

Petr PAVELEC, Martin GAZI, Milena HAJNÁ (eds.)
Ve znamení Merkura. Šlechta českých zemí v evropské diplomacii

České Budějovice: Národní památkový ústav České Budějovice 2020
 ISBN 978-80-87890-31-8, 748 pp.

It is only two years after the book created by the team led by Jiří Kubeš¹ had come out when another monograph devoted to the participation of nobility of the Czech Lands in the diplomatic service appeared. Whereas the former work had been mostly created by professionals from the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy, University of Pardubice, and the Czech Academy of Sciences, the reviewed work is a piece by authors from the National Heritage Institute and by external experts from some academic institutions. It was created within a project entitled *Tracing Nobility Family Lines – Nobility in the Czech Lands in European Diplomacy* carried out by the National Heritage Institute, following so the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018.

The monograph aims to explain a large topic in a broader context than the work by Kubeš's team. It deals with

the Czech nobility's participation in diplomatic activities from the Middle Ages to the period of the Czechoslovak Republic. It was taken as a large-format book rich in illustrations using vast sources of relics kept at the family homes of aristocrats in the Czech Lands. This focus and the level of graphics and typography impart extraordinary attractive character to the publication; however, it conditioned the authors' focus on the history of diplomacy to be "*one of the broadly conceived cultural expressions*" (p. 13). Thus, most of the contributions focus more on "*changes of standards of civilization, expected gestures, ceremonial rules, duties of representation, background of a family and court, relational links or relationship networks*" (p. 13). A particular activity, opinions and attitudes of diplomats as to key issues of diplomacy in the particular period stand rather aside, which is undoubtedly a pity, however, it nowise reduces the quality of the work.

Also the focus of the book corresponded to a criterion for a selection of particular personalities, which was

¹ J. KUBEŠ et al., *V zastoupení císaře. Česká a moravská aristokracie v habsburské diplomacii 1640–1740*, Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny s. r. o. 2018, ISBN 978-80-7422-574-1.

ownership of states in the Czech Lands, a significant imprint upon political history, as well as the existence of important cultural heritage that relates to their activities. Therefore, the publication makes available more than eight hundred photographs of works of art, objects private in character, diplomatic presents, books, archival records and cartographic works that relate to aristocratic diplomacy. So, single studies concentrate more on a role of noble diplomats as servants to their state monarch, a role of arbiters of taste, mediators and protagonists of civilization impulses, patronage, foreign artists' engagement, collecting, building and furnishing foreign embassies. Nevertheless, the emphasis placed on preserved sources material in character affected the number of studies in single spheres.

The publication is divided into six thematic spheres. Especially numerous is aristocratic diplomacy in the 19th century (18×), followed by diplomacy in the Baroque period (16×) and the Middle Ages diplomacy (5×). Included in the lowest number is diplomacy at the threshold of the early modern period (this term used by the authors is not completely clear, strictly speaking, it applies to the period up to the Thirty Years' Wars period) (4×), diplomacy of the Age of Enlightenment (4×) and diplomacy in the Czechoslovak Republic (4×). In total, the book contains fifty-one qualitatively balanced profiles added by a note apparatus and rich illustrations from home or foreign sources reproduced in a high-technical quality. Each part of the book

is introduced with a study generally characterizing diplomatic service in the given period, diplomatic activities, the Czech nobility's participation and the outstanding personalities.

It is not that easy task for a reviewer to pick a quality study out of a good number of ones that is the most revealing or the most distinctive in the terms of information. So, mentioning studies covering a role of the noblemen from Velhartice in European diplomacy in the Middle Ages (Vilém Knoll, Tomáš Karel), or a profile about Bohemian ambassadors to King of England Richard II in 1381–1382 (Eliška Niederová, Milena Hajná) is more or less random. It is studies devoted to diplomacy of the last Rosenbergs (Jaroslav Pánek) that invite to be emphasized, or Krystof Popel the Younger of Lobkowitz, and relics of visits of Persian diplomatic legations in Prague in the early 17th century (Eva Lukášová). The one that is also worth referring is the commented translation of the text collection from a book entitled *The Perfect Ambassador* by Spanish writer Juan Antonio de Vera y Figueroa from the Baroque period, considered as a “text-book” of diplomacy from its first edition published in 1620.

From the Baroque era it is also a contribution talking about George Adam II of Martinice as a diplomat full of conflict (Zdeněk Hojda), or a piece about commander Ottavio I Piccolomini and his peace-making role (Petr Pavelec). Next, from the Age of Enlightenment it is a profile by Ivo Cerman about a diplomatic service in the Kaunitz era, or a study on a big game of diplomatic

missions of Altgraf (old count) Anthony Charles Joseph of Salm-Reifferscheidt (Michal Konečný). From the period of the “long” 19th century it is a study on Victor Dubský from Třebomyslice and his journeys to the Far East (Kateřina Konečná – Petr Pavelec) or his role as an Emperor’s ambassador to Madrid joined with collecting Spanish arts (Pavel Štěpánek), a work about Archduke Franz Ferdinand d’Este and his participation in a wedding in Madrid in 1906 (Milena Hajná), or about Mechtilde Lichnowsky, the first lady in the German embassy in London (Jiří Jung). Finally, it is a contribution about diplomatic activities of Maxmilian Ervin Lobkowitz (Miroslav Popelář), and a profile by Petr Pavelec about Richard Coundenhove-Kalergi as a Pan-European ambassador.

Despite the extent, the book has a feature of thorough lector’s and editorial work and contains just a minimum of inaccuracies. On page 134, there is a wrong date of Polish-Lithuanian royal dynasty of Jagiellons’ dying out – 1573 (rightly 1572). On page

254, the note apparatus wrongly states that Jemniště is a state castle, which is not contemporary designation since it was given back to the Sternbergs (Šternberk) family in 1992. Next, the caption below the reproduced portrait of Count Lützow by Boettinger does not include information about where the building of Museum and Gallery of the Orlické Mountains stands (p. 490). This cultural institution sits in Rychnov nad Kněžnou. Austrian-Hungarian foreign minister’s correct name was Agenor Gołuchowski – not Galuchowski (written with “l”) (p. 659).

Undoubtedly, the authors of the book managed an extraordinary feat whose outcome is the aesthetically attractive publication able to enrich the professional and general public. Hopefully, the attention alike will be paid to home diplomats who are not blue-blooded, and publications focused more on a role of diplomats in the context of particular events of European and world’s diplomacy will appear too.

Michal Wanner