

Theses for doctoral thesis (PhD)

**A Career Diplomat in the Horthy era:
The Career of Elemér Újpétery (1911-2001)**

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I. Aim of the research

The aim of this thesis is to present the life of Elemér Újpestery through his diplomatic activities. To add new, hitherto little known additions to the list of already known works on Hungary's foreign policy. Through his reports and correspondence, the foreign policy mechanism of the dated period can be examined from a new perspective, and the biography of a second-tier politician is a priority in my present work.

I will give an early picture of his role in the diplomatic arm of the period 1937-1942, and aim to describe the positions he held and to explore his networks of contacts. Since 1942, he has been working in Lisbon, so that the developments in that hinterland cannot be separated from his career, and the research thus becomes two poles, depending on the space: on the one hand, the circumstances in Hungary are given, but on the other hand, the changes in Portugal are not negligible - although the latter is certainly less important in my work. In these three years, I intend not only to give a descriptive account of his activities, but also to use qualitative methods, digging deeper into primary archival sources, to show his activities in Lisbon, where the importance of his contacts is enhanced and his political turnaround is very unique for the period.

The research is also highly structured in terms of available and alternative sources. The groups of sources are determined by the content of the chapters, thus, in addition to archival and literary works, memoirs, private and official correspondence, photographic material and a certain amount of press material extend the number of sources I have used. Given the specificity of the memoirs and ego documents of the period, I primarily operate with the tools of source criticism, in order to exclude subjects that are largely present and to maintain objectivity.

The perception of Elemér Újpestery's activities is quite differentiated, both by his contemporaries and by posterity. In this way, the above-mentioned groups of sources not only offer a new perspective on the history of events, but also reveal Elemér Újpestery's personal presence in these documents, thus bringing us closer to a more quasi-contemporary "personal opinion and experience", which can sometimes be contrasted with a fact created by posterity,

thus giving us a more authentic picture. At the same time, I will try to answer other questions in the chapters as it follows:

1. How much leeway did Elemér Újpétery have in his foreign service?
2. What characterised his socio-political views?
3. How did Újpétery evaluate the foreign policy of the Nazi state and, in this respect, did his thinking change and, if so, to what extent?
4. How did Újpétery relate to his superiors in the diplomatic corps and the political elite?
5. How did he relate to his superiors in the diplomatic corps and the political elite?

The answers to these questions will not only bring us closer to Elemér Újpétery as a person and his activities, but will also help us to understand the changes in Hungarian foreign policy of the time.

II. Sources and working methods used

My main sources are primary archival sources, namely his personal and political legacy, the documents of the Foreign Policy Department of the Hungarian National Archives, the documents of the Historical Archives of the State Security Services, and I have also made use of the archives of the The National Archives /TNA/.

The disparate nature of the source groups also reinforces the structure of the topic. The majority of the writings on foreign policy of the period praise the work of Pál Pritz, whose professional activities are a necessary part of my research. In addition to the work of Pál Pritz, I also include syntheses of foreign policy events, although these do not contribute to the completeness of my thesis in a specific way, but rather through a general, factual approach. Here I mention the works of Miklós Zeidler, and Gyula Juhász's work on the history and foreign policy of Hungary. One of the most important works by expert historians is the biography of Pál Teleki by Balázs Ablonczy. Not only is it similar in genre to my political career arc, but its central figure, Pál Teleki, also played an important role in the life of Elemér Újpestery. In its methodology, structure and content, the book is a model for me to follow with regard to Elemér Újpestery, but it is also relevant from another point of view: it sheds light on the fact that Elemér Újpestery was indeed intimate with Pál Teleki.

The works of András Joó, who mainly deals with 20th century diplomatic history and the foreign policy of the Kállay government, are also indispensable in my research. It is worth to mention that he also made a study on British political warfare towards Hungary and Romania. In the case of Elemér Újpestery, the need to exploit the British connections increases, since he can be considered an active participant in the attempt to break out of the British policy, and thus the exploration of British policy is crucial for the effectiveness of my thesis. András Joó draws on the diary of Antal Ullein-Reviczky's wife and the manuscript of Domokos Szent-Iványi to provide useful insights into Elemér Újpestery. In this way, his works and the incorporation of his results have become indispensable in my research. Imre Tóth's work is by no means general in the range of historical works on the period. He not only reports on the life and career of Kálmán Kánya /Minister of Foreign Affairs/, but also mentions and refers to Elemér Újpestery.

In the exploration of the networks of relations and its methodology, I have two other works at my disposal, which approach and reconstruct the different systems of relations mainly with the tools of social science. Virág Rab and László Kiss, both of the Institute of Social Sciences

of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, deal with the issue of historical networks of relationships.

A relevant work is Judith, Listowel: Crusader in the Secret War. Elemér Újpestery had a proven relationship with the Polish colonel and cryptographer Jan Kowalewski. The relevant part of the volume, for me, is 'Detaching the Setallites-Hungary', which aims at Hungary's independence. He was in contact with Andor Wodianer and Elemér Újpestery throughout the Hungarian attempt to jump out from the war.

In addition to our own work, the Foreign Policy Department of the Hungarian National Archives and the Historical Archives of the State Security Services and the National Archives have a rich collection of documents on my subject.

Elemér Újpestery's contemporaries have also enriched the sources available to me with their recollections, and their interpretation can be achieved by applying appropriate source criticism.

The treatment of Újpestery's personal and political legacy also requires careful consideration. His personal collection was donated to me by his sister - Edit Újpestery-, which consists mainly of photographs and letters, which of course undeniably form part of Újpestery's life, but the names of his possible mistakes, wrong decisions, negative relationships and bad actors cannot be extracted from these documents. His personal legacy brings us closer to his family background, his school years and his youth. His political legacy suggests a more objective approach. The material in question was researched at the Museum of Geography in Érd in Hungary. It contains reports, official and semi-official letters. These are documented mainly from 1942 onwards and were written from Lisbon. Their content enriches the historiography's source material and, on the one hand, they discuss the ever current situation in a European context, and on the other hand, they prove that Hungary has changed irreversibly in economic, social and ideological terms. Elemér Újpestery began his career as a participant in this change, and so it is interesting to see how he took a major turn in the early 1940s and how his Anglo-Saxon orientation became his primary heading, taking on the characteristics of a far-right orientation.

By searching the archives, and by exploring the personal and political legacy, I was able to uncover and use the complete archival material kept by Elemér Újpestery. The present documents and subsequent reports are in my possession and I will include them in the relevant chapters.

III. Results of the dissertation

One of the hypotheses I have outlined was aimed at changing political attitudes, which seems to be well-founded in the light of the sources. Several of the documents published by him reported that he himself had supported the Anglo-Saxon line and had abandoned his earlier radical right-wing orientation, although he did not deny that it existed. From this assumption follows the next problem concerning his political orientation. The documents of the State Security Archives in Budapest suggest that Elemér Újpestery was a German agent, in direct contact with a number of SD agents during his diplomatic activities. However, my research refutes this level of German involvement, and my assumptions lead to the manipulation of the communist system, which portrayed many Horthy-era diplomats and politicians as supporters of the fascist regime. My third hypothesis is also closely linked to the previous two hypotheses, I was looking for an answer to the question: to what extent was Elemér Újpestery a friend of Germany and/or England? This dichotomy permeated his entire political career, and Elemér Újpestery's double perception can also be seen in the light of sources, so this problem can only be nuanced, hardly fully unravelled.

On the basis of the sources available to me, I have divided his career into two chronologically separated parts to solve the problem. On the one hand, his activities in Hungary, which were clearly marked by German friendship, until the premiership of Pál Teleki, who had a great influence on Elemér Újpestery, so that from 1941 onwards he began to distance himself increasingly from the Germans, but no concrete British sympathies had yet developed. From 1942 onwards, the need for Anglo-Saxon relations became more and more prominent in his own political thinking, and the Lisbon years were spent mainly in this spirit. At the same time, while politically, and with regard to Hungary's future, he welcomed Anglo-Saxon diplomacy, socially, and sensitive to social reforms, he remained right-wing. As a career diplomat, he recognised that a Western orientation was the only future for Hungary, but in his thinking and ideals he remained a right-wing believer.

In any case, it can be said that he really had one goal in mind: to preserve the country's sovereignty, to establish a stable foreign policy and to give priority to the British orientation from 1942. This is also reflected in his letters and the criticisms he drew the attention of the Hungarian leadership to from the very beginning of his service abroad. However, Újpestery's constructive proposals were not always without criticism, but at the same time the extreme

elements and measures taken for the betterment of Hungary contribute to the positive image of the diplomat.

His career as a diplomat was far from mediocre, as his talents and the circumstances of the time led him to a very ambitious career. His contacts were also wide-ranging, with politicians in prominent positions of trust and associates. The reasons for the decisions of the politicians who played a leading role in the domestic and foreign policy of the Horthy regime, and the driving forces behind them, can be seen more clearly in the course of studying the career of Elemér Újpestery. His career can be placed in the context of a period of history that can still raise questions for historiography today, and although he was a second-rate politician, he can by no means be judged as a "grey eminence".

My last question focused on the possibility of a new career path for Elemér Újpestery. This hypothesis is only partially justified, the justification for the new career type was established by the need to create a new diplomatic corps after 1918, which was implemented in the framework of an independent Hungarian Foreign Ministry. Besides, he could not have chosen the diplomatic profession because of his origin, and this was also due to the new circumstances. He began his career and followed the path set out for him in the changed circumstances affecting diplomats and diplomatic training. Here, it is primarily the technical background that has led to a new career path for him, while from a practical point of view, the diplomatic function has not changed from the previous practice, even during the time of Austria-Hungary.

In terms of his perception, research has shown that his relations with his superiors during the period were indeed positive, while he hardly ever developed good relations with his contemporaries. His correspondence also consists mainly of semi-official and official letters, with hardly any friendly correspondence. Nowadays, memoirs about him tend to be more positive, often apologising for Elemér Újpestery - especially in terms of his German friendship - and interviews I conducted during personal encounters have confirmed this claim. The claim that he remained completely politically neutral after 1945 - he made no statements and joined no emigration political organisations - is borne out by his letters to his family, his recollections and the fact that he was allowed to return to Hungary in 1983 without reprisals.



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