgeoisie, the economic, social and cultural situation in the first months of Bolshevik "heaven". The other two letters, dated 1943 and 1944, reflect the consular agent's fear of living again under the communist regime. He reports on the Bukovinians refuge and the evacuation preparations from the capital of Bukovina, asking his superiors to send him the recall notification in time.

The last chapter brings together six documents made under the French Consular Agency in Chernivtsi. Two letters express the need to establish a consular agency in Chernivtsi, to find a suitable person for the position of consular representative, as well as a building for the future institution which, the (unknown) author of the letter says, should not be second to those of the Austrian, Polish and British consulates. The next document, from 1922, refers to difficulties in the development of some trade relations between France and Bukovina, and two others contain the French ambassador's request, dated at the beginning of 1939, asking to receive detailed monthly reports on the situation in Bukovina, including data on the activity of national minorities, as well as the thank you letter of the French ambassador addressed to the consular agent for his brilliantly well-organized transit of the French citizens, refugees from the Nazi- and Soviet-occupied Poland in September 1939. The last document is a letter sent from Bucharest to Paris, dated October 5, 1940, which contains the Romanian authorities' proposal to (re)establish the French Consular Agency in Suceava – the "new capital of Bukovina", to replace the closed one in Chernivtsi.

Summarizing the information contained in this volume, we must note that the scientific value of the documents is undeniable, as they bring to light many aspects and unpublished data. Although this selection of primary sources was not based on strictly scientific criteria, the original documents before translation were not published, and the number of documents related to consular institutions in Chernivtsi is quite small and cannot, therefore, accurately reflect the multivalent work of the consular staff and cannot reproduce the complex picture of the evolution of the Bukovinian society in the interwar time period, the editing of the volume coordinated by Volodymyr Zapolovskyi and Serhii Osachuk represents an important contribution to a better understanding of the history of the province and offers researchers new sources to support the decrypting process of the Bukovinian phenomenon.

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