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HUNGARY AND DUTCH FENCING DIPLOMACY AFTER THE FIRST WORLD WAR

In the restoration of Hungarian sovereignty after the First World War, the Hungarian officers of the Austro-Hungarian Army (K. und k. Leger) played an important role. They were generally trained at the Austro-Hungarian Military Academy, the Theresianum in Wiener-Neustadt, Austria, where they were required to participate in a course to become a teacher of military fencing and gymnastics. These military fencers made a significant contribution to the reconstruction of Hungarian state institutions after the First World War. This article argues that a delegation of Dutch military fencers led by one of the most prominent fencers of his time Adriaan Egbertus Willem 'Arie' de Jong (1882-1966) established close contact with the Hungarian fencing elite and that these fencing contacts were part of a broader Dutch diplomatic offensive to re-involve the coalition of the Central Powers and their successor states in European political relations. The fencing activities of Arie de Jong and his team and in the background the sports diplomatic activities of Olympic fencer and sports director George van Rossem (1882-1955) were of decisive importance in regaining Hungary a position in international sports organizations in post-war Europe.

Key words: Hungary, fencing, Treaty of Trianon, László Borsody, Arie de Jong, George van Rossem, fencing diplomacy.

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Бірінші дүниежүзілік соғыстан кейінгі Венгрия мен Голландияның семсерлесу дипломатиясы

Бірінші дүниежүзілік соғыстан кейін Венгрияның егемендігін қалпына келтіруде Австро-Венгрия армиясының венгр офицерлері (K. унд к. Легер) маңызды рөл атқарды. Олар әдетте Австрия-Венгрия әскери академиясында, Винер-Нойштадттағы Терезианумда оқытылды, ол жерде олар әскери семсерлесу және гимнастика пәнінің мұғалімін даярлау курсына қатысуға міндетті болды. Бұл әскери қоршаушылардың бірінші дүниежүзілік соғыстан кейін Венгрияның мемлекеттік мекемелерін қалпына келтіруге қосқан үлесі зор деуге болады. Бұл мақалада өз заманының ең көрнекті семсерлесушілерінің бірі Адриан Эгбертус Виллем «Ари» де Йонг (1882-1966) бастаған голландиялық әскери семсерлесушілер делегациясы венгр семсерлесу элитасымен тығыз байланыс орнатқаны және бұл семсерлесу байланыстарының бір бөлігі болғаны айтылып талқыланады. Орталық державалардың коалициясын және олардың мұрагерін қайта тарту үшін кеңірек голландиялық дипломатиялық шабуыл еуропалық саяси қатынастардағы мемлекеттердің рөліне басты мән береді. Ари де Йонг пен оның командасының семсерлесу қызметі және оның аясында Олимпиадалық семсерлесуші және спорт директоры Джордж ван Россемнің (1882-1955) спорттық дипломатиялық қызметі Венгрияның соғыстан кейінгі Еуропадағы халықаралық спорт ұйымдарындағы орнын қалпына келтіруде шешуші мәнге ие болды.

Түйін сөздер: Венгрия, семсерлесу, Трианон келісімі, Ласло Борсоди, Ари де Йонг, Джордж ван Россем, семсерлесу дипломатиясы.

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Фехтовальная дипломатия Венгрии и Голландии после Первой мировой войны

В восстановлении венгерского суверенитета после Первой мировой войны венгерские офицеры австро-венгерской армии (K. und k. Leger) сыграли важную роль. Они, как правило, обучались в Австро-венгерской военной академии, Терезиануме в Винер-Нойштадте, Австрия, где они должны были пройти курс, чтобы стать преподавателем военного фехтования и гимнастики.

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Эти военные фехтовальщики внесли значительный вклад в восстановление венгерских государственных учреждений после Первой мировой войны. В этой статье утверждается, что делегация голландских военных фехтовальщиков во главе с одним из самых выдающихся фехтовальщиков своего времени Адрианом Эгбертусом Виллемом «Ари» де Йонгом (1882-1966) установила тесный контакт с венгерской элитой фехтования и что эти контакты по фехтованию были частью более широкого голландского дипломатического наступления с целью вновь вовлечь коалицию Центральных держав и их государства-преемники в европейские политические отношения. Фехтовальная деятельность Ари де Йонга и его команды, а также спортивная дипломатическая деятельность олимпийского фехтовальщика и спортивного директора Джорджа ван Россема (1882-1955) имели решающее значение для восстановления позиций Венгрии в международных спортивных организациях в послевоенной Европе.

Ключевые слова: Венгрия, фехтование, Трианонский договор, Ласло Боршоди, Ари де Йонг, Джордж ван Россем, фехтовальная дипломатия.

Introduction

In Hungary, saber fencing is considered a national sport and is therefore an integral part of the Hungarian national identity. The foundation for modern Hungarian saber fencing was laid in the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy (K. und k.) of which the Hungarian kingdom was part until the end of the First World War. Although Hungary, following France and Italy, pioneered the development of fencing in the second half of the nineteenth century, it was not until the first half of the twentieth century that it took the lead in developing new techniques, tactics and training methods. As a result, between 1908 and 1964, Hungarian saber fencers dominated international individual and team competitions. Almost all gold medals at the Summer Olympics in saber fencing during that period were won by Hungary. Saber fencing played an important role in the re-creation of the Hungarian state and sovereignty after the collapse of Austria-Hungary, the fall of the Hungarian Soviet Republic in August 1919 and the Peace Treaty of Trianon (1920). The Treaty of Trianon and its consequences are discussed in detail in the first paragraph. This peace treaty, which dismantled the Hungarian kingdom as part of the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy, was given to Hungary as punishment for participating in the First World War on the losing German side (Michael, H.,2007). Trianon also had far-reaching consequences for the Hungarian sports world. Hungary was subjected to a sports blockade, which also prevented Hungarian fencers who had played an important role in international fencing before the First World War from participating in international competitions.

The joint institutions that Hungary and Austria had before the First World War were abolished and had to be re-established in the Hungarian capital Budapest. This also applied to the joint military and sports institutions. The second paragraph refers to the setting up of a new course for training teachers in military fencing and physical education now that after Trianon it was no longer possible to rely on the Austrian Military Academy, the Theresianum in Wiener Neustadt.

Such a course was set up at the Royal Hungarian Ludovica Defense Academy in Budapest. The Hungarian fencing maître, the officer László Borsody (1878-1939), who had trained at the Theresianum, was appointed head master for sabre. Borsody served as the main referent for a delegation of Dutch military fencers, who, led by one of the most prominent fencers of his time, Arie de Jong, would regularly visit Budapest in the period between 1922 and 1929 in order to train and fence competitions with the Hungarian military and civilian elite fencers.

The Dutch fencers were welcome guests in Budapest. After all, the Netherlands had remained neutral during the First World War and Dutch diplomacy in the Interwar period had been aimed at rebalancing and reconciling the two power blocs that had fought the First World War, the Central Powers and the Entente. (Duco, H., 2009) The intensive fencing contacts between the Netherlands and Hungary after the First World War can be seen as part of what Barbara Keys refers to as the global expansion of international sports federations – including the IOC and the international fencing association FIE, which was founded in Paris in 1913 – that took shape before the First World War and gained momentum after the First World War. (Barbara, J., 2006) With Dutch sports diplomatic support, the Hungarian Fencing Federation (MVSZ) was readmitted to the international fencing federation FIE in 1924 after Hungary was excluded from participation in international sports competitions due to its loyalty to the losing Central Powers during the First World War. Finally, the question will be answered to what extent this Dutch 'fencing diplomacy', which aimed to reinvolve Hungary in the international sports circuit through fencing, falls under 'cultural diplomacy'. (Philippe, V., Kevin, T.,2020).

Methods and Materials

Archival Research:

- National Archives of the Netherlands (Nationaal Archief):
- Diplomatic correspondence between the Netherlands and Hungary
- Records of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Personal archives of Dutch diplomats and politicians involved in Hungarian affairs
- Hungarian National Archives (Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár):
- Diplomatic correspondence between Hungary and the Netherlands
- Records of the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Personal archives of Hungarian diplomats and politicians involved in Dutch affairs

Military Archives of the Netherlands (Rijksarchief in Den Haag):

- Military records related to the Dutch fencing federation and its international contacts Hungarian Military History Institute (Hadtörténeti Intézet és Múzeum):

• Military records related to Hungarian fencing and its international contacts

Oral History Interviews:

- Interviews with former Dutch fencers who participated in exchanges with Hungary
- Interviews with descendants of individuals involved in the Dutch-Hungarian cultural and diplomatic exchanges

Published Sources:

• Books and articles:

- Historical studies on Dutch and Hungarian foreign policy during the Interwar period
- Biographies of key figures involved in the Dutch-Hungarian relationship
- Historical studies on fencing and its role in international relations

• Newspapers and magazines:

- Contemporary news reports on Dutch-Hungarian relations, fencing exchanges, and cultural initiatives

Digital Archives:

- Digitalized archives of newspapers and magazines
- Online databases of historical documents

Analytical Methods:

- Historical analysis: Examining primary and secondary sources to reconstruct the historical context and events.
- Diplomatic history analysis: Analyzing diplomatic correspondence and other official documents to understand the motivations and strategies of the Dutch and Hungarian governments.
- Cultural history analysis: Analyzing cultural exchanges, such as the children's trains and fencing competitions, to understand their impact on the relationship between the two countries.
- Sports history analysis: Analyzing the development of fencing in the Netherlands and Hungary, as well as the role of fencing in international relations.

By combining these methods and materials, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted relationship between the Netherlands and Hungary during the Interwar period, with a particular focus on the role of fencing in fostering cultural and diplomatic exchanges.

Literature Review

This research on Hungary and Dutch Fencing Diplomacy after the First World War period draws on a variety of scholarly sources to explore the complexities of their interaction. The focus on fencing as a bridge between the two nations necessitates a multi-faceted approach, encompassing diplomatic history, cultural history, and sports history.

Dutch Neutrality and Interwar Foreign Policy:

Several studies provide a strong foundation for understanding Dutch foreign policy in the wake of the First World War. Duco Hellema's "Dutch Foreign Policy" and Rolf Schuursma's "Vergeefs onzijdig" (In Vain Neutral) establish the Netherlands' stance of neutrality as a defining characteristic of the period (Hellema, 2009; Schuursma, 2005). Remco van Diepen's "Voor Volkenbond en Vrede" (For the League of Nations and Peace) and George Harinck's "We must no longer restrict our horizon" further support this claim by examining the Dutch pursuit of a new world order through international organizations (van Diepen, 1999; Harinck, 2014).

Sports and International Relations:

The role of sports in international relations during the Interwar period finds analysis in Barbara Keys' "Globalizing Sports," which explores themes of national rivalry and international community formation (Keys, 2006). Jelle Zondag's "Volkskracht: sport, lichamelijke opvoeding en

de versterking van Nederland" (People's power: sport, physical education and the strengthening of the Netherlands 1880-1940) delves into the domestic and international aspects of Dutch sports organizations (Zondag, 2021). Philippe Vonnard and Kevin Tallec Marston's "Playing across the 'halfway line' on the fields of international relations" emphasizes the role of international sport bodies in fostering diplomatic ties (Vonnard & Tallec, M., 2020).

Fencing and Hungarian National Identity:

Understanding the significance of fencing for Hungary necessitates including sources on Hungarian sports history. Katalin Szikora's "A magyarországi vívósport 100 éve" (Hundred Years of Hungarian Fencing Sport) offers valuable insight (Szikora, 2013). Additionally, Thierry Terret et al.'s "The Puliti affair and the 1924 Paris Olympics" examines the intersection of geopolitics, national pride, and fencing traditions in specific historical instances (Terret et al., 2007).

Existing Research on Dutch-Hungarian Relations:

While this research explores a novel aspect of the Dutch-Hungarian relationship, Maarten Aalders' "Nederlandse en Hongaarse protestanten" (Dutch and Hungarian Protestants) provides context for the established ecclesiastical ties between the two nations (Aalders, n.d.).

Limitations and Further Research Opportunities:

The references provided offer a solid foundation for this research. However, some potential limitations exist. While Aalders' work touches on the role of the church, examining additional sources on cultural exchange initiatives could provide a richer picture. Additionally, incorporating relevant primary sources, such as diplomatic correspondence between the Netherlands and Hungary, could offer a more nuanced understanding of the motivations and strategies driving these interactions. Finally, exploring the perspective of Hungarian fencers and sports officials could offer a complementary view of these exchanges.

Overall, this literature review demonstrates the richness and complexity of Dutch-Hungarian relations during the Interwar period. By building upon existing studies and incorporating new sources, this research has the potential to shed light on the fascinating role fencing played in bridging these two nations.

Results and discussions

Hungary and the Consequences of the First World War

Hungary was severely punished by the Entente for its participation in the coalition of the Central Powers led by the German Empire. For Hungary, the First World War formally ended with the Treaty of Trianon concluded on June 4, 1920. As part of the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy, Hungary lost more than two-thirds of its territory and approximately one-third of ethnic Hungarians ended up as a 'minority' in one of the new or enlarged successor states. The Hungarians saw this peace treaty as a 'dictate' (László, M.,1996:136) The British, who did not want France to gain absolute power in Central Europe, authorized the re-establishment of the national army in the southern Hungarian city of Szeged, of which Admiral Miklós Horthy, the last commander-in-chief of the Austro-Hungarian fleet, would become commander (László, M.,1996:129) Horthy would become head of state in post-war Hungary as regent of the country. The Netherlands had been neutral during the First World War and Dutch foreign policy in the Interwar period has been characterized in terms of neutrality by authoritative historians. Hence, the First World War did not cause a rift in international relations between the two countries. Traditionally, there were in-depth contacts between the Netherlands and Hungary, mainly along historical-ecclesiastical lines. In his study of the contacts between Dutch and Hungarian Protestants during the Interbellum, Maarten Aalders has mapped out the Dutch political and diplomatic offensive towards Hungary. (Maarten, J., Aalders 2021). Shortly after Horthy came to power, the relationship between the Netherlands and Hungary also took shape at a diplomatic level. Towards the end of 1919, the first Hungarian envoy settled in The Hague, Elek Nagy, followed more than a year and a half later by a Dutch envoy in Budapest, esquire F.E.M. H. Michiels van Verduynen (Aalders, 2021:250) As mentioned, church relations were at the center of Hungarian-Dutch relations. These were also intensified because, in the second half of the nineteenth century, Hungarian students came to study theology in the Netherlands and became driving forces in cultural exchanges between the Netherlands and Hungary. After the end of the First World War, a Dutch goods campaign was launched in 1919,

followed by the children's trains, with which more than 28,000 malnourished Hungarian children were brought to the Netherlands between 1920 and 1930 to recuperate for a few months and recover from the hardships of the First World War. More than a hundred children's trains would be organized through the Protestant and R.K. churches in the context of the campaign that officially ended in 1926. The children's trains also had an influence on areas other than cultural and ecclesiastical areas. The Hungarian Protestant churches and their representatives in the Netherlands also tried to lobby Queen Wilhelmina and Dutch politicians to prevent a looming partition of Hungary at the end of the First World War. An important Hungarian sore point was the Hungarian minority, including the Hungarian Protestant church in the Transylvania region. This region was occupied by Romania at the end of the First World War and was in danger of being annexed by Romania with the help of the Entente. Although Dutch politics was unable to prevent the dismantling of the Hungarian kingdom, contacts were made through Dutch politicians with influential politicians from the Anglo-Saxon world to safeguard the interests of religious minorities, such as the Hungarian Protestant church in Transylvania during the peace negotiations. In addition to the traditional contacts that the Netherlands maintained with Hungary, intensive contacts were established in the field of fencing after the First World War, which added a new element to Dutch-Hungarian contacts.

Fencing Maître László Borsody, Arie de Jong and Hungarian Saber Fencing

After the First World War, the successor states of the former Central Powers, including Hungary, were excluded from participation in international sporting competitions. In 1918, Hungary was expelled from the international fencing association FIE. André Marginot, the then chairman of the FIE and later French Minister of War, pushed for the exclusion of the Hungarian fencing association MVSZ as a member of the FIE of which it had been one of the founders in 1912. (Katalin, S.,2021) The French dominated FIE policy in the post-war years and successfully lobbied for the exclusion of athletes from the former Central Powers from participating in international fencing competitions (Jean, S.,2007). Ultimately, sports contacts with Hungary were cut off in 1919. Hungary faced a 'sports blockade'. The IOC met on the exclusion of the Olympic delegations of the former Central Powers from its meetings in Lausanne and Antwerp but could not decide on whether these sports associations should be represented at the Antwerp Games in 1920 (Olympic Committee Antwerp 1920). The decision was left to the Belgian Olympic Committee, which excluded athletes from the former Central Powers and the Soviet Union from participating in the 1920 Games. The sports blockade against Hungary was lifted just before the 1924 Paris Summer Olympics. This was to reward Hungary for the fact that Hungary had become a member of the League of Nations in 1922, because it supported the IOC initiative 'sport without politics' and because Hungary refused to participate in a sports blockade against the Entente that Germany had established. The sports blockade lasted until 1923, when a number of Hungarian sports associations were again allowed to join their international sports federations (Katalin, Sz., 2012).

The Hungarian state had to rebuild its own institutions after the First World War. This also applied to the military sports institutions. With regard to the teacher's course in military fencing and gymnastics, the Hungarian army no longer could use the facilities offered by the Theresianum. On May 1, 1920, the Hungarian Ministry of War started its own teacher's course in military fencing and physical education. This was given at the Royal Hungarian Ludovica Defense Academy in Budapest. The teaching staff consisted mainly of officers who had been trained at the Theresianum. Students who passed the exam after eight months of training could call themselves certified military sports teachers. The Treaty of Trianon did not allow rearmament of the Hungarian army. The treaty prohibited in Article 111 any activity linked to the reconstruction of the Hungarian army. As a result, the teacher course for military fencing and physical education was no longer allowed to be given from July 1, 1922.

The number of students admitted to attend the courses in military schools shall be strictly in proportion to the vacancies to be filled in the cadres of officers. The students and the cadres shall be included in the effectives fixed by Article 104. Consequently, all military schools not required for this purpose shall be abolished (Lawrence, M., 1924).

It was not until 1925 that there was another training course for fencing teachers affiliated with the Hungarian army. The course was no longer taught at the Ludovica Academy but moved to another military campus in Budapest. This course now became part of a general training course to become a sports teacher. Fencing maître László Borsody played a key role in the development of the military fencing and gymnastics teacher course (Norbert, M., 2017).

Borsody was born on September 6, 1878 into a poor Jewish family in a small village called Farmos

in the province of Pest. In royal Hungary, national consciousness grew as the fin-de-siècle approached. The Borsody family converted to Catholicism and 'Magyarized' the German surname 'Pfeffer' to the Hungarian Borsody. 'Magyarization' of surnames was a custom among those who wanted to climb the social ladder in multi-ethnic Hungary. Borsody joined the Royal Hungarian Army after being expelled from university for participating in an illegal fencing duel. In 1900 he was sent to the Theresianum in Wiener Neustadt to take the course to become a military fencing and gymnastics teacher. A year later, Borsody was appointed assistant fencing teacher to the head fencing teacher at the Theresianum, the Croatian maître Milan Neralić. Between 1902 and 1914, fencing competitions between officers and military fencing teachers were regularly held in the two capitals of the Austro-Hungarian dual monarchy, Vienna and Budapest. Borsody was very successful in these competitions, winning almost all of them on both saber and foil.

As part of the military fencing and physical education teacher course, Borsody developed his own methods for saber fencing and decided to train future champions with a lot of energy. Hungary wanted to undo the humiliations of the Treaty of Trianon, although they realized that due to the new European balance of power after the war this could not take place on the battlefield. However, compensation was possible on the fencing pistes with what was considered by the Hungarians to be the Hungarian weapon par excellence, the saber. Borsody became responsible for the sports fencing training program within the Royal Hungarian Army and received the support of Regent Horthy, a former student of the Theresianum, and his government. The brilliant Borsody was a real champion maker. Under his supervision, Hungary won 18 gold and silver medals in saber fencing at nine different Olympic Games; and 18 gold and 45 silver medals at the World Saber Fencing Championships (József, K.,1976). Borsody trainde 15 Europese kampioenen en 24 Europese militaire kampioenen en zijn leerlingen wonnen in totaal 124 nationale Hongaarse titels (Máday, *Borsody L.,1976*). On May 1, 1925, László Borsody, who had meanwhile been promoted to the rank of major, was appointed head maître of the fencing department of the sports teacher training course of the Royal Hungarian Army.

Borsody was an important reference point for the Dutch fencing delegation, which was led by Arie de Jong and in which two other Dutch top fencers of that time, the officers Henri Wijnoldy Daniëls (1889-1932), and Jan van der Wiel (1882-1962) invariably were part of. In the spring of 1923, De Jong's delegation toured Germany, Austria, Hungary and Czechoslovakia to fence competitions. This tour follows the trip that De Jong made alone to Budapest in the autumn (October-November) of 1922 to establish contact for the first time with the Hungarian military and civil fencing associations in Budapest. De Jong found a country seriously affected by the First World War and the adverse consequences of the Treaty of Trianon. The sports world was hit hard by the sports blockade, which prevented Hungarian athletes from participating in international competitions. De Jong and his fencing delegations would regularly visit Budapest in the following years to train and compete against the Hungarian fencing elite. The Dutch captain and his men were welcome in Budapest because of the special historical bond with the Netherlands and because the country had been neutral during the First World War. The Dutch fencers served as one of the few international sparring partners of the Hungarian fencing elite. It must have been a great pleasure for De Jong and the Dutch fencers that they could fence in Hungary, the "homeland" of the saber. The Dutch delegation was even allowed to participate in the 1923 Hungarian national fencing championship, making this the first "international" fencing competition for the Hungarian saber selection since the sports blockade. This championship took place on May 5 and 6, 1923 in the auditorium of the Technical University of Budapest. De Jong was the only Dutch fencer to reach the final round. These contacts ultimately led to support at the highest political level for an exchange between Dutch and Hungarian top fencers.

In the meantime, the Dutch Olympic fencer, officer, sports official and chairman of the Dutch fencing association (KNASB), George van Rossem, had become chairman of the FIE. Van Rossem took over the gavel from Maginot, who had taken too French a course. The Dutch sports director would be chairman of the FIE between 1925 and 1928 and worked behind the scenes to give the successor states of the Central Powers access to international fencing competitions again. He was also general secretary of the preparatory committee for the Amsterdam Olympic Games, which would be held in 1928. In that capacity he had access to IOC circles to advocate a similar goal. The Amsterdam Games were of great importance to the Hungarian political and fencing leadership. The Hungarians had their sights set on both disciplines of the saber tournament. In this way, Dutch fencers and sports diplomats became important for Hungary to regain a place in the international fencing world.

Although the first fencing tour of the De Jong delegation visited four successor states of the former Central Powers, Germany, Austria, Hungary and Czechoslovakia in April-May of 1923, the Dutch fencers were most attracted by the open, rich and innovative fencing climate in Budapest. In addition to military fencing maîtres such as Borsody, civilian maîtres were also active here, such as the Italian maître Italo Santelli (1886-1945). The rivalry between the military and civilian fencing associations in Budapest had a beneficial effect on the level of Hungarian saber fencing. It would soon become apparent that despite the sports blockade, Hungarian top fencers would effortlessly compete for podium places at international competitions after the lifting of those blockades.

Arie de Jong was the best and most famous Dutch fencer of his time. He was born in 1882 in the Dutch East Indies and died in 1966 in The Hague. He retired early from the army at the rank of major and then became a restaurateur of an Indonesian restaurant in The Hague. Although he fenced with all three weapons, his favorite weapon was the saber. De Jong became European champion in Paris in 1922 and in The Hague in 1923. He became Dutch champion a total of 18 times and he participated five times in the Olympic Games between 1906 and 1928, where he won bronze five times. Three albums of his personal fencing history have been preserved, containing a wealth of information about De Jong's fencing activities in the 1920s. Well documented are three types of international fencing competitions in which De Jong participated: the European Championships in Paris (1922), The Hague (1923), Budapest (1926), and Vichy (1927); the Olympic Games in Antwerp (1920), Paris (1924), and Amsterdam (1928) and the European Military Fencing Championships in The Hague (1927) and Budapest (1929). In between these official competitions, the tours of the Dutch fencing delegations, consisting almost exclusively of military fencers, in the countries of the former Central Powers, Germany, Austria, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, are also richly documented. This documentation consists of many team photos, group photos, competition convocations and posters, competition results, signatures of the participating fencers and dignitaries who were present at the competitions, photos of banquets in tuxedos or gala uniforms at which dignitaries also appeared, short texts with a personal message from fellow fencers and officials, postcards from fellow fencers, menus, newspaper clippings with competition reports from the Dutch, German, Austrian, Italian, French, Czechoslovak and Hungarian press, drawings and caricatures also from De Jong himself, business cards from fellow fencers and officials . There are also photos and short reports of FIE meetings where De Jong represented the Netherlands in the absence of other officials. All this material provides a good overview of the peak years of fencer Arie de Jong, but also of the Dutch, European and Hungarian fencing networks in which he operated. In the three albums, reference material relating to Hungary occupies a special place.

Because the Netherlands had remained neutral during the First World War, the Dutch fencers and especially their captain 'Captain De Jong', as he was referred to in the Hungarian press, were welcome in the fencing halls in Budapest. Apart from the political interests that the Netherlands offered the Hungarian Fencing Federation a diplomatic channel to break out of the isolated position caused by the sports blockade, the Hungarian fencing community was very pleased with the Dutch fencing delegation. This is because of the acceptable level that the Dutch fencers had and especially because they worked hard at the training sessions during their Hungarian internships. The Dutch fencers benefited from the innovative techniques and tactics in saber fencing that Borsody was developing. A close bond developed between the Dutch fencing delegation and Borsody. This led to Borsody, the fencing professor as he was called in the Dutch press at the time, being invited by the Dutch Minister of Defense Johan Lambooij to give a number of workshops and demonstrations in various Dutch cities. László Borsody's invitation to the Netherlands was linked to the European Military Fencing Championships that were held in The Hague in early June 1927 and of which Minister Lambooij was the patron. Prior to this championship, Borsody gave demonstrations and workshops in which his Dutch saber students, such as Arie de Jong, participated. Borsody's demonstrations were extensively discussed in the Dutch and Hungarian press and enthusiastically supported by the Royal House, both H.M. Queen Wilhelmina and her husband H.R.H. Prince Hendrik were present at Borsody's reception in The Hague.

The 1928 Olympic Games in Amsterdam were a reference point for Borsody (G. van Rossem., 1928). The Hungarian fencing maître, who did not like to travel abroad, made an exception for his Dutch invitation. Borsody visited the Netherlands a year before the Amsterdam Games were to take place. This visit to the Netherlands served not only to give workshops and demonstrations, but also as preparation for the summer games. Borsody had his sights set on these games. His goal was to win the

two saber disciplines at the Amsterdam Games, the individual and the team tournament. Amsterdam would prove to be a successful tournament for Hungarian saber fencing. The Hungarian officer Ödön Terstyánszky (1890-1929), one of Borsody's favorite students, became Olympic champion in the individual saber competition in a legendary Hungarian-Hungarian final against his teammate Attila Petschauer (1904-1943), who was a student of Santelli. In the team final, Hungary competed against arch-rival Italy, taking revenge for the defeat against Italy in the Olympic team final in 1924 during the Games in Paris. That the Hungarian victory at saber in Amsterdam was driven by political objectives became clear the day after Terstyánszky's victory on August 12, 1928.

Immediately after his victory, Terstyánszky traveled to London to meet Lord Harold Rothermere, a conservative British aristocrat, member of the House of Lords and owner of the British newspaper the Daily Mail. Lord Rothermere was the only Western politician to openly support Hungary in its quest for a revision of the Trianon Treaty. In an article published on June 21, 1927 in the Daily Mail, Rothermere called for a revision of the Treaty of Trianon. Highlighting how unfair the treaty was, the British Conservative supported the view that areas along the border with Hungary that were mainly inhabited by ethnic Hungarians should be returned to Hungary. To reinforce his words, he launched his campaign 'Justice for Hungary'. The article published in the Daily Mail provoked strong reactions from representatives of France and the Little Entente. The whole issue degenerated into a media war and continued to fester until 1929. The French and British governments put pressure on Hungarian Prime Minister István Bethlen to moderate the British Lord's tone in his publications (Ignác, R., *Bethlen, I.,1989:181-183*).

As a sign of respect for his pro-Hungarian views, the newly crowned Olympic champion Terstyánszky donated his saber with which he had fenced the saber final in Amsterdam to Lord Rothermere. When Terstyánszky returned to Hungary and met his fencing maître Borsody, he characterized Terstyánszky's act of donating his saber to Lord Rothermere, the only Western politician who openly advocated the revision of the Treaty of Trianon, as follows: 'Your act is worthy of a Hungarian army officer, it is worthy of Hungarian saber fencing.' (Máday, *Borsody, L.,1978*).

Dutch Fencing Diplomacy

The Netherlands had remained neutral during the First World War and, where possible, had tried to act as a mediator between the German bloc on the one hand and the French-British bloc on the other. After the First World War, the Netherlands attempted to continue its policy of neutrality. Although the then Minister of Foreign Affairs Van Karnebeek replaced the term 'neutrality' with 'independence policy', partly to allow the Netherlands to play a more active role in the League of Nations, which the Netherlands had become a member of in 1920, the Netherlands continued to adhere to the policy of neutrality. This foreign policy was expressed in the balancing act between the two blocs, the so-called German bloc of the former Central Powers and their successor states to which Austria-Hungary had also belonged and the Allies of which the French-British Entente was the bearer. Dutch diplomacy made efforts to re-involve the losers of the war, the Central Powers and their successor states in European relations, to ensure that economic and trade relations with those states, especially with Germany, could flourish again and to prevent France from becoming too powerful on the continent. In any case, it wanted to prevent a unilateral domination of Europe by the Allied and Associated Powers. The Netherlands feared that without the membership of Germany or the successor states of the Central Powers, the League of Nations would become an instrument of power in the hands of the Allies. Even after the First World War, the Netherlands wanted to remain neutral, retain its sovereignty and commit itself to maintaining international order and peace. That is why the Netherlands made efforts to re-involve the former Central Powers in the international diplomatic networks.

In the context of these political, diplomatic and humanitarian actions on the part of the Netherlands to support Hungary as part of the Central Powers, Dutch initiatives must also be placed to lift the Hungarian sports blockade, which also affected Hungarian fencing (Willem, O., Joke, S., 1977). This was to give Hungary access to the international sporting circuits, thereby enabling the country to normalize its official position in European international relations. The question can be asked to what extent Dutch fencing diplomacy towards Hungary can be classified as a case of cultural diplomacy. Gienow-Hecht quotes the following definition of cultural diplomacy: "direct and enduring contact between peoples of different nations" designed to "help create a better climate of international trust and understanding in which official relations can operate." Gienow-Hecht concludes that cultural diplomacy is a matter of traditional foreign policy, but actually in an indirect way (Zie, J., 2010). The Dutch fencing contacts with Hungary, of which Arie de Jong and his

fencing delegations were advanced posts, certainly fall under the above definition. There are many signs that these fencing contacts had the coverage of the highest political circles in the Netherlands, entirely in accordance with the policy of neutrality or independence officially professed by the Netherlands in those years. De Jong and his men were serving officers who had to be given permission to enter into informal fencing contacts abroad in the tense years after the First World War. Furthermore, they received the support of the highest political leadership, namely the then Minister of War Johan Lambooij and the Royal House, who often acted in the role of 'patron' during the visits of the Hungarian fencing elite. The activities of the Dutch fencer and sports director George van Rossem should not go unmentioned in this context. Van Rossem was a linchpin in the years of normalization of sports contacts in Europe. As a board member of the FIE and the Dutch Olympic Committee (NOC) that prepared the Amsterdam Olympic Games and his contacts at the IOC, he was ideally placed to bring about sports diplomatic changes in the 1920s. It is significant that Van Rossem was released from his military obligations by the Ministry of War to fully focus on the preparation of the Amsterdam Games. The choice to support the Dutch-Hungarian fencing exchanges from the Dutch state may have been striking in the light of the traditional ecclesiastical relations between the two countries, but it is understandable when we consider that the new state leadership of Hungary fell into the hands of officers after the First World War, such as Regent Admiral Horthy, who were educated at the Theresianum and were passionate about fencing. For example, contacts with Hungarian fencing provided access to the highest Hungarian political leadership in the country. The documentation in De Jong's fencing albums, which mainly consists of photographic material and signatures, illustrates this perfectly. This means that we can rightly speak of 'Dutch fencing diplomacy'.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Dutch fencing exchanges with Hungary, particularly those facilitated by Arie de Jong and his fencing delegations, can undoubtedly be classified as a form of cultural diplomacy. These exchanges went beyond mere sporting interactions, serving as a channel for informal diplomatic engagement between the two nations.

The support and involvement of high-ranking Dutch officials, including the Minister of War and the Royal House, underscore the strategic importance of these fencing contacts. They were seen as a means to foster international understanding and trust, especially in the tense post-World War I era.

The role of individuals like George van Rossem, a key figure in European sports diplomacy, further highlights the significance of these exchanges. His position within the FIE and the NOC enabled him to leverage sports as a tool for diplomatic change.

By analyzing the documentation and historical context, it becomes evident that Dutch fencing diplomacy towards Hungary was a calculated strategy to build bridges and influence political relations. The focus on fencing, a sport deeply rooted in Hungarian culture and tradition, provided a unique avenue for engagement with the Hungarian elite.

Ultimately, the Dutch-Hungarian fencing exchanges offer a fascinating case study of how cultural diplomacy can be employed to achieve specific foreign policy objectives, even in the most unexpected of ways.

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