

György NANOVSZKY

NANO: Egy soknyelvű diplomata kalandjai öt kontinensen.

István Nemere (ed.)

**(NANO: A multilingual diplomat's adventures on five
continents)**

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NANO - Egy soknyelvű diplomata kalandjai öt kontinensen (hereinafter: NANO) has a unique genre – as Mr. Ivan Bába, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs once put it: it is more than a special self-portrait, a personal reflection, taking a look back on a very rich professional life-journey, at the same time hitting a surprisingly personal tone.

The author, prof. György Nanovszky Ph.D., a former university teacher in several higher education institutions has been holding lectures for decades on religious protocol, international organization, interpretation and translation technique as well as the history of diplomacy.

Furthermore, he is also a well-known Ambassador accredited to seven countries, a former UN diplomat, an acknowledged economist, political scientist and translator. Today, he also serves as Honorary President of the Hungarian Esperanto Association. Mr Nanovszky has been awarded a number of state awards and enjoys several prominent scientific and public memberships – thus he is a true polymath.

His enviable language skills include English, Esperanto, French, German, Indonesian, Polish and Russian with top level state certificates and he also speaks three further languages. These outstanding language skills and the fact that, being a true perfectionist, he is striving for continuous improvement has become one of the most important tools and a firm base of his elaborate diplomatic career – no wonder this motive repeatedly appears in the book. In addition to this reviewed memoirs the author has written fourteen books on the following topics: negotiation strategy, international organisations, diplomacy, religious etiquette and diplomatic protocol, and cultural studies including the history of Russian or Finno-Ugrian peoples, which are all worthy of note.

NANO, should it be presented briefly in numbers, could be summarized as follows: the author compiled his 70-year history in 15 chapters on 272 pages covering 62 different topics. The authenticity and uniqueness of the book is enhanced by the images in the Annex depicting Mr Nanovszky's immediate family members, ex-wives and, of course, extraordinary meetings with state leaders, church leaders and scientists during his outstanding diplomatic career.

It goes without saying that the aforementioned 272 pages are by no means long enough

to present his diverse diplomatic work, professional and public activities, but I am sure that this mirror shows us a moral and professional example, particularly for those wanting to build a career in the world of diplomacy. In the book, the author does not only reflect on his official activities but informs us about the features of his personal life, making him look like a simple human being, one of us, having emotions, whilst also referring to issues that inevitably arise from time to time during the implementation of such a rich and varied life. As with any book, writing this one also began with exploring and selecting the right authentic sources – the process of data and memory collection lasted for seventy years but was not in vain: Nano – this is the familiar nickname of the writer – can tell quite a few stories that have never been referred to anywhere else.

Since this memoir includes the most important events in the author's life, we definitely have to mention the myriad of travels associated with a diplomatic career, taking him to more than 100 countries. His achievements in international Finno-Ugric and in the Esperanto movements, as well as the more than twenty years spent in the World Trade Movement are among his most outstanding results contributing to an elaborate diplomatic, ambassadorial life.

The structure of the book follows a logical chronological order: the first chapters depict the author's life in detail from primary school all the way to university studies; as reading his unusual stories we are going back in time and unnoticeably learning about the special characteristics of our political system before the change of the regime. Going through the chapters we are learning more and more about the author: his personal relationships, and outstanding interest in foreign languages.

The nicely shaped periods are gently filled with useful information; moving forward in the story, we get to know more and more about Hungary's political, social and even cultural aspects of the era. We can even read about the still unknown events of Yeltsin's visit to Budapest, the recollection of the Hungarian works of art captured by the Red Army or the story of the Hungarian hostages held by the Chechens. Furthermore, we find details of the author's tracing of the remains of former Hungarian Prime Minister István Bethlen in hidden prisons and cemeteries after secret investigations and negotiations behind the scenes. (It is also worth mentioning that should that remarkable meeting have taken place between His Holiness, Pope John Paul II. and the Patriarch in Pannonhalma, Hungary in 1996, we would probably have the first Hungarian Nobel Peace Prize laureate...)

The *contexture* of the book is therefore clear with a nice flow – forming a full picture of the author's life by his short stories in the chapters that are logically built upon one another until the moment we suddenly realize that 'we simply cannot put the book down.' This impact can only be achieved when we may get a glimpse into a world that is 'unknown and beyond imagination' for most of us, reading about stories that have not been told before. Although this is not the first memoir by a diplomat I have read over the years (majoring in International Studies we have met a few), this was definitely the first essay that was the most 'consumable' in style: excellent and precise wording, perfect editing and pagination throughout the whole text, a reader-friendly font, smooth phrasing free from any demagogic pomposity, and professional jargon which carefully avoids turning into lurid writing. All in all, the book is purely a great succession of interesting stories setting an excellent example of how to write about ourselves in a way that is not boring or slow-paced – ev-

ery reader finds his or her favourite chapter. Asking István Nemere to draft the book has proved to be an excellent choice. In his 'moderator' role, once inquiring, sometimes provoking the author with direct questions, is a clever way to motivate the author into a full-swing narrative. The publicist Nemere, with more than six hundred books published to date, is a sound conversation partner, an equivalent interlocutor.

The writing as a whole is extremely colourful and informative – similarly to the author's university lectures – fitting both diplomacy and politics into a harmonious coexistence with an exciting professional career and personal love stories. Nano is known to be a chatty person, always a centre of attention, so his book is no different. Anyone who starts to read Nano will not be able to put the book down until the end is reached. I could not either...

As for the tone of the book, the author – whom I have personally known for eight years now, as my former university professor and thesis consultant – testifies to an exemplary professional vocation and enviable human touch, complemented with an unprecedented hard-working attitude – this feature can be gently sensed in each and every line of the book.

Evaluation of the work: this report is not ostentatious and the author does not intend to become a role model at all, he does not try to flatter himself. He talks about his failings and situations where he could not manage to achieve the expected results. It is quite rare for someone holding such high positions, being close to power, yet never forgetting that life has its 'ups and downs', too.

Reports and stories are composed in a rather moderate but extremely accurate style, even when they reflect on significant events such as high-level political or economic negotiations, meetings with high religious leaders', or "simple" hostage negotiations.

For me, the most exciting chapters depict Nano's rich diplomatic career through a variety of missions; describing problems, unusual situations occurring either in everyday life or in the diplomatic sphere, and also their solutions. Those who wish to choose a diplomatic career may learn a lot by reading these secret stories.

Recommendation

I personally recommend the chapters exploring the author's diplomatic missions to the seven different countries – Russia, Singapore, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan – he travelled to on five continents, always in the good service of our country, whilst he managed to remain a true Hungarian, and a human being.

Furthermore, I specifically recommend the book to those interested in learning about foreign languages, different cultures and the world of diplomacy. All prospective diplomats and young international relations experts may benefit from these stories that are never included in university textbooks – therefore those who wish to know more about the real life of diplomats may be enriched with a unique experience by reading about the exemplary professional vocation, the lifelong learning feature that receives an increasing emphasis today. The necessity of the continuous improvement of foreign languages, as well as the significance of genuine loyalty and patriotism also appears in the book.

In these days, unfortunately, it is getting increasingly harder to meet this rare human approach, honesty, outstanding respect for different cultures and diversity, not to mention the

endless desire for knowledge, which can serve as an example for all of us.

NANO is a truly fascinating book with lessons taught whilst following a very interesting life path, which also familiarises us with how this could be achieved and at what cost in the second half of the 20th century.

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