

Péter Debreceni

Horthy's Meeting with Hitler in Kiel in August of 1938 from a Polish perspective¹

The aim of this publication to present one of the most important of the trips and talks of Miklós Horthy in the interwar era from the Polish political and journalistic side.² This meeting caused many mutations

1 The research in writing the paper is supported by the Visegrad Scholarship Fund.

2 I examined four daily newspapers for this study: the *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny* (I. K. C.) was one of the most popular newspapers in Poland in that period, published in Cracow with a circulation of 80 000 copies on weekdays and 120 000 copies on Sundays, but obtained 130-180 000 copies between 1929 and 1939. After May of 1926 politically associated with the government side and supported Piłsudski and his groups (before it the I.K.C. pertain to Centrum side); The I.K.C. had twelve local departments in other Polish cities, so this newspaper had one of the best information network in the country. Furthermore, the I.K.C. was the most important press for the Polish people, who lived abroad, mainly in France and Czechoslovakia. The daily, which had most probably the best technical conditions, focussed on Cracow and the “Małopolska” region, it was the most influenced press in this part of country, which supported the governments. Among its readers we could find officers, clerks, tradesmen, craftsmen and agricultural labourer, so every part of the Polish society. Its (and its concern’s) leader was Marian Dąbrowski, who was member of the Polish Parliament of the Second Polish Republic. The *Kurier Poznański* published in Poznań with a circulation of about 35 000 copies, ideologically very close to the National – Democratic (“endecja”) side and became the most important dailies of this political circle which was printed out of Warsaw. The *Kurier Poznański* was printed two times per day (except Monday) morning on 4, evening on 16 pages, especially detailing the economical situation. The newspaper was addressed to intellectuals of Poznań’s area, who agreed with the anti-Germans views. They employed many famous and prominent publicists and redactors, so the *Kurier Poznański* had one of the best journalist guards in this era. The reason that this kind of press became popular was the economical crisis in ’30s and the younger generation started to follow the authoritarian right-side (sometimes fascist elements) political trends and parallel with this rejected the liberal and left side element.

The Daily sought independence from the Warsaw’s left cabinets and through determinedly followed the opinion of the right-wing political circles, which meant strong criticism to “sanation” system in the end of 20s.

Their main aims were: create a new elite, hierarchy and discipline policy, which could be based on strong national organization(s). Strongly rejected communist ideology and wanted to defend the Christian moral. Protection of Polishness was based on the movement and they surmise the Jewish groups to be dangerous. The *Czas* (this newspaper had the longest tradition in Poland in this period, published in Cracow from 1848) after its fusion with the *Dzień Polski* published in Warsaw from 1935 with a circulation of about 4000 – 6000 copies, in terms of its political orientation the *Czas* was principally Conservative. The daily was addressed

in the Hungarian policy and had some (and shortly) effects to Central European situation. Many Hungarian publications care about these days and trying to discover what happened, for example during Béla Imrédy's talks, whose behaviour and political mind definitely changed after them. In this paper we try to show the opinion of Polish policy and journals about this meeting and review the topics of talks between Horthy and Józef Lipski, furthermore between Hermann Göring and the Polish Ambassador. Firstly, we would like to represent widely the events of this meeting from Polish side and focusing the less well-known facts, for example Lipski's talks and its topics with the Hungarian statesmen, which is an absolutely new information in Hungarian history.

to the intellectuals and small aristocrats and landowner layers (who started to lose their existentialism after the economical crisis) and they felt sympathy with Piłsudski in the first half of the '30s. The daily had a kind of „quality” elitist character. Their publicists (who were known personalities for example in Cracow aged university professors) and ideologists agreed in a monarchist view, or in an authoritarian system and they believed in a more centralized system, which could solve the economical and social problems. The Conservatives were pushed opposition side after Piłsudski's death, same as the other important Conservative daily, the *Słowo* (redacted by Cat-Mackiewicz in Vilnius). The two newspapers often had polemic, but mainly neither agreed with Beck's foreign policy. The *Gazeta Polska* (conservative daily), which was published in the capital of Poland with a circulation of about 30 000 copies in the end of the '30s. Started to publish in 1929 redacted by Adam Koc until 1931, after Bogusław Miedziński and Ignacy Matuszewski). Became the central organ of BBWR (Bezpartyjny Blok Współpracy z Rządem Józefa Piłsudskiego – Non-party Bloc for Cooperation with the Government) and mainly represented the „Piłsudski's colonels” group (for example Adam Koc, Józef Beck, Bogusław Miedziński, etc.) During the years *Gazeta Polska* was one of the best distributed political newspapers and half of its copies were sold outside of Warsaw. It was one of the most stable and most richly informative editorial newspapers, which had a great literary section (here published Tuwim, or Iwaszkiewicz for example). Slowly became the leader organ of the government groups, from December of 1937 became the main daily of OZN (Obóz Zjednoczenia Narodowego – Camp of National Unity) and mentioned as a trumpet of the Polish government. Brzoza-Sowa: *Historia Polski 1918-1945* [History of Poland 1918-1945], Kraków, 2006; Ilustrowany Kuryer Codzienny 1910-1939. Ed: Grażyna Wrona- Piotr Borowiec-Krzysztof Woźniakowski, Kraków-Katowice, 2010.; Leczyk, Marian: *Druga Rzeczpospolita 1918-1939* [The Second Polish Republic 1918-1939], Warszawa, 2006; Paczkowski, A.: *Prasa polska 1918-1939* [The Polish press 1918-1939] Warszawa, 1980.; *Prasa Narodowej Demokracji 1886-1939* [Press of National Democratic side 1886-1939]. Ed.: Aneta Dawidowicz-Ewa Maj, Lublin, 2010.; Rudnicki-Władysław: *Prasa konserwatywna Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej – zarys problematyki i przegląd tytułów*. [Conservative press of the Second Polish Republic – schema and review of titles] RHCzP, 1975, z. 4, 409-465.; Toczek, A.: *Stosunki „Czasu” z prasą krakowską i konserwatywną w latach 1920-1934*. [Relations of „Czas” with the press of Cracow and the conservative press in years 1920-1934] RHPP, 2007, z. 2, 95-121.;

The political situation in Hungary in the years before the Second World War was definitely tense. The three members of the Little Entente encircled Hungary and from spring 1938, the Third Reich was becoming the small country's direct neighbour.

In the interwar period the revisionist efforts (which represented the most important foreign policy goals of Hungarian politics) were inefficient but the negotiations with the Little Entente promised some results in 1937 and 1938. From among the Little Entente members, Hungary had the most strained relationships with Czechoslovakia while Prague had tense contacts with Poland.

During Gyula Gömbös' premiership Germany became the most important partner of Hungary mainly in economic line³ but the Central-European country has not signed any political or military agreement with Hitler's Reich. Unlike Poland who signed a non-aggression treaty with Germany in January 1934, which – temporary – fixed its situation and stabilized its relations with its western neighbours. This political calm did not force to look for a new partnership in the Danube's Territory and they did not want to put its good contacts with Romania and Yugoslavia at risk between 1934 and 1938.

At the time, the common Hungarian-Polish border was also a recurring topic of political news (*mutatis mutandis*, to the detriment of Czechoslovakia), without any concrete basis in day-to-day politics. The Polish-Hungarian relationship was mostly neutral. The atmosphere became warm during the premierships of Gyula Gömbös, who visited Warsaw at the end of 1934 and Marian Zyndram Kościłkowski, the Polish Prime Minister who paid a return visit to Budapest in April 1936. The two countries established many contacts including economic, legal and educational ones, but remained neutral in political and military topics.

No doubt that the most important meeting was the visit of Miklós Horthy and Kálmán Kánya to Poland in February 1938, only half a year before Horthy's meeting with Hitler in Germany. The occasion was very ceremonial, with the Hungarian and Polish press making many references to the traditional Polish-Hungarian friendship and writing in positive terms about Regent Horthy. However, no new treaty was signed at that time.

As far as internal policy is concerned, Hungarian radicals caused the most problems for the country's government in the second half of 1930. Hungarian Prime Minister Kálmán Darányi could not find any solution to this situation which led to his government's slow but inevitable fall.

3 Gömbös was the first European statesman who met Hitler in June 1933.

After the Anschluss, the Czechoslovakian-question was one of the most important issues in the Central-European policy. Poland – similar to Hungary – was also interested in this topic because both countries had notable minorities and they had territorial claims to Czechoslovakia which in case of its termination actually could open a free way to Hungarian-Polish border. The Polish politicians had much information about the Germans aim in this question and they seriously followed the events in the German-Czechoslovakian relations and the activities of Heinlein and the SdP party. Göring has already mentioned during his talk with Beck in January 1938 that existence of Czechoslovakia in this form is impossible.⁴ It means that the action against the south neighbour of Poland would not be a surprise but the Polish minister Beck told that they did not have any aim to destroy or attack Czechoslovakia and he realised that Great Britain and France would not defend their alliance, furthermore the British political circles would even sacrifice them to Hitler for the universal peace.⁵ (Göring also mentioned to Lipski in August 1938 that England could only be ready for a military action at the end of 1939.⁶) Beck clearly saw that the Czech army would not fight and the western powers were not prepared to enter any kind of war and the Soviet Union could not move either⁷ and they knew that Rumania would not give any kind of permission to the Soviet army to cross its territory.⁸ They were absolutely right because the statesmen of these countries declared in May 1938 that their main aim was to steer clear of military conflict.⁹

Beck was definitely sure that the destiny of Czechoslovakia was going to be decided in 1938 and he enhanced that Poland would not participate in any actions or attack against his neighbour and would not fight together with Germans.¹⁰ Furthermore, he had different interest in Czechoslovakia as Hungary did who wanted a bigger territorial part and Poland did not want to fight together with Hitler, they could imagine

4 *Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne* [Polish Diplomatic Documents] 1938. Ed. Marek Konrad. Warszawa, 2007. 22–26.

5 Anna Cienciąła, *Polska polityka zagraniczna w latach 1926-1932* [Polish foreign policy between 1926 and 1932]. Paris, 1990. 214–217.

6 Niepublikowany Dokumenty – rozmowy Göring-Lipski z 24 sierpnia 1938 r. [Unpublished documents – Göring talks to Lipski on 24th of August in 1938]. = *Sprawy Międzynarodowe* [International issues], 1958. 3. no. 80–87.

7 Ibid.

8 *Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne*, 411–416.

9 Ibid. 240–244.

10 Ibid. 213., 219.

just an economical cooperation¹¹. Hungary was mainly afraid of the Yugoslavian and Rumanian attack, this was the main reason why they wanted to keep its abstention in the military questions but they did not resign about the territorial revision and irredentism which were the basic things of Hungarian foreign policy. The Polish foreign minister did not want to risk the good relations with the other members of Little Entente.

The Prussian prime minister has confirmed his earlier opinion to Lipski about the existence of Czechoslovakia in March¹² and the German policy did not rule out the cooperation among the Reich, Hungary and Poland in this question.¹³

The Polish politicians also had a lot of information about the Hungarian attitude. Wettstein who was the Hungarian Ambassador in Prague these years, privately informed his Polish colleague that Hungary can unleash a war just could be able to take advantage of the confusion and confirmed the information about the relationship between the Hungarian minority and Slovakian minority.¹⁴ It was the major topic in the Polish foreign policy because if Hungary gets back some territories (and population, mainly Hungarians of course) eventually it would be a pattern for Poland too but Beck mentioned that the Hungarian policy in the Czechoslovakian-Hungarian question is unfair.¹⁵ (This matter and the Polish interest about a Czechoslovakian territory was not a topic neither in the Polish press nor in the diplomatic correspondence in these months.) According to Beck the main question was about the Polish minorities in Czechoslovakia and the Czechoslovakian-Soviet Union relationship.¹⁶ They also had some information about the German plans towards Hungary. Szembek said that Germany wanted Slovakia to be annexed by Hungary and in this case Hungarian policy has to guarantee wide cultural and administrative laws for the remaining Slovakian minorities¹⁷ and they also had information about the Hungarians-Heinlein contact.

11 Niepublikowany Dokumenty, 80–87.

12 Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne, 138–139.

13 Ibid. 220–221.

14 Ibid. 236.

15 Ibid. 22–26.

16 Polska polityka zagraniczna w świetle archiwów Wilhelmstrasse (1937-1938) [Polish Foreign Policy in light of the Wilhelmstrasse archives (1937-1938)]. = *Sprawy Międzynarodowe*, 1958. 4. no. 80–93.

17 Niepublikowany Dokumenty, 80–87.

In the Polish diplomatic correspondence the Czechoslovakian crisis was the main topic at the end of May because the Polish policy thought that its strategic position would become worse in case Germans dominated above all Czechoslovakia and wrote many times about the tense relations with their southern neighbour. The press in this month seriously dealt with the Hungarian government crisis¹⁸ beside the Central-European issues and in the diplomatic correspondences wrote many times about the Czechoslovakian communist actions against Poland¹⁹ and the Polish press wrote in negative tone about them.

In this study we would like to review some important and interesting questions from the Polish side.

Firstly, we have to check if this meeting could modify anything in the Polish-Hungarian relationships? Hungary had had a new prime minister since May, did he show a new way in the Hungarian foreign policy in Hungarian-Polish and German-Hungarian relations?

Furthermore: How did the dailies value the German-Hungarian meeting? Did it cause any change in the Hungarian-Polish relations?

Was it basically an important topic in the Polish press and diplomacy correspondence, or they disregarded it?

What they thought about the Bled's agreement and about the Hungarian policy towards national minorities? What was the German and Polish opinion about it?

What the Polish thought about an eventual military conflict and the Hungarians' role in it? Did they have any information about the situation of the Hungarian Army?

Did they write about the Hungarian-Polish common board or did they calculate with a military conflict from Hungarian side? It should have been an important topic because a strong and friendly neighbour was very important for Poland. Furthermore, the question of the Slovakian minority should have been interesting for the Polish political circles.

In the issue of May 16, the *I. K. C.* discussed the programme of the new prime minister whom they called "Hungarian Schacht". The title of the article was „The foreign and domestic policy programme of the new

18 In the Polish daily press published lots of articles about the crisis of the Darányi government. They mentioned Imrédy and Bárdossy as possible successors to take the vacant positions. After this crisis the Hungarian Regent had entrusted Béla Imrédy with forming the new Hungarian government.

19 For example: *Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne*, 383–387.

Hungarian government.”²⁰ In his speech before the Parliament, Imrédy tried to define the main aims and directions of the Hungarian foreign policy. He spoke about further strengthening of the Hungarian-Italian relations and the unchanged and evolving friendship between Hungary and Germany.

As regards the Hungarian-Polish relations, he said that there was a deep and sincere friendship between Hungary and Poland, a comment which received thunderous applause by the audience and was pleased in his speech that England was demonstrating growing interest in the problems of Central Europe.

At the end of his address on Hungarian foreign policy, Imrédy spoke about the „negotiations with Yugoslavia, Romania and Czechoslovakia started in the last few years” with a view to harmonize the relationship among the countries. Furthermore, he referred to the situation of the Hungarian population in these countries, emphasizing that „the Hungarian government did not lose its hope to succeed in creating conditions in the Danube Basin which would make it possible to ensure the normal development and allow the creation of friendly relations necessary for them.”²¹

Referring to the topic of the domestic politics, Imrédy mentioned the continuation of the ongoing projects and emphasized the armaments which he identified as the main target and the elimination of harmful political activities from the far right. „Finally, the Prime Minister gave his full support to the previous government’s legislation which is to be introduced next.”²²

The *Gazeta Polska* in its issue of May 15 emphasized other key details from the speech by the new prime minister. According to the article, Imrédy explained that “in recent times there have not been any changes in the Hungarian policy. We could characterize this policy as an active policy of peace which tried to strengthen the good relations with our friends as well as trying to improve our contacts with countries that we may not have had friendly relations with.”²³

The new government, the new prime minister and his policy also became interesting for Poland. They tried to calculate effect of the

20 Zagraniczny i wewnętrzny program nowego rządu węgierskiego [Foreign and internal program of the new Hungarian government]. *I. K. C.*, no. 124, May 16, 1938.

21 Ibid.

22 Ibid.

23 Polityka pokojowa Węgier – bez zmian [Peace Politics of Hungary – without changes]. *Gazeta Polska*, no. 132, May 15, 1938.

changing in Hungarian foreign policy which could affect the whole Danube Basin political situation and could cause change between the Hungarian-Little Entente, Hungarian-German and somehow the Hungarian-Polish relationship.

The Polish policy in those weeks was waiting for the solution of the Czechoslovakian question; they were interested in the behaviour of Hungarian statesmen. They knew about the cooperation between Hungarians and Heinlein's group and Beck had a critical opinion about the Hungarians' minority-policy.²⁴

In the next two months in the Polish press we also can find some short articles about Hungary, for example concerning the resignation of Bálint Hóman and some serious reports about the visit to Italy between 18 and 20 July 1938. On these days, Imrédy, accompanied by Kálmán Kánya, arrived in Rome and met Mussolini and Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs Ciano.²⁵ The *Gazeta Polska* expected that three topics would be discussed during this meeting, namely: the futures of the Rome Protocols²⁶ after Austria had been occupied by Third Reich, the relationships between Yugoslavia, Hungary and Italy, as well as the possibility of convergence of these three states.²⁷

During the negotiations the issue of Yugoslavia also came up,²⁸ and they tried to predict the reaction of the Yugoslav government in case of a possible Hungarian attack against Czechoslovakia.²⁹ In connection with this analysis the daily speculated about the prospect of Yugoslavia leaving the Little Entente.

Before this meeting the dailies mentioned in the first footnote published short articles, usually a few sentences, informing their readers about Horthy's visit to Germany in August of 1938. From the reviewed newspapers the biggest interest was shown in the *I. K. C.* which reported about this event on 14 June (while Wilhelm Keitel was staying in Hungary).

24 Cienciała, *Polska polityka*, 219.

25 György Réti, *Budapest – Róma Berlin árnyékában. Magyar-olasz diplomáciai kapcsolatok 1932-1940* [Budapest – Rome in the shade of Berlin. Italian – Hungarian diplomatic relationships between 1932 and 1940]. Budapest, 1998. 117–129.

26 The Rome Protocols: an international agreement which was signed in 1934 in Rome by Austria, Hungary and Italy. This protocol dealt with economic development.

27 Przed węgierską wizytą w Rzymie [Before the Hungarian visit in Rome]. *Gazeta Polska*, no. 193, July 16, 1938.

28 Wizyta Mussoliniego w Budapeszcie [Mussolini's visit in Budapest]. *I. K. C.*, no. 200, July 22, 1938.

29 Réti, *Budapest – Róma*, 117–129.

During the first half of May, i.e. when the Hungarian government crisis was already in progress, the *Gazeta Polska* informed about a Hungarian-German meeting (without concrete date), during which Admiral Raeder delivered the invitation from Adolf Hitler to Miklós Horthy³⁰ (other presented dailies reported about the invitation, too). The Polish Embassy in Budapest also sent a report about this fact³¹ and noted that the official political circles tried to keep quiet about the meeting.³²

The Polish press published numerous articles about the meeting in the first half of August of 1938. These included extensive information about the reasons of the visit with speculations that the Hungarian and German politicians would sign a new agreement (a political or only economic treaty or both). In the end, though, the dailies dismissed these possibilities.³³

The relationship between Hungary and the Little Entente was also of great interest during these days. The most important aspect of this situation was the question of Hungary's armament.³⁴ The *I.K.C.*'s reporter sent a short article from Berlin saying that the English and French political circles were ready to accept the equality of armaments for Hungary.³⁵ (They could have perhaps accepted such a proposal already in 1936 if Hungary had pushed it through in the League of Nations.³⁶) This topic was one of the most important questions in the Hungarian foreign policy and became even more important as the Little Entente gradually weakened.

Simultaneously, Czechoslovakia began to be isolated inside the Little Entente, too.³⁷ The agreement between Bulgaria and Yugoslavia from January 27, 1937 showed definitely that this cooperation would slowly disintegrate.³⁸

30 Regent Horthy zaproszony do Niemiec na manewry floty [Regent Horthy invited to Germany for fleet maneuvers]. *Gazeta Polska*, no. 129, May 12, 1938.

31 Archiwum Akt Nowych [hereinafter AAN], Ambasada RP w Berlinie, 323. documents of Józef Lipski, 15. no. 52/4/W/34.

32 Ibid.

33 Prem.[sic!] Horthy nie podpisze w Berlinie nowych umów z Rzeszą [Prem. Horthy will not sign a new contract with the Reich in Berlin]. *I. K. C.*, no. 219, August 10, 1938.

34 Węgry uzyskają wkrótce równouprawienie w dziedzinie zbrojeń [Hungary will soon gain equality in the field of armaments]. *I. K. C.*, no. 220, August 11, 1938.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 Magda Ádám, *Magyarország és a kisantant a harmincas években* [Hungary and the Little Entente during the 1930s]. Budapest, 1968, 130.

38 Ádám, *Magyarország*, 138. and 144.

The situation of Czechoslovakia in that year was very complicated because it had bad relations with each and every neighbour. The biggest problems were with the Czechoslovakian-German relationship and with the Sudetes Germans who enjoyed Hitler's support and made many anti-Czech activities. The situation was very complicated because the 3 million minorities became a well organised movement with a strong Party (SdP) which firstly wanted autonomy, later wanted "Anschluss" and to join to Hitler's Empire.³⁹ Furthermore, the Polish-Czechoslovakian contact was not de-energized. One of the most important sources of the tension was the Polish minority in this country. Many times during the talks with other statesmen its situation was the main topic and the Polish diplomacy and policy emphasized that they wanted the same right as the Sudetes could get.⁴⁰ The other thing was the communist agitation which caused a continuous problem for the Polish side. They had complained about it many times. These problems and the other conflicts between the two countries did not cause any military solution.

The main aim of the Hungarian foreign policy was the border revision. They knew that it was possible to modify the borderline mainly against Czechoslovakia and it depended only on the support given by Germany. The Polish Ambassador in Budapest sent his report to Warsaw and in it he mentioned that Hungary did not want to inaugurate any conflicts. Furthermore, the Hungarian policy should be sure, in case of a Hungarian attack neither Yugoslavia nor Romania would turn against Hungary.⁴¹ The Polish diplomatic circles well realized that Hitler's policy did not support a Hungarian-Polish common border and for the Germans it was not necessary to occupy the whole Czechoslovakian territory.⁴²

The Polish Foreign Affairs documents also dealt with the talks between Hungary and Yugoslavia which took place a week before the meeting in Kiel. Accordingly, the Hungarian government drafted a bilateral (Yugoslavian-Hungarian) agreement.⁴³ Kánya was almost certain that Belgrade's attitude would be positive but had not received any proposal for approval.⁴⁴

39 <http://www.tankonyvtar.hu/hu/tartalom/historia/02-08/ch03.html> – January 22, 2015.

40 *Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne*, 328–330.

41 *Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne*, 320–322. He reported, that if Yugoslavia will not mobilize, then Roumania also stay in peace.

42 *Ibid.*

43 *Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne*, 418–419.

44 *Ibid.*

In any case, the document proves that the Hungarian foreign policy (regardless of the meeting in Germany) strongly emphasized the need to improve relations with the Little Entente (at least with Yugoslavia). The position of Little Entente started to change in the mid 30's. Germany built more closely relationship (firstly economically) with Romania and Yugoslavia, which caused slow political closing of both countries to Reich. The first signs of decay obviously appeared around 1936-1937 and Czechoslovakia started to lose his power inside the organization. Yugoslavia signed an agreement with Italy in March 1937 and they did not ask the two other members about it which should have been necessary.⁴⁵ Benes looked for a new solution and started to approach Hungary because he had seen the chance to sign a secret agreement with them. The other thing was that the situation with the Sudetes became very tense and the Czechoslovakian political circles wanted to find solution with Hungary and the Hungarian minorities who lived there.

The first step was the invitation of Bárdossy to the conference in Sinaia, where the Hungarian politician talked about these topics which became facts a year later in Bled. From the end of 1937 it became increasingly clear that the organization would fall apart and the Czechoslovakian efforts were in vain. Most probably this was the reason why the politicians of Czechoslovakia tried to regulate the political relations with Hungary and offered the equality of armaments in Sinaia⁴⁶ on August 30, 1937.⁴⁷ The negotiations in Sinaia ended without any results but it was a positive development for the Hungarian diplomacy because it demonstrated that it could demand more political rights in the next months than Hungary could expect under the equality of armament arrangement. (The Hungarian Minister for Foreign Affairs Kálmán Kánya wanted to regulate the situation of the Hungarian minorities among the member countries of the Little Entente.)

The visit of the Hungarian statesmen was a frequent topic in the diplomatic correspondence in August 1938. The Polish ambassador sent back the concrete date of the visit to the Polish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and wrote about the significance of the meeting: „[...] Horthy's trip is going to occur on the 21st of this month. Prime Minister, Imrédy,

45 In this agreement the these two countries mutually recognized by the other existing boundaries on March 25, 1937.

46 Sinaia is a small town In Romania, where the prime and foreign ministers from Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia met at the end of August 1937.

47 Ádám, Magyarország, 159–161.

who had still not visited Germany, Kánya, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and General Rátz, the Minister of Defence, would be travelling in the company of the Regent. [...] I received information (from official circles) that the invitation of Rátz happened due to German pressure, considering the colossal parade of German army – of about 120 000 people were expected to take part – during the visit of the Regent.”⁴⁸ The ambassador noted that this would be the biggest show which was ever held in Germany.⁴⁹

“As expected, during the eight days the Regent should visit Berlin, Hamburg, Kiel and Nuremberg. The Hungarian State Department was aware of the commentaries and the echoes, which were caused by the participation of Minister of Defence Rátz and the long period of this visit. I also heard that the Hungarian prime minister was not delighted about the fact that Rátz accepted the invitation. Even so, the local political circles were comforting themselves with the hope that the echo of this meeting would not last long and that it would not result in any concrete political agreement.”⁵⁰

The *I. K. C.* confirmed it in a very short article on 10th August which declared that “Horthy will not sign any new agreement with the German Reich.”⁵¹ According to the daily there would be some talks about political and economic topics between the two statesmen but they „*will not sign any new documents, [...] the relations between the two countries do not require any changes* [Italics in the original text – P. D.]”⁵²

The dailies already started to take up the topic of the arrangements on August 14. The national democratic *Kurier Poznański* from the opposite side published that Germany would welcome Hungarian Regent with the same pomp as they welcomed Mussolini.⁵³

Expectations were heightened by the German press too, with the Hungarian – German relationship and Horthy making the headlines of German newspapers. A number of dailies declared that Horthy would

48 AAN, M. S. Z. Poselstwo RP w Budapeszcie, 6751, Orłowski's report, 52/4/W/39, August 12, 1938.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

51 Prem.[sic!] Horthy nie podpisze w Berlinie nowych umów z Rzeszą [Prem. Horthy will not sign a new contract with the Reich in Berlin]. *I. K. C.*, no. 219, August 10, 1938.

52 Ibid.

53 Przed wizytą Horthy'ego w Niemczech – Regent Węgier będzie przyjęty tak świetnie jak niedawno Duce [Before Horthy's visit in Germany – Regent of Hungary will be welcomed as well as the Duce]. *Kurier Poznański*, no. 368, August 14, 1938.

be the first head of state to visit the German Reich.⁵⁴

Every newspaper reported about the arrangements⁵⁵ and the *Gazeta Polska* drew attention (by referring to the article of the *Berliner Zeitung am Mittag*) to the fact that „the Czech – Slovakian question was of common interest to Hungary and Germany. The newspaper reminded that 700 000 Hungarians lived in Czechoslovakia.”⁵⁶

The *I. K. C.* also published a series of short articles saying that no one believed in concrete results from the meeting in England.⁵⁷ The interest was definitely more serious in Paris because French politicians were sure that the Czech-Slovak problem and the German propaganda in Hungary would be important topics.⁵⁸

Horthy and his escort left Budapest on Saturday evening, August 20.⁵⁹ (Horthy wrote in his memoirs that they set off on Sunday, August 21,⁶⁰ but Pál Pritz in his study also mentioned the date of August 20⁶¹, which was confirmed by the Polish press and diplomatic correspondence).

On August 21 Horthy arrived on a special train in Vienna,⁶² where the newly installed Nazi chancellor Seyss-Inquart welcomed him in the company of top officials.⁶³ The next station was Regensburg where

54 Horthy had already been in Berchtesgaden, where he met with Hitler in 1936, but this meeting was informal. Miklós Horthy, *Emlékirataim* [Memoirs]. Budapest, 1990. 188–191.

55 For example: Dla Horthy’ego przystroi się Berlin tak samo jak dla Mussoliniego [For Horthy Berlin as well preparing as for Mussolini]. *I. K. C.*, no. 224, August 15, 1938.

56 Ibid. *Gazeta Polska*, no. 220, August 13, 1938.

57 Angliacy o wizycie Horthy’ego [Britons about the visit of Horthy]. *I. K. C.*, no. 232, August 22, 1938.

58 Powitanie regenta Węgier w Wiedniu; and Problem czechosłowacki na pierwszym miejscu [Welcome to the Regent of Hungary in Vienna; the Czechoslovakian problem in the first place]. *I. K. C.*, no. 233, August 23, 1938.

59 Regent Horthy wyjechał do Niemiec [Regent Horthy travelled to Germany]. *I. K. C.*, no. 232, August 22, 1938; furthermore *Gazeta Polska* no. 228, August 21, 1938. 4. and Wyjazd regenta Węgier do Niemiec [Travel of the Hungarian Regent to Germany], 16.

60 Horthy, *Emlékirataim*, 209.

61 Pál Pritz, *Magyar diplomácia a két világháború között* [The Hungarian diplomacy between the Two World Wars]. Budapest, 1995. 297.

62 Wizyta regenta Horthy’ego w Rzeszy [Visit of Regent Horthy in the Reich]. *Gazeta Polska*, no. 239, August 22, 1938.

63 Ibid. *Gazeta Polska*, no. 239, August 22, 1938.; furthermore Regent Horthy na ziemi niemieckiej – [Regent Horthy on German territory – great welcome in Vienna], *Czas*, no. 229, August 22, 1938.

arrived on Sunday evening.⁶⁴

The Polish press tried to publish some background information about the meeting and analyzed the German – Hungarian relations of the previous few years. The *I. K. C.* wrote about Hungary's economic dependence on the German Reich.⁶⁵ The journalist included some very detailed statistics and concluded that Hungary's economy was lop-sided and dependant on Hitler's Germany.⁶⁶ This could also cause the loss of political independence.⁶⁷ Hungary tried to search for new goals, mainly in Italy and in England and, the country would like to open towards the Balkans (mainly Romania).⁶⁸ The analyst argued that Hungary could not be included in the sphere of influence of Germany without any resistance because of Hungary's leading papist faith, national traditions and strong monarchist sentiment.⁶⁹ It was a fact that Hitler tried to co-opt Hungary to the Rome – Berlin axis because he thought it would be easier to get to the Balkans through Hungary.⁷⁰ The author warned this cooperation was very similar to the one that existed a few years earlier, i.e. during the First World War.⁷¹ In the closing lines the journalist emphasized that "*the Hungarian nation has been able to defend its independence in the course of ten centuries*" [Italics in the original text – P. D.].⁷²

The Hungarian Regent arrived in Cologne on 22nd August. At the railway station, which was richly decorated, he was welcomed by Hitler and a huge crowd.⁷³ The two leaders travelled to the harbour where the new German cruiser was named: *Prinz Eugen* to honour the wife of the Hungarian Regent.⁷⁴ After the parade and the christening Horthy in the

64 Ibid.

65 Czy Węgry poddadzą się wpływowi Berlina? Za kulisami podróży Regenta Horthy'ego do Niemiec [Is Hungary surrender to the influence of Berlin? Behind the scenes, Regent Horthy's trip to Germany]. *I. K. C.*, no. 232, August 22, 1938.

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid.

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid.

72 Ibid.

73 Spotkanie regenta Horthy'ego z kanclerzem Hitlerem w Kolonji [Regent Horthy's meeting Chancellor Hitler in the Colonies]. *I. K. C.*, no. 233, August 24, 1938.

74 Spuszczenie na wodę nowego krążownika [Celebration of the new cruiser]. *I. K. C.*, no. 233, August 24, 1938. Furthermore, Horthy, *Emlékirataim*, 209. and Pritz, *Magyar diplomácia*, 297.

company of Hitler travelled to Hamburg on board of the “Grill” ship.⁷⁵ The German press published a number of articles about the salute of Hungarian statesmen, Hungary and the person of Horthy.⁷⁶

Apart from this topic, the politics of the Little Entente and their conference in Bled⁷⁷ also became important issues in the German press. Before the Hungarian statesmen set off on their journey, the *Czas* published a full-page analysis with the title “Armament issue of Hungary”.⁷⁸ The journalist analysed the agreement from Saloniki⁷⁹ (when Bulgaria recovered the equality of armaments) and declared that only Hungary did not have this right,⁸⁰ although the country fought for it without any results [*Czas* published this analysis in a report from Budapest dated August 20, 1938 – P. D.].⁸¹

After these analyses the conference of Bled became one of the most important topics in the examined dailies. The *Gazeta Polska* activated its reporters in Bucharest and Belgrade, who informed that the statesmen from Romania and Yugoslavia travelled to a serious conference where they were going to discuss some important economic and political questions.⁸² This was the aftermath of the Anschluss and of the relations with Hungary (at the same time, the papers emphasized that the talks with Budapest⁸³ had not been broken off since the conference of Sinaia).⁸⁴ The newspaper issued the next day wrote about expecting three bilateral agreements which would be modelled on the agreement from Thessaloniki.⁸⁵

75 Ibid. *I. K. C.*, no. 233, August 24, 1938.

76 Powitalne artykuły prasy niemieckiej [Welcoming articles of German press]. *Gazeta Polska*, no. 239, August 22, 1938.

77 Bled is a small town in Yugoslavia (today in Slovenia) where met the Hungarian and Little Entente’s politics in August 1938.

78 Sprawa dozbrojenia Węgier [Military situation of Hungary]. *Czas*, no. 227, August 20, 1938.

79 They signed this agreement on July 31, 1938.

80 Ibid. *Czas*, no. 227, August 20, 1938.

81 Ibid.

82 Przed konferencją państw Małej Ententy [Before the conference of Little Entente]. *Gazeta Polska*, no. 228, 21 August 1938.

83 Conference in Sinaia: conference of Little Entente on August 30, 1937. The Little Entente invited the Hungarian ambassador, László Bárdossy also as a partner.

84 Ibid. *Gazeta Polska*, no. 228, August 21, 1938.

85 Propozycje M. Ententy pod adresem Węgier [Proposal of Little Entente to Hungary]. *Gazeta Polska*, no. 230, August 23, 1938. In Thessaloniki the Little Entente and Bulgaria signed an agreement about the equality of armaments.

The official statement became the most important news in the dailies on 24th August and received even more coverage on the second day of the meeting between the Hungarian and German statesmen. The *Gazeta Polska* published it on the title page,⁸⁶ the *I. K. C.* wrote a full-page about it and emphasized that this agreement “*had not been accepted yet in its final version*”⁸⁷ [Italics in the original text – P. D.].

The reporter from Belgrade informed that an obstacle to the final agreement was the situation of Hungarian minorities in the countries of Little Entente. They could find the solution only “*through personal negotiations*” [Italics in the original text – P. D.].⁸⁸ This news met with great satisfaction in Prague because they thought that Hungary had opened up routes to the West.⁸⁹

This agreement received big echoes in the Hungarian and the German press, too. The *Czas* informed that the Hungarian political circles were delighted with the results of Bled but they did not treat it as an event of particular importance.⁹⁰ The German *Nationale Zeitung* believed the Little Entente lost its actual purpose as a result of this agreement.⁹¹

The visit gave rise to many significant reports. The newspapers principally wrote about the pomp and other formal circumstances, for example the biggest naval show since the First World War.⁹² The reason for this ceremonial pomp was that Germany wanted to demonstrate its friendship with Hungary and stress the common political interests informed by the *Gazeta Polska*.⁹³ Unfortunately, we did not find any concrete information what was meant by “common political interests”, and the papers just repeated that Hungary would not sign any new agreement.⁹⁴

86 Równouprawienie Węgier w dziedzinie zbrojeń uznały Państwa Małej Ententy [Recognize the equality of Hungary in the field of armaments by Little Entente]. *Gazeta Polska*, no. 231, 24 August 1938.

87 Ibid. *I. K. C.*, no. 234, August 25, 1938. The issued official statement touched upon the situation between Little Entente and League of Nations, too.

88 Ibid.

89 Ibid.

90 Mała Ententa przyznała Węgrom równouprawienie zbrojeń [Little Entente granted equality of arms to Hungary]. *Czas*, no. 232, August 25, 1938.

91 Ibid.

92 Manifestacyjne przyjęcie regenta Węgier w Niemczech [Celebrating reception of Horthy in Germany]. *Gazeta Polska*, no. 231, August 24, 1938.

93 Ibid.

94 Celem wizyty – ściślejsza współpraca Węgier z Rzeszą twierdzi Berlin [The aim of the visit – closer cooperation between Hungary and Reich says Berlin]. *Gazeta Polska*, no. 231, August 24, 1938.

Regent Horthy arrived in Berlin on August 25. His welcome ceremony was the most important news in the *Gazeta Polska*, which reported it on the front page.⁹⁵ Chancellor Hitler, Göring, Ribbentrop and other political leaders welcomed Horthy at the decorated station.⁹⁶ It was also here where Hitler held his speech. Hitler emphasized the friendship between Germany and Hungary which had existed since the reign of St. Stephen.⁹⁷ Horthy accentuated that he did not feel himself on foreign territory since he crossed the German border, and furthermore talked about the common friendship (Hungarian and German) with Italy.⁹⁸ The reporter from Berlin also informed that the background situation was very friendly, no one created uncomfortable atmosphere around the agreement of Bled⁹⁹ (we found other opinions in the Hungarian and Polish documents¹⁰⁰) moreover the German political circles did not want any solutions between Hungary and Czechoslovakia.¹⁰¹

The Polish press was buzzing on August 26, when the papers wrote about the presentation of the German Army (which lasted at least two hours).¹⁰² The statesmen continued their programme at the Opera in Berlin.¹⁰³

95 Powitanie regenta Węgier w Berlinie [Welcome to the Regent of Hungary in Berlin]. *Gazeta Polska*, no. 232, August 25, 1938.

96 Ibid.

97 Ibid. and Przemówienie kanclerza Hitlera i regenta Horthy'ego [Speech by Chancellor Hitler and regent Horthy]. no. 232, August 25, 1938. furthermore Regent Węgier w Berlinie [Regent of Hungary in Berlin]. *Kurier Poznański*, no. 386, August 26, 1938, Wymiana toastów w Berlinie między regentem Horthym a kancl. Hitlerem [Toasts in Berlin between the regent of Hungary and chancellor Hitler's]. *I. K. C.*, no. 235, August 26, 1938.

98 Ibid.

99 Zastrzeżenia Węgier wobec uchwał M. Ententy – Czy zostanie zawarty węgiersko-czeski pakt nieagresji [Accepting Hungary's demands by Little Entente – Will the Hungarian-Czech non-aggression pact be alive?]. *Gazeta Polska*, no. 232, August 25, 1938.

100 for example: Pál Pritz, A kieli találkozó [The meeting in Kiel]. = *Századok*, 1974. 3. no. 646–679.

101 Zastrzeżenia Węgier wobec uchwał M. Ententy – Czy zostanie zawarty węgiersko-czeski pakt nieagresji [Accepting Hungary's demands by Little Entente – Will the Hungarian-Czech non-aggression pact be alive?]. *Gazeta Polska*, no. 232, August 25, 1938.

102 Regent Horthy w stolicy Niemiec [Horthy regent in the capital of Germany]. *Kurier Poznański*, no. 387, August 26, 1938.

103 Wielka rewia wojskowa w Berlinie przed regentem Węgier [Great military parade in Berlin for the Regent of Hungary]. *Gazeta Polska*, no. 233, August 26, 1938.

The examined dailies started to publish some political information, too, besides the description of the programme and the protocol of the visit on the next day. The *Gazeta Polska* collected the results of the meeting in five points and published them on the front page.¹⁰⁴

- eliminating the negative intentions after the Anschluss;
- no negative opinions about Romania and Yugoslavia in the welcoming speeches;
- military parades as demonstration of the Third Reich's return to military force;
- Horthy's declaration that Hungary would not participate in any cooperation against Germany;
- the visit and the official statement meant as Hungary's demonstration of an independent foreign policy.¹⁰⁵

Horthy with his wife travelled on to Potsdam where they visited the Sanssouci Palace and laid wreaths on the tomb of Frederick the Great on the last day of their visit.¹⁰⁶ Finally, they met Göring and his wife.¹⁰⁷ The dailies reported about the visit to Nuremberg on the last day, 28th August, when Rudolf Hess welcomed Horthy.¹⁰⁸ In a special article, the *Gazeta Polska* analysed the Hungarian public mood during these days and mentioned the Hungarians were satisfied with the visit,¹⁰⁹ which, however, did not cause any changes.¹¹⁰

The *I. K. C.* analysed the echoes in the German press which emphasized that "there would not be peace in the Danube-basin" until

104 Polityczny wynik wizyty regenta Węgier w Niemczech [The political result of the Hungarian regent's visit in Germany]. *Gazeta Polska*, no. 234, August 27, 1938.

105 Ibid. Furthermore Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára [hereinafter MNL OL] K. 66. Press and Culture Affairs, 1938. I–5.

106 Ostatni dzień pobytu w Berlinie [Last day in Berlin]. *Gazeta Polska*, no. 234, August 27, 1938.

107 Ibid.

108 Regent Horthy w Norymberdze [Regent Horthy in Nuremberg]. *Gazeta Polska*, no. 235, August 28, 1938.

109 Nastroje na Węgrzech w związku z wizytą regenta Horthy'ego w Niemczech [The mood of Hungary in connection with the visit of Regent Horthy in Germany]. *Gazeta Polska*, no. 235, August 28, 1938.

110 Ibid.

the situation of the Hungarian minority is not solved.¹¹¹ The newspaper underscored that “*Hungary negotiated solely bilaterally and would like to enter into an agreement on a bilateral basis*”¹¹² [Italics in the original text – P. D.].

The question of the Hungarian minority was a barrier to establishing contacts and the “*negotiations between Hungary and Czechoslovakia would be continued when the question of Sudeten is solved because Hungary would like to get the same right for its minority as for Sudeten Germans got in Czechoslovakia*”¹¹³ [Italics in the original text – P. D.]. The newspaper informed (citing Hungarian sources) that the decision of the Little Entente “*did not cause any advantages for Hungary [...]*”¹¹⁴ [Italics in the original text – P. D.]

The Hungarian – Little Entente situation was in the focus of other newspapers, too. The *Czas* published an article about a series of important activities (Horthy’s meeting with Hitler, conference in Bled, arrests in Hungary targeting the extreme right) and the political situation in the Danube-basin.¹¹⁵ The analyst concluded that „the Little Entente was late”¹¹⁶, it was definitely not ready to head off the Anschluss,¹¹⁷ and Italy was the power which forced the negotiations between Hungary and the Little Entente.¹¹⁸

The *Gazeta Polska* declared with respect to the situation between Hungary and the Little Entente “significant progress but no solution” was reached.¹¹⁹ The solution would be the settlement of the situation of the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia.¹²⁰ They also informed about

111 Węgrzy żądają dla siebie tych praw, jakie otrzymują Niemcy w Sudetach [Hungarians claim the same rights for themselves as the Sudeten Germans receive]. *I. K. C.*, no. 237, August 28, 1938.

112 Ibid.

113 Ibid.

114 Ibid.

115 Decydujące dni basenu naddunajskiego [Decision day in Danube Basin]. *Czas*, no. 234, August 27, 1938.

116 Ibid.

117 Ibid.

118 Ibid.

119 Węgry a Mała Ententa [Hungary and the Little Entente]. *Gazeta Polska*, no. 235, August 28, 1938, Title-page. Furthermore: Nowa era w basenie naddunajskim [New era in Danube Basin]. *I. K. C.*, no. 238, 29 August 1938.

120 Ibid. and *Gazeta Polska*, no. 235, August 28, 1938.

the return of Horthy. The Regent left from Linz to Budapest by ship on Sunday.¹²¹

The topic did not fade in the Polish press after the end of their visit. The papers published different analyses (often on their front pages) about the (political) results of the meeting. They declared the biggest result for Hungary was that the statesmen refused to be involved under German influence¹²² and showed the independence of Hungarian foreign policy with the official statement of Bled.¹²³

The Polish press dealt with this meeting in September 1938, too. The *I. K. C.* published a very interesting essay titled "Hungary refused the military and political demands of Germany."¹²⁴ The journalist emphasized the most important thing was that Hungary kept its freedom to make its own decisions.¹²⁵ The most important demand of Germany was the customs union,¹²⁶ as well as cooperation between the German and Hungarian armies during a military conflict with Czechoslovakia.¹²⁷ At the meeting the other German aims were to convince Hungary to join the Anti-Comintern Pact and leave the League of Nations.¹²⁸ During the visit the Germans could secure only one concrete result: emphasize the German-Hungarian friendship,¹²⁹ which was definitely an unsatisfactory outcome for Germany.¹³⁰

The issue that Hungary should join Anti-Comintern Pact was not a topic in the diplomatic correspondence,¹³¹ which focused on the Hungarian reaction to the conflict with Czechoslovakia,¹³² as well as the reaction of England and Poland to this crisis.¹³³ The Hungarian political

121 Regent Horthy z Linzu odpłynął Dunajem do Węgier [Regent Horthy from Linz sailed to Hungary on Danube]. *I. K. C.*, no. 239, August 30, 1938.

122 Ibid.

123 Ibid.

124 Węgry odrzuciły polityczne i wojskowe żądania Niemiec [Hungary rejected the political and military demands of Germany]. *I. K. C.*, no. 243, September 3, 1938.

125 Ibid.

126 Ibid.

127 Ibid.

128 Ibid.

129 Ibid.

130 Ibid.

131 AAN, Ambasada RP w Berlinie, 323.

132 Ibid.

133 Ibid.

atmosphere was very tense during these weeks because the extreme right was very active in Hungary and caused serious problems in the Hungarian domestic politics.¹³⁴

SUMMARY

“The visit of Horthy and the members of the Hungarian government to Germany aroused big interest”¹³⁵ in contemporary Polish press. It’s proved by dailies which gave primary importance to the meeting on their front pages and informed about all possible things (for example, the *Gazeta Polska* published over ten articles and reports only in one issue on August 24). They have already informed their readers about it from May to mid of September. We come to realize that the Polish diplomacy would not have been satisfied if the German-Hungarian relationship had become stronger and closer and they did not mention it straight but we could feel that the confidence of the Polish politicians in the Hungarian policy had decreased. The meeting was also an important topic in the diplomatic correspondence with ambassadors informing the public about all the details.¹³⁶ (The Polish Foreign Minister, Józef Beck himself gave orders to inform the public about the smallest details.)¹³⁷

In terms of political topics it was often strongly emphasized that Horthy was the first head of state who officially visited the German Reich. As no new agreements or contracts between the two countries were signed (the diplomatic documents declared the same), this caused general satisfaction for Polish diplomacy and politicians. The meeting only served to show the traditional friendship and gave Hungarian statesmen an opportunity to admire the military force of Germany.¹³⁸ The press did not write directly that Hungary was not a satellite state and would try to keep its independence. In these weeks this was an important part in the Polish newspapers because they hoped that the situation of Hungary (especially its foreign policy) would not change during Imrédy’s premiership (who received positive comments in the dailies) and did

134 Ibid.

135 MNL OL K. 63. (1938-17/7. Polish-Hungarian relationships) 1938. 227/pol. Attitudes of Polish press about the visit of Regent Horthy to Germany and of conference in Bled.

136 AAN, Ambasada RP w Berlinie, 323.

137 AAN, Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, 6571, P. III.1./W-N/9. 203.

138 AAN, Ambasada RP w Berlinie, 323.

not write about any Hungarian military actions and effects or about the situation of the Hungarian army.

The newspapers showed bigger interest in the negotiations in Bled, the Polish press informed about this event in parallel to the meeting but then in the diplomatic correspondence the issue was not mentioned. The press also was neutral and did not write about any Polish (emphatic) opinions about the agreement but they made feel doubt of German politicians. As regards this topic, we can definitely get more concrete political news about the meeting between Horthy and Hitler.

The importance of this topic is obvious and it is confirmed by many articles about the background information and news, for example Stojadinović (who supported the establishment of Hungarian schools in Yugoslavia¹³⁹) backed the agreement between Hungary and the Little Entente and Italy was the power who urged the parties to conduct the negotiations. The situation of the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia was mentioned a lot of times in the press. The diplomatic circles had information from June that Kánya will not sign any minorities' agreement with Czechoslovakia and Esterházy said to Göring that the Germans blocked the completion of the agreement between Hungary and Little Entente.¹⁴⁰

The dailies also activated their correspondence network all over Europe and collected a lot of reports, interviews and gossips. The most active places were Bucharest and Belgrade, while Prague barely figured at all.

It is an interesting fact that none of the examined Polish papers published voices of Polish public opinion and expectations about the meeting and political talks. In addition, the analyzed dailies did not publish any information about the territorial changes. Reports, statements and summaries about the actual political situation between Hungary and the Little Entente as well as Hungary and the Third Reich were very neutral and did not include any speculations. This confirms they did not expect any new agreements or contracts. They also did not publish that the meeting would cause any changes in the Polish-Hungarian relationships. Most probably – as we mentioned – the Polish trust decreased in the Hungarian policy but the Polish policy had a lot of bigger problems than the question of the friendship with Hungary in these years. The

139 Mała Ententa i Węgry [Hungary and the Little Entente]. *Kurier Poznański*, no. 398, 2 September 1938.

140 *Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne*, 343–344.

common boarder also was not a topic in these weeks (later many articles wrote about it.) Its reason was that they did not want to risk their good relationship with Rumania and Yugoslavia.¹⁴¹ So Poland needed a strong south neighbour¹⁴² (for example Hungary who was a “neutral friend” but Hungary was not strong enough in any spheres) but if they had had it, they would have lost their actual friends. They absolutely did not trust either in Hitler’s policy or the 25-year-elongation of the 1934 Polish-German agreement offered by Göring.

We know that the Polish ambassador in Berlin, Lipski met Göring and Miklós Horthy three times.¹⁴³ During the talks with Göring they mentioned the agreement of Bled and the German politician described the position of Hungary as “a little slack” (in German “flau”).¹⁴⁴

Furthermore they talked about the German-Polish relations, the question of Czechoslovakia, the situation of powers in Western Europe and the negotiations between France, the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia.¹⁴⁵ We were informed that Göring also calculated with the role of Poland. This meant that Warsaw could have some influence in Bucharest (as Berlin in Yugoslavia) and they would not have moved against Hungary in case if the Hungarians had not taken any military actions.¹⁴⁶ The Prussian prime minister emphasized that Hungary had to give the same autonomy to Slovakians that the Slovakian minority were not given by the Czech.¹⁴⁷

It means the Polish diplomatic circles knew about the danger of armed conflicts. It was confirmed by the Polish ambassador from Rome, such as Ciano said, Yugoslavia would not move (against Hungary of course) if Germany was the provocateur but if Hungary moved first, there was no guarantee that Yugoslavia would stay passive.¹⁴⁸

This information showed they had thought about the Hungarian behaviour in the case of military conflict. If Hungary joined any military attacks, they would get some territory from Germany. The risk was huge because they did not have any guarantee that during this time, when they were fighting in Czechoslovakia, no enemy armies would attack them.

141 Ibid. 387–390.

142 Ibid. 172–173.

143 AAN, Ambasada RP w Berlinie, 323.

144 Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne, 427–432.

145 Ibid.

146 Ibid. 427–432.

147 Ibid.

148 Ibid. 356–358.

Lipski also took a particular note on his conversations with Horthy on August 24. Firstly, they talked about the visit of Polish president to Hungary and the Polish ambassador referred to the cordial English-Polish relations, stressing the importance of „the current difficult political times.”¹⁴⁹ After this Horthy analyzed the internal political situation of Hungary and mentioned that Hungary would not follow Germany's example in the Jewish question.¹⁵⁰ Touching on the topic of the visit, Horthy also referred to oddities and difficulties, saying that for him the biggest surprise was the welcome of the Rumanian and Czechoslovakian ambassadors on the railway station.¹⁵¹ About the agreement in Bled he observed (talking to Lipski) that it seemed Hungary made a step against Germany. But in reality the Italian and the German governments wanted to force the Hungarian political circles to repair Hungarian-Yugoslavian and Hungarian-Rumanian relationships.¹⁵² This was the reason for the negotiations which was an “action of the Hungarian Foreign Affairs.”¹⁵³

At the end of these talks Lipski mentioned the common policy of Poland and Romania related to the Soviet Union, Horthy referred to Far East countries and the Japanese-Chinese relationship.¹⁵⁴ We might conclude Horthy quietly noted to Lipski that he was missing Blomberg and only one person had influence on German policy. It could be very difficult and negative in German policy.¹⁵⁵

The reports and the articles we used showed „abstention of assessments”.¹⁵⁶ We can think that Poland was not disappointed with the official statements from Bled (many times they emphasized that it could be the first step in the détente of the Danube-basin and the beginning of a new era). They were not disappointed in fact that the publication about the agreement of Bled took place at the same time when the Hungarian statesmen were staying in Germany. They thought that it showed the

149 Ibid. 433–434.

150 Ibid.

151 Ibidem 434.

152 Ibid.

153 Ibid.

154 Ibid.

155 Ibid. 433–434.

156 MNLOL, K. 63. 1938. 227/pol. Attitudes of Polish press about the visit of Regent Horthy to Germany and about the conference in Bled.

independence of the Hungarian foreign policy.¹⁵⁷ Lipski's information also supported this: Hungary would not sign anything.

Furthermore, he had a secret source, which informed him about what Imrédy said: "Hungary will not participate in a German-Czech military conflict." It was a positive thing for the actual Polish policy because they counted with a Hungarian territorial growing and a separation of Slovakia from the Czech Republic.¹⁵⁸

The lack of a final agreement with the Little Entente was due to the political stubbornness of Czechoslovakia.¹⁵⁹ We could hardly find any reference to the military question or any news about the preparations against Czechoslovakia but the press published negative comments about the fact that the Hungarian Minister of Defence joined the talks.¹⁶⁰

We did not find any information about tension between the statesmen during the visit in the examined dailies - for example when Hitler wanted to cancel their common programme in the Opera¹⁶¹ - therefore we do not know the opinion of Polish press or diplomats about this meeting.¹⁶² This is very interesting because the Hungarian historians wrote that Hitler wanted to encourage Hungarians to attack Czechoslovakia: he wanted a military attack from Hungary.

About this fact the Poles most probably did not have any information. The Hungarian politicians turned down the German offer – so the Polish opinion that Hungary would not be the satellite of the German Reich (in the near future) was correct.

The Polish diplomatic circles also wrote about this topic in mid-September, when Göring shared many secret information with Józef Lipski, for example about the autonomy question of the Slovaks and the Hungarian and Polish territorial claim which was not important for the German policy. It meant that in fact, Hitler did not support it (and the Hungarian-Polish common border neither) because Germany did not want an actual Hungarian or Polish recruitment.

157 AAN, Ambasada RP w Berlinie, 323.

158 Polskie Dokumenty Dyplomatyczne, 434–436.

159 Ibid.

160 AAN, M. S. Z. Poselstwo RP w Budapeszcie, 6751, 52/4/W/39, August 12, 1938.

161 Pritz, Magyar diplomácia, 315.

162 Supposedly Keitel talked about the participation of Poles. Pritz, Magyar diplomácia, 324 and 326.

