

**Consular Affairs:
Exploring the Practices of Austro-Hungarian Consular Diplomacy
in the Ottoman Balkans and Eastern Mediterranean Around 1900**

by
Sven Mörsdorf

submitted to
Central European University
Department of History

in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts

Supervisor: Jan Hennings
Second Reader: Robyn D. Radway

Budapest, Hungary

2020

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Abstract

The long nineteenth century gave rise to a new type of diplomacy. Consuls, or lower-ranking diplomats posted to places far away from dynastic courts and capitals, led the way in a global transformation of diplomatic practice. As the scope of diplomacy broadened to include social and economic policies, consuls' tasks multiplied, transforming these officials from mere commercial agents to very active political representatives.

Austria-Hungary participated in this process as a major diplomatic player, but its consular service has received little scholarly attention. My thesis argues against prevailing simplistic notions on consuls and consular diplomacy, aiming to integrate consulship into a broader understanding of the Dual Monarchy's foreign policy and the bureaucracy that sustained it. Viewing consular diplomacy through a sociocultural prism, I trace Habsburg consuls' diplomatic agency with an analysis of the social, bureaucratic-institutional, and diplomatic practices in which they took part. I examine, among others, the role of patronage in consular careers and a consul's ability to act autonomously, thereby engaging in a dialogue with newly emerging scholarship in diplomatic history from a south-east European perspective.

My thesis presents two case studies that are centred around diplomatic scandals or 'affairs' that emanated from Smyrna (İzmir) in 1880 and from Kosovo in 1912, respectively. The first case examines the career of Count Victor Crenneville, an aristocrat in the predominantly bourgeois consular service; the second case examines Oskar Prochaska, a consul who found himself cut off from communications during the First Balkan War. Investigating their examples, I seek to explore consular activity in the institutional context of the Austro-Hungarian foreign service and, by placing it on the microlevel, to contribute to the bigger picture of the historical development in diplomatic history and foreign relations.

Acknowledgements

It is with great pleasure that I acknowledge my gratitude to:

JH for having brought the Perfect Advisor, as defined in early modern thesis-treatises, to life.

RDR for her magnificent courses and all the inspiration.

The bearers of various initials at the History Department for their integrity and dedication.

My colleagues for all their support, understanding, and kindness.

My friends for the same and more. Also: proofreading.

Thank you very much!

This thesis is dedicated to NM for important Arctic reasons.

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Introduction¹

There is no doubt about the importance of the consular institution for the advancement of a state's navigational and trade interests abroad. As interstate relations keep getting more and more tightly knit, a better understanding of the aims and the sphere of activity of consulate offices has become a timely need.²

These were the words of Joseph Piskur, an official at the trade ministry in Vienna, in the opening lines to the first manual on Habsburg consular affairs. By 1900, less than forty years after the manual's publication, dozens of consulates had been established by the Habsburgs alone and consular careers frequently spanned the globe.³ But just how far a consul's duties could extend was still as undefined as it had been in Piskur's days, and the "timely need" to learn more about consulship has in fact largely remained through today.

The consular service was one of the three branches of the Austro-Hungarian foreign service. Habsburg foreign policy was governed from the central ministry in Vienna, nicknamed the "Ballhausplatz" after its location nearby the imperial Hofburg. Embassies and missions at the courts and capitals of the world were staffed by officials in the diplomatic service. The three branches of the foreign service, then, can be called the ministerial, the diplomatic, and the consular service, respectively. Although these represented distinct career paths, officials could

¹ This thesis was written between March and June 2020 during a public health crisis. I would like to note that I could not access as many scholarly works as I would have liked to since libraries remained closed during that time. This regards both older and newer publications; it turned out especially frustrating since I had planned to (re)read important theoretical works for my topic towards the end of the research process. I ask the reader to excuse possibly missing or vague references. – Throughout the main text of this thesis, I use single inverted commas for my own emphases and double inverted commas for quotes and terms quoted directly from sources.

² Joseph Piskur: *Österreichs Consularwesen* (Vienna 1862), i; my translation. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations given in this thesis from sources that are originally in German or French are my own translations.

³ To give precise numbers, in 1900, Austria-Hungary maintained 414 consular offices around the world, most of which were honorary offices. The 77 "effective" offices, i.e. those headed by salaried state officials, were 24 consulates-general, 40 consulates, 11 vice-consulates, and two consular agencies. See Rudolf Agstner: "An Institutional History of the Austrian Foreign Office in the Twentieth Century", in *Austrian Foreign Policy in Historical Context*, eds. Günter Bischof, Anton Pelinka, Michael Gehler (New Brunswick: Transaction, 2006), 39–57, data on 39–40.

be transferred between the branches. Consuls could sometimes be reappointed to the ministry; promotions to the most prestigious branch, the diplomatic service, were much rarer.⁴

This organisational structure should, however, not create the wrong impression that only diplomatic officials were diplomats. This point is very important for my argument. Consuls could also be diplomats if they took part in the practice of diplomacy – and my thesis will present ample evidence that they did. The aim here is not to measure consular against diplomatic officials, but simply to demonstrate that consuls, too, were diplomatic actors, which calls for studying their activities as part of Habsburg diplomatic history.

To state this may seem obvious or trivial but is quite necessary. This is because in much of the historiography, consuls are still a neglected topic. It is important to note that the roots for this lie in the consuls' own time. Even though consular activity had over the course of several centuries become inseparable from the conduct of diplomacy, consuls around 1900 were generally not appreciated as diplomats, especially in Austria-Hungary. As members of a predominantly bourgeois institution, a wide social gulf separated most consuls from their blue-blooded superiors, a division that reflected Habsburg society at large. Contemporaries generally held that to be a 'consul' or a 'diplomat' were two entirely different things. Later observers, often drawing on anecdotal evidence such as diplomatic officials' memoirs, were led to believe that the rigid social hierarchies that pervaded the Habsburg foreign service precluded consuls not only from socialising with their aristocratic colleagues (as indeed was the case) but also from engaging in actual diplomatic work.⁵ Accordingly, consuls and

⁴ Godsey discusses the complicated practice of such transfers throughout his social history of the Habsburg foreign service around 1900; see William D. Godsey: *Aristocratic Redoubt. The Austro-Hungarian Foreign Office on the Eve of the First World War* (West Lafayette: Purdue UP, 1999).

⁵ Compare e.g. the following anecdote told by Paul von Hevesy (Hevesy Pál, 1883–1988). In 1912, as a freshly appointed attaché at the embassy in Constantinople, Hevesy started spending time with his colleagues from the imperial-and-royal consulate next door. Soon enough, Hevesy's fellows at the embassy took him aside and told him that he should decide whether he wanted to be "with us or with *them*." ("Entweder Du verkehrst mit uns oder mit denen.") This episode was quoted by Erwin Matsch: *Der Auswärtige Dienst von Österreich(-Ungarn) 1720–1920* (Vienna: Böhlau, 1986), 92.

consulship continue to be a neglected topic in Habsburg diplomatic history.⁶ The most comprehensive studies on Habsburg foreign policy and its institutions, which still date from the 1980s, either downplay consuls or simply ignore them altogether.⁷ Those few scholars who developed a closer interest in the Habsburg consular service in its own right mostly concentrated on unearthing facts, figures, and anecdotes.⁸

In consequence, it is a novelty to argue that in Habsburg contexts consuls, too, should be seen as diplomats and that they should also be studied as such. Outside the field, cultural and social approaches have greatly widened perspectives on diplomatic history and opened up pathways to studying previously overlooked diplomatic actors.⁹ I place my work within this recent tradition, taking inspiration from studies that explore late-Habsburg diplomatic history through innovative approaches and ideas.¹⁰

Indeed, as a part of this ongoing revaluation of what diplomacy is and who can take part in it, scholarly interest in consuls is finally on the rise. Consular studies have great potential, largely untapped, to aid diplomatic historians in their efforts to theorise and complicate the history of

⁶ This is in fact a general and longstanding characteristic shared by many historiographies. For a discussion of the reasons for this neglect, see Halvard Leira and Iver B. Neumann: “The Many Past Lives of the Consul” in *Consular Affairs and Diplomacy*, eds. Jan Melissen, Ana Mar Fernández (Leiden: Nijhoff, 2011), 225–246.

⁷ See Matsch: *Der Auswärtige Dienst* and *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918*, vol. VI/1–2: *Die Habsburgermonarchie im System der internationalen Beziehungen*, eds. Peter Urbanitsch, Adam Wandruszka (Vienna: ÖAW, 1989–1993).

⁸ Two Austrian scholars – Rudolf Agstner and Engelbert Deusch – dominate the existing catalogue. Their many studies on various consuls and consulates are based on extensive source work but do not seek to place their observations in a broader framework of diplomatic history; that said, thanks to the many details and insights they contain, these works are immensely valuable resources for further research. See e.g. Rudolf Agstner: *Handbuch des k. (u.) k. Konsulardienstes. Die Konsulate der Donaumonarchie vom 18. Jh. bis 1918*, ed. Gerhard Gonsa (Vienna: New Academic Press, 2018) and Engelbert Deusch: *Die effektiven Konsuln Österreich(-Ungarns) von 1825–1918. Ihre Ausbildung, Arbeitsverhältnisse und Biografien* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2017).

⁹ See *The Diplomats’ World. A Cultural History of Diplomacy, 1815–1914*, eds. Markus Mösslang, Torsten Rietze (Oxford: UP, 2008); see especially the chapter by William D. Godsey: “The Culture of Diplomacy and Reform in the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Office, 1867–1914” 59–81.

¹⁰ I am aware of three such recent publications. See Alison Frank Johnson: “The Bureaucracy of Honor. The Habsburg Consular Service and the History of Emotions” in *Administrative History. Journal for the History of Public Administration* 3 (2018): 164–184; also see Nicole M. Phelps: *U.S.-Habsburg Relations from 1815 to the Paris Peace Conference. Sovereignty Transformed* (Cambridge: UP, 2015 [first ed. 2013]) and Krisztián Csaplár-Degovics: “Österreichisch-ungarische Interessendurchsetzung im Kaza von Tirana” in *Südost-Forschungen* 71 (2012): 129–182.

foreign affairs and the practice of diplomacy.¹¹ Why is that so? Let us consider some key characteristics of consulship as it historically developed. Jan Melissen points out the following four: first, consulship's high degree of adaptability as exemplified by the ever-changing nature of its scope and tasks; second, its deep enmeshment or "overlap" with diplomacy; third, its inbuilt transnational and societal outlook; and fourth, its historical development in close correspondence with large-scale economic and social transformation processes.¹² Elaborating on the third characteristic, Melissen observes that

the 'consular perspective' has always been tied up with unfolding transnational relations instead of mere inter-state relations. Throughout history, the traditional division between 'foreign' and 'domestic' was alien to the world in which consular officers operated, as their daily tasks guaranteed a variety of contacts with citizens from different strata of society. A perspective on diplomacy infused by the consular experience contributes, and could have contributed, to an earlier questioning of traditional modes of thinking about a neatly organized 'Westphalian' diplomatic world. Fundamentally, the consular dimension of diplomacy draws attention to the long-time neglect of the societal dimension of world politics and diplomacy.¹³

Similar convictions may be detected in recent works by two scholars who highlight consuls as important agents of change for the international order and the practice of diplomacy in the nineteenth century. Nicole M. Phelps, in her study on U.S.-Habsburg relations, discusses the two powers' bilateral relations as an entangled history of shifting diplomatic practices and notions of sovereignty; the groundwork for this took place on the consular level as it revolved around consular matters such as trade, citizenship, and mass politics.¹⁴ Holly Case, on the other hand, locates the heart of these transformation processes in the imperial borderlands of the Ottoman Empire, with foreign consuls as the pacemakers of a new diplomacy. In Case's view, consuls steadily pushed diplomacy in the wider Balkan region into a novel post-Westphalian

¹¹ For an introduction focused on the nineteenth century, see *Consulship in the 19th Century*, eds. Jörg Ulbert, Lukian Prijac (Hamburg: DOBU, 2010).

¹² Jan Melissen: "The Consular Dimension of Diplomacy" in *Consular Affairs*, eds. Melissen and Fernández, 1–20, 2–3.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁴ Phelps: *Sovereignty Transformed*.

direction that blended “foreign-policy strategy and domestic social policy” and mobilised both state and non-state actors with little regard for state borders and jurisdictions.¹⁵

The examples just given may suffice to motivate my earlier claim about the great potential of embracing consulship for a revaluation of the history of diplomacy and foreign relations. Unsurprisingly, many historians have already adopted consular points of view in their research and launched into very fruitful discussions; in my view, works by early modernists and scholars of the Mediterranean region stand out in particular.¹⁶ Instead of giving a more detailed survey here, however, I will now move on to discuss selected concepts and methods that play a role in the newer historiography and which I adapt in this thesis for my own analysis.

My analytical frame will, above all, rest on an investigation of the various practices of diplomacy.¹⁷ Conceptualising activity in terms of practices creates a flexible and inclusive tool for capturing the agency of individuals and, in a larger view, of collective bodies such as institutions. Thus, I see the Habsburg consular service as a group of individual actors who engaged in shared practices, thereby contributing to the formation of the foreign service as a bureaucratic institution and, ultimately, to the shaping of foreign policy and the conduct of diplomacy.¹⁸ In my two case studies, I will highlight various kinds of practices and loosely assign them to three categories: social practices; institutional practices; and diplomatic practices. This grouping is nothing but a heuristic device – practices have always been

¹⁵ Holly Case: “The Quiet Revolution: Consuls and the International System in the Nineteenth Century” in *The Balkans as Europe, 1821–1914*, eds. Timothy Snyder, Katherine Younger (Rochester 2018), 110–38, 126. Also see Leira and Neuman: “The Many Past Lives”, 225–6.

¹⁶ See, for example, the excellent collected volume *Les consuls en Méditerranée, agents d’information, XVIe-XXe siècle*, ed. Silvia Marzagalli (Paris: Garnier, 2015). As part of a multidisciplinary debate, early modernists have developed a great variety of sophisticated new approaches for studying diplomatic history and continue to lead innovative debates; see Tracey A. Sowerby: “Early Modern Diplomatic History” in *History Compass* 9 (2016): 441–56. Finally, to name a pathbreaking work for the study of Mediterranean consular diplomacy, see Christian Windler: *La diplomatie comme expérience de l’Autre. Consuls français au Maghreb (1700–1840)* (Geneva: Droz, 2002).

¹⁷ For a comprehensive discussion, see the introduction to *Practices of Diplomacy in the Early Modern World c. 1410–1800*, eds. Jan Hennings, Tracey A. Sowerby (London: Routledge, 2017), 1–21.

¹⁸ Various actor-centric approaches to studying nineteenth-century diplomatic history are explored in *The Diplomats’ World*, eds. Mösslang and Riotte.

“complex, multifarious, and interconnected”¹⁹ – but I adopt these labels for greater readability. For example, aristocratic patronage in the foreign service will be treated as a social practice even though its outcomes (such as decisions on official appointments) were essentially institutional and sometimes also diplomatic in nature. My aim here is not to construct a typology but to comment on the entangled character of the various elements that made up the practice of diplomacy; which, of course, parallels my overall suggestion in this thesis that Habsburg consular officials participated in the same fields of activity as their colleagues in the central ministry and the diplomatic service.

A big topic in diplomatic history is when and how diplomacy became ‘modern’. As we have already seen, consuls are now understood by many as important agents in the processes that lead to the great transformation of diplomatic practice in the long nineteenth century. Since this thesis is interested in consuls as diplomatic actors in their institutional context, the question of the Habsburg foreign service’s ‘professionalisation’ suggests itself. Let us consider a conventional narrative:

The nineteenth century did indeed witness the gradual professionalization of diplomacy. The emergence of the modern state with its centralised and complex bureaucratic structures led to the creation of foreign services with regular career patterns and rules governing such matters as recruitment, education, promotion, retirement, and pensions.²⁰

Generally speaking, this is of course accurate, especially in the Euro-Atlantic context. But if we were to consider actual ground-level developments from around the world over a long period of time, the rendering just given would surely turn out to be a rather simplistic and certainly biased one. As newer scholarship argues, ‘professionalisation’ is a concept that needs to be studied in concrete cases and not within an already established framework that prescribes a clear-cut teleological development. “The task of a New Diplomatic History must therefore

¹⁹ *Practices of Diplomacy*, eds. Hennings and Sowerby, 2.

²⁰ Keith Hamilton and Richard Langhorne: *The Practice of Diplomacy. Its Evolution, Theory and Administration* (Abingdon: Taylor & Francis 2010; first edition published 1995).

be to forego established definitions in investigating how norms were negotiated and rehearsed in social interactions.”²¹ This statement by Christian Windler, who commented on the historical development of diplomatic practice in a much wider perspective, can easily be applied as well to the related (sub)topic of professionalisation processes in foreign-service bureaucracies, as I aim at doing here.

Bureaucracies fetishise routine; at the same time, norms and official procedures are not always followed and human errors occur. It takes a historian of a bureaucratic institution such as the Austro-Hungarian foreign service a great deal of work before s_he may be able to distinguish ‘business as usual’ from more or less subtle variations and exceptions.²² This complicates the study of practices: how to measure a detail’s significance in the bigger picture? To make matters worse, the most well-documented practices in a given setting are not necessarily those that were also the most prevalent. To mitigate this difficulty, I have selected case studies that are centred on times of disruption in the bureaucratic routine during diplomatic scandals: consul Victor Crenneville’s Duel Affair in Smyrna (İzmir) in 1880 and the Prochaska Affair of 1912, which was named after consul Oskar Prochaska in Prizren. The consuls and various other foreign-service officials that lived through these crises resorted to established practices when they made their decisions and acted; and yet, they did so under the pressure of unusual or unprecedented developments. While my focus on times of conflict and rupture does not do away with the complications mentioned just above, it does have two advantages: first, there is ample documentation since the foreign service’s crisis-management generated more extensive instructions, justifications, and generally more detailed written communication than would usually have been necessary; second, times of uncertainty meant that individual officials,

²¹ Christian Windler: “Afterword: From Social Status to Sovereignty. Practices of Foreign Relations from the Renaissance to the Sattelzeit” in *Practices of Diplomacy*, eds. Hennings and Sowerby, 254–266, 255.

²² Compare Waltraud Heindl’s introductory remarks in *Josephinische Mandarine*, 17–34; see Waltraud Heindl: *Bürokratie und Beamte in Österreich, vol. 1: Gehorsame Rebellen (1780–1848); vol. 2: Josephinische Mandarine (1848–1914)* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2013).

especially the two main protagonists of this thesis, come into sharper relief as actors in these events. That said, I do not mean to theorise further on diplomatic conflict: I merely use these two affairs as vehicles to reach a more sophisticated level in my analysis of more generally relevant practices.²³

The sources on which this thesis is based are primarily archival documents held in the imperial archives in Vienna (Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, HHStA).²⁴ Consuls are most often studied through the political reports that they produced.²⁵ Here, however, I will be drawing mostly on administrative documents, which are kept in the consuls' personnel files. These often very voluminous files contain the internal records that accumulated over the span of a consul's career; they frequently offer surprising insights into otherwise hidden procedures and practices as they can preserve, for example, semi-private letters or the results of investigations into a consul's conduct.²⁶ In working with these sources, I have tried to make sense of the foreign-service bureaucracy's labyrinthine internal procedures with the help of the principles of *Aktenkunde*: I considered the information found in administrative documents in the context of their creation processes, their function in daily bureaucratic business, and their afterlife in the

²³ Compare, however, the innovative framework for studying scandals in a bureaucratic/diplomatic setting in Tolga U. Esmer: "Notes on a Scandal: Transregional Networks of Violence, Gossip, and Imperial Sovereignty in the Late Eighteenth-Century Ottoman Empire" in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 58 (2016): 99–128.

²⁴ Nearly all of these belong to the HHStA's collection of the ministry of foreign affair's files. Throughout this thesis, source citations that start with PA refer to the archive's political subdivision (*Politisches Archiv*) while those starting with AR belong to its administrative section (*Administrative Registratur*). In chapter 1, I have also used documents held in a family archive that is part of the HHStA's special collections (SB – *Sonderbestände*).

²⁵ For a discussion of the information value of Habsburg consular reports and how different historiographies have worked with them, here in the context of late-nineteenth-century Kosovo, see the introduction to *Politik und Gesellschaft im Vilayet Kosovo und im serbisch beherrschten Kosovo. Berichte der österreichisch-ungarischen Konsuln aus dem zentralen Balkan 1870–1914*, 5 vols., eds. Eva Anne Frantz, Oliver Jens Schmitt, assist. Sven Mörsdorf (Vienna: ÖAW, forthcoming 2020) [hereinafter cited as 'PGK' followed by a Roman numeral denoting the volume].

²⁶ I would like to give some credit to Engelbert Deusch's work for originally having brought my attention to these files. Deusch's handbook on consular careers (Deusch: *Die effektiven Konsuln*) is built to a large degree on his laborious sighting of the many hundreds of personnel files, whose contents Deusch summarises. Although these summaries do not follow a systematic pattern, they offer extremely valuable references to materials for specific questions that one would be hard-pressed to find otherwise in this vast administrative archive.

archives.²⁷ Where appropriate, I have also used various other sources such as newspaper clippings and a diary. These sources will be presented in the respective chapters.

Most of my sources are from inside the Habsburg foreign service and were produced by its members or their allies. Although in principle it would have been desirable to contrast these with outside views, I am confident that this is not a limitation here. My objective in this thesis is to trace the inner workings of the institution that I study. I will engage critically with a spectrum of internal documents that highlight concrete practices and the ways in which consuls and other actors took part in them. As such, this strictly internal viewpoint may serve to heighten our awareness of the diversity of actors and practices present in the Habsburg foreign service. On that note, I have limited this study to investigating upper-tier state officials (*Konzeptsbeamte*) and, in one justified exception in the second chapter, a consular secretary who took over a consul's role.²⁸ The consular service also managed a large network of honorary consulates, but these were not staffed with state officials; the cases of honorary consuls, doubtlessly also very interesting, await future researchers to take a closer interest.

Though highly mobile during their careers, consuls were always embedded in the local contexts at their consular posts. Their activity and reportage linked these places to the imperial centre.²⁹ Seen this way, the consuls' daily work as clerks, translators, spies, negotiators, politicians and

²⁷ See Michael Hochedlinger: *Aktenkunde. Urkunden- und Aktenlehre der Neuzeit* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2009). This publication is more than a handbook: it synthesises scholarship on archival hermeneutics into principles that are particularly geared towards working with Austrian/Austro-Hungarian state documents. A reconstruction of the administrative procedures in the Austro-Hungarian foreign ministry during its last decade of existence can be found in Rudolf Wiedermayer: "Geschäftsgang des k. u. k. Ministeriums des Äußern 1908–1918" in *Archivalische Zeitschrift* 40 (1931): 131–152.

²⁸ Throughout the thesis, I use the term 'consul' mostly in a generic way: meaning a consul is a consular official. Where necessary to distinguish between the ranks, however, I will specify the concrete title. These were: consul-general (first or second class); consul; vice-consul; and trainee consul (*Konsulareleve*, later *Konsularattaché* – note how the title was changed to sound more 'diplomatic'; by contrast, diplomatic officials-in-training had been called attachés all along).

²⁹ Habsburg consuls were remarkably closely connected with Vienna through constant communication by mail and, increasingly, the telegraph. This invites reflection on spatiality (including the applicability of centre-periphery models) and, crucially for the present thesis, consuls' autonomy to act; see the classic study by David Paull Nickles: *Under the Wire. How the Telegraph Changed Diplomacy* (Cambridge/MAL UP, 2003).

so on need to be analysed first and foremost on the micro-level.³⁰ At the same time, consuls were part of an institution that was centred in Vienna and also spanned the globe. With this in mind, my thesis is trying to balance its scope in the following way: it examines its two case studies on the microlevel but zooms in on different places simultaneously (Vienna, Smyrna, Prizren, etc.), highlighting their interconnectedness. In addition, my observations about the Austro-Hungarian foreign service remain focused on its activity in the south-east of Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean shores beyond.³¹ There, numerous consulates existed in the major port-cities and further inland, testifying to the prime importance of the Ottoman sphere for Austro-Hungarian foreign policy.³² My choice is also influenced by the region's importance for the development of a new consular diplomacy, as argued by Case.³³

In the following two case studies, therefore, I seek to embed consular activity on the microlevel in its institutional context in the Austro-Hungarian foreign service. Analysing various kinds of practices, I will link these cases with the bigger picture of the historical development of diplomacy during a time of accelerated transformation. In examining the activity of two consuls (Count Victor Crenneville and Oskar Prochaska, joined by some of their colleagues), I will address my principal aims as outlined before; where appropriate, I will also point out various opportunities for further study under additional thematic headings that I could not follow here. In this way, I hope to be able to illustrate that Habsburg consuls open up manifold opportunities for studying diplomatic history through a social and cultural prism.

³⁰ Compare Csaplár-Degovics: "Österreichisch-ungarische Interessendurchsetzung".

³¹ There are good reasons why south-east Europe/the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean should historically be regarded as one macroregion and shared cultural and political space. See a critique to this effect in Karl Kaser: *The Balkans and the Near East. Introduction to a Shared History* (Vienna: LIT, 2011).

³² Leopold Kammerhofer: "Das Konsularwesen der Habsburgermonarchie 1752–1918. Ein Überblick mit Schwerpunkt auf Südosteuropa" in *Der Weg führt über Österreich. Zur Geschichte des Verkehrs- und Nachrichtenwesens von und nach Südosteuropa (18. Jh. bis zur Gegenwart)*, ed. Harald Heppner (Vienna: Böhlau, 1996), 7–35.

³³ Care: "Quiet Revolution".

Chapter 1: Victor Crenneville – A Count as Consul

1.1 Introduction

This is the story of an unlikely consul: Count Victor Folliot de Crenneville (1847–1920), by right of birth a member of the highest circles of the Austro-Hungarian aristocracy. Though now mostly forgotten, with no living members bearing their ancient name, the Crenneville were a prominent noble house during their own time. In 1867, the year in which the Dual Monarchy was founded, Victor Crenneville's father, Count Franz Crenneville (1815–1888),³⁴ was a top-ranking general and about to be appointed First Chamberlain, the gatekeeper to the imperial court.³⁵

Knowing this leads to a series of questions: Why would somebody like Victor Crenneville, a young man to whom all doors stood wide open, take on a consular career? Why did he not become a 'real' diplomatic official at an embassy, or at least a ministerial official, like so many of his aristocratic cousins? Once the count had become a consul, how did his privileged background and superior social rank affect his work in the 'bourgeois' consular service? How did this play out during times of crisis and over the course of his entire career? And finally: What can all this tell us about the inner workings of the consular service and the Austro-Hungarian foreign service as a whole?

³⁴ On Franz Crenneville, see the two existing biographies by Klaus Koch: *Generaladjutant Graf Crenneville. Politik und Militär zwischen Krimkrieg und Königgrätz* (Vienna: Bundesverlag, 1984) and Heinz Schießer: *Franz Graf Folliot de Crenneville. Generaladjutant und Oberstkämmerer Kaiser Franz Josephs* (Graz: Stocker, 2015). Koch focused on the elder Crenneville's career as a military officer and Emperor Franz Joseph's aide-de-camp, leaving out other aspects of his life story, including family history. Schießer, on the other hand, provides a more accessible and less academically rigid account that assumes a broader perspective and introduces valuable and previously unknown materials. Notably, Schießer's book covers Franz Crenneville's equally important later function as First Chamberlain (*Oberstkämmerer*). This high office's main duties were to watch over court ceremonial, control access to the imperial family, and administer the granting of honours and noble rank; in addition to these regular tasks, Franz Crenneville oversaw the re-organisation of the imperial collections, later to be displayed in the two newly-built monumental museums on the Ringstraße.

³⁵ It should be noted that I translate Franz Crenneville's actual military rank of *Feldzeugmeister* more generically as 'general' since there is no directly corresponding designation in English. At the time, Crenneville's rank of "FZM" was the second-highest rank obtainable in the Austro-Hungarian army.

I will investigate these question in the following three steps: first, by reconstructing Crenneville's social background and his long way to signing up for a consular career; second, by dissecting the course of a diplomatic affair that Crenneville had originally caused, explaining why he was saved from harm while another implicated consul was not; and third, by also following Crenneville's career path beyond this scandal, observing what additional factors shaped it in the longer run. As mentioned in the introduction, I posit in this thesis that practices become more visible during times of crisis. In this chapter, I selected episodes from Crenneville's career that correspond to three periods of crisis: a family crisis in his youth that led him to his lifelong occupation; a diplomatic crisis in his early years as a consul; and a continuous career crisis at a time when Crenneville's fortunes as a diplomat had already begun to wane.

All three groups of practices that I highlight in this thesis will be explored throughout this chapter; social practices will feature most often and among these, particularly patronage (or *Protektion*). It is well understood that patronage and aristocratic family connections were key to a successful career in the Habsburg foreign service, particularly in its diplomatic branch.³⁶ Seen this way, Victor Crenneville was destined for an extraordinary future in the service of the emperor. The young count, as he emerges from the sources, seems to have been a typical representative of the 'snobbish elite' that ruled the Austro-Hungarian foreign service: privileged, aloof, and acutely aware of social hierarchies and distinctions of rank.³⁷ The following, second section of this chapter will introduce Victor Crenneville as a young

³⁶ As Godsey noted, "without a grasp of such ties, an understanding of the Ballhausplatz and its modus operandi is hardly conceivable." See Godsey: *Aristocratic Redoubt*, 7.

³⁷ Godsey (who, in addition to his work on the social composition of the Austro-Hungarian foreign service, also wrote on the late-Habsburg aristocracy in general) included the Crennevilles in his list of the leading families of the Austro-Hungarian nobility. See William D. Godsey: "Quarterings and Kinship. The Social Composition of the Habsburg Aristocracy in the Dualist Era" in *Journal of Modern History* 71 (1999): 56–104. This important article gives a comprehensive overview on the mechanisms and internal hierarchies that governed the aristocracy as a social group or class. The central requirement for enjoying membership in the most rarefied circles of the Austro-Hungarian nobility, the court society, were impeccable genealogical credentials reaching back several generations. The Crennevilles were part of this most exclusive of elites; their social position gave them access to the highest honours and most influential offices that the Habsburg Empire could offer.

aristocrat; it will show in detail why out of all the possible options he chose to become a consular official and how patronage made this possible.

Unquestionably a lifelong member of Vienna's 'first society',³⁸ Crenneville moved in influential circles at ease, both in the Habsburg Empire and abroad. Thanks to his status, or more precisely the prestige and connections that came with it, Crenneville enjoyed opportunities in his professional life that no ordinary consul would have had. Crenneville could not only rely on the goodwill of his superiors in Vienna but also on the respect of his colleagues in the consular branch, all of whom he socially outranked. At the very least, Crenneville was always assured of his supervisors' leniency when they had to deal with his antics and mistakes. These were frequent and could even have disastrous diplomatic outcomes – though not for himself, as Crenneville's "Duel Affair" of 1880 will illustrate in the third section of this chapter.

Despite all the encouragement, help, and second chances he was granted, Crenneville did not make it to the top. His thirty years in the foreign service, even though he had been promoted from the consular to the diplomatic branch after some time, ended without major accomplishments.³⁹ This is not to say that Crenneville was completely unsuccessful as a diplomat; but my argument in this chapter rests on the observation that Crenneville's career

³⁸ The so-called first and second societies of Vienna were strictly separated. Aristocratic families such as the Crenneilles belonged to the first society, while the second society comprised the haute bourgeoisie as well as members of the economic and bureaucratic nobility such as Herzfeld (Crenneville's supervisor in Smyrna; see the third section of this chapter). Godsey gives the following, very vivid illustration: "From the perspective of a Viennese streetcar conductor, little may have differentiated the *Herr Baron* whose title dated from 1850 from the count whose ancestral line emerged from the mists in the Middle Ages. But in reality, the wife of the latter would no more have consented to receive a visit from that of the former than from the spouse of the streetcar conductor. The genealogical exclusiveness of the Habsburg court aristocracy, to which so many diplomats belonged, had no rivals in Europe"; see Godsey, *Aristocratic Redoubt*, 7.

³⁹ To be fair, this is only one way of interpreting Crenneville's relative success or failure. For a very positive appraisal of his diplomatic work at the end of his career, see Krisztián Komár: "Az Osztrák-Magyar Monarchia és Marokkó diplomáciai kapcsolatai a 20. század elején. Gróf Victor Folliot de Crenneville-Poutet Victor I. osztályú főkonzul, rendkívüli követ látogatása (1902. január 27-1902. február 10.). Mulaj Abdel Aziz Hasszán marokkói uralkodónál" [Austria-Hungary's diplomatic relations with Morocco at the beginning of the twentieth century. Crenneville's visit to the Moroccan ruler in 1902] in *Aetas* 19 (2004): 50-61. I thank my colleague Sára Lakatos for providing me with a detailed summary of this article.

was based on his active participation in social and institutional practices as well as his passive benefiting from them, rather than on outstanding diplomatic achievements. In the long run, Crenneville did not distinguish himself enough to be elevated to a first-rate diplomatic envoyship or other high office, positions that his father, since deceased, would surely have wished him to attain.

Crenneville was given many chances – he made use of only some of them. The fourth and final section will discuss this in more detail and examine Crenneville’s peculiar (and ultimately unsuccessful) strategy to seek career advancement through a combination of patronage and the writing of economic and political policy memoranda of dubitable quality. Here, I will explore what Crenneville’s career may tell us about the historical development of professionalisation in the Austro-Hungarian foreign service; a topic that ties in with longstanding debates about the aristocracy and aristocratic diplomats as symbols of the Habsburg Monarchy’s “decline” or its “anachronistic” nature.⁴⁰

Tracing Crenneville’s meandering from consular to junior diplomatic official and from there back to a consular role, I will argue that Crenneville’s case may complicate our understanding of aristocratic patronage in the late-Habsburg foreign service. The widely-held belief that patronage was the defining factor for career advancement in the Habsburg foreign service is mostly based on observations gained solely from its diplomatic branch. But what about the consular service? To make matters worse, patronage is simply hard to study. William Godsey once commented on the elusiveness of patronage as follows:

[C]ases in which the exercise of influence clearly failed to produce the desired result appear only rarely. This is no doubt primarily a function of the nature of the available evidence. Letters written on behalf of candidates ultimately

⁴⁰ See Godsey’s related comments in *Aristocratic Redoubt*, 1–8 and 205–6. For a headlong attack on narratives of decline and anachronism, see Pieter M. Judson: *The Habsburg Empire. A New History* (Cambridge/MA, Harvard UP, 2016), for the present context esp. the conclusion to chapter 7.

admitted to the service often ended up in their personnel files, whereas those for failed aspirants more likely found their way into the wastebasket.⁴¹

Godsey wrote this in the context of the foreign service's admission policies, whose frequent favouring of status over qualification contributed to the foreign service's lack of innovation. The same difficulty applies to analyses of practices during all career stages of a foreign service official. Fortunately, Victor Crenneville's case is very different in this regard. His elevated status resulted in the production and the preservation of an unusually large variety of sources. Throughout the chapter, I will present multiple varieties of practices in different contexts, most frequently instances of patronage. Based on this relative abundance of material, I will try to add nuance to our understanding of aristocratic patronage. Crenneville's example shows that even a count could not always ask for a free upgrade. Neither could he build his success exclusively on kinship ties, past achievements, or episodic bursts of motivation rather than a more continuous effort.

Analysing Crenneville's activity at close range allows us to glimpse into the inner workings of the foreign-service bureaucracy and its consular branch in a new and thought-provoking way: through an unusually privileged official's point of view. As I would like to show, the case of Victor Crenneville, whose career choice quite obviously challenges the traditional, strict dichotomy between aristocratic diplomats and consular commoners, is that of an intriguing figure; one whose tenure in the foreign service turned out not at all as clear-cut as the older scholarship would have it.

Crenneville's three decades in the Habsburg foreign service led him halfway around the globe, from the Ottoman Empire to the United States and back to postings across western Europe and North Africa. Crenneville spent crucial years of his consular career in the port cities of the Eastern Mediterranean, and this is where I will follow him. At the beginning of this journey

⁴¹ Godsey: *Aristocratic Redoubt*, 38–41, quote on 39.

stood the young count's wish to become a consular official – and stands my initial question: why?

1.2 The Runaway Count

Every family is unhappy in its own way. For Count Franz Crenneville, the general and faithful servant of the Habsburg emperor, the trouble started with his firstborn son. Before Victor Crenneville was ready to join the consular service, nearly a decade of turmoil between the two men had to pass. These early years, during which Victor fled from his father all the way to America, do not only explain his choice of career, but also tell us a lot about the aristocratic world which he inhabited, and continued to inhabit later as a consul.

The Crenneilles were a military family, originally of French old nobility. Unsurprisingly, the young Victor Crenneville was destined by his father to become an army officer. Victor was raised to be a cultivated, widely educated man of refined taste and manners, worthy to bear an illustrious name and follow in the footsteps of his ancestors.⁴² The Crenneilles were also a *kaisertreue*, or pro-imperial, family by choice. Victor's paternal grandfather had fled the 1789 revolution and vowed never to return, transplanting the comital family tree firmly into Austrian soil. In their new home, and under their new sovereign, the following generation of the Crenneilles produced no fewer than three high-ranking military officers, of which Victor's father Franz became the most prominent.

A general already at age 35, Franz Crenneville had been able to benefit from the patronage available to him at the imperial court as well as from the growing kinship networks of his family.⁴³ Thanks to advantageous marriages, the Crenneilles had become related to some of the most eminent aristocratic dynasties in the Habsburg realm: the Kinskys and the

⁴² In other words, Victor Crenneville had received a typical aristocratic socialisation; for a brief discussion on this topic, see Konstantinos Raptis: *Die Grafen Harrach und ihre Welt 1884–1945* (Wien: Böhlau, 2017), 74. Also see fn. 45 below.

⁴³ Koch: *Generaladjutant Graf Crenneville*, 169.

Falkenhayns, and through them to several more. His father's marriage to a member of the Chotek family made Victor Crenneville a cousin to Sophie Chotek, later the wife of Franz Ferdinand, the heir-apparent to the throne. Half a century earlier, Victor's younger brother, Heinrich Crenneville (1855–1929), had been appointed as a playfellow to the crown-prince Rudolf, the previous heir-apparent, who tragically died in 1889.⁴⁴ A closer connection to the imperial family could hardly be imagined. But although their aristocratic standing was impeccable, the Crennevilles had one important disadvantage vis-à-vis their kin: as recent immigrants whose ancestral possessions had been lost, they owned no lands to which they could retire; instead, they had to seek an appropriate career, which for Franz Crenneville, the general, could only mean the military.

Starting off in this way with a family history might seem gratuitous but is actually quite necessary. There are two reasons for this, the first being that for individual aristocrats such as Victor Crenneville, even those who tried to reject their families and names (as he did for a while), the family context is key.⁴⁵ The second reason is more practical: plenty of sources from inside the family circle are available. Unlike the cases of other consuls, the Crennevilles' typically aristocratic habit of collecting letters and other documents in an extensive family archive allows us to consider some of what was hidden from the outside world but shared with relatives or consigned to personal diaries.⁴⁶ Although Victor Crenneville himself appears to not

⁴⁴ Schießer: *Franz Graf Folliot de Crenneville*, 178.

⁴⁵ Raptis, in his fascinating book on the Harrachs (another prominent Austro-Hungarian family of comital rank), underlines the value of studying aristocratic families' daily lives and their life worlds on the micro-level, one family at a time. Raptis bases his study on the understanding that the social unit of the family played the central role in aristocratic culture. Biographies of individual aristocrats were decisively shaped by collective practices, norms, and traditions that were dictated by the family (and especially the family head – Franz Crenneville in the present example). See Raptis: *Die Grafen Harrach*.

⁴⁶ The family archive was created and curated with great dedication by Franz Crenneville. He bequeathed it to his youngest son Franz jr., urging his son to keep honouring family tradition (Schießer: *Franz Graf Folliot de Crenneville*, 259). The largest part of the family archive was added to the collections of the HHStA over the course of the twentieth century; other parts have been handed down the family line until the present day. On the part of the Crenneville archives that are publicly available in Vienna together with other such collections, see Christiane Arndt: *Das Archiv der Grafenfamilie Folliot de Crenneville im Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv Wien* (unpublished diploma thesis, Potsdam 2009) and more generally also Thomas Just: "Die Nachlässe und Privat- und Familienarchive im Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv" in *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Staatsarchivs* 56 (2011): 203–238.

have left any memoirs or letters (his estranged father apparently destroyed all the letters he received from Victor, noting in his diary how they only made him angry),⁴⁷ important materials have been preserved. In addition to Franz Crenneville's diary, which the general kept meticulously throughout his long life, Victor's own daughter Herminie, an accomplished writer, published an extensive autobiography.⁴⁸ In this way, major developments in Victor Crenneville's own biography can be triangulated from these two sides.

Thus, we know that the young count, aged 18, followed his father's wish and joined the Habsburg military, much to the general's pride.⁴⁹ Victor was almost immediately sent off with the troops that fought on the Italian front in the war of 1866. After about two months in the field, where he saw action in the victorious Battle of Custoza,⁵⁰ Victor returned home – as a hero and with a venereal disease.⁵¹ He had been recommended for a medal (presumably to flatter the father, not so much the son), but to Victor's bitter disappointment, Franz Crenneville intervened, thinking a decoration came too soon.⁵² Whether around that time or already before, a wide rift between the two had opened that soon became unbridgeable. As a soldier, the young

⁴⁷ While hundreds of the two younger brothers' letters were kept in the family archive, most of Victor's letters are conspicuously absent. Only a handful, mostly from his childhood and with apparent sentimental value, add to the collection (see the thin file in SB FA Folliot-Crenneville 50). I assume that Franz Crenneville destroyed most of Victor's letters because they could only serve to remind him of a troubled past; see e.g. the entry for 6 July 1875 (in diary 1875–78, SB FA Folliot-Crenneville 79), which mentions an "impertinent reply" that the general had received from Victor and which prompted him to jot down several lines of angry remarks.

⁴⁸ *The Red Countess. Selected Autobiographical and Fictional Writing by Hermynia Zur Mühlen (1883–1951)*, ed. Lionel Gossman (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2018). Zur Mühlen, née Countess Herminie Crenneville, became a celebrated socialist and feminist writer. Her memoir's first translator changed its title from what should have been "The End and the Beginning" to the racier "The Runaway Countess"; hence my choice of title for this section.

⁴⁹ See e.g. entry for 20 July 1866 in diary 1865–67, SB FA Folliot-Crenneville 71.

⁵⁰ The family archive contains a letter that Victor sent to his parents from the field, dated 4 July 1866, i.e. shortly after the battle. SB FA Folliot-Crenneville 50, f. 145–6.

⁵¹ This is how I interpret an uncharacteristic entry in Franz Crenneville's diary: "Friday, 17 August 1866. [...] Victor returned with gout and Tr. . . . [...] In the evening at Victor's bedside." I read this as "Tripper", i.e. gonorrhoea. The entry is uncharacteristic because of a peculiar use of abbreviation (five periods for five missing letters?) together with colourful jagged markings that Crenneville, against his usual habit, drew around this passage. This gives the impression of great agitation. The general probably did so much later when re-reading his 1866 diary since he started using coloured pencils in his daily entries only in subsequent years. It would appear, then, that this passage captures a major event in the deteriorating relationship between father and son, at the end of which stood Victor Crenneville's decision to become a consul. Entry in diary 1865–67, SB FA Folliot-Crenneville Nr. 71.

⁵² Schießler: *Franz Graf Folliot de Crenneville*, 177.

count, who was accustomed to a privileged life among the highest circles of society in Vienna, and who now had to spend dull days without end in a succession of provincial garrisons, could not keep out of trouble. Victor gambled, ran into debt, and fought duels, causing public outrage that reached the ears of his father even in his office in the capital.⁵³ Naturally, for the emperor's former aide-de-camp who was now one of the highest dignitaries at the Habsburg court, a disobedient son was an unacceptable embarrassment. The general's diary entries from this time hint at his growing frustration with Victor's never-ending misbehaviour. Franz Crenneville, who had chosen the motto *honneur et devoir* as his guiding principle, was known and feared for his severity and irate temper. His anger was quick to flare up whenever "honour and duty" were at stake. When his unruly son finally declared that he would quit the hated army life, the general cast him out of the family.⁵⁴ Victor left the service in 1870 and went into exile as far away as possible: America.

What happened during the four years that Victor Crenneville spent in the United States is not entirely clear, but there are fragments that give some clues. Initially, in 1870, Victor's name appears in the official US government records, where he is listed as an attaché at the Austro-Hungarian legation in Washington D.C.⁵⁵ There is, however, no reference to this in Crenneville's personnel file, which was later opened at the foreign ministry.⁵⁶ This points to an informal arrangement made possible through family connections. According to Godsey, young aristocrats who had not yet taken the prescribed diplomatic entrance exam or who simply wanted to "spend a few pleasant years abroad" could be assigned to embassies as provisional attachés. This Habsburg equivalent to today's unpaid internships held advantages for both

⁵³ Entries for 13/14 February 1869 in diary 1869–70, SB FA Folliot-Crenneville 73.

⁵⁴ Entry for 21 November 1866 in diary 1865–67, SB FA Folliot-Crenneville 71.

⁵⁵ *Register of the Department of State 1870* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office), 31. Crenneville's appointment might still have been official or semi-official in some form. The Austro-Hungarian counterpart to the US State Department's registry, i.e. the voluminous *Hof- und Staatshandbuch der österreichisch-ungarischen Monarchie* which lists all state employees including consuls and diplomats, could help solve the question. Unfortunately, I have not been able to consult its 1870 edition as it has not been digitised yet.

⁵⁶ AR F4 60 Victor Crenneville [hereinafter: Pe. Victor Crenneville].

sides: “In exchange for lending their brilliant social attributes to the occasional embassy function,” these young men “enhanced their own positions through the glamorous connection to a diplomatic establishment.”⁵⁷ Victor Crenneville, however, continued to gamble and make debts also in Washington, which must have made his affiliation with the embassy untenable quite soon.⁵⁸

A way out appeared in 1871–72. Crenneville could leave the capital and take part in an Austrian-led geological expedition to little-known areas in the northwest of Texas, close to Native American territory.⁵⁹ Crenneville seems to have enjoyed the trip to the Wild West – he survived it, after all – but the young aristocrat had clearly come from a different world. A seasoned frontiersman who took part in the same trek noted in his diary: “This evening Count Crenneville a young Austrian of blood joins us – of no visible use as I see even as an ornament”, adding that Victor had entertained them in their tent with “fancy songs from operas &c in different languages, and with theatric [sic] gestures and divine looks screams as only little men can equal.”⁶⁰ Another member of the group recalled him, in his Texan way, as “Victor de Greneville”, a “little Hungarian Count.”⁶¹ Incidentally, both men recorded that Crenneville had planned to write a book about his travels, a special interest of his to which I will return in the last section of this chapter.

There is also a version about his adventures in America that Crenneville liked to tell his family later in life. It is no surprise that this *Gschichtl*⁶² presents his exile years in the best possible way, omitting any hint at the help which Crenneville received from the outside such as money

⁵⁷ See Godsey: *Aristocratic Redoubt*, 74–75.

⁵⁸ See also Schießer: *Franz Graf Folliot de Crenneville*, 177.

⁵⁹ See the expedition report by Alb. S. Gatschet: “Erforschung des Nordwesttheiles von Texas im Jahre 1872” in *Mittheilungen aus Justus Perthes’ Geographischer Anstalt* 19 (1873): 453–467. Crenneville is named among the members (without his proper title as count) on 454.

⁶⁰ *M.K. Kellogg’s Texas Journal*, ed. Llerena B. Friend (Dallas: Texas UP, 1967), entry for 1 July 1872.

⁶¹ Robert G. Carter: *On the Border with Mackenzie, or, Winning West Texas from the Comanches* (Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 2007 [first published 1935]), 334.

⁶² Austrian expression for a charming but not necessarily very trustworthy story.

sent to him clandestinely by his mother.⁶³ Still, we have the advantage that Victor Crenneville's own version of the tale was recorded by a close and critical observer, his daughter Herminie. She wrote:

He had run away to America when he was quite a young man, and there, without a *kreuzer* in his pocket, had earned his own living – first as a waiter, [...] then as a salesman in a dry-goods store. He had made an excellent salesman, he claimed, and I think he was telling the truth, for no one was a greater charmer than my father, when he wanted to be. [...] Later he went to the western states as an election speaker for the Republican party, if I am not mistaken. [...] The last job father found was teaching German at a finishing school for girls. [...] Afterwards he became reconciled with my grandfather and came back to Europe. He was very proud of the fact that he, the spoiled child of an aristocrat, had made his way so well over there, and many years later when he was at the embassy in Washington, he was much amused when at grand embassy receptions he got to lead in to dinner the very ladies to whom he had once sold dry-goods.⁶⁴

This is an amusing story, but can we believe its original teller, a somewhat older Victor Crenneville? Does his story really show a man who had crossed the strict social boundaries of his youth and preferred a modest, bourgeois existence to the golden cage of an aristocratic life? Did his wandering years make the 'job' of a consul more attractive to him than becoming an officer or embassy official instead? If so, then only for a while. Although it is not unlikely that his taste of a simple life made Crenneville more open towards social intercourse with common people, it is clear that he returned to his 'proper' social role quite soon. All the evidence we have from Crenneville's later life rules out any egalitarian tendencies. Upon his return to Europe and the exclusive society that had created him, the runaway count became a complete aristocrat again, proud of his distinguished position even among the nobility itself. When, years later, a waiter mistakenly addressed Crenneville with a lower rank, he angrily shouted at the man: "Call me Victor if it pleases you, but for God's sake don't call me a baron!"⁶⁵ The count

⁶³ Schießer: *Franz Graf Folliot de Crenneville*, 177.

⁶⁴ *The Red Countess*, ed. Gossman, 40–41.

⁶⁵ *The Red Countess*, ed. Gossman, 96. The memoir tells several more anecdotes that illustrate Crenneville's dislike of noble but lower-ranking suitors for his daughter; he also resented the prospect of his daughter marrying a Protestant since this would bar his grandchildren from admission to the Viennese court nobility as Court Chamberlains or Ladies of the Star-Cross (ibid., 70–71 and 101). On the aristocratic honours system, see Godsey: "Quarterings and Kinship".

clearly did not really want to think back to the days when according to his own tale he, too, had been a waiter.

In the summer of 1874, Victor Crenneville returned from America to Europe after four years of absence. His arrival was eagerly awaited by his mother but silently resented by his father, who had not forgiven him. “We will soon regret having called him back,” wrote the general.⁶⁶ When the prodigal son started asking for money again, Franz Crenneville concluded that nothing had changed.⁶⁷

This renewed disappointment did, however, not mean that Father Crenneville would stop helping his son. As his diary shows, the general was anxious that his firstborn should become respectable at last.⁶⁸ A deeply pious man, Franz Crenneville prayed in writing that Victor should find the right path and take up a worthy profession⁶⁹ – and as a top official, he also knew that there were worldly powers that could be appealed to. Victor had not yet obtained a law degree, the minimum qualification for an upper-level career in the state administration. To brush over this detail, Franz Crenneville, via the minister of the interior, gained permission from the emperor (who reserved the right to decide about all upper-tier appointments) to waive this requirement until Victor could complete the necessary studies. Within days, a suitable administrative position in the provincial capital of St. Pölten had been found.⁷⁰

Victor seems to have been highly motivated at first – a bit too much, as his father observed⁷¹ – but this was not to last. After only a few months, he could not stand the small town and his

⁶⁶ Franz Crenneville wrote on several occasions that only the love for his wife had made him accept his son’s return. Entry for 15 July 1874 in diary 1873–75, SB FA Folliot-Crenneville 78.

⁶⁷ E.g. entries for 7 July 1874 and 25 April 1875, *ibid.*

⁶⁸ This is perhaps a feeling that most parents will relate to. I could trace Franz Crenneville’s worries about his son’s future career (and therefore his position in life) as far back as 1869, i.e. the time when Victor decided to leave the army: “I allowed my son to see me [until then, the general had refused to admit him]. Whither can I send him?” The German original is perhaps more meaningful than my translation: “Wohin sol [sic] ich ihn geben?” Franz Crenneville did not necessarily want to send Victor away; he wanted to place him in a suitable surrounding. Entry for 16 February 1869 in diary 1869–1870, SB FA Folliot-Crenneville 73.

⁶⁹ Entry for 28 August 1874 in diary 1873–75, SB FA Folliot-Crenneville 78.

⁷⁰ Pe. Victor Crenneville, f. 455–458.

⁷¹ Entry for 28 November 1874 in diary 1873–75, SB FA Folliot-Crenneville 78.

monotonous office job anymore. When a transfer to Vienna was denied to him (which to request so soon must have been an insult to all those who had helped serve him this position on a silver tray), Victor simply called it quits. Even worse, it came to light that he had run up high debts again and that his father, as always, had to settle them. Having learned about this newest catastrophe, Franz Crenneville poured his grief onto the pages of his diary:

“Victor [...] whose earlier conduct in life [*Vorleben*] I cannot forget or only if he achieves something great, honourable, [and] good. I have no more heart for him. He has dishonoured my faultless name, this! is what I cannot forgive him. Even if in the eyes of society [*der Welt*] he has been saved.”⁷²

What shines through this emotional passage is the importance of keeping up appearances: hardly a notion exclusive to aristocrats, but one that was in this case complicated by the general’s strong feelings about the honour of his family and how his son ought to behave.

As there is no corresponding diary entry, it is impossible to know if Franz Crenneville actively suggested any new alternatives to Victor at that point, but it is obvious that one had to be found quite soon. What we can know from the general’s notes is that on August 16, 1875, about a month after pulling out of St. Pölten, Victor told his father about his latest plan. At the end of that day, Franz Crenneville wrote: “Victor wants to join the consular service. I have no objections!”⁷³ It turns out that after all that had happened, the general had little left to say.

This is unfortunate since it only raises further questions. It has only become clear that Victor had not considered a consular career right from the start. But was it pure desperation that led him to choose the consular track – or did he look forward to it? Was the diplomatic branch off-limits to him entirely due to his tarnished reputation – or were there simply no vacancies on offer? Finally, was it perfectly fine in the eyes of his proud father that a count could be a consul – or had Franz Crenneville lost all hope in a son who had disgraced the family and was simply glad to see him leave? Without the help of other sources, there can be no definite answers to

⁷² Entry for 6 July 1875 in diary 1875–78, SB FA Folliot-Crenneville 79.

⁷³ Entry for 17 August 1875 in diary 1875–78, SB FA Folliot-Crenneville 79.

these questions. But I like to think that Victor Crenneville's willingness to become a consul, together with his father's disinterested reaction, show that it was an *acceptable* solution, not another scandal. This means that it was not unthinkable for an aristocrat to join the consular service, even if the diplomatic track remained much more desirable.

With Victor's new plan approved, progress came as quick as ever. The Crennevilles' ability to call on the highest levels of the ministerial decision makers once again made sure that the application process for a consular career was smoothed over. An examination at the ministry had to be taken by all who wanted to enter the consular service, but we can assume that the young count was not questioned too harshly.⁷⁴ Still, Victor had to take a day-long exam, but it is telling that, even before he had returned at night ("utterly exhausted", as his father noted), Franz Crenneville was paid a visit by section councillor Baron Hofmann of the ministry, who took the trouble to announce the positive result in person.⁷⁵

Soon after, Victor was officially appointed a trainee consul destined for the consulate in Cairo. Following this announcement, Franz Crenneville called a meeting with Count Julius (Gyula) Andrassy, the minister of foreign affairs. Later that day, the general noted: "Spoke to Andrassy, who was late, about Victor. He says he knows nothing and plays the despotic toutpuissant."⁷⁶ What exactly the two grandees of the realm talked about is not recorded in this diary entry. The context tells us that it must have been Victor's prospects and that it led to a plea for Andrassy's active support. Franz Crenneville was disappointed, however, because the foreign minister, quite the diplomat, did not promise anything. The elder Crenneville's intense dislike of Andrassy and all Hungarian 'traitors' of 1848 and after was well-known; surely the two men were no friends.⁷⁷ Still, we can see that despite this personal aversion, Crenneville tried to talk

⁷⁴ The ministry entertained flexible admission standards when it came to favouring the sons of influential aristocratic fathers; see Godsey: *Aristocratic Redoubt*, 33–58.

⁷⁵ Entry for 22 October 1875 in diary 1875–78, SB FA Folliot-Crenneville 79.

⁷⁶ Entry for 20 December 1875 in diary 1875–78, SB FA Folliot-Crenneville 79.

⁷⁷ See e.g. the following comment in Crenneville's diary from the time when Andrassy returned to Vienna, probably to take part in the negotiations that would result in the Austro-Hungarian Compromise: "Count Gyula

to the minister about his son and that Andrásy indeed came to see him (and not the other way around, which bears ceremonial significance). Crenneville's wording suggests that Andrásy, while not committing to any concrete action, emphasised that he *could* grant his patronage to anyone in the foreign service if he chose to do so. And perhaps the meeting had borne some fruit, after all. Three days later, Andrásy granted Victor the honour of a personal audience.⁷⁸

This whole episode, a glimpse into the concrete mechanisms behind aristocratic patronage, underscores the importance of studying the Habsburg foreign service through a cultural and social prism and not just as a lifeless bureaucratic machine. We have seen how Franz Crenneville's grave concerns about his family reputation urged him to pull all the many social strings he could to try and place Victor in a respectable position. Although I could not find entirely sufficient evidence, I have suggested that to take up a consular career was not seen as an outright degradation even for a high aristocrat. Future research could test this claim and examine similar cases (for there were several aristocratic consuls); if nothing else, this may help overcome the traditionally held view that consular and diplomatic officials belonged to two entirely different species.

Shortly before the end of 1875, that is about a week after these events, Victor Crenneville left Vienna, now bound for Egypt. Once again, his father's influence had secured him a solid career prospect in the imperial service – only that this time, the young count would also follow through with it until the end.

Andrassy was summoned here!!! I will pay no attention to him [*à quoi je l'ignore*]". Entry for 17 July 1866 in diary 1865–67, SB FA Folliot-Crenneville 71.

⁷⁸ Entry for 23 December 1875 in diary 1875–78, SB FA Folliot-Crenneville 79.

1.3 The Duel Affair

Victor Crenneville's new life as a consular official began with a tour of the Eastern Mediterranean and several of the Habsburgs' major outposts in the region.⁷⁹ Starting in January 1876, he spent six months at the consulate in Cairo followed by another nine months in Beirut. Throughout the following three years, Crenneville was stationed in Smyrna (İzmir), remaining there from mid-1877 until the autumn of 1880. These early years seem to have been a quiet time for him, at least when compared to the turbulences of his recent past. Crenneville's last few months in Smyrna, however, turned out to be so eventful that they can provide the material for the entire section of this chapter.

In the spring and summer of 1880, Crenneville's participation in a duel set off an affair that quickly spiralled into a minor diplomatic incident. The affair soon pitted the entire Habsburg foreign ministry against a local bourgeois family in Smyrna – and the Habsburgs lost. The outcome was some embarrassment for the ministry and the early retirement of Crenneville's supervising consul-general, Stephan Ritter von Herzfeld (1828–1903). The young count, on the other hand, emerged from it untarnished. Following the course of Crenneville's "Duel Affair" will allow us to peek behind the scenes of Habsburg consular diplomacy as it connected the local and transregional levels. I will continue the previous section's theme of aristocratic patronage and related practices and ask why Crenneville's career survived the affair and Herzfeld's did not. Moreover, I will also reflect on the affair from a diplomatic point of view and locate it in the bigger picture of the changing practice of diplomacy at the end of the nineteenth century.

Before coming to the Duel Affair itself, let me briefly outline Crenneville's career until that point. During his first three years in the consular service, Crenneville held the rank of trainee

⁷⁹ I summarise Crenneville's career data here and elsewhere in this section according to the respective entry in Deutsch: *Die effektiven Konsuln*.

consul. As such, he was expected to familiarise himself with the daily work of a consular official and its various procedures, study mercantile law and trade statistics, improve his command of foreign languages, assist his senior colleagues in whichever tasks they saw fit, and otherwise lead a modest life and stay out of trouble. Overall, Victor seems to have been successful at this. His basic training ended with his promotion to vice-consul in 1878–79. To Victor’s father in Vienna, this step forward must have meant that his son had finally secured a respectable position in life. The time had come to formally induct Victor into the inner circles of the Habsburg court society as a Court Chamberlain. One of Franz Crenneville’s duties as the First Chamberlain was to make sure that this extremely coveted honour was granted only to claimants with an impeccable social standing who could prove a pure aristocratic lineage reaching back several generations.⁸⁰ As soon as he had joined this most exclusive club, Victor Crenneville made it a habit to sign official documents as “*k.u.k. Kämmerer und Vice-Consul*”, with the court title coming first, thereby propping up his still very modest rank in the consular service with the help of his outstanding social rank.⁸¹

As part of the prescribed evaluation process that Victor had to undergo before he could become a Court Chamberlain, Franz Crenneville had obtained an official assessment from Victor’s supervisor in Smyrna, consul-general Herzfeld. Writing in 1879, Herzfeld praised Victor’s diligence at work and generally his “brilliant capabilities” [*glänzende Fähigkeiten*]. He also noted that Victor was popular among the naval officers with whom he kept company in his free time. Although Herzfeld had himself been a naval officer in his earlier years, he did not approve of Victor’s conduct when together with his friends:

⁸⁰ See Godsey: “Quarterings and Kinship” and cf. fn. 37 and 65 above.

⁸¹ See e.g. Victor Crenneville to Herzfeld, Smyrna, 15 May 1880, unnumbered (Pe. Victor Crenneville f. 476–79).

A character trait of his that leads him to try to stand out in every way makes him take risks at times such as during par force hunting trips or foolhardy stunts at sea; he puts his life in danger just so that people will talk about him.⁸²

One may wonder why Herzfeld, who was after all the head of the Smyrna consulate, did not simply order Crenneville to stop. I believe that the answer lies in Herzfeld's lower social position. Although a nobleman himself, the consul-general was vastly outranked by his nominal subordinate. Herzfeld apparently hesitated to treat Victor in the same way as he would have treated any other junior official; he might have feared that too much criticism could prompt Victor to write to his powerful father in Vienna. When chance, in the guise of bureaucratic procedure, presented this opportunity to Herzfeld himself, he did not hold back with comments even though this made his own lack of authority become apparent as well.

When in the following year the Duel Affair started to unfurl, Herzfeld's concern about the young count's reckless behaviour turned out to have been justified. As noted in the previous section, Victor Crenneville had displayed an inclination to fight duels already in his early twenties when still an army officer.⁸³ He had quit his commission but continued to inhabit a world that put the strongest possible emphasis on questions of 'honour', be it in one's daily life or in diplomacy. As Frank Johnson has recently suggested, this was no different for (bourgeois) consuls either.⁸⁴ Crenneville, as an aristocrat with a military background, will certainly have been ready to defend what he regarded as his honour or the honour of his friends. This is in fact what set the Duel Affair in motion: it was not Crenneville himself who had at first been involved, but a young member of a prominent local family, the d'Andria of Smyrna.

⁸² Herzfeld to Franz Crenneville, Smyrna, 8 January 1879, Nr. III (Pe. Victor Crenneville f. 416–19).

⁸³ Cf. fn. 53 above.

⁸⁴ See Frank Johnson: "The Bureaucracy of Honor", including for a deeper conceptual discussion of 'honour', which I will omit here.

This Paris d'Andria⁸⁵ had a quarrel of some kind with a certain Georges Psiachi, who belonged to another family of note. The d'Andria and the Psiachi families were 'Levantine', or Catholic inhabitants of the Ottoman Eastern Mediterranean.⁸⁶ In Smyrna, the bustling port city, Levantine merchant and banking families constituted important parts of the urban economic and cultural elite. Leading Levantine families maintained networks that stretched to other port cities and trade centres in the region and onwards to western Europe and beyond. Many Levantines cultivated close connections to the local consulates of Catholic powers such as Austria-Hungary, Italy, and France, profiting from their protection. An official connection through the consulate might well have had to do with how Crenneville and d'Andria first met. D'Andria then drew Crenneville into his conflict.

In a quite ungentlemanly way, Psiachi and d'Andria had been fighting each other in the open street in early April 1880. Paris d'Andria, who claimed he had been ambushed, called upon Victor Crenneville for help. They decided to hit back in style and formed a 'court of honour' with Crenneville and a German naval lieutenant, Truppel, as the judges. The whole subsequent process has been documented in a detailed protocol that Crenneville later forwarded to Herzfeld.⁸⁷ The proceedings were a very serious matter for the young men. Their protocol records a succession of formalised steps to establish what had happened, what was the nature of the injury to d'Andria's honour, and in what way satisfaction could be gained. Having weighed the evidence, a jury of locals (more of d'Andria's friends, no doubt) demanded a written apology from Georges Psiachi or, failing that, a duel.

⁸⁵ A genealogy website gives very exact biographical data for a "Giuseppe 'Paride' (Paris) d'Andria (1851–1907)" and his family members, quoting from the Italian consulate's registry and church registries. See the respective entry on www.en.geneanet.org (accessed 12 June 2020).

⁸⁶ On Levantines, with a particular focus on the societies of Galata-Pera and Smyrna, see Oliver Jens Schmitt: *Levantine. Lebenswelten und Identitäten einer ethnokonfessionellen Gruppe im Osmanischen Reich im 'langen 19. Jahrhundert'* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2005). For the urban society of Smyrna, also see Marie-Carmen Smyrnelis: *Une société hors de soi. Identités et relations sociales à Smyrne aux XVIIIe et XIXe siècles* (Paris: Peeters, 2006).

⁸⁷ See Herzfeld to Haymerle, Smyrna, 15 May 1880, unnumbered, confidential (Pe. Victor Crenneville f. 375–80).

Neither could be obtained, however, because Psiachi's father had in the meantime arrived at the scene. Jean Psiachi had little regard for the officious decorum of the court: he forbade his son to duel on account of their religion and then took him away.⁸⁸ With the accused party unavailable for further comment, the court moved on to pass its final judgement. Addressing Georges Psiachi *in absentia*, it resolved that "your conduct has not been that of a man of honour [and] we declare you a villain and a coward".⁸⁹ The verdict, signed by Crenneville and Truppel, was given in French and English so that all of Smyrna should know.

This should have been the end of it. D'Andria's honour had been cleansed, at least as far as his supporters were concerned; no duel had been necessary, and nobody was hurt. But Jean Psiachi did not leave it there. He turned the tables on Crenneville and Truppel, the two self-appointed judges, by filing actual lawsuits at the courts in Vienna and Berlin.⁹⁰ Back home, Crenneville now stood accused of defamation and, in the impression of the general public, of actually having fought another duel. I believe that newspaper coverage had caused this misconception. The various major newspapers that reported on the lawsuit and its background presented detailed and informed accounts, stating quite clearly that there had, in fact, never been a duel; but all this appeared under the uniform headline "A Duel Affair", which the papers then kept using also in their future coverage.⁹¹

By the time the news broke to the public between 27 and 29 May 1880, the foreign ministry had already been made aware of the situation. On 15 May, Herzfeld, as soon as he had learned that Jean Psiachi intended to sue Crenneville, had sent a full report to Vienna containing a copy of the court of honour's protocol, Victor's own account of the events, and Herzfeld's calm

⁸⁸ See Schmitt: *Levantiner*, 257–258 on duels. Discussing an unrelated example from Smyrna, Schmitt notes that Levantines tended to avoid duels at all cost, often citing religious reasons.

⁸⁹ Herzfeld to Haymerle, Smyrna, 15 May 1880, see fn. 87 above.

⁹⁰ Although it would have made for an interesting comparison, I could not follow Truppel's case further here.

⁹¹ *Die Presse*, 27 May 1880, 15–16; *Neue Freie Presse*, 27 May 1880, 7; *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*, 28 May 1880, 2; and again *Die Presse*, 29 May 1880, 11.

assurance that there was no need to worry. The consul-general asked the ministry to be lenient with Crenneville, who, as Herzfeld wrote,

has not yet sufficiently understood the base practices of the Levantines and has erroneously tried to transplant notions of chivalry out of his native circles [*aus den heimathlichen Kreisen*] into a soil that lacks any predisposition for them.⁹²

The subsequent course of the Affair would reveal that it was in fact mostly Herzfeld, not Crenneville, who had a poor understanding of the real “practices” of the Levantines in question.⁹³ The consul-general’s actions turned out to be so disastrous that, over in the central ministry, the Duel Affair became internally known as the “Herzfeld-Psiachi Affair”.⁹⁴

What had happened? It seems that Herzfeld had taken the initiative and not thought about the consequences. On 26 May, that is the day before the Duel Affair hit the news in Vienna, Herzfeld cabled from Smyrna that he had convinced Jean Psiachi to drop all charges against Crenneville.⁹⁵ The message arrived in the late afternoon and came too late to stall the newspaper reports from being published. Still, the lawsuit was no more. Herzfeld, writing in the full report that had to follow his telegram, assured the ministry that “this matter has been sorted out completely now”. Herzfeld explained that he had felt the need to put “considerable pressure” on Psiachi to drop the lawsuit in view of “the prominent position and the famously high moral standards of His Excellency the First Chamberlain”. Herzfeld had already reprimanded Crenneville for his inappropriate behaviour and asked the ministry once more to “forgive this, doubtless, final youthful escapade of the very talented but too hot-blooded

⁹² Herzfeld to Haymerle, Smyrna, 15 May 1880, f. 380; see fn. 87 above.

⁹³ Herzfeld’s contempt for Levantines was typical for a nineteenth-century western European. A major cause for this was the Levantines’ perceived ‘in-betweenness’ as Christian subjects under Ottoman rule; parallels to contemporary perceptions of Balkan Christians are obvious. For more on this, see Schmitt: *Levantine*, 61–87.

⁹⁴ This is how I interpret the fact that the dossier which the ministry kept about the developments bears this title. Considering the Affair’s outcome, it is also quite telling that the dossier later ended up in Crenneville’s personnel file, not Herzfeld’s: only Crenneville mattered to the ministry. The dossier comprises Pe. Victor Crenneville, f. 354–364.

⁹⁵ Telegram Herzfeld to Haymerle, Smyrna, 26 May 1880, cyphered (Pe. Victor Crenneville, f. 373).

count.”⁹⁶ But Herzfeld’s step had in fact not been the feat of negotiation as which he wanted it to be seen.

It took some time until it became known what really had happened in Smyrna, and then only gradually. In their initial reports on what they termed the Duel Affair, the Viennese newspapers had promised their readers to “follow up on this interesting affair” as soon as more information could be obtained.⁹⁷ New material from Smyrna had finally found its way to Vienna about two weeks later. On 15 June, both *Die Presse* and the *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung* were able to clear up for their readers why the lawsuit against Crenneville had disappeared so quickly: because Herzfeld had given Psiachi complete satisfaction. The consul-general, the papers reported, had written a letter of apology that expressed the foreign minister’s sincere regret about Crenneville’s conduct and announced that the vice-consul would be punished and recalled from Smyrna.⁹⁸ That was on 16 June; the following morning, however, the same readers might have been surprised to see this information completely contradicted in the official government organ *Politische Correspondenz*. The government announcement denied that any intervention of the minister in this “private matter” had been necessary and that consequently there had also been no need to punish Crenneville in any way. On the contrary, the announcement continued, Crenneville enjoyed the minister’s full trust; he had in fact already much earlier been selected for a “very honourable mission” to Cyprus that would begin quite soon.⁹⁹ This meant to say that Crenneville would indeed leave Smyrna, but not in disgrace. The announcement as a whole, of course, could only mean that Herzfeld’s letter of apology had never been written.

The ball was now back in Smyrna in the Psiachi family’s court. If there was no letter, then there had been no apology. Jean Psiachi had been lying, or so it had to seem unless he could prove

⁹⁶ Herzfeld to Haymerle, Smyrna, 27 May 1880, unnumbered, confidential (Pe. Victor Crenneville, f. 371–72).

⁹⁷ Quoted from the end of the original article that had appeared on 27 May in *Die Presse*; see fn. 91 above. Other newspapers used the similar formulations.

⁹⁸ *Die Presse*, 15 June 1880, 9; *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*, 15 June 1880, 4.

⁹⁹ I am citing the full reprint of the announcement in *Die Presse*, 17 June 1880, 3.

that the letter really existed. This could easily be done in Smyrna, but what about the public in Vienna? Psiachi once more called on his attorney in Vienna, Dr. Bernhard Stall, who had taken the original lawsuit to the courts. On 25 August, Stall arranged the publication in at least two major papers in Vienna of a statement that gave the letter's text in full. To leave no doubt about its authenticity, a confirmation by the French consul-general in Smyrna was added.¹⁰⁰ For those who wished it was now possible to compare with the earlier newspaper reports about the letter, which had paraphrased its content completely accurately indeed.

The foreign ministry already knew that this would happen. It had been warned by Herzfeld himself, in a letter that had arrived from Smyrna already in July.¹⁰¹ Herzfeld, knowing that nothing more could be done, asked the ministry to consider that he had acted in good faith to “bring about some kind of compromise” but that the other side had betrayed him. According to Herzfeld, Jean Psiachi had been furious about the official denial that had appeared in the *Politische Correspondenz* back in June.¹⁰² Still, he might have let the matter rest, wrote Herzfeld, but Psiachi's attorney in Vienna, Stall, had pushed him to fight on.¹⁰³ Psiachi had now brushed aside an agreement he had originally made with Herzfeld that the letter of apology was never to be handed to the papers. This meant the game was over for Herzfeld since the

¹⁰⁰ *Neue Freie Presse*, 25 August 1880, 7; *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*, 25 August 1880, 4.

¹⁰¹ Herzfeld to [Przibram?], Smyrna, [30?] July 1880, unnumbered (Pe. Victor Crenneville, f. 369–70; only the first four pages of the letter are preserved in the file).

¹⁰² Although I am concentrating on the developments in Vienna and Smyrna here, it needs to be kept in mind that the affair was followed with great interest all over Europe. It affected the international reputation of the Austro-Hungarian foreign ministry as much as it did the reputation of the Psiachi family and therefore their business interests (a point that Herzfeld raised in his July letter as well; see the previous fn.). To name just one example, consider that in Paris, *Le Soleil* reprinted the full announcement in French translation on its front page as the sole item in the “Foreign News – Austria-Hungary” section (*Le Soleil*, 20 June 1880, 1). This newspaper was renowned for its coverage of foreign affairs; see Michael B. Palmer: *Des petits journaux aux grandes agences: naissance du journalisme moderne 1863–1914*, (Paris: Aubier, 1983), 124.

¹⁰³ According to Herzfeld, the Psiachi wanted to “defend his [Stall's] honour” as well (see Herzfeld's July letter, as cited above in f. 101). This is to be understood in the sense that their attorney, too, had been compromised by the ministry's claim that a letter of apology had never been written. I am also inclined to believe that Stall, who seems to have been an enterprising and somewhat controversial figure, simply sought more publicity. Herzfeld mentions Stall's interest and those of the newspaper editors were one and the same (see his July letter, *ibid.*, quote on f. 369v). For more on Stall's biography and his rise and fall as a prominent society lawyer, see *Die Presse*, 9 March 1885, 1. According to a short obituary, a disgraced Stall died in exile in 1895, aged 54; see *Neues Wiener Abendblatt*, 31 July 1895, 3.

ministry could not protect him if it wanted to save face. Herzfeld concluded his report with a suggestion how the ministry should phrase a second, expanded official denial: by stating that the ministry had never authorised any such letter and that its content was not at all an expression of the minister's opinion; leaving unsaid, however, what Herzfeld's exact role in the Affair had been. In this way, he closed, the denial would turn out "perpetually embarrassing but not fatal" for him.¹⁰⁴

The ministry granted Herzfeld his wish when it published its updated denial on 25 August, that is on the same day as Stall's statement, on the front page of the *Politische Correspondenz*.¹⁰⁵ But it was quite clear who had signed the letter since Herzfeld's name had been part of the full transcript that had just been published. Before long, Herzfeld had to be recalled from Smyrna and was asked to go into retirement.¹⁰⁶

I have narrated the course of the Affair mostly from Herzfeld's point of view and left Victor Crenneville out of the picture so far. This is due partly to the vice-consul's seeming passivity throughout the four months that it took the Duel Affair to build up. Crenneville had only made a single active step, so far as my sources tell, but this step is quite revealing as to his relationship with Herzfeld. After the foreign ministry had released its first official denial in the middle of June 1880, the young count immediately took it to local newspaper offices and demanded that it be published in Smyrna as well.¹⁰⁷ Even though he must have known from Herzfeld or

¹⁰⁴ See fn. 101 above.

¹⁰⁵ *Politische Correspondenz*, 25 August 1880, 1. The dossier contains a galley proof, dated 24 August, presumably because the statement's wording had been checked by a ministry official beforehand (Pe. Victor Crenneville, n.f., after f. 380).

¹⁰⁶ Herzfeld's own personnel file (AR F4 135 Stephan Herzfeld) holds some interesting additional documents that expand on the theme of patronage. Briefly put, a more modest position in the Austrian Lloyd was found for Herzfeld after his retirement as consul, and the minister had promised him that he could rely on the ministry's assistance if he ever was in need. But Foreign Minister Haymerle died not much later and Herzfeld, when he finally wanted to call in the favour he had been given, did not get the help he wanted. Patronage relied on direct interpersonal relationships; this will also play a role in Crenneville's case, see the following section. I am summarising several documents since there is no space here for a detailed discussion; the bottom line being that more parallels and contrasts to Crenneville could be found.

¹⁰⁷ This "odd detail", as the *Neue Freie Presse* put (29 September 1880, 7), had become known in Vienna only much later after local newspaper articles from Smyrna had been obtained.

perhaps even from the Psiachi family that the letter of apology actually existed, it seems that he wanted to create an alternative impression in the urban public sphere and shift the blame for the Affair directly onto Herzfeld. Though this might be speculation, Crenneville's step shows at the very least that he did not care about Herzfeld's precarious position. Herzfeld was really only nominally his superior since Crenneville continued to act as he himself saw fit.

Crenneville's general passivity, except when scheming against Herzfeld, can also be explained by another circumstance: there were others who watched over him from afar. There was his father, of course, who was still the First Chamberlain. At the foreign ministry, there was also Ludwig Przibram (1840–1916), then a ministerial councillor in the minister's office (*Präsidial-Section*) but formerly a tutor to Victor Crenneville and his brothers.¹⁰⁸ Przibram was a protégé of the general and kept in close touch with him. Via Przibram, Victor Crenneville might have had informal access to information about the Affair or could attempt to influence internal decision-making. For this I could find no evidence so far; but there is proof that Przibram was connected in this way with Franz Crenneville. The general's diary entries from that time mention Przibram frequently;¹⁰⁹ one of them shows how the general acted immediately upon receiving a note from Przibram about internal deliberations and wrote to section chief Kállay, one of the most senior ministry officials.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ The close connection between Przibram and the Crenneville family lasted for more than half a century. Victor Crenneville's daughter Herminie recounted in her memoir that she spent a summer at Przibram's retirement home in Merano sometime after 1900; she noted that the old man was composing his own memoirs at the time (*The Red Countess*, ed. Gossman, 98). Przibram's memoirs are frequently cited in the scholarship and might hold interesting details also about the present context; unfortunately, travel restrictions have prevented me from gaining access. See Ludwig Przibram Ritter von Gladona: *Erinnerungen eines alten Oesterreichers*, 2 vls. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 1910–1912).

¹⁰⁹ See e.g. the entries for 23 May 1880 (Przibram informs Franz Crenneville about Victor's mission to Cyprus) and 6 July 1880 (the two meet to talk about "Victor's stupid duel affair" and Herzfeld's situation) in diary 1879–80 (SB FA Folliot-Crenneville 90).

¹¹⁰ Entry for 15 August 1880 in diary 1879–80 (SB FA Folliot-Crenneville 90).

During the high phase of the Affair, Franz Crenneville's level of access in Vienna must have been invaluable. On 25 August, for example, Franz Crenneville had spoken to several top officials and even the emperor himself:

To the coffee house at the Kohlmarkt. [...] All papers again full of the Smyrniote duel story. Because Herzfeld stupidly used the name of the ministry and will now be compromised. At the office. Went to His Majesty who was very gracious, I also spoke of Victor's duel affair. Ran into Field Marshal Beck who told me that Victor acted quite appropriately. [...] Court secretary Malfatti requested me to write to [foreign minister] Haymerle about Herzfeld. Went to section chief Kállay regarding the same. A decent Hungarian!¹¹¹

All the above, then, adds more substance to the argument that Victor Crenneville's special position in the foreign service relied to a great extent on patronage. It is not unthinkable that this vice-consul, even if only thanks to his father, had more numerous and powerful connections in Vienna than even some of the Austro-Hungarian ambassadors.

Herzfeld, by contrast, did in all likelihood not have a power base in the ministry at all. First of all, Herzfeld was of a much more modest noble rank and had no relevant family connections in the Viennese 'first society'. In addition, Herzfeld had also not had a proper chance to gain friends and allies in the foreign service during long years together at the Oriental Academy¹¹² and at shared postings abroad, as other consuls would have had. Herzfeld had been directly appointed consul-general by special arrangement after the end of his career in the Austrian imperial navy. In the 1860s, he had been an official in the service of Maximilian, the Habsburg emperor of Mexico, though inevitably only for a short time.¹¹³ Whatever relevant contacts Herzfeld might still have had in Vienna in 1880 he will certainly have tried to mobilise for his cause. Herzfeld also appealed to Franz Crenneville for help several times but instead rather

¹¹¹ Entry for 25 August 1880 in diary 1879–80 (SB FA Folliot-Crenneville 90).

¹¹² On the Oriental Academy, later renamed the Consular Academy, see *250 Jahre. Von der Orientalischen zur Diplomatischen Akademie in Wien*, ed. Oliver Rathkolb (Innsbruck: Studienverlag, 2004). See also Heinrich Pfusterschmid-Hardenstein: "Von der Orientalischen Akademie zur k.u.k. Konsularakademie" in *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918*, vol. VI/1, eds. Urbanitsch and Wandruszka, 122–195.

¹¹³ See the entry for Stephan von Herzfeld in Deutsch: *Die effektiven Konsuln*.

managed to irritate the general.¹¹⁴ Still, on 25 August, Franz Crenneville wrote a mildly supportive letter directly to the minister and also went to see Kállay after he had been asked to do so by Malfatti, as his previously cited diary entry shows.¹¹⁵

With that being said, whether or not Herzfeld still had some friends left in Vienna did not really matter in the end. If the ministry was to insist on its previously publicised position, as indeed it would, the Affair could only be resolved through Herzfeld's sacrifice. With Victor Crenneville actively undermining Herzfeld's standing in Smyrna and the ministry certainly not in a position to choose him over the young count, there was no real hope for Herzfeld that he could still be saved somehow. As I noted before, Herzfeld suggested this himself when he reported to Vienna about the impending publication of his letter of apology. It is quite ironic that he probably sent this report to Przibram, who was managing the related correspondence, but who could not necessarily be trusted to act in Herzfeld's best interest.¹¹⁶

After the consul-general had been irreparably disgraced, the Psiachi family had finally won the conflict against Crenneville, Herzfeld, and the Habsburg foreign ministry. What had started as a simple fistfight in a street of Smyrna had by then made headlines across Europe. Thanks to their transregional outlook and their ability to put public pressure on the Habsburgs,¹¹⁷ the Psiachi family had been able to let the Affair escalate in such a way that it would hit their

¹¹⁴ See the entries for 5 July 1880 ("Mail. Odd letter from cons.-gen. Herzfeld who is in real trouble [*Schwulitäten*] as he has been compromised because of Victor's stupid duel affair. Replied immediately."); 6 July 1880 ("Herzfeld's tactless letter"); 28 August 1880 ("stupid letter from consul-general Herzfeld") in diary 1879–80 (SB FA Folliot-Crenneville 90).

¹¹⁵ Franz Crenneville's letter to Haymerle can be found in the dossier (Pe. Victor Crenneville, 367–68). Malfatti was the author of the official reference handbook of the Austro-Hungarian consular service; see Josef Ritter (Freiherr) von Malfatti di Monte Tretto: *Handbuch des österreichisch-ungarischen Konsularwesens*, 2 vls. (Vienna: Braumüller, 1879; second edition Vienna: Manz, 1904).

¹¹⁶ See fn. 101 above. The letter has not been preserved in its entirety. It is addressed at a ministerial councillor, which was Przibram's title. There were several other officials who bore the same title; but I think it is highly plausible that Herzfeld would have written to Przibram given his position in the minister's office and his close connection to the Crenneville family.

¹¹⁷ The Psiachi family might have had some prior practice: on the transformation of local politics in Smyrna, driven by bourgeois elite families, see Sibel Zandi-Sayek: *Ottoman Izmir. The Rise of a Cosmopolitan Port, 1840–1880* (Minneapolis: Minnesota UP, 2012); on the local elites' use of newspapers to promote their reformist goals, see esp. 32–35.

adversaries where it hurt them most. In this way, the Levantines had proven Herzfeld wrong: what he had called their “base practices”¹¹⁸ was in fact more akin to the practices of a new type of diplomacy that was then already on the rise.

My retelling of the Duel Affair has concentrated on various social and institutional practices, especially aristocratic patronage. A more extensive analysis could add further elements. Herzfeld’s unauthorised step with his letter of apology, for example, could be put in a broader perspective: Did he always act that autonomously? Did the ministry expect him to? This theme – a consul’s autonomy – will be explored more deeply in the second chapter. Another promising extension could be based on a more thorough look at the local context of the Affair:¹¹⁹ What were the developments on the ground in Smyrna? How did the consuls interact with locals and with fellow diplomats such as the French consul-general, who had also participated very actively in the events? What was the role of public opinion in Smyrna for the course of the Affair? These are just a few more examples. My chosen approach has quite obviously only scratched the surface of this episode’s potential.

Crenneville remained in Smyrna until the end of September 1880. He departed for Cyprus, where he was to carry out a special diplomatic mission. The following section will use this episode as a springboard towards a different theme: Crenneville’s successively less successful attempts to advance his career through relying on patronage and his resorting to handing his superiors increasingly unwanted policy memoranda.

¹¹⁸ See fn. 92 above.

¹¹⁹ Compare e.g. David Do Paço: “Trans-Imperial Familiarity. Ottoman Ambassadors in Eighteenth-Century Vienna” in *Practices of Diplomacy*, eds. Sowerby, Hennings, 166–184. Do Paço’s innovative approach sees diplomats of various backgrounds as actors embedded in a shared urban, social, and symbolical space and analyses their interactions under the heading of the twin category of sociability/familiarity.

1.4 Crenneville, the Memoranda Diplomat

In late September 1880, Crenneville embarked on an Austrian Lloyd steamer from Smyrna to Cyprus to begin his special mission. Its objective was colonialist fact-finding.¹²⁰ Not long ago, in 1878, Cyprus had been acquired from the Ottomans by Great Britain while Austria-Hungary had occupied Bosnia-Herzegovina. Both lands were officially still Ottoman provinces but remained so only for the time being, while their new overlords contemplated what to do with them.

Crenneville's instructions for the mission were quite clear about the foreign ministry's intentions. Since "the previous Turkish regime has been replaced by an administration which is led according to the tenets of European civilization" it would be beneficial for the Austro-Hungarian government to learn more about the British plans for the island. This knowledge was then to be taken into consideration when the Austrians had to draw up their own policies for Bosnia-Herzegovina.¹²¹

With these instructions came a detailed questionnaire: filling in the many points in a long list of questions would form the basis for a final report. The foreign ministry wanted to gain a comprehensive overview on the British plans for all key areas of governance and the economy as well as regarding political and constitutional factors. Much of this was confidential information. Although Vienna had made sure that the British authorities were informed and had given their consent to Crenneville's presence, the ministry also made clear to Crenneville that his role as an accredited gentleman spy was above all to be tactful and discreet. The instructions leave no doubt about the diplomatic character of the mission: Crenneville was told to present it to others as a harmless "study trip" and guard his "speech and conduct" at all times.

¹²⁰ See the draft instructions in Pe. Victor Crenneville, f. 385–394.

¹²¹ Ibid.

He was to stay clear of close personal contact with the local population, British administrators, and other foreign consuls.¹²²

The Duel Affair had delayed the start of the mission, but Crenneville had been hand-picked for this assignment long ago.¹²³ Apart from his social status, which could open many doors, he could boast some familiarity with the island and perhaps also had useful local contacts. Crenneville had visited Cyprus as early as 1876. Three years later, when the British takeover aroused great interest at the Habsburg foreign ministry, he wrote a long memorandum based on his experiences. This essay was printed as a fifty-page brochure in eighty copies, most of which were then sent to various top ministry officials, ambassadors, and consuls-general.¹²⁴ One may wonder if the foreign ministry would have promoted such a work in the same way if it had been composed by a bourgeois consul. A main duty of any consul was to periodically submit longer analytical works, but I am not aware if any of these were circulated in this elaborate way. Be that as it may, Crenneville's memorandum on Cyprus was a great success early on in his career and led to his special mission in 1880.

In devising the mission, the Austro-Hungarian government doubtlessly counted on the skill of the British as colonial administrators. Indeed, over the past two decades, scholars have come to understand that the Habsburg's engagement in Bosnia-Herzegovina was a typically colonialist effort.¹²⁵ Initially, Bosnia-Herzegovina remained under military occupation for several years and few large-scale reforms were implemented, indicating that the new rulers were not sure how to proceed. Ironically, however, the British themselves had no clear idea

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ The instructions are dated 25 May 1880 but corrections in the draft show that it was begun sometime in 1879; *ibid.*

¹²⁴ Victor Graf Folliot de Crenneville: *Die Insel Cypern in ihrer heutigen Gestalt, ihren ethnographischen und wirtschaftlichen Verhältnissen* (Vienna: Faesy & Frick, 1879). See Pe. Victor Crenneville, f. 395–98 for information on the number of copies and who received them.

¹²⁵ See the overview given in the most recent and comprehensive publication about the topic: Clemens Ruthner: "Bosnien-Herzegowina als k.u.k. Kolonie: Eine Einführung" in *Bosnien-Herzegowina und Österreich-Ungarn, 1878–1918: Annäherungen an eine Kolonie*, eds. Clemens Ruthner, Tamara Scheer (Tübingen: Narr, 2018), 15–44.

what to do with Cyprus at the time. As a recent study shows in detail, the British had acquired the island almost on a whim.¹²⁶ Cyprus was never granted the attention and funding that would have been needed for its transformation into an economic and strategic asset for the British Empire. As another study noted, even forty years after their takeover of Cyprus, the British did not regard it as a colony in its own right but only as a temporary holding; the result was that, especially in the early years, “Ottoman law and custom was disturbed as little as possible”.¹²⁷

It must seem, then, that in 1880 there was little of value to find out for Crenneville. But around halfway through the planned duration of his mission, an unexpected twist occurred. Crenneville met with the British governor of the island and received an offer: *quid pro quo*, applying the diplomatic principle of reciprocity, the Austrians and the British could exchange the same kind of information about their respective colonies. The Habsburg foreign ministry agreed and the exchange took place.¹²⁸

This episode strongly reminds one of Ann Stoler’s observations on a “poaching of practices” among empires, meaning that empires studied each other’s examples when developing their colonial projects.¹²⁹ Moreover, Crenneville’s activity in Cyprus may serve as a vivid example for the still largely unknown role of consuls as actors and intermediaries in Habsburg colonialist ventures, be it in Bosnia-Herzegovina or globally.¹³⁰

I have not seen Crenneville’s final report on the mission, but there is much evidence that it was very well received in Vienna. For example, in 1882, the minister of foreign affairs listed

¹²⁶ Andrekos Varnava: *British Imperialism in Cyprus, 1878–1915. The Inconsequential Possession* (Manchester: UP, 2009).

¹²⁷ Diana Markides: “Cyprus 1878–1925: Ambiguities and Uncertainties” in *Britain in Cyprus. Colonialism and Post-Colonialism 1878–2006*, eds. Hubert Faustmann, Nicos Peristianis (Mannheim: Bibliopolis, 2006), 19–34, quote on 26.

¹²⁸ Evidence of the information that was passed on to the British can be found in Pe. Victor Crenneville, f. 339–349.

¹²⁹ Ann Laura Stoler: “Considerations on Imperial Comparisons” in *Empire Speaks Out. Languages of Rationalization and Self-Description in the Russian Empire*, eds. Ilya Gerasimov, Jan Kusber, Alexander Semyonov (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 33–55.

¹³⁰ See Walter Sauer: “Habsburg Colonial: Austria-Hungary’s Role in European Overseas Expansion Reconsidered” in *Austrian Studies* 20 (2012): 5–23.

Crenneville's achievements in a formal request to the emperor about a promotion, highlighting that the young count's qualifications had been amply demonstrated by his "noteworthy memorandum" [*schätzenswerthes Elaborat*].¹³¹ It is quite possible that the emperor himself had read it back in the day. As a similar document from 1900 shows, the success of Crenneville's mission was remembered in the foreign ministry long after.¹³²

So far we have seen that Crenneville became a rising star in the foreign service. At end of 1880, when he returned from Cyprus, Crenneville had only been a consular official for five years. During that time, the young count had left his scandalous past behind and survived a diplomatic incident that he himself had helped create. Seen in hindsight, however, it becomes clear that 1880 was the pinnacle of Crenneville's success and that from then on, his career declined.

Initially, Crenneville kept being promoted. He was transferred to the diplomatic branch and, to cut a long story short, retired after thirty years in the foreign service with the senior title of envoy (*Gesandter*). Curiously, his last position was that of a consul-general-cum-minister-plenipotentiary (to use a cumbersome term for an indeed unusual arrangement).¹³³ Crenneville had not left the consular sphere completely, or rather, the consular and diplomatic spheres simply "overlapped" quite visibly in this case.¹³⁴ But the rapid advancement of his early years had not continued past the early 1880s.

I believe there were two reasons for this. The first is that in 1884, Crenneville's father retired from his court office and from public life altogether; he died in 1888.¹³⁵ Henceforth, Victor Crenneville could not benefit from the same degree of active patronage that he had received during his early career. In the previous sections, we have seen how Franz Crenneville regularly

¹³¹ Petition Kálnoky to Franz Joseph, Vienna, 15 October 1882 (Pe. Victor Crenneville, f. 301–305).

¹³² Petition Gołuchowski to Franz Joseph, Vienna, 19 February 1900 (Pe. Victor Crenneville, f. 181–185).

¹³³ On this posting, see Komár: "Az Osztrák-Magyar Monarchia és Marokkó".

¹³⁴ Melissen: "The Consular Dimension of Diplomacy", 2–3; see also the introduction of this thesis.

¹³⁵ See Schießer: *Franz Graf Folliot de Crenneville*, 255–56 and Koch: *Generaladjutant Graf Crenneville*, 225–26.

and successfully used his unlimited access to top officials to help his son. Victor Crenneville, though well connected, apparently had no comparably effective network of his own. With his father out of the picture, Crenneville also lost the added prestige that he had enjoyed as the son of a very powerful man. The foreign minister had justified Crenneville's full promotion to the diplomatic service in 1883 by saying that this would fulfil his father's wishes;¹³⁶ after the general's retirement in the following year, references of this kind vanished from the documents together with the underlying social relationships.

Still, all this notwithstanding, Crenneville had achieved notable success with his Cyrus mission, continued to hold an exceptional social rank, and could rely on his kinship ties regardless of his father's position. Later documents in Crenneville's personnel file reveal that several of his aristocratic relatives worked in the foreign service and that Crenneville had also made some friends among his (aristocratic) colleagues; he was not afraid to mention these connections when he asked his superiors for favours such as transfers to better posts.¹³⁷

This is where I see the second reason for the decline of his career come to the fore. Crenneville seems to have been largely indifferent to diplomatic work that went beyond aristocratic representation. I gain this impression (which would be worthwhile to study in more depth) from various letters that he sent to the foreign office throughout the 1890s. These letters contain various passages that, seen together, show his preoccupation with matters of ceremonial (complaining that a consul had slighted him), representation (complaining about inadequate housing), and his rank in the foreign service (complaining that younger colleagues had been promoted ahead of him as time went by).¹³⁸ Quite obviously, Crenneville would have made a fine court diplomat, especially during a slightly earlier age of diplomatic practice. In the 1890s,

¹³⁶ Petition Kálnoky to Franz Joseph, Vienna, 20 March 1883 (Pe. Victor Crenneville, f. 276–280).

¹³⁷ E.g. letters Crenneville to Pasetti, Lisbon, 3 November 1895; to Gołuchowski, Tangier, 17 March 1902; and to Gołuchowski, Florence, 2 February 1904 (Pe. Victor Crenneville, f. 249–50, 94–95, 85–88).

¹³⁸ Ibid.

at posts such as Tunis or Rabat that relied less on aristocratic *éclat* and more on hands-on consular skills, Crenneville could or would not succeed.

Crenneville tried to advance his career despite the unsatisfying conditions and results that characterised his daily work. His greatest achievements in the eyes of his colleagues had been the two memoranda that he had penned about Cyprus in 1879 and 1880; naturally, he must have thought that he could repeat these successes. But it seems that he was not able to strike the same chord again. In 1881, he submitted a memorandum titled “The Importance of East Albania”¹³⁹ to the ministry after he had visited the region on another, smaller fact-finding mission. The ministry official reading the text was, however, not very impressed. On the very first page, he scribbled a big “wrong!” next to a far-reaching policy recommendation that indeed sounds as if Crenneville had developed it during one sunny afternoon in the field.¹⁴⁰ I have also found a passage in a letter from 1895 that mentions another failing memorandum: Crenneville asks his colleague in the ministry whether he knew what happened to the “*mémoire on Morocco*” that he had sent in some time ago to another official. Crenneville’s letter was then handed to that very official, who noted in the margins that he had not seen any such memorandum. Clearly, whatever Crenneville had sent in had not been noticed or passed on.¹⁴¹ Why had Crenneville’s memoranda been successful in earlier years? Having read his 1879 publication, which to me does not seem outstanding in terms of content or style, I am inclined to believe that patronage affected the reception of his early works to a considerable degree.¹⁴² Crenneville’s final memorandum, if we can call it like that, was sent in 1914, by which time he had already been in retirement for ten years. Shortly after the outbreak of WW1, Crenneville had apparently read a newspaper article that mused about the possible reorganisation of

¹³⁹ PGK I 109 = Memorandum Crenneville (“*Ostalbaniens Bedeutung*”), Vienna, 25 August 1881 (PA XII 263, f. 680–694)

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., f. 680.

¹⁴¹ Letter Crenneville to Pasetti, Lisbon, 3 November 1895, cf. fn. 137 above.

¹⁴² Crenneville: *Die Insel Cypern*.

territories in eastern Europe after the end of the war. This prompted Crenneville to write a letter addressed at the emperor's aide-de-camp (curiously, his father had held the same position fifty years earlier, under the same monarch). Forwarding the article in question and adding a handful of lines about how exactly Poland should be reorganised, Crenneville asked the aide-de-camp to pass on his recommendations to the emperor. He excused himself for not having approached His Majesty via the proper channel, that is the foreign ministry, saying that this was because he did not personally know the new foreign minister. The letter ended up near the very top of Crenneville's personal file, wrapped in the draft of the answer that he received: a polite but firm request to refrain from sending "well-meant suggestions" to the emperor "in these troubled times".¹⁴³

Looking back on Crenneville's career from beginning to end, I see it as an example – or at least a symbol – for the professionalisation of the Austro-Hungarian foreign service over the final decades of the nineteenth century and after. Crenneville's career relied heavily on social prestige, direct access to decision makers, and above all, aristocratic patronage as a practice of diplomacy. Had he been granted a more glamorous appointment at one of the great aristocratic courts, such as St. Petersburg or Berlin, Crenneville might have been in the right surroundings to capitalise on his indefatigable confidence and his aristocratic understanding of a diplomat's daily work. But as a former consular official who continued to be sent to less prestigious posts, he apparently did not adapt to the different, more down-to-earth surroundings and the kind of work that awaited him there. Crenneville sought to compensate for this by clinging to memoranda writing, a practice that had earlier brought him success, but which appears to have been based on patronage as well. The fact that an older Crenneville could not succeed in

¹⁴³ Letter Crenneville to [emperor's aide-de-camp], Zurich, 26 August 1914 and draft for an answer (Pe. Victor Crenneville, n.f.).

diplomacy as a gentleman amateur in the same way as in earlier years suggests that, in the meantime, the Habsburg foreign service had changed as well.

Chapter 2: Oskar Prochaska

2.1 Introduction: Where Was Prochaska During the Prochaska Affair?

Oskar Prochaska (1876–1945) was probably the most well known Austro-Hungarian consul both during his own lifetime and for long thereafter, though not voluntarily so. In the winter of 1912–13, during the high phase of the First Balkan War, Prochaska became the central figure in a major diplomatic and government scandal that shook the Habsburg Empire from the outside to its core. This chapter discusses how the study of Prochaska’s case raises important questions about a consul’s ability to act autonomously in a time of violent upheaval.¹⁴⁴ It will also analyse three consuls’ activities during this time with regard to their deployment of diplomatic practices and the success of their autonomous decision-making.

The so-called “Prochaska Affair” arose over the consul’s disappearance after the Serbian army had occupied Prizren. It was initially a diplomatic row over the Serbs’ refusal to respect Prochaska’s protected status as the head of an Austro-Hungarian consulate. Since the Serbian army had cut the lines of communication between the consul and Vienna, all kinds of rumours about the situation in Prizren started to circulate. For several weeks in November and December 1912, popular opinion throughout Austria-Hungary held for a fact that Prochaska had been brutally mistreated at the hands of the conquerors.¹⁴⁵ Amidst a media frenzy in which violent news from the battlefields and occupation zones were framed with common stereotypes about the “violent” and “uncivilised” Balkans, more and more voices called for retribution and war

¹⁴⁴ In his classic study, David Paull Nickles highlighted that the introduction of telegraphy fostered bureaucratization and centralization in foreign ministries and challenged the autonomy of resident diplomats. Moreover, during crises such as the Prochaska Affair, “the faster pace of diplomatic disputes invited more emotional and less creative decisions on the part of statesmen, while public opinion, which sometimes moderates over the course of a long crisis, often exercised a belligerent influence on shorter crises.” See Nickles: *Under the Wire*, 191.

¹⁴⁵ As Tamara Scheer pointed out, issues of Austro-Hungarian domestic and foreign policy were deeply intertwined both in government thinking and the press coverage of the Balkan Wars. The public perceived the unfolding events not at all as a distant affair; see Scheer: “The Habsburg Empire’s German-speaking Public Sphere and the First Balkan War” in *The Wars before the Great War. Conflict and International Politics before the Outbreak of the First World War*, eds. Dominik Geppert, William Mulligan, Andreas Rose (Cambridge: UP, 2015), 301–319.

with Serbia.¹⁴⁶ When Prochaska eventually reappeared quite unharmed, the tensions unleashed turned against the Habsburg government, which now stood accused of having mishandled and abused the crisis for unjustified warmongering. One and a half years later, in July 1914, another, much more famous diplomatic crisis would lead the two unequal neighbours and their allies to the same precipice again, making the Prochaska Affair a stepping stone on the way to World War 1.¹⁴⁷

Yet relatively little is known about the exact course of the Prochaska Affair, and nearly nothing about the consul with whom everything started. Only a single article, published in the 1970s by the famous Habsburg scholar, Robert A. Kann, addresses the topic directly.¹⁴⁸ Kann's short piece does a good job at assembling a chronology and surveying the bigger picture of foreign and domestic politics, the press, and public opinion. But the story is told exclusively from the perspective of Viennese politicians and diplomats, journalists, and some European onlookers. His argument mostly rests on edited diplomatic reports as well as press clippings. Kann took

¹⁴⁶ The presence of these and other important motifs in two important Viennese newspapers are explored in Maximilian Gulla: *Prestigeverlust oder Krieg? Die Reaktionen auf die Balkankriege 1912/13 in der Berichterstattung von "Reichspost" und "Arbeiterzeitung"* (master's thesis, University of Vienna, 2014); the author examines the Prochaska Affair on 64–82. On the notion of "civilisation" vs. "barbarism" in the press coverage of the war in the Balkans in a broader geographic and chronological perspective, see Florian Keisinger: *Unzivilisierte Kriege im zivilisierten Europa? Die Balkankriege und die öffentliche Meinung in Deutschland, England und Irland 1876–1913* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2008; a short English version can be found in *The Wars before the Great War*, eds. Geppert et al., 343–358). Also see Marco Sigg: "Die Balkankriege 1912/13. Bulgarische Kriegsvölkerrechtsverletzungen im Spiegel der europäischen Kriegsberichterstattung und des Carnegie-Berichts" in *Am Rande Europas? Der Balkan: Raum und Bevölkerung als Wirkungsfelder militärischer Gewalt*, eds. Bernhard Chiari, Gerhard P. Groß (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2009).

¹⁴⁷ For a brief overview of some landmarks in this vast discussion, see Samuel R. Williamson: "Austria and the Origins of the Great War. A Selective Historiographical Survey" in *1914. Austria-Hungary, the Origins, and the First Year of World War I*, eds. Günter Bischof, Ferdinand Karlhofer, Samuel R. Williamson (Innsbruck: UP, 2014), 21–33. The previously cited *The Wars before the Great War*, eds. Geppert et al., explores the continuities from the Balkan Wars to the First World War and beyond from many different angles. Also see *The Wars of Yesterday. The Balkan Wars and the Emergence of Modern Military Conflict, 1912–13*, eds. Katrin Boeckh, Sabine Rutar (New York: Berghahn, 2018), which seeks to further complicate the historiography and to add to the social history of the Balkan Wars in particular.

¹⁴⁸ Robert A. Kann: *Die Prochaska-Affäre vom Herbst 1912. Zwischen kaltem und heissem Krieg* (Vienna: ÖAW, 1977); the text is a published lecture and around thirty-five pages long.

no interest in the microlevel of Prochaska's experience in Prizren and adopted a rather dismissive attitude whenever he mentioned him.¹⁴⁹

As is argued throughout this thesis, this lack of interest in the agency of consuls (even when writing about a scandal that revolved around and was even named after a consul) is a common characteristic of most traditional scholarship on late-Habsburg diplomatic history. In response, I will try to show how an actor-centred approach to studying the Prochaska Affair can serve to reconstruct and, very likely, reconsider this consul's role at the centre of a unique conflict situation that linked local with international levels. What is more, with Prochaska's help we may add another puzzle piece to our picture of the many different origins of World War 1 – a major historiographical debate in which the Prochaska Affair has so far remained an oft-quoted but underresearched side-note.¹⁵⁰

Thus, the following section of this chapter will seek to demonstrate why Prochaska's activity in Prizren, long ignored, deserves to be examined in its own right. I will give an outline of what we know about the Prochaska Affair and show how Prochaska's negative portrayal in contemporary sources has previously discouraged interest in studying his case. Afterwards, in the third section, I would have liked to sketch out such an analysis myself but could not visit Vienna to collect critical primary sources due to the ongoing public health crisis.¹⁵¹ In the

¹⁴⁹ Thus, we read that Prochaska was “obviously incapable” of handling the situation; compared to the geopolitical turbulences caused by the ongoing war in the Balkans, the Affair was “unimportant” and “essentially trivial” because Prochaska was only of “so modest a rank”; etc. (Kann: *Prochaska-Affäre*, 10, 36–38). Kann qualified none of these statements with reference to archival sources that might have shed more light on the activity behind closed doors, and Prochaska's conduct in particular, even though Kann would have had access to them in Vienna. I share Deusch's observation that Prochaska should not be called “incapable” so easily. See the relatively detailed entry on Oskar Prochaska in Engelbert Deusch: *Die effektiven Konsuln*, 538–42 and fn. 1042 for Deusch's criticism of Kann's verdict.

¹⁵⁰ Instead of an extended survey, I can only indicate two bracketing examples here. Christopher Clark, in his influential recent work, refers repeatedly to the Prochaska Affair as one of the escalating factors on the way to WW1; see Clark: *The Sleepwalkers. How Europe Went to War in 1914* (London: Allen Lane, 2012), 283 and 445. Around a quarter-century earlier, the two volumes on foreign policy in the Austrian Academy of Science's standard work on late-Habsburg history mention the Prochaska Affair in no more than a few lines; see *Die Habsburgermonarchie 1848–1918*, vol. VI/1–2, eds. Urbanitsch and Wandruszka, 1, 491 and 2, 272). It should, however, also be noted that many related studies do not mention the Prochaska Affair at all.

¹⁵¹ The most important sources on Prochaska from inside the Austro-Hungarian consular service are to be found in a contemporary collection of reports and telegrams on the Affair (PA XII/415 Liasse XLV “Prochaska-Affäre”). I had also hoped to find contrasting materials in Prochaska's personnel file (AR F4/272). Deusch (*Die effektiven*

absence of detailed information on Prochaska's conduct on the ground, I will try to make up by drawing on alternative materials instead.¹⁵² These sources show how Prochaska's three closest colleagues in the other two Kosovo consulates fared during the same time and under similar circumstances: Maryan Heimroth Ritter von Hessfeld (1871–1935) in Üsküp; Ladislaus von Tahy (Tahvári és Tarkeői Tahy László, 1881–1940) in Mitrovica; and Josef Umlauf (1880–unknown), who replaced Tahy. These consuls, too, experienced heightened diplomatic tension, imminent violence, and the risk of injury or even death during the hostilities and in the early stages of the military occupation. Crucially, they, too, were forced to act on their own, without being able to ask for instructions from their superiors in Vienna or at the embassy in Constantinople.

As we will see, this led to very different results: Tahy probably failed and fled the scene; Umlauf took over and managed to cope well; Heimroth went far beyond the call of duty of a peacetime consul. It is my hope that by comparing these three consuls' different courses of action, we may also infer something about Prochaska's options, even if his own case could not be reopened just now. In this way, the present chapter, despite its limitations, wants to lay some of the groundwork for future research on this promising topic in Habsburg consular studies.

2.2 The Prochaska Affair Revisited

There is good reason to believe that Oskar Prochaska was a competent consul who understood the demands of his profession and how to navigate the ways of the land in the Ottoman Balkans very well. A graduate of the Oriental Academy in Vienna, which had just been renamed the Consular Academy when Prochaska took his final exams in 1900, the young consular official had spent his entire career at posts in the central Balkans. In fact, he had for the most part been

Konsuln, 541, fn. 1042) noted that the file contains a previously overlooked memorandum that Prochaska wrote some years later, after WWI, and I expect that it could help us reconstruct the consul's personal view on the Affair and on his conduct on the ground in Prizren back in 1912.

¹⁵² These are mostly reports collected in the source edition *Politik und Gesellschaft im Vilayet Kosovo*, eds. Frantz and Schmitt.

in Kosovo. Prochaska's long tenure at the head of the Prizren consulate had already begun in 1904. Various reports from his early years in office indicate that he must have had a firm grasp of the consulate's political importance. Indeed, Prochaska's official writings from this time give a genuine impression that he was as apt at the consular job as any of his predecessors.¹⁵³ Although by 1912 Prochaska was already an experienced consular official who looked back on more than a decade of service, he was in no way an outstanding figure. Later in the same year, however, and within the space of less than three months, a chain of events unfolded that catapulted Prochaska into European newspaper headlines.¹⁵⁴ "Der Konsul Prochaska" became something of a stock character that people from all walks of life would talk about and remember for many years to come. From the various references to Prochaska that I have come across in contemporary sources such as diaries and memoirs (some of which will be cited further below), it would appear that his contemporaries thought of Prochaska with a mixture of amusement and contempt – as a harmless, hapless bureaucrat who got caught up in events that were clearly out of his league. "Prochaska's lack of independent action [*unselbstständiges Verhalten*]," wrote a young navy officer in 1913, "is reproachable and characteristic of our foreign policy."¹⁵⁵ But

¹⁵³ See Prochaska's reports in PGK vols. III and IV. To name just a single example, see PGK IV 27 = Prochaska to Berchtold, Prizren, 21 September 1908, Nr. 160 confidential. This report presents an informed analysis of the problem of the day: the place of rising Albanian nationalism within the Ottoman Empire, or in opposition to it, developments in which Austria-Hungary took a most active role for its own purposes. Notably, Prochaska's argument in this report appears to reference experiences gained by previous officeholders at the Prizren consulate. Prochaska might have learned from some of them informally, or more likely through studying the old files in the consular archive, a widespread practice that Crenneville and others were also encouraged to follow by their mentors in the service. Most consular archives have been destroyed, but it may still be possible to study those that survive as sites of knowledge production. This has the potential to immensely advance our understanding of both consuls' daily work and how its written communication and its archival afterlife impacted the decision-making behind 'great politics'; compare the approach developed in Ann Laura Stoler: *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: UP, 2009).

¹⁵⁴ Unless otherwise noted, this overview on the Prochaska Affair is based on information in Kann's article, with further details supplied by the entry in Deusch: *Die effektiven Konsuln*.

¹⁵⁵ Peter Freiherr von Handel-Mazzetti. *Unzensurierte und geheime Einblicke eines k.u.k. Marineoffiziers*, ed. Heinz Strauss (Berlin: Pro Business, 2016), 66. The quote comes from a letter dated 7 October 1913 that Handel-Mazzetti sent home after he had chatted about Prochaska with an unnamed Austro-Hungarian vice-consul. Already back in January 1913, Handel-Mazzetti had been asked by his father, an army general, whether he had any information about Prochaska. At the time, he could only reply that he knew that Prochaska's brother was a fellow junior officer in the navy. (We see here how rumours and gossip could also travel by mail across the Monarchy and beyond and do so in ways that are hard to access for the historians unless private papers are laboriously edited.) Later, in October, the previously mentioned vice-consul boarded Handel-Mazzetti's warship to get from Smyrna to Adalia (Antalya), his next posting. According to the vice-consul's opinion, it had all been Prochaska's

was that really so? Did Prochaska's contemporaries really understand, have later historians fully grasped his role?

Let us now follow the course of the Prochaska Affair in its broad contours. By the end of October 1912, that is within about a fortnight into the First Balkan War, Serbian forces had already conquered the largest part of Kosovo from the Ottomans, with its allies advancing on other fronts. The Serbs were quick to establish their occupation with brutal force.¹⁵⁶ Just when first reports about large-scale atrocities in Kosovo started reaching the rest of Europe, Consul Prochaska found himself cut off from all communications. The victorious army had taken control of the telegraph lines and also suppressed and censored mail, even consular despatches. The government in Vienna, although itself completely in the dark about the latest developments in Kosovo, knew that there was reason for concern when Belgrade demanded that Prochaska had to be recalled immediately. The consul, the Serbs alleged, had organised armed resistance against their entry into Prizren and also sent a compromising letter about mass shootings and other war crimes that the military had then intercepted.¹⁵⁷ Vienna protested and pressed for

fault. This official can be very likely identified as Tibor von Pözel (Virányosi Pözel Tibor), who was another 'Kosovo consul' and had in fact just come from the Prizren consulate – he had been Prochaska's immediate successor and probably knew him quite well. In the months before, Pözel had been Heimroth's assistant in Üsküp and been in a similar situation (to which we will return later in this chapter). This gives his opinion special significance. I thank Heinz Strauss for clarifying details about the letters and for pointing me towards Pözel.

¹⁵⁶ As did all sides in this war. On the heightened brutality of this conflict with strong "elements of a civil strife", see Panagiotis Delis: "Violence and Civilians During the Balkan Wars (1912–1913)" in *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 20 (2018): 547–563, quote on 557. See also Marc Biondich: "The Balkan Wars: Violence and Nation-building in the Balkans, 1912–13" in *Journal of Genocide Research* 18 (2016): 389–404 on the political function of violence during the wars and in their aftermath and a broader perspective on their place in early twentieth-century history. Finally, for a detailed investigation of the mechanisms of violence in Ottoman Kosovo in the *longue durée*, see Eva Anne Frantz: *Gewalt und Koexistenz. Muslime und Christen im spätosmanischen Kosovo* (1870–1913) (Munich: De Gruyter, 2016).

¹⁵⁷ Relaying information on (real or alleged) violent transgressions was especially sensitive information at the time as belligerents used such information themselves to rouse support for their own cause and condemn their respective opponents; for more on this, see Y. Doğan Çetinkaya: "Atrocity Propaganda and the Nationalization of the Masses in the Ottoman Empire During the Balkan Wars (1912–13)" in *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 46 (2014): 759–778. Regarding Prochaska's intercepted letter, Kann (*Prochaska-Affäre*, 5) remarked quite correctly that the consul had been careless to write about Serbian soldiers' transgressions, especially since such information had likely not been verifiable at the time. Having seized the letter, the Serbian military command prepared a dossier on Prochaska, which is apparently still held in an archive in Belgrade and was also (perhaps partially) published; see Mile Bjelajac: "The Austro-Hungarian Creation of a 'Humanitarian' Pretext for the Planned Invasion of Serbia in 1912–1913: Facts and Counter-Facts" in *Balkanica* 50 (2019): 131–156, 134f. It should be noted that the general argument of this last-named article – that the Austrians used "atrocity propaganda (to borrow Çetinkaya's term) against the Serbs for whipping up support for a possible war – is not mistaken;

contact with its consul, but it did so unsuccessfully. In reply, Belgrade merely asserted that Prochaska had been placed under house arrest at the consulate and could under no circumstance be allowed contact with the outside world. Neither would the Serbs let anybody through to see him.

At this point, the Habsburg press was full of speculation on what terrible things could be going on in Prizren. Commentators in the major newspapers both in Austria-Hungary and further afield speculated that the consul had been killed, or worse, left alive and castrated. This second possibility was as unprintable at the time (at least in the more ‘respectable’ periodicals such as the *Neue Freie Presse*) as it proved captivating to the public imagination. Throughout the whole winter, more or less veiled references to Prochaska’s sorrow became commonplace in all sorts of publications and were the hottest conversation topic.¹⁵⁸ Many Austro-Hungarians felt serious outrage at the symbolical (and for the poor consul, very real) injury that their Monarchy had suffered. On 27 November, an editorial in *Pesti Napló*, a leading Hungarian newspaper, expressed the hope that war could be averted, but only if Prochaska had indeed been left alive. “For many years”, wrote an unnamed author, “we have lived without knowing that a certain Mr Prochaska represented us ... One day we reach for the newspaper and find that we have a new hero named Prochaska, whose shed blood calls for vengeance.”¹⁵⁹ Nevertheless, all these speculations about a grim future were only based on hearsay since direct contact to Prochaska had still not been established.

however, the author’s unbalanced and methodically uncritical approach to his source material curtails the usefulness of his individual observations rather drastically.

¹⁵⁸ I believe that the ‘risqué’ nature of the subject greatly added to the Prochaska Affair’s sensationalist appeal. It helped making the crisis much more than a dry diplomatic quarrel. Stefan Zweig, who was only five years younger than Prochaska, famously portrayed how the Victorian morals of his youth led to what Zweig called a “sticky, perfumed, sultry, unhealthy atmosphere” in which a guilty obsession with all things erotic and sexual took root. See the chapter “Eros Matutinus” in Zweig: *Die Welt von Gestern. Erinnerungen eines Europäers* (first published in 1942); I quote from an English translation, *The World of Yesterday. An Autobiography* (Lincoln: Nebraska UP, 1964), 71. At the same time, it could be argued the public’s preoccupation with Prochaska’s alleged castration also has strong Balkan-stereotypical overtones; this is an interesting topic of its own that I cannot engage with here.

¹⁵⁹ *Pesti Napló*, 27 November 1912, 1 (my translation of Kann’s German translation from the original Hungarian; see Kann: *Prochaska-Affäre*, 32).

While these debates in the public sphere went on, the Ballhausplatz stayed completely silent. Historians have generally held that this was the government's expression of approval for the surging anti-Serb emotions in the population. Kann, whose study remains the reference point for all later commentators, worked out quite convincingly that there was no single unified plan of action that all government and army circles would have followed, but that there was still something of a general understanding among top officers and civil servants that Serbia should be put under extreme pressure.¹⁶⁰ Still, the war party had the upper hand. No matter what had happened to Prochaska, the Serbs' sweeping military successes had jeopardised several decades of Austrian ambition in the Balkans in just a matter of days. Many powerful officials were willing to go all the way to reverse this outcome. This was no different in the foreign ministry, although Count Berchtold, the minister, remained hesitant and let things go their way.¹⁶¹

The silence of the ministry, combined with a latent pro-war inclination among many of its staff, caused the Prochaska Affair to take a sharp turn against the Monarchy's interest when the Affair suddenly fell apart. Shortly before Christmas 1912, after more than a month of feverish uncertainty in the public sphere, the news broke loose that Prochaska had finally been allowed to leave Prizren – very much alive and indeed untouched. It was in fact the Ballhausplatz that issued a communiqué to this effect, announcing that the Prochaska Affair had been resolved.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Kann: *Prochaska-Affäre*, 8–15.

¹⁶¹ Kann: *Prochaska-Affäre*, 31f. Having been unable to consult newer works on the top-level decision makers of Habsburg foreign-policy of around that time, I adopt Kann's interpretation here but want to record some reservations. Despite the great value of Kann's article and the many insights it contains, it does seem dated in places. I already noted my main objection: Kann did not take any interest in Prochaska and quite severely judges him based on the opinions of some of the consul's contemporaries, who were likely biased against Prochaska. But this failure to look for individual agency as a counterweight to received wisdom in the scholarship may also have impacted Kann's portrayal of other important figures in the Affair. First and foremost, this concerns the foreign minister, about whom Kann wrote the following: "Berchtold's reaction [when caught in the middle of conflicting interests in the military and press] was typical for a self-conscious diplomat who had no experience with the behaviour of social statra that were alien to him. He therefore let things drift along without intervening in them himself. He might have hoped for some kind of deus ex machina that could show a way out of the Prochaska crisis. Unable to consider a possible shift to a new course [for foreign policy], his ability to make decisions was later completely overrun by the tragic events of the summer of 1914" (ibid., 37). I cannot decide

¹⁶² The communique appeared in the 17 December issue of the daily *Fremdenblatt*, which functioned as a semi-official government mouthpiece. See Kann: *Prochaska-Affäre*, 8f., who also quotes from its text.

Poorly worded and offering only feeble excuses for its excessively delayed publication, this declaration backfired completely.¹⁶³ Not only did it finally acknowledge that Prochaska had not been wronged or harmed, which is what the Serbian government had maintained throughout all attacks; as more details emerged, it also became clear to the public that the foreign ministry had obtained proof of this fact already since November, weeks ago, but had held back this information.

Commentators from diverse political camps now called out the government for its foul play, incompetence, and, at the very least, lack of diplomatic tact. Throughout Europe, including in Austria-Hungary itself, the excitement and anti-Serb hostility of the previous weeks gave way to reactions ranging from amusement to disgust. Serbia and its army now stood fully vindicated. The Habsburg foreign ministry, on the other hand, had become the laughing stock even of its own people. To be true, there was first of all a crushing wave of political criticism, but since Kann and other authors have quoted at length from these ‘sober’ reactions to the Prochaska Affair’s unmasking, I would like to give some more light-hearted examples instead. In Vienna, after the Christmas holidays, the satirist Karl Kraus dotted an entire issue of *Die Fackel* with sharp-tongued references to the scandal.¹⁶⁴ But this was really an all-Habsburg topic: even the local jokesters of Dornbirn in Vorarlberg, a small town near the Swiss border on the far side of the Monarchy, had a good laugh at the expense of the bigwigs in the imperial capital. As carnival season came, the *Dornbirner Faschingsmichel*, a humorous pamphlet, summed up the press coverage of the past weeks in a mock-news section:

¹⁶³ I cannot help but notice certain parallels with the ministry’s communication strategy in the “Duel Affair” of 1880, discussed in the first chapter; however, I do not attempt a direct comparison since this would lead to far away from the chosen focus of this thesis.

¹⁶⁴ *Die Fackel* 366/367, 11 January 1913.

Consul Prohaska! Latest telegrams.

Prizren, 25 January, 10am. Consul Prohaska horridly mutilated, has no arms or legs left!

12pm noon! Disclaimed! Prohaska still has one leg and one hand!

3pm. In well-informed circles one is of the general opinion that Prohaska still has both hands, but only one foot!

6pm! Sensational! Prohaska has neither lost his hands nor his feet, but it might have easily happened to him after all.¹⁶⁵

These few lines quite accurately reflect the initial hysteria and the rather transparent way in which the government had later tried to save face. They also illustrate the general public's preoccupation with Prochaska's rumoured injury and not so much with the diplomatic matters that were at stake. Other observers did, however, also understand the diplomatic context very well. An interesting example is the anarchist poet František Gellner's satirical poem "Consul Prochaska" (1912). In it, Gellner, a Czech, first pointed with some relish to Prochaska's humble origins in rural Moravia and then moved on to ridicule the main events of the Prochaska Affair from the consul's perspective. Strikingly, Gellner states in a central passage the open secret that Prochaska's tasks in Prizren had not been all that innocent, putting the Serbs' strong objections to his presence in a very different light:

As a man of the Franciscan Order [i.e. in the service of the emperor]
He did a lot in the Balkans
For this unhappy country.
He was handing out rifles
To the needy Albanians
Without any receipt
So that they, when their hands are itchy
Could tickle the Serbs.
The Serbs are an impulsive nation,
They came to Prizren with their army.
And their first question was:
What's going on with Prochaska?¹⁶⁶

Meanwhile in Vienna, the scandal continued. The chief of the foreign ministry's press bureau, Koloman von Kánia (Kányai Kánya Kálmán), a known pro-war schemer, was sacked after a

¹⁶⁵ *Der Dornbirner Faschingsmichel* 18 (1913), issue dated Dornbirn, 26 January 1913 (scan provided at the Dornbirn City Archives's website, stadtarchiv.dornbirn.at, accessed 19 April 2020).

¹⁶⁶ See the Czech original in the anthology František Gellner: *Básně. Spisy I* (s.l.: Carpe Diem, 2011), 389f. I thank my colleague Boleslav Šmejkal for providing me with a rough translation.

protracted public inquiry, and so were some others. Prochaska, however, was told to return to Prizren post-haste and continue from where he had left off. The government ordered this precisely to avoid even greater embarrassment; recalling Prochaska would have been a symbolic concession to the Serbs. Despite its overall defeat and general humiliation, the Habsburg side was still keen on scoring some points in this diplomatic sparring match. On the surface, Vienna had in fact won: the Serbian government, despite the moral advantage it now held, still had had to agree to giving formal ‘satisfaction’ to the Austrians. The Serbian prime minister, Nikola Pašić, expressed his regret in written form, and when Prochaska returned to Prizren in January 1913, detachments of Serbian soldiers saluted the Austro-Hungarian flag as it was ceremonially re-hoisted – two typically ritualised displays of diplomatic conflict resolution.¹⁶⁷ In reality, this only added to the tensions. For the Austro-Hungarian government, these diplomatic manoeuvres could not undo the great damage that its credibility had suffered in the eyes of its citizens and those of the wider world; while the Serbian government, as many have argued, was to remember this outcome in the summer 1914, when another Austrian ultimatum arrived.¹⁶⁸

Having returned to Prizren, however, Prochaska did not stay long. After a short cooldown period, he was quietly transferred as far away as possible. Had he been disgraced within the

¹⁶⁷ Flags and flag ceremonies appear relatively frequently in Austro-Hungarian consular reports; they seem to have formed part of regular diplomatic practice also on the consular level. Hence it is not surprising that during the Prochaska Affair, different voices in the press speculated about a possible “desecration of the flag” as one of the Serbian soldiers’ many alleged transgressions – a recurring theme that, to the best of my knowledge, has not been picked up by any of the various scholars who studied press clippings. I believe that this element might have greatly added to the anti-Serb feelings in circulation as it symbolised an attack on the entire Habsburg Empire, not just the person of the consul. Its symbolic significance could be comprehended even by those among the general population who did not know or care about the intricacies of diplomatic ceremonial. Without access to the sources, I could not investigate this further. Future research could enter into a dialogue with Alison Frank Johnson’s work on consuls’ honour codes; see Frank Johnson: “The Bureaucracy of Honor”.

¹⁶⁸ The Prochaska Affair was not the only crisis that shattered Austro-Serb relations and let the Monarchy appear as an aggressor at the time. Contemporaries experienced it in conjunction with other scandals, the most well-known of which is the *Friedjung-Prozess* of 1909 in which documents that were used to indict alleged pro-Serb/pro-Slavic agitators for treason but were in fact forgeries. On the impact of the scandals surrounding Friedjung and Prochaska on the July Crisis, see Kann: *Prochaska-Affäre*, 10f. and Clark: *Sleepwalkers*, 445f. Also see the brief remarks in Manfred Rauchensteiner: *The First World War and the End of the Habsburg Monarchy, 1914–1918* (Vienna: Böhlau, 2014), 103–104.

foreign service? This is hard to decide; although Prochaska was forthwith promoted consul-general, his new destination was Rio de Janeiro, an undesirable post out of the public eye (and thus “out of harm’s way” as Robert Elsie put it).¹⁶⁹ The German-speaking colony there, which had of course also followed the news from Vienna and Prizren, gave him a warm welcome in its local newspaper:

Consul Prochaska, who played an important role in the conflict with Serbia and has almost become a legendary figure, is only 37 years old. Thus, he has made a fine career for himself in relatively young years. The energy and perseverance that he displayed in Prizren guarantees that he will occupy his [new] position wholeheartedly.¹⁷⁰

It is interesting to read such a positive passage for a change. Open praise for Prochaska’s conduct, which in any case few outside the foreign ministry could judge, rarely made it into print. Be that as it may, it seems that upon reaching South America, Prochaska’s career had come to a complete halt. While the suspension of peacetime order and regular career advancement during World War 1 might also be to blame, it is curious enough that Prochaska was not recalled from Brazil after the Monarchy had ceased to exist. It appears that amid the great changes at the “k.u.k. foreign ministry in liquidation”, as it was called now, nobody in Vienna cared much for Prochaska or the consular office he still headed. Perhaps he really had been exiled in 1913 and since been forgotten. Whether out of loyalty and dutifulness or for more mundane reasons, Prochaska continued to keep his consulate running until as long as 1920. He did so under the old name, as the imperial-and-royal Austro-Hungarian consulate, despite there no longer being a Dual Monarchy, nor a monarch for that matter. Only then, Prochaska went back to Europe, at his own expense. His later years, so far as the foreign-

¹⁶⁹ Quoted from the entry on Oskar Prochaska in Robert Elsie: *A Biographical Dictionary of Albanian History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

¹⁷⁰ *Deutsche Zeitung Rio de Janeiro*, 28 April 1913, 1.

service files can tell, were marred by squabbles with the Austrian Republic over pension payments and re-entering the foreign service, which the new government denied.¹⁷¹

At one point during that time, Prochaska kept a low profile back in his native Bohemia but was spotted by Egon Erwin Kisch, the famous investigative journalist, who wrote up a humorous account of their meeting.¹⁷² Kisch made every effort to belittle the since-retired consul as a somewhat pitiful and entirely uninteresting personality, no doubt for added comical effect and surely also to meet his readers' expectations of Prochaska. It is not clear whether this portrayal of Prochaska can be fully trusted.¹⁷³ With that being said, we must thank Kisch for revealing the great mystery of where the spectacular rumours about Prochaska's intimate injury had originated: apparently, a telegraph operator is to blame. Prochaska (if he, too, can be trusted) told Kisch the following: having escaped from Prizren to Üsküp, which had only recently been renamed officially as Skoplje, Prochaska sent a coded emergency message to Vienna, reporting that he had arrived. The telegraphist, however, mistook its meaning and added a correction. Thus, instead of "u Skoplje", meaning in that town, Prochaska's message said that he was "uskopljen", castrated.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ Once again, see the entry on Prochaska in Deusch: *Die effektiven Konsuln*. Here as in many more cases, Deusch deserves much credit for having brought to light the existence of important sources. Prochaska stayed in Vienna and eventually became an Austrian rather than a Czechoslovak citizen. He lived to see the interwar period and WW2. The files, as summarised by Deusch, show that the former consul had to struggle to survive, though he also seemed to have had friends in influential positions who could help him – in other words, he could benefit from patronage, likely from his former colleagues. Prochaska's later years might be as interesting to study as his first life in the Habsburg consular service; doing so would help to highlight continuities of practices and networks in the foreign service, government, and to an extent also society at large from empire to republic. On the Austrian foreign service after 1918, see Rudolf Agstner: *Handbuch des Österreichischen Auswärtigen Dienstes*, vol. 1: 1918–1938 (Vienna: LIT, 2015); on the change from the foreign service's formerly aristocratic to its new bourgeois, "consular" character, see the introduction, 17–26.

¹⁷² Published in English as Egon Erwin Kisch: *Sensation Fair. Tales of Prague*, transl. Guy Endore (Lexington, MA: Plunkett Lake Press, 2012), chapter 21.

¹⁷³ I agree with Kann, who raised some doubts about Kisch's reliability as a witness or analyst of the Prochaska Affair. At the same time, Kann acknowledges the reporter's frequently demonstrated skill in obtaining background information as well as Kisch's professional integrity. He concludes, and I agree, that Kisch's account surely takes some poetic licence but cannot be purely invented either; see Kann: *Prochaska-Affäre*, 34.

¹⁷⁴ A second source, the memoir of Franz Souček, an Austrian gardener, may serve to corroborate this. According to Souček, in the beginning of 1919 he met an unnamed brother of Prochaska's, who gave the same explanation with the corrupted telegram and alluded that there had been a plan of the Hungarian [sic] government to incite war over it. See Souček: *Ein neuer Anfang 1919–46. Fortsetzung von 'Blumen und Krieg. Lebenserinnerungen eines Gärtners'* (Hamburg: Tredition, 2019), chronicle for 1919. It is, however, also thinkable that Oskar

Kisch himself was not impressed. He concluded:

I realized how unsensational this sensation was from every journalistic aspect. It is true that [Prochaska] had given us a glimpse into the rarely revealed microcosm of diplomacy; he had brought out all the frivolity with which patriotic passions are stirred up, and put into relief the stubborn vanity of statesmen who coasted so near to war that a single letter almost unleashed it. But such conditions have always been, so there was nothing hot about my article. [...] To a newspaper, a consul who was not castrated and at the same time not potent enough to beget a war was an uninteresting nonentity. Precisely what I had taken him to be from the very first.¹⁷⁵

One may respectfully disagree with this view and take a great interest in Oskar Prochaska and indeed his whole career. Whether or not the consul, by then retired, had a less than sparkling personality, at least in the eyes of the original ‘roving reporter’ Egon Erwin Kisch, is not that important. Kisch was probably quite right to think Prochaska, the man, was nowhere near as interesting as Prochaska, the symbol, had been a few years back. Where Kisch was fundamentally mistaken, however, is in his underappreciation of a consul’s place in the practice of diplomacy. This attitude, together with Prochaska’s clichéd public image, must have blinded Kisch to what “glimpses into the rarely revealed microcosm of diplomacy” a consul really could provide, to use the journalist’s own words.

Kisch’s quote give us one more good example for the common disdain that consular officials faced in their own lifetimes. In a broad variety of sources, such as in the examples I present in this chapter and elsewhere in the thesis, we see time and again that the average Austro-Hungarian could not take consuls seriously, at least not as diplomats. Instead, the consuls’ contemporaries, and therefore also later historians, rather saw them as puppets who could not move unless ‘real’ aristocratic diplomats higher up were pulling the strings. If these strings were cut, or if the telegraph lines were blocked, there was no hope that a consul make the right decisions on his own.

Prochaska made up this entire story and told it to his family. We would have to examine the telegram in question or find other evidence from inside the foreign ministry to come to a definite conclusion.

¹⁷⁵ Kisch: *Sensation Fair*, chapter 21.

This is of course what I take issue with here. It lies in the nature of his occupation that Prochaska, during his consular career of nearly twenty years, must have been an active participant in many a difficult and ‘diplomatic’ situation before, during, and also after the events of the Affair. I have already mentioned the positive impression that Prochaska’s early reports give about his abilities. It would be worthwhile to examine his time in South America and see how he acted and developed in this very different setting. In any case, what I mean to say is that it is nearly inconceivable that Prochaska would have failed at every single step during his time of greatest trial in 1912–13. Or if he did, we should at least try to find out why. My ultimate aim in this is not to seek Prochaska’s rehabilitation as a positive character or an able consul. Rather, I aim at suggesting that studying Prochaska’s case in earnest may likely lead to new insight about diplomatic practice and consular diplomacy that have so far been obscured by contemporary ridicule and historiographical neglect.

2.3 Prochaska’s Colleagues

Having reflected on the Prochaska Affair’s historiographical stakes and a way forward, I now could like to move to the microlevel of analysis. As the consulate in Prizren cannot be visited, I will turn to its neighbouring offices instead. The three Austro-Hungarian consulates in Ottoman Kosovo were not only geographically proximate but also linked with each other in the hierarchical organisation and the social and information network of the foreign service; which is a topic that would merit a much broader discussion than I could undertake here.¹⁷⁶ In what follows, I will have to limit myself to addressing the main question of this chapter and look for a consul’s agency in a time of communication breakdown and escalating diplomatic tensions.

¹⁷⁶ An study of consular networks may draw on the approaches outlined in *Akteure der Außenbeziehungen. Netzwerke und Interkulturalität im historischen Wandel*, eds. Hillard van Thiesen, Christian Windler (Vienna: Böhlau, 2010).

In Ottoman Kosovo in late 1912, there were three imperial-and-royal consulates.¹⁷⁷ The first was the already familiar Prizren in central Kosovo, at the foot of the Šar/Sharr mountains, headed by Prochaska; to the south-east, across the mountain range, in Üsküp, the provincial capital, headed by Heimroth; and to the north and closer to the border with Serbia, in Mitrovica, headed by Tahy and later Umlauf.

The four officials had different educational backgrounds and levels of experience.¹⁷⁸ Heimroth, at age 41, was around ten years older than both Tahy and Umlauf, with Prochaska, aged 36, somewhere in the middle. Prochaska and Tahy had both been educated at the Consular Academy, the regular entry point for a consular career. Heimroth, on the other hand, had a legal background (he was a Dr. jur.) and undergone several years of training at the courts. Heimroth joined the consular service in 1900, the same year as Prochaska, while Tahy followed in 1905. In 1912, the two older officials held the rank of consul, while Tahy was still a vice-consul.

Less is known about Umlauf, who was not a career consul but a consular secretary, a so-called ‘subaltern official’. He had been employed in this capacity from at least 1899 and been promoted several times since. Umlauf became the official caretaker (*Gerent*) of the Mitrovica consulate after Tahy’s departure from Mitrovica shortly after the start of the hostilities.

Tahy, the son of a Hungarian nobleman, had spent his first years in the consular service in various corners of the Balkans, circling ever closer towards Kosovo. In quick succession, the young official was posted to consulates in Bucharest, Monastir (Bitola), Vlora, Niš, and finally Mitrovica, where he remained between 1909 and 1913. In a similar way to Prochaska, perhaps, Tahy was promoted consul later that year and sent far away to Bagdad, where he spent the war

¹⁷⁷ For more details on these consulates, see Rudolf Agstner’s comprehensive *Handbuch des k.u.k. auswärtigen Dienstes*. Even more data can be found in the official almanac of the Habsburg foreign service, *Jahrbuch des k.u.k. auswärtigen Dienstes*, which in 1912 had already reached its sixteenth yearly issue.

¹⁷⁸ I take all biographical and career data from the respective entries in Deutsch: *Die effektiven Konsuln* and, for Umlauf, from PGK V, 143.

years as the head of a one-man consulate.¹⁷⁹ Afterwards, Tahy returned home and continued on in the Hungarian foreign service. Over time, he became a minister plenipotentiary and later an undersecretary and member of parliament.

Heimroth seems to have been quite skilled at navigating his career. Within the span of just ten years as a consular official, he had been promoted rapidly and already earned a medal. He had also had a duel over a romantic affair but managed to come out of it with his good standing intact. On 5 November 1912, that is shortly after the events discussed below, Heimroth was awarded a knighthood.¹⁸⁰ Heimroth, an army reserve officer, switched to active duty in 1914 and worked in military intelligence. After the war, he was retired from the consular service against his will.

Even before the First Balkan War broke out in October 1912, the previous months had been a continuous crisis. A major revolt of Albanians, centred on Kosovo, weakened the Ottoman grip on the region. In Üsküp, Heimroth witnessed the influx of thousands of armed insurgents into the city. Foreigners and Ottoman officials alike started to flee as an outbreak of violence seemed imminent. In this volatile situation, the consular corps elected the Russian consul-general (who held precedence) as their spokesperson and sent a common message to the Russian embassy in Constantinople, asking for instructions. It seems that Heimroth had not been able to contact Vienna at the time. When this was possible again, he reported that he had tried his best to calm down the local Austro-Hungarians, who had started to panic together with many in the foreign colony.¹⁸¹ Meanwhile, Tahy and Prochaska related long lists of violent

¹⁷⁹ Deusch quotes from an insightful exchange that Tahy and the foreign ministry had in 1916 about the excessive workload that wartime cryptography required. According to Tahy, a message that took ten minutes to draft required four to five hours of “mechanical” (manual) encryption. The ministry promptly assigned more staff to Tahy’s consulate. See Deusch: *Die effektiven Konsuln*, 650.

¹⁸⁰ By way of comparison, it had taken Friedrich Lippich (1834–1888) more than twenty years longer to be awarded a knighthood. Lippich founded the Prizren consulate in the 1860s and subsequently had one of the most successful careers among his generation of consular officials. On Lippich, see the respective entry in Deusch: *Die effektiven Konsuln*.

¹⁸¹ PGK IV 153 = Heimroth to Berchtold, Üsküp, 21 August 1912, Nr. 103 confidential.

incidents from their respective posts. They noted how the overland roads had become unsafe, including for the postal service.¹⁸² These events in late August may have readied the consuls, especially Heimroth, for the worse developments that were still to come.

The situation continued to tighten throughout the following weeks as the Balkan states, convinced of the Ottoman Empire's weakness after the Albanian revolt, made their preparations. Already on 8 October, the day that Montenegro declared war, Heimroth reported that nobody in Üsküp, not even Ottoman officials, had reliable information about the general situation anymore. Foreign newspapers had not reached the city since over a week. Members of the foreign colony left the city but were turned back at the border with Serbia, which had already been closed to them.¹⁸³ Serbia and the other allies joined Montenegro against the Ottomans on 17 October. By then at the latest, the consuls' hectic messages about troop movements and skirmishes made the telegraph wires glow. But there were hardly any reliable news to be had. From Belgrade, which should have been the centre of news-gathering and military intelligence for the Habsburgs, the minister-plenipotentiary, Ugron, could not report anything of value, he deplored. According to Ugron, the Serbian military enforced absolute secrecy. Not even war correspondents were allowed to the frontline; they were handed pre-approved information instead. Rumours, often contradictory and by nature exaggerated, filled the void. "It is obvious already now how poor the state of intelligence [*Nachrichtendienst*] will be in this war."¹⁸⁴ These turned out to be prophetic words.

In Kosovo, the consuls continued telegraphing about troop deployment, battles, and which neighbouring towns had already been captured, always adding precious extra words about the uncertainty of it all.¹⁸⁵ On 20 October, Tahy predicted that the main line between Vienna and

¹⁸² PGK IV 154 = Tahy to Berchtold, Mitrovica, 21 August 1912, Nr. 50 confidential and PGK IV 155 = Prochaska to Berchtold, Prizren, 27 August 1912, Nr. 86.

¹⁸³ PGK IV 158 = Heimroth to Berchtold, Üsküp, 8 October 1912, Nr. 114.

¹⁸⁴ Ugron to Berchtold, Belgrade, 19 October 1912, Nr. 112 (PA XII 385 f. 300r–309r).

¹⁸⁵ Tahy, for example, sent daily updates. I paraphrased from the telegrams Tahy to Berchtold, Mitrovica, 13 and 14 October 1912, Nr. 71 and 72 (PA XII 385).

Constantinople would be cut at any moment.¹⁸⁶ This must indeed have happened soon enough since Prochaska, three days later, relayed a message he had received from Tahy through an alternative line that ran through yet-unconquered territory. The main line through which Mitrovica normally communicated had already been blocked. This message of 23 October is also the last that I have from Prochaska.¹⁸⁷ Heimroth still sent a message the following day, reporting Serbian advances in his direction and Prochaska's.¹⁸⁸ By the end of the month, Prizren, Mitrovica, and Üsküp had been occupied and put under information lockdown by the Serbian military.¹⁸⁹

In the remainder of this chapter, I will discuss Heimroth's, Tahy's, and Umlauf's activity during the following few days or, in Umlauf's case, weeks, though with two caveats: I am quoting their own sources and I do not have all of them. Heimroth and Umlauf submitted comprehensive reports¹⁹⁰ – Tahy must have done the same, but I do not have his testimonial. This leaves me mostly in the dark as to his concrete actions, so that my comparison is somewhat flawed. Still, by analysing the documentation left by Umlauf, who was Tahy's assistant and immediate successor at the Mitrovica consulate, I hope to be able to give an idea of the kinds of situations that Tahy likely had also faced, or would have had to face had he not chosen to make for an escape early on.

Heimroth's report was submitted in two separate parts that both date from 18 November. It is very long and reached Vienna as a draft, not a fair copy, which testifies to the ongoing state of emergency and the consulate staff's extraordinary workload. The first part recounts the events in Üsküp between 23 and 27 October and reads as a detailed day-by-day chronicle. The second

¹⁸⁶ Telegram Tahy to Berchtold, Mitrovica, 20 October 1912, Nr. 79.

¹⁸⁷ Telegram Prochaska to Berchtold, Prizren, 23 October 1912, Nr. 74.

¹⁸⁸ Telegram Heimroth to Berchtold, Üsküp, 24 October 1912, Nr. 99. It should be noted that there are probably many more telegrams in the same collection (PA XII 385) and the ones I cite here might not have been the last. At present, I could only draw on a small cache of materials.

¹⁸⁹ Telegram Ugron to Berchtold, Belgrade, 29 October 1912, Nr. 154.

¹⁹⁰ PGK 165 and 166 = Heimroth to Berchtold, Üsküp, 18 November 1912, Nr. 125 and 126. Also: Umlauf to Berchtold, Mitrovica, 3 January 1913, Nr. 1 secret (PA XII 415, f. 260r–274v).

part turns to summarising more recent developments, moods in the population, and also tries to form an opinion about the many rumours about atrocities and genocidal intentions of the conquerors then in circulation.

On 23–24 October, the Battle of Kumanovo took place between the main Serbian and Ottoman forces. Heimroth began his account describing the initial confusion and rising panic that the battle caused in nearby Üsküp. Both sides claimed a victory. After a large number of soldiers had returned from the frontline in complete disorder, it became clear that the Ottomans had been severely beaten. Ordinary soldiers as well as most officers and government officials fled at once. According to Heimroth, only the vali (governor) of Kosovo stayed for a day longer, during which time he barely escaped an assassination attempt. Heimroth gives the vali some credit for this and condemns the officers' desertions as "possibly the saddest chapter" of these days. Given that Heimroth was an army officer himself, it appears plausible that he must have had strong feelings about this breakdown of military discipline and the 'dishonour' that came with it.¹⁹¹

As the Ottoman authorities abandoned the city, the foreign consulates had become sanctuaries for hundreds of refugees. While these were mostly (Christian) locals and members of the respective foreign colonies, Heimroth was also approached by several Ottoman officers who begged him for asylum. The consul allowed the officers in but was glad to see them leave again after they changed their minds. As he wrote in his report, Heimroth was neither willing to hide them nor hand them over to the Serbs. The Serbian army's arrival was now expected any minute. A deputation of local notables asked Heimroth to hoist the Austro-Hungarian flag over the city, hoping this would spare it from shelling, but this was a request that Heimroth had to deny. He answered them quite soberly that "the city's protection must remain with the Turkish

¹⁹¹ This episode forms another example for which Alison Frank Johnson's recent work on consular and military honour codes provided some insight; see Frank Johnson: "The Bureaucracy of Honour".

troops [...] and will after a lost battle naturally change over to the victors.” Heimroth added that while he alone could do nothing, the consular corps as a whole might assume a mediating role.

This is in fact what happened next. By 25 October, civil and military authority had broken down completely in and around Üsküp. Looting and fires were commonplace. The Ottoman military had left behind supplies, abandoned weaponry, and even their wounded. In this catastrophic situation, the consuls formed an improvised council, which was once again headed by the Russian consul-general.¹⁹² This consular government issued orders – “as the single authority”, wrote Heimroth – for the protection of crucial supplies and to organise care for the wounded soldiers. The consuls also decided to hand over the city to the Serbs. In full uniform, they drove out of the city and met with the Serbian commanders, informing them that the way was free. Here, the consuls obviously exceeded even their assumed authority, and they probably knew it themselves. Though Heimroth does not mention it directly, he noted that the Serbs asked for guarantees of free passage towards Üsküp which the consuls, not being Ottoman officials, simply could not provide. Still, their initiative might have saved the city from destruction and further bloodshed in the middle of the general confusion.

After the Serbs had occupied the city, order was quickly restored. The refugees were let out of the consulate and a Serbian military guard took their place in both the Austro-Hungarian as well as in the other consulates. While Heimroth goes on to describe great tensions with the Serbs, who showed a particular hostility against Austria-Hungary and its consulate, it was probably wise to allow a Serb detachment to put up camp within the consulate’s walls. A denial

¹⁹² Heimroth mentions that four consuls formed the council (the Russian, French, and English consuls as well as Heimroth himself) and that they met in the building of the Romanian consulate-general. While this simply might have been a practical consideration of some sort, it is also thinkable that this ‘neutral ground’ was chosen for symbolic reasons. No matter the gravity of the situation, or perhaps especially because of it, proper diplomatic ceremonial had to be upheld. I believe we can also see this reflected in various other remarks that Heimroth gives in his report, such as his long description of the way in which the Serbian commanders interacted with the consuls, which I cannot not include here.

would likely have led to an escalation of the conflict; this is probably what happened in Prizren, where Prochaska insisted perhaps too forcefully on his consulate's inviolability and was put under arrest in it himself.¹⁹³

All of the above is based on Heimroth's own reportage. Ideally, I would have liked to draw on additional materials for balance. Still, Heimroth's account seems sober and reliable enough to also stand on its own. It appears that Heimroth really worked tirelessly to help uphold order and save civilians and the wounded. Instead of barricading himself in his consulate, he opened its doors for refugees – even if this could lead to complications, as the incident with the asylum-seeking Ottoman officers shows. Together with his colleagues, Heimroth assumed responsibility for the community and used the consular corps' diplomatic authority to avert an even greater disaster. In all this, Heimroth made his own choices. That he was knighted almost on the spot may illustrate that Heimroth's superiors, once they had learned of his actions a few days later, strongly approved of them as well.

The case of Tahy in Mitrovica can, unfortunately, not be told here in sufficient detail. Based on the various earlier reports from Tahy's hand that I have read, I see him as a more impulsive character who trusted highly in his own ability to judge but was in fact not as experienced or able as, for example, his two colleagues Heimroth and Prochaska.¹⁹⁴ Kann's opinion, though I have criticised it before, could also be invoked. According to Kann, Tahy (and also Prochaska) failed to understand well enough that the new authorities were not bound by the Ottoman

¹⁹³ See Deusch's summary of some of the events in Prizren that lead to the escalation in *Die effektiven Konsuln*, 539–541.

¹⁹⁴ See Tahy's various reports in PGK IV. For example, Tahy can be seen writing and acting in a comparatively more assertive way than his colleagues in two reports from 1910, shortly after he had arrived in Mitrovica. In the first of these reports, Tahy found it sensible to attempt a sweeping analysis of the current political situation of the Ottoman Empire and future developments in just a few paragraphs. This compares unfavourable with other consuls' often much more detailed and measured analyses, not only in memoranda (see the previous chapter) but not uncommonly also in their regular reportage. In the second report, Tahy retroactively asked the ministry for permission to fund certain subsidies that he had handed out upon a local contact's request. These two cases, though they might be taken out of context, stand in for various other passages that can be found in Tahy's edited reports and from all of which combined I take my impression. Further research will be needed to work out a more reliable interpretation. For the two cited reports, see PGK IV 72 und 73 = Tahy to Aehrenthal, Mitrovica, 12 January 1910, Nr. 1 and 1 February 1910, Nr. 3 secret.

capitulations to fulfill a consul's every request, whereby they displayed a lack of agility and tact.¹⁹⁵ I do not dispute this possibility but only criticise the traditionally biased judgements on which it is based. Nevertheless, my view on Tahy is highly speculative as well. Closer scrutiny of his case, too, will be necessary before a meaningful comparison can be made. I do think, however, that the fact that Tahy chose to abandon his post while others stood their ground already forms a telling contrast with the examples of Prochaska, Heimroth, and even his own successor Umlauf. Tahy's unexplained departure and continued absence had caused lasting damage to the Monarchy's interests in Mitrovica since members of his local network felt symbolically abandoned as well.¹⁹⁶

Whatever the exact reasons were, Tahy left his consulate in early November 1912, from which point Umlauf took over. I will now summarise his report.¹⁹⁷ Umlauf sent it to Vienna in January 1913, when the threat of war between Austria-Hungary and Serbia had become less acute again and things were slowly getting back to normal. While Heimroth's similar report had been a detailed narrative, Umlauf sent in a more concisely written logbook for the longer period from November 1912 until the beginning of January 1913. Communication lines will have been restored by then, but the fact that Vienna requested the report only at the end of the year may indicate that it had been preoccupied with more pressing matters and not taken much interest in Umlauf's situation; though it is of course also possible that in Mitrovica he had been subjected to military lockdown or rigid censorship longer.

After Tahy's departure on 8 November, Umlauf remained behind with two cavasses (local consular guards). He gave them strict instructions to keep the consulate off limits for all visitors except trusted locals. If anyone else, especially Serbian army personnel, should call, the

¹⁹⁵ Kann: *Prochaska-Affäre*, 6, fn. 4. Kann is in fact basing this opinion on comments made by a contemporary consul.

¹⁹⁶ See Umlauf's report, as cited in the following fn. Also see PGK IV 172 = Umlauf to Berchtold, Mitrovica, 18 January 1913, Nr. 2.

¹⁹⁷ Umlauf to Berchtold, Mitrovica, 3 January 1913, Nr. 1 secret (PA XII 415, f. 260r–274v.)

cavasses were to seek Umlauf's approval. Under no circumstance, however, would armed soldiers be allowed in. In contrast to what had likely happened to Prochaska, Umlauf actively kept Serbian soldiers out of the consulate without becoming trapped in it. Outside the consulate, the Serbs had placed their own guards but did not hinder Umlauf's movement. Nevertheless, he reminded his cavasses to leave the consulate only when necessary and avoid any kind of provocation while outside. Umlauf's daily notes from the report give the impression that he was aware that any argument or other small occurrence could cause trouble or even incite a diplomatic incident.

These precautions did not lead Umlauf to stay entirely passive. On the contrary, at one point, for example, a Serbian junior officer prompted Umlauf to place his personal quarters at the army's disposal. After a long discussion, Umlauf declared that he would never agree to this. He challenged the officer to go ahead and break his door by force if he so dared – thereby invoking the principle of diplomatic inviolability. And it worked. Umlauf then went to speak with the Serbian commander and had this right confirmed for himself and the houses of the cavasses. Another reason why Umlauf could not simply hide is that he had inherited active political and diplomatic duties from Tahy. When the local Catholic priest, Don Nikola, showed signs of trying to appease the Serbs, Umlauf had to remind him that the Monarchy still upheld its cultural protectorate over the Catholic church (and therefore also over the political leanings of the priest). This evolved into a protracted conflict between the two in which Umlauf underlined the rights of the Monarchy time and again whereas Don Nikola tried to shift towards a pro-Serbian course symbolically and in his public rhetoric.

The most publicly visible stage of this quiet struggle happened one Sunday towards the end of November. Umlauf went to attend mass and noticed that the Austro-Hungarian flag had been removed from its usual place near the altar. In response, he stood still in the middle of the church and did not take his seat until the priest had the flag carried back in. Serbian officers

noticed the flag the following week but apparently did not take it down. Also here, Umlauf's adoption of a diplomat's (ceremonial) role had been crowned with success.

Still, there was a risk that Umlauf could eventually overplay his hand. Kann put it quite nicely when he wrote that "courtoisie according to diplomatic protocol has neither been a characteristic trait of the Serbian military nor of any troops in combat zones whatsoever."¹⁹⁸

The situation was volatile; whether or not Umlauf knew about it, the Prochaska Affair had just reached its height. On the whole, though, it seems that Umlauf's adversaries were willing to abide by the same, peacetime rules of consular diplomacy, so that he could follow existing practices. As an experienced consular secretary, Umlauf will have been able to observe how career consuls went about their business for many years. This is illustrated by a wonderful scene that closes Umlauf's report, which I am still quoting, showcasing the determination with which he occupied his newfound role.

In early January 1913, the Serbian authorities had appointed a 'handler' – a former consul, named Milan Milojević, who would manage all official business that Umlauf and the Serbs had with each other. Both men now met for the first time to discuss a complaint. The diplomatic stakes of the matter were extreme: a soldier had cut down a tree in the consulate's vegetable garden and damaged the fence; such a transgression could not go unpunished. Indeed, even though the tree and fence did not matter, the violation of the consulate's territory did. If we can trust Umlauf's transcript of the meeting, the two consular officials quietly fought each other tooth and nail about this incident, or at least Umlauf did. When Milojević started taking notes during their conversation, Umlauf asked him to stop, or else he would have to regard their talk as an interrogation. When Milojević suggested that Umlauf may visit with him anytime to discuss his complaints, Umlauf, perhaps a little arrogantly, but still according to procedure, protested that "in Europe" it was still a matter of prevailing courtesy that the head or caretaker

¹⁹⁸ Kann: *Prochaska-Affäre*, 7.

of a consulate could not be summoned for an official meeting “even if he is just a secretary”. Milojević countered by saying that he had not been aware that the consulate was currently headed by an official caretaker as no official insignia were visible outside. And so it went on. In the end, these technicalities probably led nowhere. In a typically bureaucratic way, it was agreed that Umlauf should submit a written list of his complaints and that Milojević would take it from there. But Umlauf had successfully asserted his new position as a diplomat in charge of a protected office and therefore his right to be treated according to the rules.

With this, Umlauf’s report concluded. Whether or not the Habsburg Empire received satisfaction for a broken garden fence remains for future historians to find out. Still, this episode, seen together with all of Umlauf’s conduct, indicates a way in which an extraordinary situation such as Umlauf’s could be navigated with success: by appealing with confidence to diplomatic practices, rights, and ceremonial. This required negotiation skills, both verbal and symbolical, and above all an acute awareness of a consul’s social standing and responsibilities. Recalling Heimroth’s case, we may state that his success essentially relied on the same awareness and skills. Both men rose to the occasion and made their own decisions in matters large and small.

It remains to be seen if Tahy, and especially Prochaska, were the complete opposite to this (as Kann and others thought) or why else their stories turned out differently. As I have tried to argue in the beginning of this chapter, outlining the example of Prochaska, these consuls, too, deserve a fair chance to be studied as actors in their own right. Thereafter, by examining Heimroth, Tahy, and Umlauf side by side, I have attempted to show that there were various courses of action to take and that it was possible for a consul to assert his position and continue with his diplomatic work even under very difficult circumstances. As soon as proper source work will be possible again, the main questions about a consul’s agency and his autonomy that I started to explore in this chapter will invite attempts at further discussion. Regarding the

overarching themes of this thesis, this chapter has added further observations on the variety of practices in the Austro-Hungarian foreign service, here with particular regard to the diplomatic role of consuls. I will now move on to conclude and pull the main results of the two case studies more tightly together.

Conclusion

My thesis has made a case for studying Habsburg diplomatic history from a consular point of view. The two case studies that I presented were grouped around a central diplomatic “affair” in whose retelling I highlighted different practices that, together, form the practice of diplomacy. I have embedded these centrepieces in a broader analysis of two consuls’ career paths over a longer period and also, where possible, compared these consuls with some of their colleagues.

Rather than focusing on a single analytical theme, I have laid out my two case studies in such a way that they can give an idea of the potential that lies in studying consuls as part of diplomatic history, here in a late-Habsburg and south-eastern European context. I am convinced and have tried to demonstrate with the help of multiple examples that the study of consuls can provide fresh vantage points to address old and new research questions into diplomatic history. I hope that the various opportunities for further study sketched out at various points above turned out more enriching than distracting – I see this thesis as an exploratory endeavour and hence have kept the thematic scope quite flexible.

Still, there were core themes discussed throughout: patronage and professionalisation in the chapter on Victor Crenneville, and a consul’s autonomy and diplomatic agency in the chapter on Oskar Prochaska. I have decided against a formal comparison of these two cases. This would have made it necessary to concentrate on a narrow selection of shared characteristics and required leaving the largest part of the available material unused. Instead, I opted to present the two cases side by side and shift between different thematic foci.

Analysing the practice of aristocratic patronage in the consular career of Victor Crenneville led me to underline its combined social and institutional function and, particularly in the Duel Affair, its diplomatic function as well. The events in Smyrna would not have escalated in the way they did if Crenneville had been a ‘regular’ bourgeois consul. Crenneville benefitted from

his own social rank, the active patronage of his famous father (or those who wanted to please his father), and from the fact that his nominal supervisor in Smyrna, consul-general Herzfeld, ranked lower in the social hierarchy and could not draw on a similarly powerful network. But these social factors shaped the institutional development of the foreign service and its diplomatic activity and thus cannot be separated from each other. I examined the Duel Affair, and Crenneville's career as a whole, mostly on the basis of internal correspondence and his father's private diary. Adopting this micro-perspective made it possible to show with the help of concrete examples how the three types of practices that I posited were part of a whole in the practice of Habsburg consular diplomacy, including how it had begun to 'professionalise' by the time of Crenneville's later career.

Oskar Prochaska's case leads to similar conclusions where elements from all three practices came together, here with reference to a consul's diplomatic agency and autonomy to act. Although I could not investigate Prochaska in similar detail, his colleagues' activities during the time of the Prochaska Affair of 1912 indicate that consular officials took part in diplomatic practice in very much the same way that diplomatic officials would; indeed, the consuls' success at their job depended on their skilful and tactful application of ceremonial, negotiation techniques, and other core elements of diplomatic practice. The examples of Heimroth and Umlauf suggest that consuls could and did make autonomous decisions: they played by the diplomatic rulebook and, in times of crisis, used it to assert their position, be it in an abandoned city or an occupied village. This, again, is what the micro-perspective could reveal; we have also seen that Prochaska, and no doubt all Habsburg consuls, were not publicly recognised as diplomats due to their less prestigious social standing and the habitual ridicule or disinterest they faced in contemporary accounts and in the later historiography. More microhistorical studies will surely be able to correct such views and present a fuller spectrum of consular activity, both during times of crisis and business-as-usual.

The two principal shared characteristics of both cases, then, is that, firstly, they demonstrate the entanglement of practices within a shared social, institutional, and diplomatic space such as was maintained by the Habsburg foreign service and a transforming diplomatic practice as a whole; and secondly, that diplomatic practice connected the local levels (consular posts, their respective urban contexts, Vienna, etc.) with the transregional levels of imperial, colonial, and overall diplomacy and foreign affairs.

My aim in this thesis was to highlight a variety of ways in which Habsburg consular officials could participate in diplomacy, broadly understood. I examined consuls' activities through a sociocultural prism and argued why consuls should be analysed as diplomatic actors and some ways in which this could be done. The results of my analysis call into question the traditional narratives of a rigid separation between consular and diplomatic officials in the Habsburg foreign service. The continuing prevalence of such narratives in the historiography may be a result of the consuls' uniquely complicated social and institutional position or perhaps 'in-betweenness'. There are many open questions and contradictions that future scholarship will have to address. While most consuls could be called marginalised underdogs, they could just as well be seen as members of an imperial elite. We might find that consuls were relegated to the peripheries – both on the map and in their foreign-service bureaucracy – but may come to understand that foreign policy often depended on their presence and continuous activity, and that consuls therefore wielded a far greater influence than officially acknowledged. Finally, we may appreciate the consuls' perspective on Habsburg society and the state from within its most prestigious branch of service but may equally draw on their experiences gained during long tenures spent outside the imperial borders.

It is my hope that the present thesis has given some preliminary answers to some of the many questions that can be asked about Habsburg consuls; at the same time, it has been my attention

to raise further questions to stimulate further explorations of consulship as part of Habsburg diplomatic history.

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