

Arthur C. Clarke's Childhood's End: *Ad Hoc Diplomacy and Three Types of its Envoys*

Milan Jazbec¹

ABSTRACT

This paper is focusing on the analysis of diplomatic aspects of the groundbreaking classical science fiction novel "Childhood's End" by Arthur C. Clarke. Its main diplomatic characteristic is the role of ad hoc diplomacy and the envoy as its driver in the centre. Ad hoc diplomacy blossomed in the period of early diplomacy and came again in the forefront with the outset of postmodern diplomacy. Clarke presents three types of an ad hoc envoy starting with the UN Secretary General and the Alien in the first part and closing in the third part of the text with the third one, as a fully atypical one, due to the highly unconventional circumstances. All the three of them discuss, negotiate and report — the third one with a switch that is unusual for diplomatic practice. The author uses diplomacy as a frame, driver and tool in his narrative, not dwelling on inside diplomatic work and practice, but on diplomatic form and messaging. Diplomacy as an activity and method is confirmed in Clarke's masterpiece and also developed to diplomacy of the first contact.

KEYWORDS: ad hoc diplomacy, science fiction, Arthur C. Clarke, Childhood's End, envoy, diplomacy of the first contact

POVZETEK

Članek se osredotoča na analizo diplomatskih vidikov enega od prelomnih romanov znanstvene fantastike "Konec otroštva" Arthurja C. Clarka. Osrednja diplomatska značilnost romana je vloga ad hoc diplomacije z vlogo odposlanca kot njenega izvajalca v ospredju. Ad hoc diplomacija je cvetela v obdobju zgodnje diplomacije, na pomenu pa spet pridobiva v postmoderini diplomaciji. Clarke predstavi tri tipe ad hoc odposlancev, začenši z generalnim sekretarjem OZN in z Drugim v prvem delu ter zaključí s popolnoma atipičnim odposlancem v povsem posebnih okoliščinah. Vsi se pogovarjajo, pogajajo in poročajo, tretji izvaja slednje na način, ki v celoti odstopa od skozi tisočletja oblikovane diplomatske prakse. Avtor uporablja diplomacijo kot okvir, promotorja in sredstvo, pri čemer se ne spušča v podrobnosti diplomatskega dela, ampak se ukvarja z njeno obliko in sporočilnostjo. Diplomacija kot dejavnost in metoda je potrjena v tej Clarkovi znanstvenofantastični mojstrovini in razširjena na diplomacijo prvega stika.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: ad hoc diplomacija, znanstvena fantastika, Arthur C. Clarke, Konec otroštva, odposlanec, diplomacija prvega stika

1 ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Milan Jazbec, PhD, Professor of Diplomacy, poet and writer. Former Ambassador of Slovenia to North Macedonia (2016 – 2020) as well as to Turkey (2010 – 2015), accredited also to Azerbaijan, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon and Syria, and State Secretary at the Slovene Ministry of Defence (2000 – 2004). Employed at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Slovenia. Email: milan.jazbec@gmail.com

INTRODUCTION

Diplomacy is the management of relations between states and international organizations. It is exercised by professional diplomats, but also by other individuals in this field. Career diplomats are those who deal with these activities on a permanent basis, as part of a diplomatic apparatus of a given state, i.e. of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. But there is also a variety of other persons that occasionally deal with diplomatic tasks, although they are not part of the professional diplomatic service. They are by the rule tasked with one issue only and figure as representatives, special representatives etc., commonly being described as envoys exercising ad hoc diplomacy. Ad hoc diplomats or envoys dominated the diplomatic scenery during the period of early diplomacy (till 1648).² This was the time before introducing residential diplomacy as well as permanent instructing and reporting into diplomatic practice, and before forming diplomatic services of nation states. Diplomats negotiate, observe and report to their governments, as well as establish and deepen friendly relations among states and nations.³

We dwell significantly on these aspects later on when we focus our research interest on one of the groundbreaking science fiction novels, namely *Childhood's End* by Arthur C. Clarke. The role of ad hoc diplomacy and its envoys stand out in it from the diplomatic point of view. One could additionally claim that this text presents a unique understanding of ad hoc diplomacy, which is placed in the distant future, although being written already in 1953. Our approach is that works like the one discussed here help us understand and comprehend diplomacy better and more thoughtfully. In this paper we focus primarily on diplomacy as activity and method. But such works offer a more comprehensive view in complying with the literature works as well.

We try to answer two research questions in this paper. Firstly, how the distinguished author presents and perceives ad hoc diplomacy and the role of ad hoc envoys in his monumental work, and secondly, what is his contribution to diplomatic studies and their expertise on the phenomena of diplomacy as exercised in this text. The following methods are used in this research: analysis, comments, comparison

2 For more on categorization of diplomacy see Jazbec, 2021.

3 Comp. functions of a diplomatic mission, Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, Article 3.

and interpretation and – since the author is a career diplomat – also the method of observing through one's own participation.⁴ Last but not least, with our research endeavour we try to further add to the innovative study of diplomacy in literature, in particular in science fiction.

DIPLOMACY AND ENVOYS

Among the numerous definitions of diplomacy, which do not contradict each other, but rather complement themselves,⁵ we focus our attention in this paper on understanding diplomacy as an activity and as method. For this purpose we point out at the beginning the way diplomacy is defined by Nicolson and Satow. The former sees diplomacy as negotiation and the processes and machinery by which such negotiation is carried out, (1988, pp.3-5) and the latter as the management of international relations by negotiation as well as the method by which these relations are adjusted and managed by ambassadors and envoys, but also as negotiation (1994, p.3). Barston (2006, p.1) claims that “[D]iplomacy is concerned with the management of relations between states and between states and other actors. [...] As such it is the means by which states through their formal and other representatives, as well as other actors, articulate, coordinate and secure particular or wider interests, using correspondence, private talks, exchanges of view, lobbying, visits, threats and other related activities.”

As we can see, diplomacy is, in the first place, carried out by formal representatives of a given state, meaning diplomats. Diplomats are members of the diplomatic service of a Ministry of Foreign Affairs. When posted abroad, at the receiving state or at an international organization, they have a fixed term appointment, nowadays usually up to four years. A commonly used expression for diplomats is also envoy (Berridge and James, 2003, p.94), though currently this term sounds outdated.⁶ Hence the term envoy is mostly used for ad hoc diplomats that could be career diplomats on a one issue mission or persons out of the diplomatic service, those who are not diplomats, but function in this status and are tasked with a diplomatic mission.

4 For more on the latter method see Burnham, 2004 and Mason, 2002.

5 Benko, 1998, p.39.

6 Compare Feltham, 1993, p.4.

As mentioned already in the previous part, ad hoc diplomacy was typical for the period of early diplomacy that spanned from approximately 3,000 B.C. up to the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, when the period of classical diplomacy started. With the appearance of the nation state as the direct consequence of 1648 that led to the establishment of the first foreign ministry in France in late 17th century, and before this with introduction of residential missions and permanent communication (instructions and reporting) between the sending authority and its mission at the receiving authority to the diplomatic practice during the period of the Italian City states towards the end of the period of early diplomacy, ad hoc diplomacy started to lose its dominance. This is also illustrated by the fact that ad hoc diplomacy should “be distinguished from the conduct of diplomacy through resident and permanent missions” (Berridge and James, 2003, p.3). However, in the late 20th century the practice of ad hoc diplomacy and envoys has been gaining on importance again. This is the period of postmodern diplomacy that is from one point of view characterized and determined by globalization and from another one by increasingly developing media and communication technology. Both have transformed international community to such extent that it is decisively different from that of early 20th century when modern diplomacy began (or to any diplomatic and historical situation in the preceding history). Hence we understand the role of ad hoc diplomacy and its envoys as highly complementary to resident and permanent missions, i.e. diplomacy.

There is one important common characteristic of ad hoc envoys while comparing those from early diplomacy at its peak from 14th century on with those of postmodern diplomacy. The former were high level aristocrats from the Emperor’s closest vicinity and the latter are by the rule former high ranking politicians, mostly former Heads of States and Prime Ministers. In any case, in principle an ad hoc diplomatic envoy could be each person tasked with a diplomatic mission, be it public, private or secret one, to manage an open issue between two formal sides in the international intercourse.

As a matter of fact, we could develop further the meaning of envoys in diplomatic business, claiming that they are occupied with three types of tasks: they establish diplomatic relations, they maintain them and they exercise special tasks within this frame. They can pursue only one of this duties or all of them, something that depends on the concrete historical, social, political, security and diplomatic environment and on

the consequent instructions from the sending authority (that of their state). At the same time, as already pointed out at the beginning, they perform all five of diplomatic functions: they represent their sending authority, they protect its interests, they negotiate, they observe and report as well as establish, maintain and deepen friendly relations. An envoy is by the book a one man band mission, to say so, but he/she can perform all the diplomatic functions although being only one person.⁷

From the terminological point of view we speak about business of diplomats, but with a *differentia specifica* in mind, we use the common term envoy. This by definition means a onetime task that could be timely clearly limited or ends with the fulfilment of the task that could basically not be timely defined, but relates to circumstances and the development of the process. Anyway, when speaking of envoys, we mean diplomatic envoys and we have in mind *ad hoc* diplomacy. This used to be by far the most prevailing form of diplomatic business in early diplomacy, but nowadays it is an important and indispensable element of postmodern diplomacy.⁸

There exist various terms that could serve as synonyms for the envoy in the explained frame, such as representative (also special and personnel representative), emissary, legate, messenger, mediator, intermediate and other similar. We use in this paper envoy as the established term, for *ad hoc* diplomacy (unless otherwise specified in a given case).

CHILDHOOD'S END

It was the year 1952, when *Childhood's End*, a groundbreaking science fiction novel was written. Clarke says that it was "extensively revised in the spring of 1953" (Clarke, 1995.b, p.1) and then published in August of that same year. It was Clarke's first major appearance in a novel form "both within science fiction circles and in the wider literary world" (Zebrowski, 1995, p.v). The novel is structured in three parts: *Earth and the Overlords*; *The Golden Age*, and *The Last Generation*. The first part is a revised and expanded short story *Guardian Angel* that was published in 1950 (Clarke, 1995.b, p.1). Just to take a note, it should be mentioned that Clarke has become one of the classics of this genre,

7 In the conduct of diplomatic relations through missions it is possible (and it happens often in diplomatic practice) that diplomatic missions can exercise all the listed functions even being staffed with one diplomat only.

8 Here we do not intend to refer to the relation between bilateral and multilateral diplomacy. This is from one point of view not our main ambition and from the another one the relation between the two types of diplomacy are so dynamic and changeable within a given frame that such a discussion would take us far away from our topic in this paper.

along with Asimov, Bradbury, Dick, Heinlein, Herbert, Huxley, Le Guin, Lem, Orwell, Simak and others.⁹ This is also the reason why we do not present the story as such here. We leave it to the encouraged reader of this paper to do this by themselves. At the same time we believe that the way this paper is developed gives enough information about the story to be able to follow our elaboration. Additionally, and in the same spirit as above we understand Verne, Wells, Zamjatin and some others as the founders of the genre.¹⁰

For a broader understanding and contextualization of Clarke's work it is important to point out that with the *Childhood's End* he introduced in the genre at the very beginning of his long and highly successful career the topic of the first contact. One could even claim that among the classical authors of this genre Clarke was the biggest and most consistent promotor of this topic, starting with the here discussed novel and continuing with the *Space Odyssey* and the *Rendezvous with Rama* cycles. As Zebrowski put it "[T]he central idea of *Childhood's End* is its provocative, preemptive view of human history, in which humanity is drawn from its chrysalis of human history and engulfed by an alien purpose – whether for better or worse, we cannot say" (1995, p.v). Here, additionally, "the first contact is at first humiliating, then politically constructive but sterile, and finally terrifying" (ibid., p.vi). It would be interesting to explore at some other occasion if this was set as Clarke's model of pursuing the first contact.

The main idea is rather simple, but astonishing: the representatives of the supreme civilization (the Overlords¹¹, as named later on by people) arrive to dominate the Earth, but as it proved, with a highly ethical purpose. After the first shock and some signs that the aliens were not keen on doing any harm, the dialogue between the two sides started. It was pursued by the Secretary General of the United Nations as the Earth's representative, and Karellen as the representative of the Overlords. At the beginning of the second part the Overlords made them also visible, that produced another shock for people, although the Overlords were part of their life already for the previous half of the century. They became rather acquainted and present around. That

9 The Easton Press, Norwalk, Connecticut, produced three decades ago a series of science fiction classics "The Masterpieces of Science Fiction" bringing together 50 works from 40 authors, what can be understood as the classical heritage of the genre.

10 With both lists we just want to point out both groups and terms, without having any ambition to fix and close them.

11 The style of Clarke is a profound one, using metaphors, parables, hints and similar methods as well as approaches, stemming from history, culture, anthropology and myths.

helped to uncover the star of their origin and a young member of the Earth's elite managed to smuggle himself on a supply cargo ship with that direction, being 40 light years away. In the third part the change in the youngest generation started to show with their immense mental powers, shocking everybody. Obviously they were being prepared for something else than the then life on Earth. As the young man comes back from the star journey, the Earth is already in the state of the downfall. Overlords left the Earth, but the returner from the star trek didn't want to join them. He remained on Earth and was reporting how the destruction of his home planet was continuing.

As for the aim of this research paper one has to point out there are three ad hoc envoys in the novel: the Secretary General and Karellaen in the first part and the young star traveler in the rest of the text. Each one of them presents a different type of an envoy, depending on their position, role and situation. Therefore, diplomatic aspects and messages of their representation vary, but stem from clear diplomatic reservoir. When reading the text, its general and also more specific diplomatic aspects and elements are rather obvious. We analyze and discuss them in the next section of this paper.

Last but not least, judging by Clarke's own definition of a masterpiece, *Childhood's End* is one: "The acid test for a work of fiction, he [Clarke] has asserted, is in the rereading, preferably after a lapse of some years. If it's good, the second reading is as enjoyable as the first. If it's great, the second reading is more enjoyable. And if it's a masterpiece, it will improve on every rereading" (ibid., pp.viii-ix). Zebrowski claims the novel "has rung true for me [him] on every rereading" (ibid., p.viii).¹² However, we try to prove that the diplomatic analysis of the novel's greatness goes along primarily different criteria, not only a fan's rereading, no matter how favourable it might be.

Still, it should be added how Clarke sees his own occupation: "...the science fiction writer does a great service to the community. He encourages in his readers *flexibility* of mind, *readiness* to accept and even *welcome* change – in one word, *adaptability*" (Clarke, 2002.b, p.x)¹³. This most probably stems from the fact that "science fiction is something that *could* happen – but usually you wouldn't want it to.

12 It's rather easy to put the *Childhood's End* (or any other text) to such test. The author of this paper read it for the first time in the summer of the 1978. Its reading forty years later proved overall to be a thrilling exercise.

13 Italics by M.J.

Fantasy is something that *couldn't* happen – though often you only *wish* that it could” (ibid., p.ix). Clarke possesses power of style and an intriguing attractiveness of argument that is appealing to readers.

AD HOC ENVOYS IN THE CHILDHOOD'S END

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

In this paper we research diplomatic aspects and elements in the Clarke's groundbreaking novel *Childhood's End* that set the stage for a highly outcrafted first contact narrative in the science fiction genre. Soon after starting the reading, it becomes obvious – not only to an eye with diplomatic glasses – that the issue of ad hoc envoys is put in front. Hence ad hoc diplomacy is the form he uses as a starting point for his utilization of diplomacy, in particular as a profession and as a method. With his skillful approach, deep understanding of human nature and highly developed ethics, Clarke is elaborating his text as a master of pen and style.

As already annotated earlier, there are three ad hoc envoys as the de facto main protagonists of the essence of the story. They present three types of an ad hoc envoy: two of them, both in a position of a formal delegate, dominate the scene in the first part. They are the Secretary General of the United Nations and the Alien (Karellen by name). The third one that appears in the remaining two parts, with the emphasis on the final part of the story, is a young member of the Earth's elite who secretly and on his own initiative departs to the world of the Overlords. While the first two present basically what a formal diplomatic envoy performs, the third one appears as highly unconventional, but due to the circumstances formally accepted in this role. It should be added that the circumstances in which he is active as an envoy, are highly atypical and unconventional ones.

In the following pages we try to dig deeper in the way Clarke uses diplomatic apparatus, what he is trying to achieve with it and how does this fit in the chamber of diplomatic studies. His three envoys carry the dynamic of the story, but are at the same time also a means of illustrating its diplomatic effect. To be able to uncover it, we ask ourselves which authority all the three of them represent, on whose behalf they act, what is their status, rank and authority. We pay attention to the nature and substance as well as circumstances in which they

exercise dialogue, set and use the scenery, and the relations they step in the attitude they take. Additionally, there are a number of remarks, comments, hints and similar expressions of feelings and reflections of a given situation that point out the essence of diplomacy. This profession is a social phenomenon that has been exercised in unlimited number of occasions and each of them brings something new and useful to its collection. That very fact gives it a special charm and offers at the same time a variety of opportunities to appear and to be dwelled upon in fictional works.

THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE UNITED NATIONS

As the Earth's top diplomatic authority (and consequently via facti at least to a certain extent also top political authority¹⁴) is the Secretary General of the United Nations as the most appropriate person to be ad hoc diplomatic envoy. Here we do not have in mind situations in world politics when he¹⁵ intervenes with his statements or tries to be (or is tasked by the Security Council) a mediator in a world hot spot. To be an envoy in pure diplomatic sense it would mean that the Secretary General would represent the Earth as a sending authority to an extraterrestrial authority as the receiving one. Such a situation hasn't occurred during the period of the recorded human history.

It is exactly this Clarke introduced with his pioneering novel. It is, though, not the first one that elaborates on the first contact, but it is the one that presents it with a clear diplomatic frame, substance and scenery. It must have happened in only one possible way: "The human race was no longer alone" (Clarke, 1995.a, p.9). That fact provided the circumstance for Stormgren, the Secretary General to envoy on behalf of the Earth.

Soon after Overlords arrived and started monitoring human race to follow their dominant view upon world affairs, based on utmost ethical principles, a regular dialogue between the Secretary General and Karellen, the representative of the Overlords started. It should be mentioned here that diplomatic dialogue takes places always in such form that the visiting envoy meets with and discuss topics with his receiving counterpart in the premises of the receiving authority, never

14 For more on various aspects of the role of the United Nation's Secretary General compare Chesterman, 2007. Annan (2007) points out also the political dimensions of the Secretary's work.

15 In the so far history of the United Nations there hasn't been a female Secretary General. Also this fact is a telling one of the history of zoon politicon. We use "he" in neutral form, unless otherwise specified.

the other way round. So the fact that the Secretary General was not only invited by Karellen to come to his premises in the starship above New York for discussions, but was also following that invitation, reflects the relation between the two sides clearly. As a matter of fact that hierarchy of authorities was realistic. Directly speaking, this was presented to the Earth's envoy as a fact, but wrapped up in the diplomatic language, which he understood all too well.

The ritual of coming to Karellen was always the same: "There was the usual circle of sight-seers, cameras at the ready, as Stormgren's car drove on to the landing field. [...] Karellen never kept him waiting for long. [...] ... as the tiny ship came to rest fifty meters away, floating delicately a few centimeters above the ground ..." (ibid., p.16). Few minutes later the Secretary General found himself inside "the silver ship glittering against the zenith" (ibid., p.22) fifty kilometers above the ground, in a specially arranged room for meetings that was, apart from one chair and desk, empty, and with a huge screen that remained dark throughout the whole time. On the other side, most probably, it was Karellen and the discussion went on by usual procedure.

While receiving the leader of Freedom League, a world's movement of opponents of the Overlords, prior to one of such meetings with the cosmic envoy, the Secretary¹⁶ himself described his job as the Earth's ad hoc diplomatic representative and the relation to Karellen: "In three days I will be meeting the Supervisor again. I will explain your objections to him, since it is my duty to represent the views of the world" (ibid., p.13).

The way Clarke presented the very meeting is a master example of diplomatic intercourse between the two envoys. Karellen was the authority and his guest knew this well, hence followed the rule. But within this frame a variety of nuances were on the way that show the span of their intercourse, relation and mastering of diplomatic procedures and manners from both of them. Therefore that part of the novel could easily serve as an ad hoc manual for diplomatic practice.

Presenting the case of the Freedom League that primarily was expressing immense disbelief in good mission of the Overlords and

¹⁶ We refer to the Secretary General of the United Nations in this text with his full official title as just used here and with his shorter form as Secretary General or only as Secretary. But Karellen usually calls him by his name Rikki. This shows how between negotiating envoys also personal relations establish, that could help to reach better and more satisfying results for both sides. Envoys, although being on different sides, are bound to work together.

demanding that Karellen shall show himself to the people, if really having nothing to hide,¹⁷ the Secretary asked his host:

“What are we going to do about him” (ibid., p.17)? The question shows that Karellen and him were discussing issues of mutual interest and also making decision together in some cases (“we” – sic). Later on, Karellen just pretended not to hear his guest’s comment: “Karellen evaded the point in the annoying way he sometimes had” (ibid.). There was nothing that the Secretary could do about. It was a typical part of the discussion/negotiation diplomatic frame that one simply has to accept, or at least tolerate. But still, nobody is almighty in such process: “Karellen’s sight was technically perfect, yet somehow lacked conviction” (ibid.). Also the Secretary is proficient in the profession, how could he not be: “The question was so rhetorical that Stormgren did not bother to answer it” (ibid., p.18).

But still, he added what is another illustration of understanding diplomatic skillfulness of Clarke: “I wonder if you really appreciate,” he continued earnestly, “how difficult this state of affairs make my job” (ibid.). From what followed we can see that also Karellen was only an envoy: “It doesn’t exactly help mine,” replied Karellen with some spirit. “I wish people would stop thinking of me as a dictator, and remember I’m only a civil servant trying to administer a colonial policy in which shaping I had no hand” (ibid.). This quotation shows that both envoys have an authority to report to and be responsible for, which makes them equal in spite of immense difference in knowledge, power and wisdom. Also Karellen found himself in the position to agree with his guest here and there: “Of all the problems that faced us when we came to Earth, this [human curiosity] was the most difficult,” admitted Karellen” (ibid.). And added later on: “However, I will try to get a statement from my-superiors-which may satisfy you and perhaps placate the Freedom League” (ibid., p.19). This is a clear recognition of his envoy status on behalf of the unknown authorities. And as we can see this was the informal part of their regular meetings: “Now, please, can we return to the agenda and start recording again”(ibid.)?¹⁸

One could notice three types of replies Karellen was giving to the Secretary: agreeing with him, keeping silent, meaning without a reply,

17 Using an innocent remark of Van Ryberg, Clarke makes a skillful hint about the outlook of Karellen (ibid., p.21), which is uncovered at the beginning of Part Two (ibid., p.65).

18 Most probably Stormgren didn’t bother if his host recorded also the informal part of the meeting. If he really did, since sometimes he did not (“We won’t record this, by the way.” – ibid., p.50).

and leaving the initiative to the guest. Although it was clear enough (and accepted by the guest as well) that he was the driver of the dialogue, its mode and final point. The two of them were also in written communication as we learn later on, when the Secretary General was kidnapped and his Assistant Secretary General Peter Van Ryberg, being active Secretary General, contacted Karellen for advice: "It [the communication machine] was, he knew, very seldom used, since nearly all business between Karellen and Stormgren was dealt with at their weekly meetings" (ibid., p.34). The envoy's reply was swift, but nothing more: "NO INFORMATION. LEAVE MATTERS ENTIRELY TO YOUR DISCRETION. K." (ibid.). Even though this is not a diplomatic cable between the mission and its sending authority, by style, essence and syntax it could have perfectly been one. As a communication expert with military experience Clarke must have read much of such reporting.

Envoys have to be curious and have full trust in the other side, if possible. We learn from the novel that this was the case both with the Secretary and Karellen. Though, also the Secretary wanted to know how his counterpart – and his race – looks like. His kidnapping (ibid., p.44) and the choice of the Overlords to show themselves to the people only in fifty years (ibid., p.50) made him decide to try on his own to demystify Karellen's secret. Additionally, he was driven by the fact of his retirement: "... four months from now another man would be Secretary-General" (ibid., p.24). With a help of his friend physicist a special device was constructed, hidden in his suitcase and he managed to uncover the mystery. Diplomacy and untruth (i.e. lie) are two intriguing issues with a wide range of relations – Stormgren used one of its aspects and denied both to his friend and to the journalist who made an interview with him thirty years after the retirement (ibid., p.59) that he did not achieve in finding out anything. As a matter of fact, he did (Clarke, 2002.a, p.224).

To wrap up, the world's top diplomatic and also political authority, the United Nations Secretary General, received the envoy of the Overlords, Karellen, on behalf of the Earth. But at the same time he was also functioning as the envoy by himself. He drew this authority from one point of view from his position and from another one figuring as the executive of the United Nations Organizations (being his authority). Though the relation between the two of them was not on equal footing (The Overlords made their dominance "by the presence of illimitable

power” – Clarke, 1995.b, p.38), diplomatic aspects and substance of that circumstance are more than clear and offer much fruit to dwell upon.

KARELLEN OF THE OVERLORDS

From our previous discussion on the Secretary General we have learned also much about Karellen, the envoy of the Overlords. Therefore, we try to add some particular aspects of him in this part of our elaboration.

Judging from the novel's style, approach and narrative, we cannot learn much about Karellen directly from him, his appearance and behaviour, since he remains to be pretty much distant and behind the scene as a real diplomat. For this reason, we primarily use the Stormgren's observations on Karellen and deduct from them. Deduction is one of the approaches that are often used in diplomacy, since it is not easy – as well as fully reliable – to depend on the reactions from the environment, in which diplomats perform. At the end of the day, diplomats must make decisions by themselves, judging from observation, analysis and their own understanding of issues.

Karellen is the most typical ad hoc diplomatic envoy of all of three of them. He has his own job from which he was recruited – and from the text it is obvious that it is not for the first time as far as the Earth is concerned (*ibid.*, p.60) – and which is he longing to be occupied with again as soon as possible. This is typical for ad hoc diplomatic envoys – they have their own occupation, be it diplomatic or something else (preferably the latter). It's the job from which he was engaged for the ad hoc mission; to put it by his words: "In the first place, the sooner I finish my work here, the sooner I can get back to where I belong, a good many light-years from here" (*ibid.*, p.20). Also the Secretary had this impression: "Well, he often refers to his position here as something temporary, hindering him from getting on with his real work, which I think is some form of mathematics" (*ibid.*). This would not mean that he does not like his diplomatic mission, but anyway, it is not his life time engagement, though appreciated. However, his mission on Earth exceeds that of merely being the envoy: "I'm just – Supervisor" (*ibid.*)¹⁹. Although in his case, supervisor's job fits in the description of the envoy, understood by the Overlords. Diplomacy as an activity,

¹⁹ As we learn from the novel, Karellen was able to listen to the conversations of the Secretary General from his starship fifty kilometers above the ground (comp. Clarke, 1995.a, p.17 and p.21).

among others, is a highly flexible phenomenon, always depending on a given historical and social situation.²⁰ This is the criteria for its concrete definition.

Additionally, the envoy of the Overlords, speaking and acting on their behalf, was as a matter of fact more than the mere diplomatic envoy, what we already learned. “And on the sixth day, Karellen, Supervisor for Earth, made himself known to the world in a broadcast that blanked every radio frequency” (ibid., pp. 13-14). So, the Supervisor. But this did not change his diplomatic mission as an ad hoc envoy, discussing his business with Rikki, as he calls the Secretary.

Next, we can notice a high level of not only accepting the real situation and relation between the two envoys, but primarily an outstanding level of their mutual understanding. From one point of view this stems, of course, from their shared awareness and recognition of the situation as such (envoys have to be realistic), but on another one, also from their reciprocated understanding and trust. One could judge that for an envoy, pursuing his duty, this is the most important aspect. Maybe also a rare one, but certainly a highly important one.

The Secretary noticed – or at least was hoping for – a supportive, emphatic approach in the way Karellen pursued their meetings. The Earth’s envoy was reporting to the one of the Overlords and was receiving instructions or hints from him. But those meetings, as it is the rule between envoys of different sides when they are at their job, remained closed and no information from them was publicly available: “What took place between Karellen and Stormgren was never publicly revealed, and sometimes Stormgren himself wondered why the Supervisor found these interviews necessary” (ibid., p.22). There were two explanations for this: “Perhaps he [Karellen] felt the need of direct contact with one human being at least; perhaps he realized that Stormgren needed this form of personal support. If this was the explanation, the Secretary-General appreciated it” (ibid.). In each serious diplomatic discussion, not to speak about negotiation process, empathy is highly important and contributes to the end result. Karellen obviously knew this business well.

One could find at least three illustrations of Karellen’s trust in the Earth’s envoy. Rikki, when discussing with his physicist friend,

²⁰ Compare Benko, 1998 and Jazbec, 2013.

declared abruptly: "I'll take that risk. Besides, we do understand each other rather well" (*ibid.*, p.46). Next time, Karellen took the same level of expressive attitude towards Stormgren: "I can't go into details, even with you, so you must accept my analysis on trust" (*ibid.*, p. 50). No reason not to believe that the Secretary would not accept it. Before finally deciding to check with the device, we see again the Secretary's recognition of the mutual relation: "Karellen always treated him with unmistakable affection, despite his occasional devastating frankness [...]" (*ibid.*, p.55). For the sake of persuasiveness one could add another example more, in Rikki's old age: "Karellen had trusted him, and Stormgren had not betrayed his faith" (*ibid.*, p. 59).²¹

And the very final confirmation of what personal relation and empathy means in diplomatic business and how it could span over settling pure official affairs: "Yes, Karellen had trusted him, had not wished him to go down into the long evening of his life haunted by a mystery he could never solve" (*ibid.*, p.59). Neither of their respected authorities were harmed by Karellen's gesture towards his envoy friend, while the latter got the appreciation that is most obvious and most rare in diplomatic state of affairs: not from his authorities, but from his counterpart. Additionally, envoys, when dealing with hot issues, should also, apart having sympathy for each other's destiny, since they have to bring evidence of some progress to their authorities, encourage each other in proceeding that way: "Stormgren [...] had recognized a note of understanding, perhaps - who could tell? - even of encouragement" (*ibid.*, p.51). All in all, Karellen "behaved like a diplomat of the old school: no one would ever hesitate to confide in him, and no one had ever regretted it subsequently" (*ibid.*, p.130).

Karellen was not an envoy as such but also head of the huge team of the Overlords, working behind him, something that we learn from the narrative: "Just before I moved here some Deputy Under-Overlord, or Over-Underlord, got in touch with me [...]" (*ibid.*, p.83), Boyce is explaining to one of his guests at the party. Additionally, the reader also learns this hierarchy from the fact that Rashaverak was reporting to Karellen the Supervisor in details about the party (*ibid.*, p.98). Contrary to this, the huge apparatus the Secretary General had behind himself was occupied by world affairs and not with the issue of the Overlords, and was working quite independently from instructions from the top (*ibid.*, p.37). In his last speech to the people exactly one

21 A diplomat could claim that persuasiveness is the main issue that counts in these affairs (comp. Jazbec, 2013).

hundred years after the first one Karellaen among others confirmed that he had superior authority on the behalf of which he came to the Earth: “And so we came—we were *sent*” (ibid., p.179).

Before heading to the portrait of the third envoy of this novel, one could conclude that the first part – Earth and the Overlords – sets the diplomatic stage of the whole plot with a sovereign pen and mastery.

JAN THE ADVENTURER

We call the third envoy by a rather freely chosen nick name (the Adventurer), hoping that this could encompass the wide range of his characteristics, activities and choice. His evolution as an ad hoc diplomatic envoy is as unusual as it is remarkable.

He – Jan Rodricks – appeared at a party that his brother-in-law Rupert Boyce organized for his standard elite circle (ibid., p.86). Clarke includes a highly reliable description of a reception, as if it would be a diplomatic one, in the second part of the novel, with Rashaverak, one of the Overlords, as the guest of honour (ibid., p.78).²² What a party that was: “Without bothering to turn his head, George could see a famous film producer, a minor poet, a mathematician, two actors, an atomic power engineer, a game warden, the editor of a weekly news magazine, a statistician from the World Bank, a violin virtuoso, a professor of archeology, and an astrophysicist” (ibid., p.82). Diplomats (and other representatives of the sending authority) are always part of such events, with an aim of establishing contacts to be able to follow their own agenda.

Jan, a young promising PhD student of engineering physics and astronomy, was well aware of the fact that no “Utopia can ever give satisfaction to everyone” (ibid., p.87). Hence it hit him directly when the Overlords, along with abolishing war and hunger and disease, “had also abolished adventure” (ibid., p.89). By pure chance he managed to get the information about the star of the Overlord’s sun (the constellation of Carina – ibid., p.119, three hundred million million kilometers away – ibid., p.128) towards the end of the party (ibid., p.97). In the next step he learned about the cargo supply ships delivery system (ibid., p.111) and he crafted out the plan how to reach

²² Here Clarke uses a reference also to parties at the White House and Buckingham Palace, hinting that diplomacy is a part of his narrative (ibid., p.81).

the world of the Overlords (ibid., p.117)²³. Not exactly being aware of that, he became an envoy, but he was counting on their attitude: “*Of course, what happens then is up to them*” (ibid., p.122)²⁴. A diplomatic envoy, since he was on the way to the extraterrestrial world and its authority as well. That authority received him de facto as the Earth’s representative, what he basically was, although nobody authorized him. But practice makes formalities as well.

When the Adventurer arrived to the Overlords’ planet, he was a de facto envoy, but since he was primarily an Alien he had to be checked and researched by their scientists so that it was at all possible to establish communication, including the language. Vindarten, his host, was fast in learning English and Jan “perfectly willing to co-operate” (ibid., p.189). His next lesson was due to the physical difference between the two species: “In a hundred ways, Jan began to realize that the psychology of a race with wings must be fundamentally different from that of earthbound creatures” (ibid., p.190). Each envoy has to absorb lessons about the difference between the two sides, regardless of what kind and span they might be.

He was shown the city (one of several thousands of them which all served their own purpose) like a sightseeing tour (including visiting the exhibition for Earth in the Museum and having a long discussion with the Curator for Earth – ibid., p.192) since this was the easiest way to basically comprehend the alien world as well as its structure and functioning. When looking at the far distant and enormous moving mountains he learned the lesson of Marco Polo: “Then he forced himself to remember that all his preconceived ideas were worthless here: he must not let his mind reject any message his senses brought into the hidden chamber of the brain. He must not try to understand—only to observe. Understanding would come later, or not at all” (ibid., p.195). That’s diplomacy: to observe and report.

But Jan practically did not meet anybody apart from Vindarten, who was his permanent companion, explaining what he could and what Jan could comprehend as well, leaving a vast number of topics out of this frame. There were many things beyond his comprehension: “The

23 There is no need to say that his endeavour was discovered by the Overlords (ibid., pp.130-131). We can compare this Jan’s operation with the one of the Secretary when trying to uncover Karella’s outlook.

24 The following sentence from Jan’s farewell letter to his sister Maia shows the span and the essence of Clarke’s science fiction notion: “*I shall be on my way to the home of the Overlords. I shall be the first man ever to leave the Solar System*” (ibid., p.119).

absence of a single familiar reference point can be utterly unnerving even to the coolest and clearest minds” (ibid., p.190). Basically, this is one of the primary challenges of practically every envoy.²⁵ Jan was a kind of envoy, but primarily as an observer. And it could easily be the case that “his mind had nearly reached the end of its resources” (ibid., p.197) after that enormous flooding of new, strange and absolutely out of any point of reference impulses. While on the way back, he was four months older, but would return to the Earth eighty years later by its standards as well the Overlords, since the “relativity time-dilation effect worked both way” (ibid., p.196). He was not any more the blind passenger but he was sitting together with pilots, longing to get back: “He had seen so much, travelled so far, and now was weary for its own familiar world” (ibid., p.186). And was – in spite of new generations that grow up in between – firm about one thing: “But of one thing he was certain—men would want to hear his story, and to know what he had glimpsed of the civilization of the Overlords” (ibid., p.187). He couldn’t have been more mistaken.

Stepping out of the ship, the Supervisor was there: “I have been waiting for you”, said Karellen” (ibid., p.198). Almost as if he was speaking on behalf of the Earth’s authorities. But there were none of the authorities, since in the meantime when Jan was gone the final transformation of human race to collective galactic Overmind was under the way. He came back just on time to witness it. Basically and with some chill he understood its necessity: “Jan had glimpsed the universe in all its awful immensity, and knew now that it was no place for man” (ibid., p.201). He was informed by Rashaverak that the end of the Earth is nearing and that upon their departure the Overlords “shall leave instruments, of course, so that we can learn what happens” (ibid., p.207). He was ready as well: “I shall stay,” said Jan abruptly. “I have seen enough of the universe. There’s only one thing that I’m curious about now—and that’s the fate of my planet” (ibid.). As a matter of fact that decision did not surprise his visitor, on the contrary: “We were hoping,” began Rashaverak slowly, “that you would wish to stay. There is something that you can do for us...” (ibid., p.208).

The Last Man (ibid., p.204) was sitting in the huge control cabin that the Overlords left behind in their final Earth’s base, reporting what he

25 When the author of this paper started his diplomatic career, the Singapore Ambassador Tan Keng Jin, the former Chief of Protocol, gave him a hint: “We [diplomats] adapt solution to the problem” (Jazbec, 2005/6, p.92). A decade and half later I advanced this advice to “We adapt approach to the issue.”

was seeing when the destruction took pace. It went briefly through his mind: "What could he add, wondered Jan, to the information they were already hurling into space?" (ibid., p.209), a question that is familiar to each envoy reporting from the spot. He could never be sure who read his reporting and to what extend it is useful for. Instructions are the necessity, but they tend to lack clarity: "Tell us what you see," Rashaverak had said" (ibid., p.210). But for this very unclarity diplomats have much of maneuver space for their concrete actions.

The Adventurer's experience and his evolution of an envoy are informative and useful to understand such diplomatic position. He headed on a star journey by his human curiosity, driven also by a dose of rebellion against the happy, golden, but sterile welfare of unprecedented dimensions brought by the Overlords. Being himself alone in the world of the Overlords he was accepted as a de facto envoy – also being the first and the only one from the Earth coming there, the only Homo Sapiens there. Never will there be another one of his species there. He was shown the place, got all the possible information, observed and remembered – to report when coming back home. On the return, he found the Earth in the process of implosion, the last generation disappearing and the transformation going on. However, there was somebody interested in his reporting from the spot. But not as he did primarily expect: the Overlords were keen on him reporting from the unique spot. Not exactly a diplomatic one, but in a certain way yes. Diplomacy is bound to circumstances and with this also its approach and methods, like discussion, observation and negotiation.²⁶

SOME COMPARATIVE REMARKS

Clarke's science fiction immense outreach in his first big novel is multidimensional. *Childhood's End* set the stage to present, elaborate and contemplate primarily on the issue of the envoy and ad hoc diplomacy, judging from the point of view of our paper. He was the first one in the genre to do this with skill, substance and devotion, this in particular since his novel rests on the first contact topic. And in order for diplomacy to be able to find its theatre, the first contact should preferably be developed by peaceful means. Next, his scenario is based on the limitless power of intellect and technology as well as imagination and curiosity. With these he provides a unique combination of circumstances for the ad hoc diplomacy to come to its full expression.

26 Compare Jazbec, 2013.b.

The three envoys he is presenting differ in their mission, status and background. Karellen the Overlord is the most typical. But not only this: “[T]he alien Karellen, [is] one of the greatest and most convincing alien characters in all science fiction” (Zebrowski, 1995, p.vii). The Secretary General of the United Nations is not that much untypical as he is rather unconventional – for the first time he has a representative of the extraterrestrial authority to receive and to discuss with. Additionally, this unconventional dimension of his mission is also due to the fact that he, although being *de facto* the host of the Alien’s representative, is not receiving the envoy of the Overlords in his premises, but the other way around. This is fully unconventional and shows the relations not that much between the two envoys but primarily between their respected authorities. And Jan the Adventurer is the most atypical envoy in this novel, primarily driven by his own impulse, curiosity and rebellion against sterile veil that was laying down on the Earth’s population, stemming from the goods of the Overlords’ intervention. But through his journey that turned out *via facti* to get also dimensions of the *de facto* diplomatic *ad hoc* mission, he turned out to be a careful observer and deep in reporting. However, both these are in his case far from typical understanding of *ad hoc* diplomacy, in particular the latter.

With all these activities and through deeds of all the three envoys Clarke *via facti* (if not already by intention)²⁷ introduced not only the first contact topic in a highly successful and developed manner, but also the diplomacy of the first contact. Developing it in a peaceful setting and with admirable attitude towards technology, Clarke shows an example of how a civilized advanced race is conducting diplomatic business. This is the most obvious innovation of this groundbreaking science fiction novel. In a certain way he continued to use and develop this topic in his *Space Odyssey* and in the *Rama* cycles.

For the contemporary diplomatic practice and its place in the world affairs it is highly noteworthy that the Overlords chose the United Nations and its top diplomat as the most appropriate tool to deal with the Earth’s issues: “They had taken the United Nations Organization as they found it, had given instructions for installing the necessary radio equipment, and had issued their orders through the mouth of the Secretary-General” (Clarke, 1995.a, p.22). As Clarke skillfully remarks, “this was not in accordance with the Charter” (*ibid.*). But

27 The author of this paper would not bet that Clarke couldn’t have had in mind something like this.

it hardly played any role: "Karellen did not seem to worry" (*ibid.*). The envoy of the Overlords obviously had broad authorities, which were accepted by his Earth's counterpart. It is not that often that the diplomatic approach as it is reflected in a novel, the science fiction one in particular, aligns so much with the current importance and the need for the United Nations in global politics and diplomacy. The Supervisor could have easily chosen for his counterpart a leader of any world's most powerful states to pursue his business. But Clarke treats the issue of representation with a highly skillful and sensible approach, being fully aware of its multiple nuances and hidden messages. This clearly spans over time.

Through these multifunctional messaging Clarke also offered his concept of ethics that is in his case based on three parameters: hate of violence, rule of law and admirable role of technology in a service of Homo Sapiens: "Clarke's stories are largely about technical progress and its effect on humanity, the purest kind of science fiction" (Zebrowski, 1995, p.vi). But the respected author does not stop here: he projects this view upon life and its sense in space. It is space where Clarke finds the purpose of his science fiction *differentia specifica* and its home theatre. Still, a man's curiosity and imagination rest in the very heart of this notion. If it is not for the man, then Clarke's science fiction does not work. And since it is like this, there's much place for diplomacy, sometimes clearly for the indispensable one. And because of this, his texts are characterized by esthetic, ethic, and psychology, rich in style ("poetic clarity and a richness" – *ibid.*, p.xi), with admiration of technology and its user friendly possibilities. All these is sometimes partially hidden and eloquent, but also amusing. And not without a point. For the latter, this quotation from the discussion between Karellen and the Secretary, after he was rescued from the kidnappers, would do: "How has he managed, by the way? Are things in as big a mess as I expect?" "You'll be disappointed to find out how little your absence has mattered" (Clarke, 2002.a, p.216).

CONCLUSION

The diplomatic analysis of Clarke's first and definitely not last novel, the masterpiece *Childhood's End* that we have chosen for our research topic, offers much to contemplate upon. Its diplomatic dimension and characteristics prove to be broad, telling and indepth.

Our general conclusion would be that the author uses diplomacy as a frame, driver and a tool in his narrative. Consequently, he is not occupied with much dwelling on inside diplomatic work and practice, but points his attention mainly on diplomatic form and messaging. This means that the broad area of diplomacy as an activity, including as a method, is present as well elaborated and henceforth also confirmed in this masterpiece. With this we arrive to two significant innovations of the research text and the contribution to diplomatic studies.

Firstly, this novel offers a highly challenging inside view in the world of ad hoc diplomacy and with this on diplomats – ad hoc envoys. From this point of view Clarke's main innovation is de facto the case study of three types of envoys: as the mostly typical, the Secretary General of the United Nations, as the most typical Karellen of the Overlords (being as well the Earth's Supervisor) and as the fully atypical Jan the Adventurer.

Only when the arrival of the Alien representative occurred, the possibility materialized that enabled the Secretary General to perform the role of an ad hoc diplomatic envoy of the receiving authority towards the envoy of the extraterrestrial sending authority. The fact that Karellen was meeting and via facti receiving the Secretary in his premises (the solar star ship above the Earth) and not the other way around presents an exceptional precedence in diplomatic practice. And it also illustrates the relation between the two envoys. It could have hardly been the other way around. But the envoy of the Overlords could have chosen a representative of any of the world's most powerful states as his interlocutor, but he did not. The Adventurer is an even more innovative example of the envoy. He was the first Homo Sapiens who ever left the solar system and arrived to the planet of the Overlords, all of which he did on his own initiative, using the supply chain of the Overlords. He de facto represented the Earth, was received and shown much of the place that offered him numerous opportunities to observe and report. On his return to the Earth he found nobody of

his race to report to about his mission, even more, he was received by Karellen. When the Overlords left the Earth, Jan remained to be on the spot and was reporting about the Earth's downfall to them as his new authority. A twofold switch was on the way: the nature of the Adventurer as the envoy (from personal initiative to the formal one) and that of his authority (from the Earth's one to that of the Overlords). Overall, different circumstances provided the frame for their common role as the envoy, which each of them played differently, efficiently as well as usefully.

Secondly, Clarke makes the most logical step forward and broadens his narrative to introduce and dwell on diplomacy of the first contact. Throughout the novel the reader can follow the development of diplomatic relations between the top Earth authority and that of the Overlords, with an aim of settling mutual affairs. Including the hierarchy between the two envoys and their races, we can follow what diplomats do: meet, discuss, persuade, negotiate, encourage each other, see each other also as allies of their own authorities, develop friendly and trustful relation.

Last but not least, diplomatic aspects of the *Childhood's End* serve also as a means of achieving a narrative effect. But all in all, diplomacy is a substantial part of the whole story. It could not have been otherwise. Diplomatic studies and the exercise of the ad hoc diplomacy primarily, gained much with the researched novel.

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