

Supplementary to the History of Egyptian–Hungarian Relations

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Egypt and Hungary have a long common historical past, which is characterized by fruitful diplomatic and political cooperation. The twenty years between 1919 and 1939 included a significant, active, and changeable period in the history of diplomatic and political relations between Hungary and Egypt according to the archival materials, other sources, as well as the articles of the Egyptian press. The chronological frame of this research has a precise starting- and end-point. The plan of the establishment of a Hungarian Consulate in Cairo on January 10, 1924 can be regarded as the beginning. The final event was on April 30, 1939 when Miklós Horthy, the son of the regent of Hungary, visited Egypt again to negotiate and discuss with Egyptian officials. The period between 1919 and 1939 has been studied on the basis of the sources of the archive of the Egyptian Foreign Ministry and the contemporary Arabic, English and French press in Egypt.

The historical antecedents of the Egyptian–Hungarian diplomatic relations

After signing the peace treaty known as “Pozsarevác” between the Habsburgs and the Ottoman Empire, the Habsburg Empire had the possibility to establish a consulate in Alexandria, the second largest Egyptian city and the first commercial center in the country. In 1763 Francesco Agostini became the agent in charge of consular affairs, then the empress, Maria Theresa appointed Agostini in 1785 as consul in Egypt, who was followed in 1792 by Carlo Di Rossetti, who was responsible for the General Consulate in Cairo until 1805. When he resigned from his position in 1811 Agostini became responsible again for the consular affairs.¹ The General Consul worked in Cairo until 1819. As a consequence of the continuously increasing economic activity and trade in Alexandria, he moved to Alexandria again. Cairo and Damietta had vice-consulates, and there was a consular agency authorized to direct the Consular Affairs in Rashid. In 1834 Anton Laurin was appointed general consul, who was an experienced diplomat, as there were

¹ They appointed George Cavaccó as consul, and Franz Champion as vice-consul in 1819.

more and more tasks for the diplomatic corps including navigation, commercial, political, and medical affairs. In 1846 the Habsburg representations were restructured: the General Consulate in Alexandria supervised both the prosecution Consulate in Cairo, Damietta, as well as the Consular Agency in Rashid and Suez.²

The main reason behind the establishment of diplomatic representation in Suez and Port Said was the growing trade-traffic route from India and other eastern countries. On August 17, 1871 Otto Szillas was sent and appointed as consul in Suez. From 1878 until World War I an honorary consular agency worked in Suez because its role had decreased significantly.³

In 1910 the authorities and the geographical division of the diplomatic corps of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy were restructured as follows: 1) General Consulate in Cairo, its authorities extended to the whole Egypt; 2) Consulate in Alexandria; 3) Consulate in Cairo (Court consulate as well); 4) Consulate in Port Said (Court consulate as well); 5) Consulate in Khartoum (Court consulate as well), and its authority included all the Sudanese territories.⁴

After the outbreak of World War I the representative of the United States received the authorities and functions of the Consul of Austria-Hungary in Cairo. The Austrian-Hungarian diplomatic presence in Cairo lasted till September, 1914, when General Maxwell, commander of the occupier British army⁵ expelled the diplomats and employees of the German and Austro-Hungarian consulates from Egypt. Only one consular officer remained in Cairo until he was arrested by the British army in December, 1915.⁶

Egyptian-Hungarian diplomatic relations between World War I and II

After the First World War and the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, Hungary became independent as a result of the Treaty of "Trianon", paying a terrible price for it by losing two thirds of her territory and one third of the inhabitants. The new states around Hungary tried to isolate it with French help. After a successful consolidation of the state and the completion of internal stability, Hunga-

² R. Agstner, Von k.k. Konsularagentie zum Österreichischen Generalkonsulat, Cairo 1993, 21-27. cited in K. Komár, *Relations between Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and Egypt 1882-1914*. PhD-dissertation, Faculty of Arts, University of Szeged, Szeged 2006, 70.

³ HHStA, AR. F8. Staaten. Kairó, 1891. June 1. Nr. XXVIII/B/adm. Heidler. cited in Komár, *Relations*, 71.

⁴ HHStA, AR. F8. ad. Nr. 901. Alexandria, 1882. June 3. Suzzara The consul in Alexandria to Kossiek, the general consul in Cairo. cited in Komár, *Relations*, 72-74.

⁵ General Sir John Grenfell Maxwell GCB, KCMG, CVO, DSO (1859-1929) was a British Army officer and colonial regent. Maxwell received a commission into the British Army in 1879. He served on the Western Front in the First World War until he was given command of the Army in Egypt, where he successfully held the Suez Canal against Turkish attack. Maxwell was assigned in 1916 to be General Officer Commanding-in-Chief for Northern Command at York. He was promoted in June 1919 to full general and retired in 1922.

⁶ R. Agstner, *Der Ballhausplatz und Nordafrika, Studien zur Präsenz von Österreich (-Ungarn) in Kairo, Kossier, Luxor, Tripolis und Bengasi*. Cairo 1995, 7-8.

ry began to build new foreign relations. Thus Hungary set up its first diplomatic relations with the Holy Chair.⁷

The plan to establish a Hungarian consulate in Egypt fitted into the above mentioned framework. *Al-Ahram*, a daily Arabic-language newspaper wrote about this important matter in its political column on January 10, 1924.⁸ Due to the facilities provided by the Egyptian side, the plan of establishing a Hungarian consulate in Egypt progressed rapidly. As a result, in twenty days, on February 1, 1924, *Al-Ahram* reported that the King of Egypt, Fouad received the credentials of the Hungarian General Consul Alfréd Menasce. It was the foundation of the first independent Hungarian General Consulate in Alexandria.⁹

The next important step took place three years later. *Al-Ahram* reported on October 29, 1927 that the Hungarian Plenipotentiary Minister accredited to London had contacted the Egyptian Embassy in the British capital.¹⁰ The newspaper wrote that the Hungarian side intended to establish an embassy¹¹ in Cairo in order to protect the Hungarian interests and to develop and strengthen the cooperation between the two countries. In response to the initiative, the Egyptian Office in London sent the Hungarian proposal to the Egyptian government.¹² A year later, *Al-Ahram* reported citing reports from Budapest that the Hungarian government agreed to establish a Hungarian Embassy in Cairo, and Félix Parcher will be the first Plenipotentiary Minister of Hungary in Cairo and he will take over the affairs of the embassy from the city of Berne, Switzerland.¹³ On 20 February 1928 King Fouad met the first Hungarian ambassador in the royal palace, who in turn handed over his credentials to his Majesty. The Plenipotentiary Minister discussed the bilateral relations and international problems with the king.¹⁴

The day after presenting his credentials to the Egyptian King, *Al-Ahram* published an interview with the first Hungarian Plenipotentiary Minister in Cairo, Mr. Félix Parcher on February 20, 1928 on page five. According to the journalist, the Hungarian diplomat was very friendly and met him with pleasure. He was fluent in Arabic and he read *Al-Ahram* daily in order to enrich his Arabic knowledge. He spoke of the Egyptian newspaper with high esteem, as it was

⁷ I. Zombori, Magyarország és a Szentszék diplomáciai kapcsolata, 1920–2000. [Diplomatic Relations between Hungary and the Holy See, 1920–2000] Budapest, 2001, 7.

⁸ "Hungarian Consulate-General in Egypt," *Al-Ahram* (1924/-), 4.

⁹ "The Foreign Consulates" *Al-Ahram* (1924/-), 4.

¹⁰ From 1927 until October 3, 1928. Sizostris Sidarus Bey was the Egyptian Minister Plenipotentiary in London, and on October 4, 1928 was followed by Abdel-Malek Hamza Bey.

¹¹ The article of *Al-Ahram* wrote that the Hungarian government wanted to establish a consulate in Egypt. This information was incorrect. The journalist made a mistake, instead of writing 'embassy' he wrote 'consulate'.

¹² "Hungarian Consulate in Cairo," *Al-Ahram* (1927/-), 4.

¹³ "Establishment of Hungarian Embassy in Egypt," *Al-Ahram* (1928/-), 2.

¹⁴ Abdin Royal Palace Archive, Cairo, 20 February 1928. Archived document about when the King Fouad met the first Hungarian Ambassador in the royal palace, and who in turn handed over his credentials to His Majesty, the King.

characterized by a balanced view and it had leading role in the Arabic world. His Excellency, the Plenipotentiary Minister of Hungary, said that in May, 1900, after his graduation, he worked as an attaché in the Austro-Hungarian Consulate in Alexandria and then in Cairo. The journalist emphasized that the Hungarian Plenipotentiary Minister was affected by Egypt. The diplomat assured that the priority in his diplomatic activity was to strengthen the Egyptian-Hungarian economic and commercial relations. He strove to finalize the talks, which were started by Alfréd Menasce, the Hungarian General Honorary Consul in Alexandria about the commercial agreement between the two countries.¹⁵

Al-Ahram published in its issue dated February 28, 1928 the meeting of the new Hungarian Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary during the presentation of his credentials to His Majesty, the King. The Hungarian diplomat said: "Majesty! It gives me the honor to present to you the credentials, which were accredited to me by the regent of the Kingdom of Hungary to make me the Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to your Majesty. I hope Your Majesty will let me be the spokesman for the Hungarian regent: Our regent is expressing his great appreciation and affection to your majesty and is wishing happiness, welfare, and progress to Your Majesty, your family, and your people! Sir, Your Majesty, allow me to add my great respects. I hope Your Majesty will find it worth to take interest in my efforts to carry out my mission and complete the task we begin today. The purpose is to consolidate and strengthen friendly relations and promote understanding between the two kingdoms."

After the last talk, and presentation of credentials, the response of the King was the following: "Excellency! It gives me pleasure to accept your message in this official concert, which the regent of the Kingdom of Hungary accredited to you as Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary. It makes me happier that it is the first time that the Kingdom of Hungary has its representative in my country, and I expect from the establishment of this representation an explosive growth in strengthening friendly relations and promoting understanding between the two kingdoms, which will produce more benefits. The Hungarian regent's emotions expressed to me, to my country, and to my family have had the most beautiful effect on me. So accept my sincere thanks and give them to his Majesty, the Hungarian regent with my hopes for the happiness and prosperity of the Kingdom of Hungary. Thank you for the efforts that you will take to complete your mission. I assure you that you can depend on my support and my government's help."¹⁶

Félix Parcher performed his duties as an Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Minister in Cairo from the Swiss capital, Bern, he came to Cairo every year staying for two months. *Al-Ahram* published the news on January 24, 1929 that Hafiz Afifi Pasha, Minister of Foreign Affairs, invited Parcher to a banquet before his

¹⁵ M. Fatah-Allah, "Quarter with the New Hungarian Minister Plenipotentiary," *Al-Ahram* (1928), 5.

¹⁶ "Between Egypt and Hungary," *Al-Ahram* (1928/-), 4.

departure to Switzerland. Tawfiq Nasim Pasha¹⁷ and a large group of foreign diplomats appeared at the dinner.¹⁸

Félix Parcher died in 1933 and Dr. Pál Förstner was appointed in his position as temporary charge of affairs, who led the Hungarian Embassy in Cairo from Budapest.¹⁹ He succeeded in signing a trade agreement with the Egyptian side, under which the Egyptian cotton was exported to Hungary in exchange for agricultural machines to Egypt.²⁰

In 1937 Lajos Rudnay became charge of affairs.²¹ On December 22, 1937, *Al-Ahram* published a large photo on its front page and stated that the previous day Lajos Rudnay, the Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Minister of Hungary had given his credentials to the king of Egypt.²²

The embassy moved to Cairo in 1939, and the ambassador stayed in Cairo from that time.²³ Andor Semsey, who was from an aristocratic family, arrived in Cairo as charge of affairs.²⁴ Semsey was very fond of hunting, it was his real hobby. He repeatedly said that he preferred to retire or give up his post in Egypt because he could not practice his favorite hobby there.²⁵ *Al-Ahram* reported on February 22, 1939 that Semsey had given his credentials to the Egyptian King in the Abdin Palace. After the meeting Mr. Ismail Taimour said farewell and good-bye to Semsey. On the first page of the *Al-Ahram* a photo of the Hungarian Minister Plenipotentiary with Ismail Taimour can be seen.²⁶ The Hungarian Kingdom had his first Embassy in Cairo in the entire African continent, and had continued its work until the middle of 1941. In April, 1941, the Hungarian Plenipotentiary Minister was called back to Budapest.²⁷

¹⁷ He was considered one of the most important leaders of the National Democratic Party, and was a prime minister several times. He was the best-known political figure in Hungary in the first half of the twentieth century.

¹⁸ "The Hungarian Plenipotentiary Minister," *Al-Ahram* (1929/-), 4.

¹⁹ Y. L. Rezk, "The Egyptian Foreign Ministry 1826-1937," *Al-Qahira: Al-Haia' Al-Masria Al-Amma Lel-Ketab*, 1989, 135.

²⁰ F.O. 407/219 (I) Enc. In No. 49. Annual Report on Heads of Foreign Missions... op. cit. in S. Shakerr, "Egyptian Foreign Ministry 1937-1953," *Al-Qahira: Matbaett Dar Al-Kotobb Aal-Wathaekk Al-Kawmia*, 2006, 43.

²¹ F.O. 407/223 (II) Enc. In No. 34. Annual Report on Heads of Foreign Missions... op. cit. in Shakerr, "Egyptian Foreign Ministry 1937-1953," 43.

²² "The Greek and the Hungarian Ministers Plenipotentiary give their credentials to the King," *Al-Ahram* (1937:19136), 1.

²³ F. Nagy, "Külgügyminisztérium Levéltára (1918-1945)," [Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs] Vol. 2. *Külgügyminisztérium, Utazás, és Ütlevélügyi, Osztály, Külképviseltek, Egyéb Szervek, Irathagyatékok Repertorium*. Budapest 2007, 103.

²⁴ From the status of Second Counsellor he rose to the First Secretary title, charge of affairs.

²⁵ Shakerr, "Egyptian Foreign Ministry 1937-1953," 43.

²⁶ "The Hungarian Minister Plenipotentiary at Abdin Palace," *Al-Ahram* (1939/19556), 1.

²⁷ J. Sáringer, *Documentation a l'histoire de la diplomatie Hongroise de 1920 à 1944*. PhD-dissertation, Faculty of Arts, Szeged 2005, 98.

Leaders of the Embassy of the Hungarian Kingdom:

Félix Parcher (10 February 1928–1 December 1931) he managed the embassy's tasks from Bern

Félix Parcher (1 December 1931–1 February 1933); he managed it from Budapest
Pál Förstner charge of affairs (1 February 1933–23 October 1937); he stayed in Cairo

Lajos Rudnay (23 October 1937–14 January 1939) he managed it from Athens

Andor Semsey charge of affairs (14 January 1939–April 1940); he stayed in Cairo

László Mára charge of affairs (1940–7 April 1941).²⁸

Country	City	#	Nature or Type	Leader	Year
Egypt	Alexandria	1	Honorary Consulate General	Alfréd Menasce	1924
Egypt	Alexandria	1	Honorary Consulate General	Alfréd Menasce	1925
Egypt	Cairo	1	Honorary Consulate	Moussa Green	1925
Egypt	Alexandria	1	Honorary Consulate	László Páthy (Polnauer)	1925
Egypt	Alexandria	1	Honorary Consulate General	Alfréd Menasce	1927
Egypt	Cairo	1	Honorary Consulate	Moussa Green	1927
Egypt	Alexandria	1	Honorary Consulate	László Páthy (Polnauer)	1927
Egypt	Cairo	1	Honorary Consulate	Moussa Green	1928
Egypt	Alexandria	1	Honorary Consulate	László Páthy (Polnauer)	1928
Egypt	Cairo	1	Honorary Consulate	Moussa Green	1929
Egypt	Alexandria	1	Honorary Consulate	László Páthy (Polnauer)	1929
Egypt	Cairo	2	Honorary Consulate General	Moussa Green	1930
Egypt	Alexandria	1	Honorary Consulate	László Páthy (Polnauer)	1930
Egypt	Cairo	2	Honorary Consulate General	Moussa Green	1932
Egypt	Alexandria	1	Honorary Consulate General	László Páthy (Polnauer)	1932
Egypt	Cairo	1	Honorary Consulate General	László Páthy (Polnauer)	1933
Egypt	Alexandria	2	Honorary Consulate General	László Páthy (Polnauer)	1933
Egypt	Alexandria	3	Honorary Consulate General	László Páthy (Polnauer)	1934

²⁸ J. Sáringer, *Adattár a magyar külügyi szolgálat történetéhez (1920–1944)*. [Data to the history of the Hungarian diplomatic service, 1920–1944] Budapest 2004, 60.

Egypt	Cairo	1	Alexandrian Consulate Branch	László Menczer	1936
Egypt	Alexandria	3	Honorary Consulate General	László Páthy (Polnauer)	1936
Egypt	Cairo	1	Alexandrian Consulate General Branch	György Reichmann	1937
Egypt	Alexandria	3	Honorary Consulate General	László Páthy (Polnauer)	1937
Egypt	Cairo	1	Alexandrian Consulate Branch	György Reichmann	1938
Egypt	Alexandria	3	Honorary Consulate General	László Páthy (Polnauer)	1938
Egypt	Alexandria	3	Honorary Consulate General	László Páthy (Polnauer)	1941 ²⁹

In reciprocity the Egyptian government established an Embassy in Hungary. The Egyptian Plenipotentiary Minister arrived in Budapest. *Al-Ahram* wrote about him on October 14, 1938 quoting from the German news agency: "Mourad Sayed Ahmed Pasha, Plenipotentiary Minister of Egypt had given his credentials to Admiral Horthy, the Regent of Hungary."³⁰

The visits of Miklós Horthy's son to Egypt

The son of the regent of Hungary, jr. Miklós Horthy's visit in Egypt had primary importance among the visits of Hungarian politicians and the elite in Egypt. On April 15, 1932 the English-speaking *Egyptian Mail* newspaper reported that Horthy had arrived on the ship *Ausonia* at the port of Alexandria as the head of the high-level delegation. The newspaper indicated: "Mr. Horthy is traveling strictly incognito."³¹ On April 21 Horthy visited the Pyramids and the Sphinx in Giza accompanied by Alajos De Paikert the first Hungarian director of Fouad I Agricultural Museum of Cairo and by Mr. Burghoffer. The report appeared on the first page of the newspaper with a large photo of the guests.³² On April 25 *Al-Ahram* published a long article on the son of the regent of the Hungarian Kingdom. The newspaper reported: "in spite of the young age of the son of the Hungarian regent, Mr. Miklós Horthy is the director of the Hungarian English Bank and works in business. While staying in Egypt he took the opportunity to negotiate with the experts of the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Agricul-

²⁹ *Ibid.* 95-177.

³⁰ "The Egyptian Plenipotentiary Minister in Budapest," *Al-Ahram* (1938/-), 8. The Egyptian accredited Plenipotentiary Ministers to Budapest were: from Austria Ahmed El Kadry bey (17 November 1936-1938); Ahmed Mourad Sid pasa (12 October 1938-1940); Mohamed Soliman El Hout bey charge of affairs (1940); Abdel Kerim Safvat charge of affairs (13 April 1940-1942). From 1943 the embassy was directed from Switzerland. Sáringer, *Adattár*, 60.

³¹ "Hungarian Regent's Son in Alexandria," *Egyptian Mail* (1932/6005), 3.

³² "Hungarian Regent's son at the pyramids," *Egyptian Mail* (1932/6009), 1.

tural Credit Bank to do business between Egypt and Hungary." The guest suggested that Hungary should buy a significant quantity of cotton from the Egyptian government and Hungary should pay for it by building factories, rice stores, and exporting fertilizers to the Egyptian side. The Hungarian guest visited the Ministry of Finance and Agriculture several times to discuss the matter accompanied by László Polnauer, the Hungarian General Consul in Alexandria, and by the famous trader Landman.³³

On February 14, 1934 *Al-Ahram* carried the news that Horthy junior left Rome for Alexandria on the ship "Calitia".³⁴ After three days, he arrived at the port of Alexandria, where he was greeted by László Polnauer, the Hungarian Honorary General Consul. The Hungarian politicians appeared in a large photo on the first page of *Al-Ahram*, the most popular Arabic newspaper, which reflected the importance of the visit of the honored guest.³⁵

On February 25, 1938 *Al-Ahram* indicated that Miklós Horthy had stayed in Egypt for a few weeks, and that on February 24, 1938 he left for Europe. He was accompanied to the port of Alexandria by László Polnauer, the Hungarian Honorary General Consul in Alexandria and by some illustrious members of the Hungarian community in Egypt.³⁶

On February 8, 1939 *Al-Ahram* said that Miklós Horthy junior arrived at Alexandria a day before and was accompanied by the sister of Princess Károly. Mr. László Polnauer, the Hungarian Honorary General Consul in Alexandria received them. They were to travel to Cairo the next day. *Al-Ahram* published a large photo about Horthy and the Hungarian Honorary General Consul on the front page.³⁷ On February 11 the newspaper mentioned that Ahmed Maher Pasha, the Egyptian Minister of Finance met Miklós Horthy junior in his office, where they discussed economic and commercial bilateral cooperation.³⁸ On April 30 *Al-Ahram* indicated that Hungarian regent's son and the sister of Károly travelled from Alexandria toward Hungary after a visit lasting for several weeks.³⁹

Sedky Pasha, the Egyptian Prime Minister's visit to Budapest

On February 2, 1932 the Egyptian authorities declared that the Hungarian government had the honor to invite the Prime Minister of Egypt to visit Budapest officially, in order to discuss bilateral relations between the two countries.⁴⁰ On February 26 *Al-Ahram* reported the following news: "The Consul of Hungary met

³³ "Commercial Deals between Egypt and Hungary - Miklós Horthy's efforts," *Al-Ahram* (1932/-), 6.

³⁴ "Hungarian Regent's Son is coming towards Egypt," *Al-Ahram* (1934/-), 4.

³⁵ "Horthy reached Alexandria, and the Hungarian General Honorary Consul honored his Reception," *Al-Ahram* (1934/17671), 1.

³⁶ "Hungarian Regent's Son," *Al-Ahram* (1938/-), 9.

³⁷ "Hungarian Regent's Son," *Al-Ahram* (1939/19542), 1.

³⁸ "Miklós Horthy met the Minister of Finance," *Al-Ahram* 1939/-, 08.

³⁹ "Hungarian Regent's Daughter," *Al-Ahram* 1939/19622, 1st page.

⁴⁰ "Egyptian Foreign Ministry's Archive," Cairo, 0075-050593, 2 February 1932. The Hungarian government invites the Prime Minister of Egypt to visit the Hungarian capital.

Ismail Sedky Pasha the day before yesterday and informed him that the Hungarian government bestowed him with the greatest scarf of merit, the highest medal of Hungary and only the Prime Minister of Italy received it before from the leaders of governments."⁴¹

On August 29, 1932 *Al-Ahram* reported in its political column that Sedky Pasha, the prime minister had traveled the previous morning to Geneva, heading to the Hungarian capital, Budapest, and this was the first visit of an Egyptian Prime Minister to Hungary after the First World War.⁴² The newspapers in Rome described the visit in detail. The reception of the Egyptian officials was favourable, the visit can be regarded as very successful.⁴³ In honor of the Prime Minister and his delegation Miklós Horthy, the regent of Hungary had made a dinner gala, and after the dinner, the Egyptian Prime Minister told reporters that the goal of the talks with the Hungarian officials was to strengthen the economic and commercial relations between the two countries and added that Egypt should export cotton to Hungary and the Egyptians would import industrial products from Hungary.⁴⁴

The relations between Egypt and Hungary were cut off during the Second World War. In February, 1942 Egypt declared its position of neutrality as a result of the British pressure on it and supported the British, at the same time Hungary stood with the Germans.

⁴¹ "The Hungarian government bestowed the prime minister with the greatest scarf of merit," *Al-Ahram* (1932/-), 6.

⁴² "Sedky Pasha in the Hungarian Capital," *Al-Ahram* (1932/-), 4.

⁴³ "Ismail Sedky Pasha's Visit to Hungary," *Al-Ahram* (1932/-), 2.

⁴⁴ "Sedky Pasha in the Hungarian Capital," *Al-Ahram* (1932/-), 6.