



István Burián and the Settling of the Polish Issue during the First World War

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In the second war year, at the end of 1915 the whole Polish Monarchy, more commonly known as Russian Poland, the Russian public administration in the region called Vis-tula Government, was entirely occupied by the Central Powers. On 5th of August, 1915 the German troops marched in Warsaw. At that time the Polish Monarchy had been the part of the Russian Empire for 110 years since the last partition of Poland which happened in 1795. The war victories — mainly won by the Germans — created new situation for the Polish society which lived in that area, but also meant difficult and in many respects, unsolvable tasks for the victorious powers. They had something to do with the land they occupied and also with the inhabitants that lived there. The Polish had bloody and tragic fights against their oppressors in 1831 and 1863 and they lost both, but they never gave up the hope of the reunion of the country. The Hungarian historian, László Tapolcai when analysing the characteristics of a totally different and far in the future status, suggests that *“If each of the forces of a country ‘overproduces’ itself, it can occur that the different groups secede from the community and look for a new homeland and after they have won the favour of the local forces can create a new country, although it is very much similar to their previous one, it will also grow with the characteristics of the given new place. This ‘overproduction’ lead to the migration of the Hungarians from Scythia and to the Hungarian Conquest and also this overpower made the particular Slavic nations to leave Pannonia which they had considered their homeland until that for a long time.”*¹

With the sentences above the author refers to the circumstances of the 8th and 9th century which were the age of the Vislans, Lędzians, Polans, when the Polish nation existed only at the state of the tribes. But the apart migration didn’t occur in the centuries of the early middle ages but just the opposite happened: Polish Kingdom came into being. Well, the situation hasn’t changed during the centuries. The ill-famed “anarchy” of the 17th–18th century which “upheld”² the great Polish-Lithuanian Empire lead to an “apart migration” indeed, but it wasn’t owed to the Polish but to the Great

1 L. TAPOLCAI, *Historical and Mythical Start of Poland: Changing of Space*, Budapest 2010, pp. 75–76.

2 É. RING, *“Is Poland Kept up by Anarchy?”: The Anatomy of the Crises of the Aristocratic Republic*, Budapest 2001.

Powers which subdivided it. It lasted until the 19th century, when the nation states came into existence and the mystic theory of the desire for reunion became the main motive power.

The politicians of the First World War inherited this mysticism. This supra-sensibility, the direct relationship with the supernatural powers in the national sentiment realized in the Roman Catholic religion. The Catholicism was more than a religion in the Polish minds. It was the last asylum, the “lair”,³ from which Poland could resurrect. After the August of 1914 the Polish mysticism bumped into wall of Great Powers’ interests. In August 1914, the plans which would have liked to figure out the future of Poland during the four years of the war were ready in different forms. The most well-known, the Austro-polonism very often emerged during the foreign policy crises of the 19th century and in the second part of 1914 it seemed almost the only alternative. The German foreign policy didn’t hinder the realization of the plan which had been considered very natural for a long time: the Russian-Polish territories — after the defeat of Russia — would be possessed by the Monarchy. Russian Poland would join to the Austrian province, and not *vice versa*.

PLANS FOR SETTLING THE POLISH ISSUE IN THE FIRST PART OF THE WAR

When the war began Leopold von Berchtold was the common Minister of Foreign Affairs. In the first weeks, the Germans didn’t give any statements about the specified territories to be conquered as a war goal. However, the front line ran on the Polish terrain only the conquest of the Polish Kingdom was the possible to calculate with. Later it seemed at least that the German Government had no objection against the austro-polonist, let’s say: *“Austro-Polish solution. Still it was irritating for the leaders of the Monarchy the way how the German diplomats — primarily Ambassador Heinrich von Tschirschky⁴ accredited to Vienna — made statements as they were apparently agreed, but in fact weren’t very determined about this question. The military negotiation had implied since 1914 that there was a disagreement between the two allies how they would settle the Polish issue. It was evident that the Monarchy could do nothing significant in connection with the Polish issue without the allied Germany. The representatives of the Austrian diplomacy concerned about signs which referred to the fact that the allied high command acts were contrary to the interest of Austria and Hungary [...]”*⁵

The Austrian-Polish settling would have caused overlarge growth of the land for the benefit of the Monarchy, and geopolitical asymmetry as well, what more the essential element of the plan contained that the occupied Russian-Poland would have joined the Austrian province, Galicia and not *vice versa*. Berchtold claimed to much:

3 About the Polish mysticism, see: W. FELDMAN, *Geschichte der politischen Ideen in Polen seit dessen Teilungen (1795–1914)*, München-Berlin 1917.

4 Tschirschky, Heinrich von Bögendorff (1858–1916), a Saxon origin German diplomat, in 1885–1886. The personal Secretary of Herbert von Bismarck, in 1906 State Secretary of Foreign Affairs, from 1907 until his death Ambassador to Vienna.

5 K. SZOKOLAY, *The Polish Policy of the Austrian-Hungarian Government during the First World War*, Budapest 1967, p. 20.



he charged as early as August the Berlin Ambassador László Szögyény-Marich⁶ to strive to achieve that the Germans would pass over those areas to the Austro-Hungarian public administration which were going to be occupied by the German army.⁷ While he ordered to work out a plan which was about land acquisition on “North-East” — prejudicial to Russia. While it wasn’t allowed to speak about the land acquisition need of the Central Powers in public, the press was strictly held and they were only allowed to write about defensive war. Although almost every chapter of this chunky manuscript was about the topic of “Angliederung”, inclusion.⁸ It marks three “modalities”. The first one when whole Poland is added to the Monarchy — strongly emphasized the form how it is going to be realized should be decided in the future. The second one is the partition of Poland between the two allies, third is the “Pufferstaat”, the plan of the Polish-Lithuanian-Belarusian-Kurland buffer state.⁹

Berchtold regarded important to begin the organization of Poland before Russia sustains a final defeat on the Eastern front. This state soon occurred.¹⁰ The military defensive of the central powers started at the end of 1914 was followed by run of luck from the spring of 1915. On the second of May, the German and the Austrian-Hungarian troops broke through the Russian front line at Gorlice, near Tarnów, and in three stages they reached the Tarnopol-Pinszk-Riga line.¹¹ On the 5th of August the German army marched in Warsaw. This was the beginning when the going through the mill of the Austrian-Hungarian diplomacy about the Polish issue really got started. At the session of the Common Cabinet on the 6th of November 1915, the issue that there was something to be done with the Polish emerged urgently: “*The acquisition of Poland wasn’t a military goal, therefore the deliberation mustn’t put its need of care in the shade, since it is also the aim of the war to secure the Monarchy against the repetition of such offensive of which it is the victim now.*”¹²

The organization of the public administration in the conquered territories made the first significant problem. The science of war had applied for this difficulty the establishment of “stratocracy” for a long time. Since the state of war still existed against Russia, the rear part, that is Poland might have not been put immediately under civil administration. War needs resupply, road network, safety of railway lines,

6 Earl László Szögyény-Marich (1840–1916), an Austrian-Hungarian diplomat, head of the department in the common Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and 1894–1914 the Ambassador to Berlin of the Monarchy.

7 Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, Politisches Archiv [henceforward HHStA P. A.], Wien. Krieg 8 a/k. 25. Berchtold Szögyény-Marichnak, August, 1914.

8 HHStA P. A. Wien. Krieg 8 a/k. 25. Die Frage österreichischen Gebietserwerbes im Nordosten im Falle eines glücklichen Krieges der Zentralmächte gegen Rußland. Wien, Ende August 1914.

9 Ibidem.

10 SZOKOLAY, p. 21.

11 J. GALÁNTAI, *The First World War*, Budapest 1988, pp. 255–256.

12 „Die Erwerbung Polens sei nicht Kriegsziel gewesen, die Sorge um sein Schicksal dürfe daher auch nicht die Erwägung in den Hintergrund drängen, dass der Zweck dieses Krieges vor allem darin gelegen sei, die Monarchie vor einer Wiederholung solcher Angriffe von außen zu sichern, deren sie Opfer gegenwärtig sei.“ M. KOMJÁTHY (Ed.), *Protokolle des Gemeinsamen Ministerrates der Österreichisch-Ungarischen Monarchie (1914–1918)*, Budapest 1966, p. 304.



and not least calmness: the liberated Polish people had to be loyal to the armies on the front line.¹³ The German and the Austro-Hungarian “General Military Governments” (as they were called at that time: “General-Militärgouvernement”) were established. The country was divided into two parts, one of them was the Northern German with Warsaw headquarters, and the other was the Southern Austrian-Hungarian first with Kielce headquarter which later changed and Lublin became the new headquarter.¹⁴

Future Poland meant the real problem, where would be its borders, if it would have an independent Polish foreign policy, Polish army, what could be the form of government and there were lot of other open questions for which the answers were depended on the achievements of the war goals. Necessarily the fighting powers always target for non-but victory, so the answer always could be found in the category of “conquest”. It is true that, for example, the Monarchy openly proclaimed that it had no need for the growth of its territory, but the settling of the Polish issue would just have been the proof of the opposite as the Monarchy would have won 155 thousand square meters as a result of annexation of Poland to Galicia.

Besides the Austrian-Polish solution there were countless others the most important among them was the “Germano-Polonist”¹⁵ and the “Russian-Polish”. The first case had the biggest chance for realization during the war: Germans take over the conquered territories by force and organise satellite state from them. The few number of Polish supporters of the concept assumed that because of the outnumber of Germany it was able to hold three enemy fort during the war.¹⁶ The other is the plan of Roman Dmowski,¹⁷ the representative of the council of Saint Petersburg: stay in Russia — the Russian power is the best guarantee for the Polish national evolution — Germany is the destroyer of Poland. The ideas of Dmowski were originated from the idea of national democracy and protection of the nation. He believed as early as the end of 1914 that while Austrians didn’t care about Polish people’s life, organise legions from them, these people’s life are “protected” by the Russian commanders. Dmowski’s chances didn’t stand too long: when Russia quit the war at the end of 1917 Dmowski passively (“realistically”) hoped that the Entente would establish the Polish Republic.¹⁸

The essence of the things is hiding in the details: all the arrangement plans disgregated for “different shadows” according to the different ways how the realization was going to be done. There were dozens of realization plans circulating. It was al-

13 H. SCHAPP, *Die Entstehung des polnischen Königreiches am 15. November 1916: Einmitteleuropäisches Problem*, Berlin 1940. Ensure of the supply area, restorement the damages caused by the Russians, supply, p. 46.

14 L. GROSFELD, *Polityka państw centralnych wobec sprawy polskiej w latach pierwsze wojny światowej*, Warszawa 1962, p. 27.

15 SCHAPP, pp. 67–68.

16 „Deutschland besitzt ein berechtigtes grosses Kraftgefühl, und dieses Bewusstsein seiner Kräfte wird sich nach einem siegreichen Kampfe an drei Fronten noch erhöhen.“ W. R. GIZBERT-STUDNICKI, *Die Umgestaltung Mittel-Europa’s durch den gegenwärtigen Krieg: Die Polenfrage in ihrer internationalen Bedeutung*, Wien 1918, pp. 20–21.

17 R. Dmowski (1864–1939): Polish politician, publicist, the founder “Endecja”, the Polish Democratic Party. From 1905 participated in the work of Russian Imperial Parliament, Duma. In 1923 minister of foreign affairs of Poland.

18 K. LÖFFLER, *Polen und die polnische Frage*, Hamm 1917, p. 30.



ready the Austrian-Polish solution which divided the Hungarian political elite into two parts. István Tisza, Hungarian Prime Minister, chairman of the National Labour Party intently made the case for the, so called, “sub dualist solution”, while his Parliament opposition, Gyula Andrásy junior, leader of the Constitution Party propagated in the press and also in the Hungarian Parliament the “release” of Poland, thus the realization of the triple state formation. The first one, the plan of Tisza was very similar to the situation of the Croatia within the Monarchy, with the only difference that Croatia was integrated in Hungary while Poland — according to Tisza’s idea — should have belonged to the Cisleithan provinces, or, in return for some compensations, it should have given to the Germans which would have meant the “absolute economic dependency” of the country.¹⁹

Tisza continued his intent struggle for the protection of the system of Dualism. The material of the debate on the above-mentioned October 6th session was made up by the Austrian Prime Minister, Stürgkh; before the session the participants got Stürgkh’s bulky scheme about the method of settling the Polish issue. The document inspired the triple state formation.²⁰ Tisza opposed the triple state formation earlier and now too. He judged it ill-conceived, because he was aware of the fact that the Polish considered the triple state formation temporary, and their final goal is to restore the unity of the nation by all means. *“The true aim of every Polish people — said Tisza in his parliamentary speech — is a totally independent Poland, and in such triple state formation where the Polish state would get the same rights than Austria and Hungary would only tolerate it for want of better. However, it is the high time to let them know that the dualist system of the Monarchy is a noli me tangere!, and all the newly acquired lands should be inserted in the territory of the one or the other state.”*²¹

BURIÁN’S WAY TO THE TOP OF HIS OFFICIAL CAREER

István Burián, the common Foreign Minister of the Monarchy reached the most important stage of his life in 1915 when he took his position at Ballhausplatz, at the bureau of Metternich. The times slightly had changed since the end of the 19th century. The position of a legate, ambassador or perhaps a higher post in one of the institutes of Vienna could only be the position of dukes, counts or at the worst case the barons still in the 1890s. Gentries could get lower positions or the low-prestige position of a con-

19 “[...] że Polska musi być bezwarunkowo opanowana gospodarcza przez Niemcy.” GROSFELD, p. 289.

20 J. ŽUPANIČ, *Stürgkhův plán: Příspěvek k dějinám Rakousko-Uherské monarchie za první světové války*, in: *Pocta doctentu Vladimíru Nalevkovi*, Acta Universitatis Carolinae, Philosophia et historica 2, Studia historica II, Praha 1998, pp. 117–122.

21 „Das eigentliche Ziel eines jeden Polen ist das ganz unabhängige Königreich und selbst eine trialistische Ausgestaltung der Monarchie, bei welcher der polnische Staat dieselben Rechte, wie Österreich und Ungarn erhalten würde, wird von ihnen gewissermassen als *pis-aller* betrachtet und geduldet. Dem gegenüber ist es höchste Zeit ihnen zu wissen zu geben, dass die dualistische Struktur der Monarchie ein *noli me tangere* bildet und ein jedes neu erworbene Territorium in den Rahmen des einen oder des anderen Staates eingefügt werden müsse.“ KOMJÁTHY, p. 312.



sul could be reached by them. There were also some exceptions in those modern times. István Ugron from Mezőzáh, Transylvania could be considered to be such an example, as he just in connection with the Polish issue, rose above the average when represented the Monarchy in the German General Government in Warsaw. But to be a common Foreign Minister it needed a lucky constellation of stars still in the 20th century.

Burián graduated at the Eastern Academy in Vienna²² with *summa cum laude* result, with a strong theoretical knowledge. He got his step up the ladder in the diplomatic career.²³ Thanks to his excellent skills he could have already served as a legate at less important places (Sofia, Stuttgart, Athens).²⁴ But the real breakthrough came about when in 1903, after the death of Béni Kállay, he was chosen for the position of the common Minister of Finance. The common Ministry of Finance didn't give him much possibility to have his voice in the foreign affairs — as there wasn't too much need for it during the foreign policy of Gofuchowski which based on status quo — but Burián got some years from his fate when he could observe the great-power policy not from a remote place but from a “higher position” in Vienna. The tragic trauma: he was relieved in February 1912. Then just in few months the waves took him backwards. This great and decisive change was caused by his friend, István Tisza. Tisza became once again the Prime Minister when Burián is unemployed and Tisza selected him for post of a Minister “whose responsibility was to be around the King”. Tisza's choice wasn't by chance. During the internal political struggles Tisza had drifted away from the mainstreams of the world politics, and was a stranger in the labyrinth of the international issues, and in June 1915 he needed someone he could trust in and at the same time keeps an eye on the international diplomacy.

At the beginning, he trustworthily followed the advices of Burián. István Diószegi writes in his study about Burián and says that the influence of Burián could be recognised behind Tisza's anti-war attitude in July 1914. *“The historiography of war has been trying for fifty years — says the study — to cipher out the mystery of the anti-war attitude [of Tisza — T. Z.]. Among the reasons as a real or presumed element he discovered both the Hungarocentric attitude and the excellent tactical ability of Tisza, but behind the figure of the Prime Minister he never recognised the person who was around the majesty. He didn't recognise the person who inspired the Prime Minister for the agreement with Russia by the frequent exchange of letters.”*²⁵

As the time passed the harmony of the relationship between the principal and the adviser changed slightly. At the beginning of October, when the above-mentioned session of the Cabinet was held to settle the Polish issue the absolute harmony could not be seen. The disagreements can be explained by two important facts. One of them is that there was difference between being a minister in the Cabinet of Budapest and

22 K. k. Orientalische Akademie, Wien.

23 T. GORECZKY, *Burián István, a Hungarian Diplomat Serving the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy*, PhD Thesis at the Péter Pázmány Catholic University, Piliscsaba 2010. https://btk.ppke.hu/phd/tortenelemtudomany/goreczky_tamas/tezis_hu.pdf, [cit. 2016-05-13].

24 https://hu.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buri%C3%A1n_Istv%C3%A1n_%28politikus%29, [cit. 2016-04-27].

25 I. DIÓSZEGI, *A ballhausplatzai palota utolsó gazdája*, in: *Hazánk és Európa*, Budapest 1970, p. 214.



to govern the foreign policy of a European Great Power. It is a very complicated task to find common ground for both the imperial and national interest, especially in an Empire where there are factious ethnicities, and we also have to lay down objectively that it is not the business of a common minister of foreign policy, who makes out his appropriate decisions from the strings of the fabric of the Empire. The other reason is personal; we can say it is the question of habitude. It can be found in Burián doctrinarian habitude. The word doctrinarian is used for a person who insists to abstract and scholastic principles. According to several co-temporary opinions: István Burián was this type of person. It is not good if someone reads very few books and also if he reads too many. Burián got enormous amount of knowledge at the Eastern Academy, also had principals he wanted to apply at a proper time, disregarding if real life annulled or didn't accept his measures. However, the much knowledge is not the only point in connection with his doctrinarianism. We have a good reason to say that at the case of Burián it was the question of habitude.

Since in January 1915, after Tisza had overthrown Berchtold at the end of December, 1914, there was no doubt that Burián would get the post of the common foreign minister.²⁶ At the start of the war under difficult circumstances it (still) wasn't the Polish issue which caused the biggest intriguing question for the politicians of the Monarchy. In the long run Berchtold also fell because of the Italian policy, namely because of the crises caused by the handover of Trentino. The aims of the manoeuvres directed by Berchtold were to keep Italy apart from the war. Italy asked high price for its neutrality: the handover of Trentino which had been the property of the Habsburg dynasty since the ancient times. Berchtold showed intention to do this bargain, actually he was led by good intentions as he didn't want to increase the enemies of the Monarchy with new ones, but he showed weakness with this permissiveness in the eye of the world, because in war time the public life tolerate permissiveness in no way. He fell. It was also a delicate diplomatic matter to win the neutral Bulgaria as an ally to form a counterbalance against Rumania which threatened Serbia and Transylvania. Moreover, at the beginning of Burián's career — in the first years of 1990 — Bulgaria meant for him the key of the situation, and at the beginning of his first period as the minister of foreign affairs, since March, 1915 this question came into view again in very closed connection with the three other: Polish, Italian and Rumanian. Besides these, after 1914, the Germans also wanted that the accession of Bulgaria would mean a bridge between the Central Powers and Turkey. The doctrinarianism of Burián was that the force of unreachable aims in these cases was successful.

THE DEFEATED AUSTRIAN-HUNGARIAN ARMY: THE WRONGLY HANDLED POLISH ISSUE

If we study what happened between 13th January 1915 and 22nd December 1916 while Burián spent his first period in his position as a minister of foreign affairs, we can notice two main features of his official career. One of them is a global type of nature: gradual deterioration of the relationship with Germany. The other one is the deterioro-

²⁶ Took up his office on January 13, 1915.

ration of the personal relationship with the Hungarian political elite, primarily with Tisza. In point of fact he couldn't do about any of them, since the direction of the big streamlines of the history mostly independent from the personal ideas and decisions of the politicians, it rather follows a complicated logical — or measured by human standards: irrational — mechanism. The foreign policy should know these mechanism, and should make decisions setting out from the recognition of these mechanism. In the case of Polish issue Burián did just the opposite.

At the beginning of 1915 Burián passively observed the war events. In his foreign political activity overcame his most criticisable standpoint. His viewpoint was that in war time the passive diplomatic attitude is necessary: diplomacy is depend on the development of the military circumstances, and victories create possibilities for diplomacy to take the advantage of it. The people in his surrounding, the whole apparatus of Ballhausplatz, János Forgách his first form master or, at the beginning, also the diplomat, Leopold von Adrian²⁷ at the German General Government in Warsaw warned him that an active diplomacy would be necessary not only in the Polish but also in other territories, because the course of things went beyond the desirable measures. In spite of this they didn't succeed in dissuading Burián from the role of a person who just “observes” and goes after the events.

However, he was right that the war victories of 1915 were really surprising. The Polish movements to unite the nation got into the focus of public attention in the Monarchy. The leading circles of the Austrian large-scale industry counted with the new territories to take advantage of, especially with regard to the fossil energy sources, primarily to the coal-basin of Dąbrowa, for which the k. u. k. army had a desperate need to continue the war (certainly the Germans thought the same). The National Main Committee was formed in September 1914, in Krakow,²⁸ “The Polenklub”, the Polish group of representatives of Vienna started to urge the governors of the foreign policy, actually the Kaiser himself to make a clear statement about the arrangement method and release a kind of manifesto. And what hadn't ever happened since 1867: the session of the Polish Club was a public press event in August 1915.

The foreign affairs leaders' reaction for these events showed the signs of delay: to avoid every unambiguous promise. Tisza himself went on repeating his point and headstrongly kept continuing during the war: we mustn't promise anything which would mean the commitment of Monarchy to the Polish: we mustn't do anything which would have our hands tied. Hungary must get a compensation if Poland would be annexed to Austrian provinces, to Cisleithan.²⁹ In reality politicians mustn't have

27 Leopold von Andrian-Werburg, Baron (1875–1951). A diplomat who came from a Swiss origin Austrian family. Besides his activity as Minister of Foreign Affairs, he dealt with literature.

28 Among the leaders of the Naczelny Komitet Narodowy, Władysław Jaworski, Julius Leo and Leon Biliński, the members later became famous, like Władysław Sikorski.

29 All works of Earl István Tisza, Vol. 5, Budapest 1933. Tisza's letter to Burián (March 1, 1916). “[...] the Hungarian government wouldn't agree in the annexation of the Polish territories to Austria until it hasn't got a guarantee for a share in the economic advantages at least the expenses of the war, secondly the territorial issues will be solved which opposite the significant growth of Austria give at least some compensation to Hungary.” p. 58.



mentioned these Hungarian claims, the main obstacle of it was the Germans, more accurately the “German sensitivity”. In addition, that Burián expected the opportunities of diplomacy from the successes of war, he was under the necessity of listening to the news coming from Germany and was clearly about that the Germans were not willing to hear the news of Vienna about the forging of Austro-Polonist head. The historian-journalist, the Polish Joseph Feldman, who acted as resident of the National Main Committee in Berlin in 1915, tolled already the death knell, when he warned the small group in Krakow lead by Władysław Jaworski, that competent Russian circles objected against the Austro-Polonist reorganization. It mustn’t happen — was the warning of Feldman, quoting the Prussian remarks.³⁰ The regal application of the Polish Club wasn’t released either. Although the press got to know of it the censorship didn’t allow the press to write about it.

The military defeats at the end of 1914 proved that the army of the Monarchy and especially the leadership of it, to put it mildly, didn’t measure up to its task. The series of the victories in the spring and summer was due to the Germans. In this situation Burián could only do one thing: to see clearly the real intention of the Germans in connection with the settlement of Polish issue. After Warsaw, had got into the hands of the Germans, Burián travelled to Berlin having achieved nothing. At the negotiations of August 13th — it could be clarified from the memoirs of Burián — the German chancellor was trimming. It wasn’t impossible that Poland would be annexed to Austria, but also possible that it wouldn’t, because it would rather be annexed to Germany.³¹ Though it would be annexed by Austria, then Germany must get a compensation and a border revision should be done (he thought of the coal basin of Dąbrowa together with other zones). Then at the end he brought up an otherwise really weighty argument that in case of the integration of Poland to Austria a “Slavic dominance” would come into existence in Cisleithan, and it would jeopardise the hegemony of the Austrian Germans (the all-time German government took the responsibility for the fate of all Germans of the world, on the basis of the ideology of the “civilized nation”).

The military leadership — from both part — almost went on their own way. The negotiations about the occupied areas and the matter of the two General Governments started on the 9th of January 1915 and on the 1st of October they started to exist. At this time the narrow limits diplomacy of the Monarchy continued in the relation of Warsaw and Vienna. Leopold von Adrian, later István Ugron³² represented the Ballhausplatz in Warsaw in the position of a legate. However, the diplomatic relationship also remained with the neutrals (Stockholm, Bern, Copenhagen etc.), and in Berlin at Wilhelmstrasse, at the Kaiser Prince Gottfried von Hohenlohe represented the Mon-

30 SZOKOLAY, p. 44.

31 Ibidem, p. 51.

32 István Ugron of Ábránfalva (1862–1948?), was born in the Transylvanian Mezőzáh in an old Szekler “primor” family. After finishing the Eastern Academy spent long years in consular service (New York, Tiflis, Warsaw, Bucharest), then “entered” to diplomacy, in 1913 he is already the legate in Belgrade. Some of his biographers mentioned that he spoke 13 languages. About his diplomatic career see: Z. TEFNER, *István Ugron and the German Foreign Policy in April — May 1918*, in: Századok, Vol. 145, Is. 6, 2011.



archy as an Ambassador.³³The activity of the military leadership both on the German and Austrian side was directed by a special need: the pressure to win the war. They didn't have too much intention in the occupied areas to grant for the local population to get on well. The personnel of the military authorities, among them the personnel of not only one Hungarian additional regiment played the tyrant, impressed, and considered the Lublin area almost their own prey (which didn't make any good to the case of the legendary historical Polish-Hungarian relationship). There were areas in the fields of Lublin, where in August, during the time of threshing the barn-yards were located into the big forests to make it impossible for the foragers to hear the grousing of the threshing machines.³⁴ All the thwarting had political consequence, the local authorities were inundated with complaints. The minister of foreign affairs gave weak and late answers to these. Eventually Burián — owing to the claim of the great industrial circles who were interested in the utilization of the area — sent a memorandum to Grand Duke Frederick, the generalissimo of the army,³⁵ who put Burián right in his answer: the army must have the rights which are necessary for the successful operations: “[...] where the k. und k. troops in this respect wield unlimited governmental power in the occupied region.”

THE BERLIN NEGOTIATIONS IN APRIL 1916

There had never been such atmosphere which characterised the above-mentioned session of 6th October 1915. On one side, there was the alienation of the Polish population and the great plans on the other. Then some weeks later, in the middle of November, some changes were noticeable in the way how the German delegation spoke about the future Poland. At this time Bethmann-Hollweg's clear opinion was that Poland should be in economic union with both power. Then he held a long lecture about the same idea he spoke about a year before: German public opinion could not get over the fact that Austria-Hungary would finish the war with a significant growth of area while Germany had to be satisfied with some small border revision.

German politicians got through some change of mood not only as a consequence of the ecstasy lashed up by the German media. By this time could be experienced the dramatic consequence of the destructive static war. The large number of casualties reduced the population of whole male generations such a large degree, that Falkenhayn and Ludendorff, as main quartermasters who were responsible for recruitment, realized that war soon could not be continued because of the lack of people. In that time, more generations which hadn't been conscripted into the Tsarist Army of Russian-Poland were intact from war losses: would have been excellent recruitment for

33 Gottfried Maximilian Maria zu Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst, Prinz von (1867–1932), member of the high aristocracy of Vienna, nephew of Chlodwig von Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst, the later German Chancellor, Major-General, diplomat.

34 HHStA P. A. Wien. Krieg 8 a/k. 25.

35 Friedrich von Habsburg-Teschen (1856–1936). An Austrian Grand Duke, Hungarian crown Prince, Prince of Teschen, K. und K. Marshal, 1914–1917 generalissimo of the armies of the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy.



the German Army.³⁶ But to win this generation for the purpose of the war some kind of Polish state structure, a government initiative had to be created, and as a head of state a Polish king should have had to be crowned. But to get this happened the whole Kingdom should have been ruled, simply: Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy should be “bumped” from there. The negotiations with the Germans can be considered as a beginning of a slow transition when the Germans started to let Burián know the hard facts drop by drop. Since value of the military force of the Monarchy really depreciated, the manpower dwindled away and the representatives of the German finance capital made attractive plans for the colonization of Eastern Europe, then for the world and because of the conscripts they needed the entire Poland. But they needed it also because they realized that the Austrian-Polish solution doesn’t work since it would mean a definitive breakup with Russia. (The exclusion of the separate peace with Russia was still far from the Germans at the end of 1915.)

The real failure happened in the middle of April 1916. On 25th February Burián made a slight attempt: he sent a memorandum to the German government for a final clarification of the issue. The Germans left the memorandum unanswered. Owing to the efforts of Duke Hohenlohe the meeting was realized in Berlin which was a destruction for Burián. The Austrian-Hungarian delegation travelled to Berlin on the 14th of April. During a two-day conference a detailed discussion with full of conflicts took place, which became perhaps the darkest day of Burián’s diplomatic career.

The record of the negotiations and the related documents shows the subordination of the Monarchy’s diplomacy and the German arrogance coming from the situation. In every basic situation concerning with the matter could be seen that Burián was unready to adapt to the situation although he knew from the reports of Hohenlohe in Berlin and Andrian in Warsaw that the government of Berlin had changed of course (since he got several documents from them with this content), aside from small gestures he could not be diverted from the Austropolonist plan. In Diószegi’s above cited study can be read about Burián’s 1914 autumn activity, that: *“In the judgement of the activity of the minister around the majesty the logic built on regularity failed again. His standpoint was to fight till the end of the war until the overall victory [nota bene: at the beginning of 1914 he convinced Tisza that the war against Russia is not inevitable — Z. T.]. Tisza suggested him already at the beginning of September, after almost one month of war, to sign a fair peace with Russia. But his foreign adviser answered the following: this is not the time of haggling this is the time of dictation.”*³⁷

However, it was already not possible to dictate for Bethmann-Hollweg in April, 1916. At the negotiation Burián came up again with the plan of annexation of Poland to Austria, and Burián amazedly listened when the German chancellor — for the first time in the history of this issue — rejected it bluntly.³⁸ Burián’s arguments were

³⁶ “Obaj zwolennicy prowadzenia wojny do tzw. zwyciężskiego końca, obaj też dążąc do wycisnięcia z ludności maximalnego potencjału wojskowego, opowiadali się daniem Królestwu form państwowych.” L. BAZYLOW, *Sprawa polska po wybuchu pierwszej wojny światowej*, in: L. BAZYLOWA (Ed.), *Historia Dyplomacji Polskiej: 1795–1918*, Tom 3, Warszawa 1982, p. 850.

³⁷ I. DIÓSZEGI, p. 220.

³⁸ HHStA P. A. Geheime Akten. I. Liasse XLVII. Korrespondenzen aus dem Komplexe der Verhandlungen während des Krieges 1914–1918. Aufzeichnungen über die Beratungen



his old arguments and didn't contain any new elements: if the tripartite principle came into view — which is not preferred by the Monarchy — the Polish would get an appropriate scheme for their empowerment, but also if the subdual principle came into being the same would happen. The German chancellor repeated the argument which had been emphasized for several months, that the German general opinion would never accept such a big accession of the Austrian and Hungarian territory. The answer of Gottlieb von Jagow, the state secretary of foreign affairs,³⁹ who was sitting in the delegation wasn't new either as he doubted the arguments of Burián, saying that the Slavic majority would efface the German population of the Monarchy into the background. Jagow expressed his sorry that the intention of the two allies were different regarding the settlement of the Polish issue, but he expressed bluntly that, Germany needed Poland and the German government didn't want to change its standpoint: *"They wanted to establish an "independent" Poland [a so called "Buffer State" — Z. T.] because it most met the interest of Poland. Austria would make a mistake if annexed the kingdom: the Polish part, which had been the mainstay of Austria for decades — although it set a price for it — now seeing that they would be 20 million would still lay too high claim also in respect of foreign policy.*⁴⁰ *Not to mention the fact that — and this is already about the German anxiety — that this would increase their need and they would claim the annexation of Posen.*"⁴¹

The representative of the Monarchy in Warsaw, István Ugron's weak argumentation in which he expressed that the Polish people of the Monarchy feel the strength of the German empire, and knew that Posen is a Prussian estate, didn't have a moving effect on the German delegation. Moreover, Bethmann-Hollweg chancellor drew up a new shocking plan for the expansion of the border of the German Empire at the expense of the territory of the Polish state, namely the idea of the a "Grenzstreifen", borderland, which was originated from the military leadership: the annexation of the area to the empire which was to the south from the Nyeman-Modlin-Varta-line with 3 million Polish subjects was not advisable to annex to Germany, because it would cause the same problem for Germany as the growth of Slavic part caused to Austria.⁴² Ergo: the buffer state was the good solution. (The German military leadership wanted to use this line of defence against Russia just in case if they couldn't succeed in defeating

in Berlin am 14. und 15. April, 1916. „Der k. u. k. Minister des Aeussern führt aus, dass er sehr überrascht war, gelegentlich der am selben Tage abgehaltenen Vorbesprechung zu hören, dass die deutsche Regierung in der polnischen Frage sich nicht mehr auf dem Standpunkt befinde, den der Reichskanzler gelegentlich früherer Besprechungen vertreten hat.“

39 Gottlieb von Jagow (1863–1935), a conservative German politician, diplomat, son of an old Prussian aristocratic family of Altmark. In 1913 Wilhelm II appointed him the State Secretary of Foreign Affairs (in the German chancellor system that was the name of the minister of foreign affairs). He was displaced in November 1916.

40 HHStA P. A. GeheimeAkten. I. Liasse XLVII. Korrespondenzen aus dem Komplexe der Verhandlungen während des Krieges 1914–1918. Aufzeichnungen über die Beratungen in Berlin am 14. und 15. April 1916. „Sie werden gewiss viel höhere Ansprüche erheben.“

41 Ibidem.

42 Ibidem. „Auf dem durch diese Linie begrenzten Gebiet leben 3 Millionen Polen. Da dem deutschen Reiche eine so große Vermehrung seines polnischen Elementes im höchsten Grade unerwünscht erscheint, kann und will es dieses Gebiet nicht annekieren.“



Russia and Germany would be threatened by a new offence ⁴³⁾ “*Now we are allies [...], but what will be in 10–15 years? We will not be allies then should we depend on Austria?*” — putting up this friendly additional question Bethmann-Hollweg. Now, at this conference the plan wasn’t a small surprise for Burián, but he didn’t change his mind.

As to the point he was right anyway. Namely because neither the buffer state, nor the border line solution could solve the problem of the Polish (which had followed the instinct of uniformity since the 8th century), but rather deepens the crises. The new state would become the field of Russian agitation — he said to Bethmann-Hollweg — and the Prussian authorities would be able only “*manu militari*” uphold the order. He was right that none of them was right: Polish issue, just like the quadrature of the circle, caused the powers at war an insoluble enigma, and only the arrangement managed by Entente could solve the puzzle somehow in 1920. He made a mistake as he didn’t notice: that it was a totally different Germany than it was in September 1914. In Burián’s mind was that he wanted to win at all costs and Austrian-Poland overwrote every other aspect.

THE POLEMICS BETWEEN TISZA AND BURIÁN IN THE SUMMER OF 1916

In the summer and early autumn of 1916–08 nothing changed according to the case of April. The German gave Vienna a memorandum in June, in which they announced that they insist to the plan of the buffer state. Hans Hartwig von Beseler⁴⁴ Colonel General, the main military German governor in Warsaw continued a polonofil policy in the occupied area, with the intention to win the Polish society to accept this puppet state: they opened the college of Warsaw, the school board was formed, the media got a relative freedom, it was allowed to hold the Polish national celebration on the 3rd of May. The mood of the Polish society improved, but — the intention of Ludendorff to lobby — they didn’t succeed to set up a worthwhile Polish army. The Polish youth wasn’t willing to identify themselves with the German military aims, they need more: Polish statehood, or at least a certain initiative of it, a responsible government, a Polish king and a number of other state symbols.

But those who dealt with this soon had to turn to a different direction. In the summer of 1916 in the agenda of the politicians the Polish issue was replaced by dramatic turn of events in connection of the whole war: the attack of Brusilov at

43 I. GEISS, *Tzw. Polski pasgraniczny 1914–1918*, Warszawa 1964. The idea of border zone came out in 1914 for the first time, and is linked to Friedrich von Schwerin. Schwerin handed in his memorandum in March 1915. to Bethmann-Hollweg about the idea how can be possible to create new settlement territories along the German borders. Friedrich Wilhelm Ludwig von Schwerin (1862–1925), a Prussian landowner, clerk, “Regierungspräsident” in the district of Odera/Frankfurt.

44 Hans Hartwig von Beseler (1850–1921), a German Colonel General. He was appointed for the head of the General Government in Warsaw in 1915. In 1918 when the Germans were unarmed in Warsaw he escaped to Germany. He was attacked because of the extreme permissiveness of the conservatives, the liberals attacked him because he directed the occupied Warsaw territory with dictatorship. The broken, disillusioned person repeated his good intention towards the Polish.



the beginning of June, and the Rumanian incursion to Transylvania in the middle of August. The Russians attacked from Riga to Chernivtsi on the front of 400 kilometres and broke into the Hungarian territory, Transylvania as well,⁴⁵ parallel with it news came about the preparation of the Rumanian army. The Hungarian politicians, especially Tisza were definitely aware of the seriousness of the situation. Burián's activity as a minister of foreign affairs was limited instead of the prevention of the events mainly to the acknowledgement of them and to the clearing away of the rubble. Tisza warned Burián in his 15th July letter for the imminent danger: "do not kid ourselves. The Rumanian danger is serious and can be actual at any moment. [...] Bratianu has already missed a good occasion, and probably will decide not to miss the other, and he will hurry if he wakes up to the consciousness that the nick of time has arrived."⁴⁶ Then some lines below: we don't have to quarrel with the Germans because of the Polish, but we must discuss with them what should be done to provide against the Rumanian danger.

Tisza's pieces of advice: confident talk within some days, warm, friendly comradesly atmosphere, to provide against the common danger, final effort — these were the key words of Tisza. (At the beginning of the same letter Tisza prognosticated the loss of people would be in the breakthrough at Brusilov 400 thousand which, in fact, 600 thousand was.⁴⁷) "We may not lose sight of this point in case of the Polish issue. Anyway, it is not about the Polish conquests, it is about the existence or non-existence of the Monarchy. The threatening disaster neglects the question what the future of Poland is going to be."⁴⁸ Tisza knew it correctly that there wasn't such a big danger which couldn't be overcome if a high price is payed for it. It is probable that Tisza before entering into the Italian war was absolutely aware of the mistake made by Burián on the point of Trento: "Giving the Italian provinces over versus Italian entry into the war — a statesman is qualified for being a statesman if he is well aware of the limit and knows that beyond a certain limit there is nothing but the gaping depth."⁴⁹ This was the point when the position of the "adviser", which had been existed since 1913, impaired and they separated. The appealing letter from Tisza, from this great stature of statesman, from a headstrong (Calvinist) seems still very strange at the distance of a hundred-year time, placed Burián in the category of hopeless.

Certainly, the Hungarian Prime Minister thought of another sort of compensation in his letter⁵⁰ (and did not think of the delivery of Transylvania): "In such cir-

45 GALÁNTAI, p. 298.

46 All works of Earl István Tisza, Vol. 5, Budapest 1933. Tisza wrote to Burián in July 15, 1916. "[...] we must state that where, when and what force is needed to prevent the Rumanian threat and do the necessary steps without delay, even if they are painful." p. 247.

47 J. GALÁNTAI, p. 300. German's 85 thousand, Russian's 800 thousand.

48 Ibidem.

49 Both Tisza and the Hungarian public opinion would rather choose the keeping of Trento than Poland: „Was die Rückwirkung der Abtretung österreichisch-ungarische Gebietes auf die öffentliche Meinung der Monarchie betrifft, ist Graf Tisza der Ansicht, wenn auch das Geheimnis über die erfolgte Abtretung nicht zu halten sein wird, die große Öffentlichkeit dieses Opfer doch nicht so schmerzlich empfinden wird, als man annehmen könnte.“ K. KRUPINSKI, *Die Westmächte und Polen von Napoleon I. bis Versailles*, München-Berlin 1941, p. 223.

50 Capturing the South Slavic territories.



circumstances I would consider it fatal if you spent your time weaving your Polish plans and focusing on that and reduced your time for the preparation of the absolutely indispensable and urgent protective actions [it means: cabal actions — Z. T.], and as a consequence the chance of warding off the threatening danger you would lessen. Dear Friend, please break with your favourite ideas. They cannot be implemented either. Neither the government, nor the Germans can support them. Even if your proposal could be accepted from the aspect of the structure and further development of the Monarchy, the most disadvantageous effects they would have if you drew up them to the Germans right now.”⁵¹ Then these were followed by the critical voices which could be taken as a reproach and demonstrated that Tisza might have known the nature of Burián well: his grandiose dreams, illusions and hopes which never come true... Tisza finished his letter this way: “Once more I ask you to listen to me. We are passing through one of the world-historical moments in which a mistaken or missed step can be a sentence of death for the states or nations.”⁵² At that time the Rumanian invasion in Transylvania had been decided as a final accord of a decades-long process. The Rumanian intellectual citizenship of French culture, the so called “Titulescu generation’s” foreign political credo was to weaken both the Monarchy and Russia at the same time, conquered Transylvania, and open the way for the flow of the French capital.⁵³

On the following day Burián answered in the spirit of “hardly learn and easily forget” and tried to prove that it didn’t make any problem to deal intensively with the two issues parallel. Tisza who gave a cold ear to trialism and who had wanted to give Poland to Germany for a long time could read Burián’s letter with consternation: “Besides the Rumanian threat, the Polish issue must also be treated [Z. T.] because it is required by Germany as well. You will see the evidence in the yesterday letter of Tschirschky, in which he expresses courteously the expectations of the chancellor for my further proclamations and says the agreement is desirable as soon as possible.”⁵⁴ Then: “I am also able to resist. But my method is that we may not yield always and in everything. That’s all for the out world. To inward hardly necessary to note that I haven’t got any obsession regarding to the Polish issue, I just only want to adjust to the changing requirements and I tend the save as much as possible for our interests.” It might not have been absolutely hopeless against the chancellor as now he speaks in his letter about the “eine parallele Stellung zu den Polen in Berlin und Wien”.⁵⁵ Some weeks before the Rumanian intervention in his friendliest relationship he still defended his point with mere diplomatic formalities such as what the German chancellor wrote. Otherwise it has hardly any significance since at the end of the letter he himself conceded that the Germans are militarily stronger. The content is hardly be construed: The Monarchy still can be stronger politically.⁵⁶

51 All works of Earl István Tisza, Vol. 5., Budapest 1933. Tisza to Burián, 15 July, 1916, p. 247.

52 Ibidem, pp. 247–248.

53 B. BORSI-KÁLMÁN, Nicolae Titulescu — hagyomány és európaiság, in: Kihívás és eretnkség. Adalékok a román — magyar viszony történetéhez, Sepsiszentgyörgy 1996, pp. 42–43.

54 All works of Earl István Tisza, Vol. 5, Budapest 1933. Burián to Tiszá, July 16, 1915, p. 249.

55 Ibidem.

56 Ibidem, “Do not let forget that we are militarily weaker then Germany, we have political advantages, which are wellknown by our ally, that’s why I don’t be afraid of violence.” pp. 249–250.

Apologetic response: he has done everything to protect the homeland. “How can you imagine that I fill myself in with such things in a moment when, as you yourself so keenly emphasize, we are about to the rescue the Monarchy and our homeland?”⁵⁷ He features his measures that against Rumania that calmness was always gage and he strives to maintain the calmness also in this very moment. He considered one of his most important measures that he forwarded the request of Conrad von Hötzendorff General Staff chief to the address of Bethmann-Hollweg about necessary German re-enforce in Transylvania. “He answered very accommodatingly and that he would do everything that possible. Anyway, the Germans feel the seriousness of the moment and strengthen their efforts according to this. They insured it clearly that Germany would immediately proclaim a war to Rumania, if it attacked us and what more also if we wished it.”⁵⁸ Calmness and the German politeness worth very little, Rumanians was thinking differently, which wasn’t recognised properly neither at the Ballhausplatz nor at the military intelligent service: on 17th August they joined Entente in a secret agreement in Buchares; on 27th they handed over the proclamation in Vienna and at the night of the same day the Rumanian troops overstepped the entirely unguarded Carpathian mountain passes. The chaos in Székely and Szász lands grew enormously; some 200 thousand refugees overflowed the inner counties.⁵⁹



THE CZERNIN PERIOD: CHANGE OF DIRECTION IN THE AUSTRIAN-HUNGARIAN FOREIGN POLICY AND THE GERMAN ARROGANCE

On November 21, 1916, the old monarch József Ferenc the First died. Karl, the new Kaiser displaced the whole leadership. Colonel General Arz⁶⁰ became the chief of general staff, and from December 22, 1916, Ottocar Czernin who just had returned from the position of Bucharest legate⁶¹ became the minister of foreign affairs. Tisza was also displaced in April 1917. The foreign policy of the Monarchy the so called “Belvedere-workshop” got into power, that group which politicised in the spirit of trialism, anti-democracy, anti-clericalism and anti-Hungarian activity.⁶² The “Großösterreich-group” led by Franz Ferdinand was existing in the Belvedere Palace in Vienna, planned a radical change, and wouldn’t have shrunk back from violence either for

57 Ibidem, p. 248.

58 Ibidem, p. 249.

59 Z. SZÁSZ, *Rumania’s Attempt to Occupy Transylvania*, in: Z. SZÁSZ (Ed.), *History of Transylvania: From 1830 until Today*, Vol. 3, Budapest 1987, pp. 1694–1695.

60 Arthur Freiherr Arz von Strausssenburg (1857–1935), Transylvanian origin Hungarian officer, K. und k. Colonel General.

61 Ottokar Czernin von und zu Chudenitz, Earl (1872–1932), from a-Czech aristocratic family from 1913 Ambassador in Bucharest. As a member of the Belvedere-group hallmarked by Franz Ferdinand existed as the adviser of the crown-prince.

62 L. GULYÁS, *Küzdelem a Kárpát-medencéért. Regionalizáció és etnoregionalizmus, avagy a nemzeti és nemzetiségi kérdés területi aspektusai Magyarországon 1690–1914*, Budapest 2012, p. 138. More details see L. GULYÁS, *Az Osztrák-Magyar Monarchia etnoregionalista átszervezésének tervezete. Aurél Popovici terve 1906*, in: Majoros István főszerk: *Háborúk, békék, terroristák. Székely Gábor 70 éves*, Budapest 2012, pp. 239–246.



the sake of the “reform” of the empire.⁶³ It supported mainly the trialist plan of the Czechs, which was overthrown by the Hungarian liberal-conservatives. His family relations tied him to Bohemia: his wife Zsófia Chotek born in a Czech aristocratic family, and the Crown prince was mainly staying in Bohemia as well.⁶⁴ But Croatian and Polish trialism also could be found among the plans of the Belvedere-group.⁶⁵ The plans were direct the opposite of Tisza’s opinion, and Burián, although his relationship with Tisza in course of time got lose, he wasn’t able to absolutely cut out his Hungarian habit as a minister of foreign affairs either.

Burián, before his displacement, had the chance to be part of a remarkable diplomatic success, namely the announcement of the proclamation of November 5. However, this declaration addressed to the entire Polish nation mostly realised as the workmanship of the Germans, but in fact the Austrian-Hungarian diplomacy also had a part in it. On October 18 Burián took part in the meeting at the German headquarters in Pless, where the united political and military leadership decided to release declaration and the formation of the Polish army on a “voluntary basis” (which they put under their leadership). The often quoted “6 points of Pless”⁶⁶ existed until the end of the war. The Hindenburg-Ludendorff-group which came into power in August 1916 at least formally reached its objectives. Some days later the military conference of Warsaw ordered the declaration of the proclamation. They held a big celebration on this occasion in Warsaw and Lublin.

The declaration was followed by a series of important and, in terms of Polish history, seemingly forward-looking measures. On January 14, 1917, the provisional State Council was set up.⁶⁷ The German authorities delegated 15, the Austrian-Hungarian authorities delegated 10 elected members to this board. Waclaw Niemojowski⁶⁸ was appointed to be the head of it, and Piłsudski became the leader of the military committee. Then the Polish government was set up and until the time of electing the Polish king a regent council was appointed. The regent council was ceremonially set up on October 15, on the anniversary of the death of Tadeusz Kościuszko. On 26th of November, 1917 Jan Kucharzewski⁶⁹ was appointed as a Prime Minister. At that time Burián hadn’t been the minister of foreign affairs yet. The Lublin celebration of the proclamation was the swan-song at the end of his first period as a minister. The declarations didn’t contain any concrete; still the borders of the future Poland weren’t recorded and the established boards existed with a German hand-gear, so they couldn’t make any difference in the life of the Polish society.⁷⁰ In fact the Germans

63 H. RUMPLER, *Eine Chance für Mitteleuropa. Bürgerliche Emanzipation und Staatsverfall in der Habsburgermonarchie*, in: W. HERWIG (Ed.), *Österreichische Geschichte 1904–1914*, Ueberreuter 1997, p. 560.

64 GULYÁS, *Küzdelem...*, p. 139.

65 Ibidem.

66 J. ŽUPANIČ, *Rakousko-Uhersko a polská otázka za první světové války*, Praha 2006, p. 93.

67 Tymczasowa Rada Stanu.

68 Waclaw Niemojowski (1865–1939), a Polish conservative Christian national politician. In 1917 presides “as a crown Marshall” in the State Council.

69 Jan Kucharzewski (1876–1952), a Polish historian, a jurist, and the Prime Minister in 1917–1918.

70 H. SCHAPP, pp. 69–73.

set up a stage-set on which the German arrogance was present and a world-power performance was held at the expense of Austria-Hungary and Poland.

In the following almost one and a half year, after December 22, 1916, the new Kaiser and the leadership of the empire had a go at making a separate peace. Czernin wasn't more successful than Burián, the facts that Russia left the war, the peace negotiations of Brest-Litovsk, the Sixtus-affair, the dominance of Entente as the US entered the war, all these were negatives not only from the aspect of the Polish issue but from the aspect of the entire activity of the Central Powers. In November 1917, a "false renaissance" got started in the Polish issue. There was a change in the German leadership of foreign affairs and this catalysed the processes. Instead of Jagow Richard von Kühlmann⁷¹ became the state secretary of the Foreign Office. The features of the treatment of the Polish issue always depended on the development of the actual military situation. That happened now as well. On the 5th of November at the meeting of the representatives of the two governments effected by the defeats they suffered, the Germans decided that after so many fruitless debates they would give Poland back to the Monarchy, but not the whole. They concluded conditions: broad border revision in favour of Germany, which meant the earlier fixed line of Narwa-Warta, and also that 60 thousand square kilometres were taken away from the Kingdom; handing over to the Germans almost the total Polish coal mining; ensuring the rights of the Germans in Poland, etc. The proposal was equal with the fourth division of Poland. One scandal was followed by another, then the Ukrainian separate peace (turning of East-Galicia and territory of Chełm⁷² over to the just forming Ukrainian People's Republic in change of one and a half million tons of grain, which the Monarchy tried to treat the public supply with) made in Brest in 1918 disillusioned the most determined Polish conservative friends of Austria.⁷³ After so many fruitful years of co-operation they turned away from the Monarchy.

THE WAY HOW THE END STARTS: THE SECOND COMMON MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS: APRIL 16 – OCTOBER 24, 1918

For Burián didn't start a "forced rest" until April 1918. Kaiser Karl placed him back to the position of the common minister of finance which he filled earlier. Since, issues of Bosnia-Herzegovina had belonged to the common ministry of finance since 1878, this became the main segment of the operation in the Balkan. The memoir such

71 Richard von Kühlmann (1873–1948), a German manufacturer, a diplomat in North Africa, a legate in Turkey, Sweden and in the Netherlands. In 1916 the state secretary of the Foreign affairs office. In 1917 his relationship with Ludendorff got wrong, and had to leave.

72 The territory of Chełmi: Part of the once Polish kingdom, with mixed religious, mainly unites inhabitants. In 1815 annexed to Russia together with the Polish Kingdom. At present the district centre of Lublin province.

73 "W warunkach pogarszającej się szybko sytuacji wojskowej, gospodarczej i politycznej państw centralnych również pozycja Rady Regencyjnej i powoływanych przez nią rządów w Królestwie stawała się coraz trudniejsza." H. ZIELIŃSKI, *Historia Polski 1914–1939: Zakład Narodowym*, Wrocław 1985, p. 46.



a genre, which can be said so many things, but cannot be said that its writer always writes down what he or she felt at the time when things happened. According to the memoir of Burián he “greeted” the Kaiser’s decision, as it returned to such a place which he took over with so much “interest and love” eight years before.⁷⁴ In fact we can neither say that he would have been overthrown “upwards”.

But later Czernin also overthrew, and began the second period as a common minister of foreign affairs for him, which wasn’t a shiny success either — although in that futureless social circumstances disturbed by military and supply difficulties the unsuccessfulness could not be charged Burián for. He started to come up with the Polish solution again at the Germans in April 1918 in a conciliatory tone which he always used in connection with the Polish. Some days later he took his office he wrote to István Ugron to Warsaw: “*We only seek for the Austro-Polish solution, although this was the sympathetic all the time, to the extent that is suitable for the political intellectual of the Polish nation. It is as plain as daylight that this solution is advantageous for the Polish both in terms of territory and future the situation of power of the Polish state. In that case if it would be underestimated from the Polish side so much that they listen to the German-Polish solution by the effect of irresponsible factors, that the truncated Kingdom would be only with Germany in military and customs union and they think this is the best construction alone, we would be not able to hinder it. They have to bear the consequences of their shaky decisions themselves.*”⁷⁵

His military target policy was unchanged. The defence of the great power state, the focus on maintaining the whole Monarchy, perhaps peace negotiations, but meanwhile not to give up the attempts for expansion of the territory and the aspects of security. Still the “outsider” Fritz Fischer is stated that Burián already in 1916-ban was wrong about the identification of the possibilities of Austria-Hungary.⁷⁶ At the same time the appointment of Burián — after, from Polish aspect, unblest activity of Czernin — not only the Austrian friendly, but for the other Polish people, he “pushed away the big stone” out of the way and the common agreement. The Austrian-Polish concept very quickly became the official program again. On April 6th — two weeks before the displacement of Czernin — Karl the Fourth wrote to William the Second again: the Austro-Polish solution is the best and perhaps the best solution of the issue.⁷⁷

74 HHStA P. A. Wien. Krieg 56/a/7. Karton rot 1015. Burián számjeltávirata Ugronnak 1918. április 24.

75 „Die Ziele, die Burián darüber hinaus für die als Folge des von ihm angeregten Friedesschritts erwarteten Verhandlungen festhielt, zeigen aber, daß er sein altes Ziel, einen möglichst »großen-Zuwachs an Macht und Sicherheit« für die Monarchie zu gewinnen, nicht aufgegeben hatte — womit er die Gesamtlage wie die Möglichkeiten Österreich-Ungarns verkannte.“ F. FISCHER, *Griff nach der Weltmacht. Die Kriegszielpolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschland 1914/1918*, Düsseldorf 1962, p. 399.

76 „[...] beste und vielleicht die einzige Lösung [...]“. W. CONZE, *Polnische Nation und deutsche Politik im ersten Weltkrieg*, Köln-Graz 1958, p. 357.

77 Erzherzog Karl Stephan (1860–1933). Originated from the Techen branch of the Habsburgs, he was the grandson of Grand Duke Karl, the victor in Aspern, brother of Frederick Grand Duke, the generalissimo of the Monarchy’s First World War army. He settled down with his family in the principality of Teschen at the border of Galicia and Teschen with an almost 53 thousand acre Saybusch (in Polish: Żywiec) manor. The posterity considers him the most talented member of the Habsburgs.



Until the great defeats in July at Piave this was the course which defined the political atmosphere between the two empires. At the meantime, the German military leadership forced the so called “Kandidatenlösung”, the candidate for the throne, which meant that the two-great power would agree in the person of the future Polish king to be crowned later, and during his rule would start keeping the Polish territories in one hand in a form of condominium. After a long procrastination, which started at the end of 1916, the decision was made for the Royalty. Both party found appropriate Grand Duke Karl Stephen.⁷⁸ He spoke well in Polish, lived in Galicia; Polish people loved him, and considered him to belong to them. The news reached Warsaw through the Polish channels that the Austrian — Polish solution was pushed aside and the candidate for the king version was coming. On May 17th after the checking in Berlin Burián informed Ugron in Warsaw that is far from it because the two leaderships went on checking about the Austrian-Polish solution. The repeated checking took place in Berlin on July 10 where Burián strictly insisted to his own idea: if there isn't Austrian — Polish settling “[...] *the idea of alliance is shaken*”.⁷⁹

The reality was different. A month later — the German Ambassador in Vienna reported to Hertling chancellor that Austria in the old sense not existed any more, the whole country is full of revolutionary way of thinking and the “process of disruption” is very far gone.⁸⁰ By that time — definitely by the effect of the psychical protective reflex (the start of the end) — in Budapest Tisza and misunderstood the situation; Sándor Wekerle, the Hungarian Prime Minister explained at length that he considered the Austrian-Polish solution good. In this panic, there was a mess in the thoughts.⁸¹

Burián kept on fighting for the “old aims which had lost” — said wittily Werner Conze.⁸² Germans — in the same panic — corresponding with the instructions of the Supreme Headquarters opposite to Burián still urged to secure the border land. Wedel, the German Ambassador to Vienna⁸³ not long before, at the beginning of July in Belgian Spa he handed over a proclamation which was made in the German Headquarters and left his office with the calming feeling that Burián might come around. But Burián used tactics at that meeting as well. He wasn't repulsive like he behaved earlier because he was afraid of losing his position and he was also afraid of the anger of the Germans. However, on 22nd July he let Wedel know that he didn't accept the German proposal as complete, he still considered it only a “basis of negotiations”. Wedel angrily asked his principals — that the same way they did in December 1916 — as a “German impact” let them overthrow Burián again.⁸⁴

But the emperor also used tactics. On August 14th at another military aim conference Karl committed himself to the German “Kandidatenlösung” then on the way

78 CONZE, p. 367.

79 Ibidem.

80 DIÓSZEGI, p. 234.

81 CONZE, p. 368.

82 Botho von Wedel, Graf (1862–1943). A German diplomat, and a Consul-General in Budapest in 1904. From 1916 Ambassador in Vienna.

83 CONZE, p. 371.

84 Paul von Hintze (1864–1941). A German Rear Admiral, a diplomat, from July 1918 State Secretary of Foreign Affairs (Minister of Foreign Affairs).



home he said the opposite: he didn't believe that the mood in Vienna would be such which justify the ignoring of the Austro-Polish solution. In his decision reflected Karl's insufficient knowledge. One of the reason of his dissociation was that he didn't agree with the person who was a candidate for the King (he wanted to be the Polish King), the other reason was his idea that with the loss of the coal mines of Dąbrowa Austria's energy supply would stop, and the rebellious masses' destitution would intensify and the revolution break out (in this he showed clairvoyance, as the revolution broke out mainly because of that in November). Neither Burián nor Carl judged the things at their true value: for the strengthen of the personal position and for the procrastination constitutional debate the September of 1918 wasn't the most suitable time.

The King crises had been solved some days later by the recede of Stephen Karl. The German arrogance was getting stronger (William the Second showed dilettantism as well in the different periods of the war): von Hintze state secretary,⁸⁵ the successor of Kühlmann blackmailed Burián and the Polish. If Austria insisted to its plan furthermore and autocratically annex the military border land and the coal mines. The Polish apparatus of state didn't function well either, the cabinet of Kucharzewski in its hurry towards the end wasn't able to perform its task. Among these circumstances met the two parties on 5th of September in Vienna. The meeting was ineffectual. The issue was given to an Expert Committee to examine — no one knows how many times. The Germans worked out a new plan for a new and modest border revision. Between 24th and 28th of September Berlin became the place of coordination again where happened nothing again. Finally, a grotesque thing happened. Burián decided to "make himself independent". He sent a letter to the Austrian and Hungarian government (by that time both lost its overview on the issues), and wrote them that he was going to issue a declaration about the Austrian and Polish settling, as the German government would do the same in respect of the launch of the German-Polish solution. On 10th of October Ugron reported from Warsaw that the Germans were planning as a new honey string offered the handover of new branches of public administration for the state treasury, which they reduced for the minimum and imposed new conditions. The Regent Council rejected indignantly the German "gesture".⁸⁶ The pendulum deflected again. The notice of Ugron showed how confused were the Polish in the judgement of the situation: Warsaw's attention is again on Vienna. In the rejection of the Polish that recognition is concluded that they noticed the weakening of the German empire and the "emergency". Burián and Kühlmann in the last days competed who could give more preference to the Polish. The two once great powers at the edge of destruction was quarrelling on concepts which didn't exist anymore.

85 HHStA P. A. Wien. Krieg 56/a/7. Karton rot 1015. Ugron Buriánnak, 1918. október 10. „Der Regentschaftsrat hat am 4. d. Mts. eine ziemlich schroff ablehnende Antwort an General von Bessler gerichtet, in welcher gesagt wurde, daß das Vorgehen des Generalgouverneurs nachteilige Folgen auf die Entwicklung der Verhältnisse zwischen Polen und dem Deutschen Reich nach sich ziehen müsse.“

86 HHStA P. A. Wien. Krieg 56/a/7. Karton rot 1015. Ugron Buriánnak, 1918. október 10. „Wie mir von Ostrowski sagte, hätte eine solche Note noch vor wenigen Wochen die allergrößte Befriedigung hervorgerufen; heute verfehlt sie ihre Wirkung, da darin nur ein Zeichen der Schwäche und der eingestandenen Notlage Deutschlands erblickt wird.“

On October 8th Burián presented a suggestion to Wedel to discuss the Polish issue. But this couldn't happen. On October 11 when it was clear that the "Kaisermanifest", the desperate attempt of Carl to keep the Monarchy together didn't succeed so he asked Wedel to pass over the negotiations. The point on the "i" was put by the "successor" Gyula Andrassy who suggested such a plan to the Polish government on 19th of October which he couldn't realize, this was to unite the Kingdom with Galicia. It was really a grotesque scene that someone who was the great friend of the Polish for four years couldn't able to recognize the essence of the situation and make fool of himself. Burián was followed by Andrassy as the last common foreign minister of the Monarchy between 24th October and 2nd of November — altogether for ten days. Then the things went on without two of them. On the 11th of November, the Regent Council appointed Józef Klemens Piłsudski the general commander of the Polish troops who took over later the leadership of the Polish state. A new chapter started in the Polish history.



ISTVÁN BURIÁN AND THE SETTLING OF THE POLISH ISSUE DURING THE FIRST WORLD WAR

ABSTRACT

Between 13th January 1915 and the April of 1916 filled István Burián the charge of the Common Foreign Minister of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In this time culminated the Polish question in the policy of the First World War constituting the basis of the relations Austro-Hungarian and Germany. The first period after 5th August 1915 after the troops of the too allied powers had occupied the full territory of the former Polish Kingdom was arising a political pressure to arrange the fate of the Polish Nation: government, political system, education, public supply and so on. The political leadership of the Danube-Monarchy had tried to settle the question in the framework of the so-called Austro-Polish-Project added the liberated Polish Kingdom to Austro-Hungary. In the Austrian policy became this concept the leading governing principle against the German ideas to unit Poland with Germany. This solution of the question was a consequence of the aspirations of Germany to the domination of the world or at least of East-Europe. István Burián had been acting on behalf of the Austro-Polish solution very consistent, and what is more, with a doctrinarian determination that was followed from his turn of mind: because he had a lot of political preconceptions, he tried to realize this. The resistance of the German Government on the spite with Bethmann-Hollweg was so hard that the ambitions of Burián proved to be as fighting windmills. Burián had been going on the way of the "sub-dualistic" structure in like manner to the situation of Croatian in the framework of the Danube-Monarchy. In his second period as Common Foreign Minister (April — October 1918) has hindered him the defensive trends of the military situation of the Central Powers to realize his imagines upon the Polish Solution.

KEYWORDS

Austro-Polonism; the Future of Poland; Common Ministry of the Foreign Affairs; Sub-dualistic System; Unify the Polish Nation; Central Powers