

# Clifford D. Simak's Way Station: *In the Diplomatic Service of the Galaxy*

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## ABSTRACT

This paper focuses on diplomatic aspects of the pioneer classical science fiction novel *Way Station* by Clifford D. Simak. Its main diplomatic characteristic is providing consular services, in this case on behalf of the Diplomatic Service of the Galaxy. The combination of consular services and protocol activities offers support to travelers across the Galaxy, which is the main diplomatic theater in the case of the *Way Station*. This is a de facto consular posting situated on Earth, providing a short-cut route to other parts of this wing of the galaxy. The liaison officer, i.e., a consul, is the inhabitant of the Earth on a remote American mid-west location, far away from the public eye. His diplomatic immunity takes the form of immortality, though only when he is within his posting's premises. The disclosure of this fact coincides with a Galactic political turmoil with the fate of Earth in the focal point. Simak created a skillful narrative, full of diplomatic aspects and messages, to a final relief of the Galactic authorities, represented in the novel by a Diplomatic Supervisor.

**KEYWORDS:** diplomacy, science fiction, Clifford Simak, *Way Station*, protocol, liaison officer, consular services

## POVZETEK

Prispevek analizira diplomatske vidike enega pionirskih klasičnih romanov znanstvene fantastike *Tranzitna postaja* Clifforda D. Simaka. Osrednja diplomatska značilnost romana je zagotavljanje konzularnega servisa v imenu galaktične diplomatske službe. Kombinacija konzularnih storitev in protokolarnih aktivnosti nudi podporo potnikom preko galaksije, ki je osrednje diplomatsko prizorišče v *Tranzitni postaji*. Ta je dejansko konzulat na Zemlji, ki zagotavlja bližnjico v druge dele galaksije. Častnik za zvezo, dejansko konzul, je Zemljan v zakotnem kraju ameriškega srednjega zahoda, daleč od oči javnosti. Njegova diplomatska imuniteta se kaže v nesmrtnosti, ki jo ima, kadar se nahaja znotraj uradnega prostora. Njegovo razkritje sovпада z galaktično politično krizo, v ospredju katere se znajde usoda Zemlje. S spretno pripovedjo pripelje Simak svoje besedilo, polno diplomatskih vidikov in sporočil, do zaključka, v olajšanje galaktične avtoritete, zastopane v osebi diplomatskega nadzornika.

**KLJUČNE BESEDE:** diplomacija, znanstvena fantastika, Clifford Simak, *Way Station*, protokol, častnik za zvezo, konzularne storitve

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## INTRODUCTION

All in all, diplomacy is about three key actions: observe and report.<sup>2</sup> And as for the third one, it's about protecting interests of bodies of private and corporate law of the sending state in the receiving state.<sup>3</sup> The first sentence comprises diplomatic functions and diplomatic relations, while the second one those of consular affairs. Diplomatic business has been since mid-sixties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century codified in the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and the consular one, since the same period, additionally in the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. Diplomatic business includes both diplomatic and consular affairs, meaning that diplomats can also exercise consular relations<sup>4</sup> and consuls are by definition diplomats as well (and can, too, under certain conditions, exercise diplomatic functions, i.e., diplomatic acts<sup>5</sup>).

Diplomats do not always perform their work in diplomatic mission in teams of various size, structure and shape, but also all alone, as a one-person team. This means that diplomats do not always perform their duties in huge, noble and distinguished premises of ministries of foreign affairs of a receiving state or in their missions abroad as well as in even bigger halls, where international conferences take place, but also on outer postings, working alone. In such cases, diplomats usually exercise consular functions, mostly taking care of those passing through for whatever reason. Circumstances and theatres of such care-taking vary significantly, since social and other conditions that determine diplomatic work, differ heavily. As a matter of fact, in diplomacy almost unprecedentedly.

We dwell significantly on these latter and much fewer known aspects of diplomatic business later on when we focus our research interest on one of the groundbreaking science fiction novels, namely the *Way Station* by Clifford D. Simak. His main protagonist operates physically in his homeplace, taking care about traveling demands and needs of passersby, but his diplomatic environment encompasses far more than the whole galaxy. For his outside world nothing particular is going on,

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2 Comp. functions of a diplomatic mission, Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, Article 3. Comp. also Jazbec, 2021.

3 Comp. second function of a diplomatic mission, Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, Article 3, and consular functions, Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, Article 5. Comp. also Jazbec, 2021.

4 Comp. Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, Article 3, paragraph 2, and Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, Article, 3 and 70.

5 Comp. Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, Article 17 (Performance of diplomatic acts by consular officers).

practically unnoticed and most of the time even less important. This is, though, for the maintenance of a wider spread galactic transportation of species and goods of vital interest. This way station is part of an ever-growing transportation infrastructure that enables swift, easy and rational commuting across the oceans of stars.

This specific aspect of consular work, as a part of a broader diplomatic context, and its analysis is in our focus. Also, in this case our approach remains the same as in our previous researches: works like the one discussed here help us understand and comprehend diplomacy better and more thoughtfully. At the same time, they also enrich diplomatic studies and the study of diplomacy. Such works offer a more comprehensive view in complying with the literature works as well. It is also important to point out clearly that some science fiction authors include diplomacy in their narrative on purpose, as an inevitable part of the scenery. Some do this between the lines of their texts, but still rather easy recognizable, and some do not do this at all. They may perhaps encompass the essence of diplomatic business in a broader sense with possible details included, but diplomatic aspects and element have to be detected and uncovered. Their texts should yet be interpreted this way. Interpreted successfully, to find out basic aspects and elements of diplomacy from various points of view and of its understanding. Simak's *Way Station* could be listed as an exemplary piece of this sort.

We try to answer two research questions in this paper. Firstly, how does the distinguished author present and perceive bilateral diplomacy and the role of the diplomat on the posting, acting primarily as a liaison officer, the inhabitant of the Earth in the service of the Galactic Diplomacy, who offers all the possible and necessary support to travelers across the Galaxy, and secondly, what the contribution of this monumental work of Simak is 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, comment, comparison, synthesis, interpretation, generalization, and – since the author is a career diplomat – also the method of observing through one's own participation.<sup>6</sup> Hence also a lot of his own experiences are included in the texts, not necessarily always supported by quotations from related sources. This is, however, one of the ways to form theoretical backing, stemming from practical examples and expertise from

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

the spot, having in mind their contemplation. Last but not least, with our research endeavor we try to further add to the innovative study of diplomacy in literature, in particular in science fiction.

## **DIPLOMACY AND VARIETY OF ITS APPEARANCES**

Diplomacy could be – and as well is – a lone business of a one-person posting, implementing primarily one task only. This particular type of noble and attractive profession as it is often described (comp. Barder, 2014) presents the diplomatic mainstream, but it is nevertheless of immense importance. Practically, diplomatic business at its core could be executed in numerous ways and approaches, all with the very same goal; what makes no difference from the point of view of importance of a single diplomatic activity, act or deed. What counts is the fulfilment of the mission. Additionally, through the process of its completion, such one-goal missions usually are via facti complemented with certain and unexpected topics. Diplomacy is a dynamic process of a kaleidoscope nature, unpredicted and colorful.

Diplomats who on remote locations take care about comfort and protection of those passing through, work by definition far from public eyes – although diplomacy as an activity and profession used to be fully like this.

How does such occupation look like? We will present a few elements that we see important and will hence upon analyze the Simak's discussed novel.

Firstly, a liaison officer's job, if we do not speak about those engaged at multilateral events and bilateral visits, but of those on outer postings, is an individual task. Secondly, we could generally define it as a job of a consul. This is the closest to the definition. Thirdly, the closest, since such activity also demands strong knowledge from protocol, meaning an eye for consistency, formal and human touch within it, operational flexibility and sticking to the rules of profession. However, fourthly, it is advisable to have also expertise and knowledge from the broader field of diplomacy, conditionally speaking politically diplomacy. Fifthly, basic knowledge and skill from negotiation is advisable as well. Arranging issues for, by the rule, various categories of formal passers-by, who represent at least indirectly their authorities, demands also a certain dose of persuasion skills. Last but not least and sixth, the neces-

sity to stay off the scene is a must. Officials, who commute, by the rule do not neither need nor want publicity. If they do, they do it mostly at the final destination and not at whatever stopover transit location. And in any case, by their own choice.

Out of any listing and an indispensable part of any diplomat, in such outer posting in particular, are diplomat's professional and personal characteristics. We speak here about the qualities of an ideal diplomat: "Truth, accuracy, calm, patience, good temper, modesty and loyalty" (Nicolson, 1988, p.67), with "intelligence, knowledge, discernment, prudence, hospitality, charm, industry, courage and even tact (..) taken for granted" (ibid.).

This is more than understandable, if we have in mind the fact that the wellbeing of dignitaries, who commute across, is in hands of a consul, whom passersby do not know, mostly will never see again, but they – passersby – deserve and demand proper diplomatic treatment. And also a personal one, since at the end of a day, diplomats/consuls have to have a human touch. Representing states and performing on their behalf, without having a touch for people, is not much worth. This goes in particular for consuls, who deal with destiny of a single human. Or, as it is the case in the Way Station, with beings of different forms, origins and sensitivity that commute across the Galaxy. The consul must take care of them all the best he can.

This is even more important, since in the case of Way Station, we speak about a supra national diplomatic authority and service. It must be like this to be able to provide relevant service for such variety of top commuters. Four questions rise in such cases. Firstly, recruiting persons for diplomatic business, as we already described it, from entities that are not members of such supra national authority. Secondly, the process of selection for the diplomatic job. Thirdly, qualifications that selected persons have to fulfill. And fourthly, concrete needs that determine both the recruitment and skills of recruited persons.

With this, the latter one, we also point out what Benko (1998, p.40) says about the diplomacy, namely that it is always in a function of a concrete social and historical situation. One can easily imagine that, although diplomatic service of a Galaxy could be an extrapolation of diplomacy as we know it, social and historical circumstances in which it operates

are completely different.<sup>7</sup> Still, basic premises, methods and approach remain the same. This means that we stem from the understanding of diplomacy as Barston (2006), Berridge (2022), Feltham (1994), Nicolson (1988), Satow (1994) and a variety of others see it. Diplomacy is the management of relations between states (and other actors), negotiation, maintaining of an international dialogue, settling issues by peaceful means, but also skill, profession, organization and process. It is performed by career diplomats primarily, but also by other ad hoc envoys, representatives, influential persons, as a need may demand.

As such, this profession is an everlast, since a precondition for all those aspects of diplomatic activity is the physical presence of the representative of the sending authority at the receiving authority. Nothing can replace this form on the long run. And nothing out of that frame would be diplomacy. But this could be – and is – complemented by a variety of choice.

## WAY STATION

The discussed author – Clifford D. Simak – and his novel – *Way Station* – represent what we understand today as a classic of the science fiction genre. Along with Asimov, Bradbury, Clarke, Dick, Heinlein, Le Guin to name but few, Simak has ever been in the narrowest circle of those, who defined this area of fiction writing.

*Way Station* was first published in 1963, coming out after several of his other science fiction texts (like *Time and Again*, *City*, *Ring Around the Sun*, and *World of the Red Sun* as his first one, appearing already in 1931), becoming and remaining his masterpiece (Williamson, 1988). Along with winning three Hugo Awards and one Nebula, a decade and a half later, Simak was awarded the Grand Master Nebula for his lifetime achievements, by the Science Fiction Writers of America.<sup>8</sup>

*Way Station* and its author belong to that stream in the genre that situate their works in their familiar, not to say home place: “The setting is the rural Midwestern landscape he has loved all his life” (ibid.). Additionally, and even narrower, the author portraits much of himself in the main character: “Enoch is Simak himself, at least in his solid de-

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7 The fact that we discuss a fictional diplomatic service does not influence our analysis. This is the way of analysis of any fictional piece of literature.

8 <https://nebulas.sfwaw.org/grand-masters/clifford-d-simak/>

gency, his love of nature, and a deep humanism that holds him to his post while generations live and die outside the time-shielded house" (ibid.). Both of these are pretty much normal and understandable for any fiction writing. His style is so fluid, so natural and persuasive that it becomes very easy for practically any reader to identify with the surrounding, while trying to copy paste and adapt it to his home place.<sup>9</sup> Heinlein (quoted from Williamson, ibid.) defines this Simak's approach like that: "I think this result from similar backgrounds and similar tastes. You were born on your maternal grandfather's place - and so was I, three years later and three hundred miles southwest. We are country boys who will never get the mud off our boots".

Simak places his discussed narrative there, where we all belong to: to the native Earth and within it to the place, where one is born and spends his life. And also the plot's time is pretty much close to that of the author's current: "Sixty-odd years younger than Enoch (...)" (ibid.).<sup>10</sup> So he chose to define with *Way Station* that spans however across the Universe, with rather unconventional science fiction parameters: basically his place and his time. Alien beings that commute through *Way Station* and pass by from places all across the Universe, via facti come to the Earth and bring the scenery to it as well. Hence, it is not the main protagonist that would need to travel to different worlds to meet unknown beings from there. Also, the concrete time dimension of the *Way Station* is nothing particular for a science fiction classic: novels by definition perform their stories in past, close or remote. However, it is the main character's immortality what defines science fiction's approach and substance mostly, along with the galactic space and institutions that he is in a service of. Overall, *Way Station*, much contrary to the *Time and Again*, defines one of the approaches in science fiction with, to simplify, here and now.

The plot is simple as well. The main protagonist was chosen by the Galactic Authority to become a caretaking post (his old house as premises) for those dignitaries, who commute across the Universe. Enoch thus became part of the service, doing his job consistently, efficiently and without noise as well as any particular care for world (i.e., Earth's) politics. Nevertheless, his outstanding age, practically immortality, giv-

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9 This author still remembers, when reading *Way Station* for the first-time decades ago, that he immediately positioned the House in the cottage across the road, close to the creek, where his old neighbour was living. She was close to eighty, living alone the major part of her life, being very polite, nice, open, and with a certain, unexplained veil of mystique around her.

10 Simak was born in 1904 and died in 1988.

en by a special protection and for the purpose of the service, attracted interest of the intelligence service and things got complicated. However, the upheaval echoed across the Galaxy and was on the edge of provoking an unprecedented diplomatic scandal. On the other side, it coincided with quarrels and different interests between various alien species of the Galaxy in their power struggle. Enoch, for his personal qualities and natural skills as well as with the help of his neighbour Lucy, brought the consequent galactic affair to a successful end. Consequently, the Earth maintained a possibility to become part of the galactic community, and the protagonist was enabled to continue with his mission. Throughout the story, the author is demonstrating an outmost ability of providing synergy and complementarity of his perception of nature and dimensions of an immense cosmic vastness in various senses. Diplomacy is an essential tool of achieving this in a most persuasive way.

In a remote American Midwest (“...on a high bluff above the junctures of the Wisconsin and Mississippi rivers, near the town of Millville. That quiet rural landscape has always been home to half of his imagination.” – *ibid.*), far from public eyes and interest, the story of cosmic relations and rich with diplomatic aspects, from quite a routine to a galactic climax, is masterfully developed to a classical piece of the genre. It has been so particular for Simak’s style (“What brought in the new readers was a new kind of story – better written, more human, more sensitive /.../.” – *ibid.*) that brings together “rural America (...) and the great galactic society” (*ibid.*). This formula builds upon “a sense of mystic kinship of land and life, of time and space” (*ibid.*), resting on Simak’s “strong theme of universal understanding” (*ibid.*). Overall, it produced a style, typical for Simak, “usually described as gentle and pastoral”<sup>11</sup>, being a skillful and touchy combination of a master of pen.

We dare to understand this as Simak at its best as well as diplomacy within at its best (“*Way Station*, with its strong theme of universal understanding ...” – Williamson, 1988). One could find a confirmation for this in the fifth function of a diplomatic mission: “Promoting friendly relations between the sending State and the receiving State, developing their economic, cultural and scientific relations”.<sup>12</sup> Diplomats use each opportunity to develop friendly relations and this is their univer-

11 <https://nebula.sfga.org/grand-masters/clifford-d-simak/>

12 Comp. functions of a diplomatic mission, Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, Article 3. Comp. also Jazbec, 2021.

sal mission. This mission does not recognize any borders in either time or space.

## **THE PERCEPTION OF DIPLOMACY IN THE WAY STATION**

### **GENERAL OBSERVATIONS**

Though diplomatic dimensions of the science fiction novel *Way Station* are not so recognizable at a first glance, there are plenty of them. Looking at the novel through diplomatic glasses, the text presents a comprehensive piece of diplomatic edition. It is placed within a highly unusual setting, revealing it through the story of a man that was chosen by the galactic authority to be part of the official commuting service that spans across the universe. De facto he was recruited as a consul in the service of the Galaxy. This presents the main diplomatic frame of the novel. To introduce the scenery, we will have a look at how he was chosen and why, what the diplomatic premises of the way station looked like, and what his duty was.

The representative of the Galactic Administration appeared in the courtyard of Enoch Wallace on one hot summer afternoon: "The day was hot and sultry and there was not a breath of moving air" (Simak, 1988, p.24). Enoch was sitting on the door steps, resting, contemplating and observing the surrounding: "He did not see the traveler until he turned in at the gate" (ibid., p.25). But it appeared more than that: "There was something about this traveler that disturbed him" (ibid.). That "certain strangeness" (ibid.) cleared up soon, since "the stranger was not sweating" (ibid., p.26).

The meeting continued to be an embarrassing one:

"And you have a far way to go?"

"No," the stranger said, "I believe that I have gotten to the place where I am going" (ibid.). (...) "I have been looking for a man and I think that man is you" (ibid., p.27)

"But me," Enoch said, astonished. "Why should you look for me?"

"I was looking for a man of many different parts. One of the things about him was that he must have looked up at the stars and wondered what they were".

"Yes," said Enoch, "that is something I have done" (ibid.). For a moment, he seemed to be taken away by the topic, long forgotten.

"I've sometimes wondered," Enoch said, "if the stars are other suns,

might there not be other planets and other people, too" (ibid.). (...)

"You believe that?" asked the stranger.

Enoch said, "It was just an idle notion."

"Not so idle," said the stranger. "There are other planets and there are other people. I am one of them."

"But you ..." cried Enoch, then was stricken into silence.

"For the stranger's face had split and began to fall away and beneath it he caught the glimpse of another face that was not a human face" (ibid., pp. 27-28). The shock of the getting together was rounded up. He named the stranger Ulysses henceforth.

Enoch was not chosen by chance, as we learn from their discussion later on, at one of their next meetings:

"You'll do," the alien said. "You will do all right. I did not misjudge you and it makes me proud."

"Misjudge me?"

"You do not think that I just came walking in here cold? I know about you, Enoch. Almost as much, perhaps, as you know about yourself. Probably more" (ibid., p.52).

His memories were still alive as if it were only yesterday: "That was how it started, Enoch thought, almost a hundred years ago. The campfire fantasy had turned into fact and the Earth now was on galactic charts, a way station for many different peoples (...). There were no such things as strangers" (ibid., p.28). So, it meant "there was intelligence throughout the universe" (ibid., p.33).

According to the Earth time, the way station was established soon after the end of the American Civil War.<sup>13</sup> In the novel, though, we follow its story, appearing in the theatre, almost a century later.<sup>14</sup> Hence, the main promotor must have been the oldest person in the world: "Chronologically, he is one hundred and twenty-four years old" (ibid., p.2). His physical appearance, though, was much different:

"You say he looks like thirty."

"Not a day beyond it. Maybe even less than that" (ibid., p.3).

After his recruitment, they transformed his old farmhouse into the premises of the way station, along the galactic diplomatic and security

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<sup>13</sup> From 1864 to 1868.

<sup>14</sup> The exact Earth year is 1964; one year after the Way Station was published.

rules and practice. Though, from the outside and from the distance, the timeworn building remained as if it were the same. His antiquated home was turned to diplomatic premises, totally renewed and protected. Still, a careful observer would notice the difference: "Bathed in that light, the house was somehow unearthly, as if, indeed, it might be set apart as a very special thing" (*ibid.*, p.12). Additionally, from the outside, "[T]here was something covering this house which made it slick and smooth – so smooth that dust could not cling upon its surface nor could weather stain it" (*ibid.*, p.15). Further on, also "[T]he windows were black. (...) He could see nothing but the blackness, as if the light hit the window and was absorbed by it, sucked in and held by it" (*ibid.*).

With this, we are already getting acquainted with the galactic system of traveling across the universe, "travelling star to star" (*ibid.*, p.28).<sup>15</sup> Highly advanced, educated and knowledgeable, though among themselves extremely different civilizations have developed a system of way stations all across the galaxies that enables them to commute.<sup>16</sup> The network was slowly spreading to different parts of the universe. To be able to travel through that part of the galaxy, where our solar system is, the need appeared to establish one station also on the Earth: "Because," Ulysses said, "we are a traveling people. We need a travel station here. We want to turn this house into a station and you to keep the station" (*ibid.*, p.54). It was a natural part of a broader cosmic outreach: "They're expanding the network all the time," said Enoch. "They needed a station in this solar system to carry out their extension into this spiral arm" (*ibid.*, p.70).

Though Enoch being highly surprised, the explanation was simple: "We could not build a station, for then we'd have people asking who was building and what it might be for. So we are forced to use an existing structure and change it for our needs. But the inside only. We leave the outside at it is, in appearance, that is" (*ibid.*, p.55). The house, transformed into station, became thus part of huge logistical endeavor for travelling purposes: "From star to start," Ulysses said. "Quicker than the thought of it. Faster than a wink" (*ibid.*). Or with a comparison that fits in the time when they first met: "This is just another railroad and the Earth is just another town and this house will be the station for this new and different railroad. (...) For it will be no more than a resting

<sup>15</sup> For more on how the system worked, see Simak, 1988, pp.62-63.

<sup>16</sup> It is obvious what Simak is telling to the reader: education and knowledge is the way forward for Homo sapiens on its progress to the civilizations of the galaxy: "Out among the stars lay a massive body of knowledge (...)" (1988, p.61).

and a switching point. No one on the Earth can buy a ticket to travel on the railroad” (ibid.).<sup>17</sup> His career as a keeper started, employed by the Galaxy.

A team of anonymous architects and experts from the Galactic Service (“...the screwball architects, who had designed, and the slap-happy crew of workmen who had built the station.” – ibid., p.170) completely changed the house’s interior: “It was all gone and now one room remained. (...) Now the house was one great room. One side of it was the galactic station and the other side the living space for the keeper of the station” (ibid., p.31).<sup>18</sup> All in all, “the house was no more than a house, although wondrously preserved” (ibid., p.12), but it “was alien now” (ibid., p.29). At the end of the day, everything remained to be the same as it ever has been for the last century: “He lives in the same house. Not a thing’s been changed. And the house apparently has aged no more than the man” (ibid., p.10).

Being in the service of the Galaxy as a diplomat, caretaker meant that Enoch should be at disposal to his authorities regardless of the time dimension he used to experience and lived it. Hence, he was attributed what according to the Earth standards would be immortality: “... he did not age inside the station, that he only aged when he stepped out of it, that he aged an hour or so working in his garden, that he could age for fifteen minutes sitting on the steps to watch a lovely sunset” (ibid., p.47). Since beings from the universe using the system lived incomparable longer than it was by Earth standards, they need a station keeper that would age wise to be close to their merits. It would make no sense to recruit and educate a new one each 40-50 Earth years that must have been much shorter than the galactic ones. It would present too much of an unnecessary work for the Galactic Recruitment Service. Ulysses indicated this clearly at one of their early meetings: “... for the two of us shall work together for many of your years” (ibid., p.52). According to diplomatic standards, one could understand this new aspect of his personality as the diplomatic immunity.

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17 Railroad came to Millville, Enoch’s birthplace, when he was just a kid (ibid.). After almost a century in the galactic service, he must have been an outstanding, extraterrestrial expert in those things, no more in a need of such primary comparisons.

18 The description of the house and the comparison with the railroad evokes in this author his childhood memories: his uncle and the spouse of one of his aunts were keepers of the railroad. Their duty was to close the crossing of the railroad with the country road each time when a train was passing by (for compensation on this, they lived in the railroad cabin, using it both as a house and as the official place, without any renting costs). The system used to be manual (as a child, this author once did that procedure by himself, a thrilling experience) and later on electricity driven. It was abolished in early seventies of the previous century, when the automatic one was introduced.

As the time was passing by and Enoch being fully engaged in his new assignment, which he liked extraordinarily, he was getting more and more alone. Apart from daily contact with the postman Winslowe Grant and occasional contacts with his first neighbour Hank Fisher and his daughter Lucy, he wasn't neither seeing nor meeting anybody. That loneliness was obvious to him: "But there was one thing, the aliens could not provide - the human contact he'd maintained through Winslowe and the mail" (*ibid.*, p.47). Such feelings grew strong, when he was not outside: "Once shut inside the station, he'd be cut off completely from the world he knew, for the newspapers and the magazines were his only contact" (*ibid.*, pp.47-48). As the official keeper, he also did not need to bother about his living necessities, since what he needed it was all "part of the ration regularly provided him by Galactic Central" (*ibid.*, p.64).

He practically lived a diplomat's life as if he were on an outer posting, that according to his superiors in the Galactic Administration he was. With a practical difference - he was serving in his home. But that fact only increased the feeling of him being lonely and alien as well. He was bound to and torn between the Earth and the galaxy, asking himself whether he is himself still a human or not: "He still was human. Funny, he thought, that he should stay human, that in a century of association with these beings from the many stars he should have, through it all, remained a man of Earth" (*ibid.*, p.29). But still, he was breathing thin air: "A man, he told himself, must belong to something, must have loyalty and some identity. The galaxy was too big a place for any being to stand naked and alone" (*ibid.*, p.48). Not seldom, he felt "[A]s if he were a man who has walked away from his own humanity" (*ibid.*, pp.18-19). No wonder, since he "had a greater world than anyone outside this station had ever dreamed about. He did not need Earth" (*ibid.*, p.98). And - how could it have been otherwise?

From the early days of coming from the war, he maintained the habit of taking a regular walk, to keep him fit and well: "He needed sun and soil and wind to remain a man" (*ibid.*, p.99). However, with the course of time in the galactic diplomatic service, those walks showed another important aspect: "It was the walks, he thought, more than anything, perhaps, that had kept him human and a citizen of Earth" (*ibid.*, p.48).

It was not only this. Enoch also remained in his time with those long-forgotten habits, although he was following development of sci-

ence and the rest: “He’s an anachronism, something living from another age” (ibid., p.18).

### **KEEPING THE COMMUNICATION – INSTRUCTIONS AND THE JOURNAL**

Diplomats, when on posting, work per instructions. Generally speaking, those instructions are summed up in the five functions of a diplomatic mission, but on a concrete, daily level its instructions that guide the diplomat. Therefore, a communication system is established between the central diplomatic authority and its missions around the globe, galaxy, and universe, whatever the diplomatic environment consists of. Additionally, diplomats are persons of pen: they write reports (cables) and various papers throughout their career. And many of them keep journal for the official use or only personal reasons; for possible memoirs or just by habit.<sup>19</sup>

Instructions are basically the only thing that provides a feeling of being a part of a big system. They give a notion of identification with the diplomatic service and are not only a pure working guidance. When speaking of diplomatic relations and business, those instructions primarily refer to political aspects of relations, while in the case of consular affairs; they are very practical, full of logistic data and similar technicalities. Hence, they must be exact, clear and straight to the point. There shall not be the slightest sense of a possible misunderstanding in the interpretation by the receiver (or by various receivers, if it appears so).

When an instruction was coming in, he first, when being in the house, heard the typical sound: “The message machine whistled shrilly (...)” (ibid., p.19). Following this, “[T]he machine built up its hum and the message began to form on the plate, faint at first and then becoming darker until it stood out clearly” (ibid., p.20). Then Enoch was able to read:

“NO. 406301 TO STATION 18327. TRAVELLER AT  
16097.38. NATIVE THUBAN VI. NO BAGGAGE. NO.  
3 LIQUID TANK. SOLUTION 27. DEPART FOR STA-  
TION 12892 AT 16439.16. CONFIRM.” (ibid.).

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<sup>19</sup> Among the most known and best diplomatic diaries count “The Moscow Years: 1956-1958” and “The Moscow Years: 1969-1971”, authored by Veljko Mićunović, twice the Yugoslav ambassador to Moscow. In between he also served as the Ambassador to the United States 1962-1967. Comp. <https://www.nytimes.com/1982/08/03/obituaries/veljko-micunovic-66-is-dead-was-former-yugoslav-envoy.html>

His reply was immediate:

“NO. 406301 RECEIVED. CONFIRM MOMENTARILY.” (ibid.)

This is an example of a typical instruction, not only in this science fiction masterpiece.<sup>20</sup> We know who is sending whom and for what purpose. An average reader cannot decode numbers of the sending and the receiving authority or the time. However, it is also not necessary. Both of the authorities are well acquainted with them and this will do. The text by itself is short, dry, formal and exact. No phrases or similar stylistic additives are needed. And the reply – confirmation as a matter of fact – is, as we can see, even dryer, shorter and formal as well. One of the main reasons why such texts should be very rational and short, is, apart their undoubted equal understanding by all included, also the fact that both the sender and the recipient send and receive many of such texts continuously. Hence, with such stylistic approach they are at least to a certain extent less burdened with reading.<sup>21</sup> The instruction is then followed by preparations to receive the commuter, along his wishes and needs.<sup>22</sup> The respected author offers a few case examples of diplomatic instructing and reporting in his text.<sup>23</sup>

One can also claim this is an example of a typical, already a routine diplomatic, better to say consular instruction. It demands from the receiving post and its keeper to act accordingly and provide the service it is in a need of the passerby. Their numbers went high and the majority hardly appeared twice or more: “There were many of them who passed through only once, although there were a few who showed up every week or so – old, regular travelers who had become close friends” (ibid., pp.67-68). Ridiculous or not, he got to learn more individuals in the universe than on Earth: “He knew no one in London nor elsewhere in the world” (ibid., p.57).

To enable beings transiting through the station (immediately, with practically no stop over time, or with a short stop, or even – exceptionally – visiting him) two materializers were provided, the usual one and the official, emergency one. They were securely connected and positioned to the tank through which the commuter appeared, and

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20 Comp. Asimov (1988), Clarke (1995), Le Guin (1992) etc.

21 For more on the style and structure of diplomatic reporting, see Jazbec, 2009, pp.169-173.

22 We provide the presentation of this action later on.

23 Comp. Simak, 1988, p.85.

to the one through which he left (ibid., p.56.). As it was the case with the message machine, also the materializer gave a note upon the arrival: "Across the room the materializer beeped for attention and Enoch swung around. The Thuban had arrived. He was in the tank, a shadowy globular blob of substance (...)" (ibid., p.59). And the travel was continuing "with the creature itself going on and on until it reached its final destination to carry out the purpose of its journey" (ibid., p.63).

Anyway, in the case of Ulysses coming to meet Enoch, communication shared a personal touch. It is even friendly and warm. An example would tell the following:

"NO. 406,302 TO STATION 18327. WILL ARRIVE  
EARLY EVENING YOUR TIME. HAVE THE COFFEE  
HOT. ULYSSES." (ibid., p.49)

This casual and relaxed mode of communication was in spite the fact that Ulysses was "an inspector for this and several other stations" (ibid., p.56) and henceforth "could have used the official materializer at any time he wished without prior notice" (ibid.), what he never did. Enoch felt "a touch of pride" (ibid.) for this attitude and understood it as "a courtesy, which all the other stations on the great galactic network might not be accorded (...)" (ibid., pp.56-57). This, i.a., illustrates how in diplomatic business personal relations are important. On the spot, at the receiving authority, nothing can replace direct, face-to-face, personal contact between the two sides. And the efficiency of formal relations or of executing the instruction, depends also on the personal note. It is people that provide relation and the relation depends on people. Or on any other beings or creatures, not in any case necessarily human.

Consequently, his reply went in the same manner, professional and with the touch as well:

"NO. 406302 RECEIVED. COFFE ON THE FIRE.  
ENoch." (ibid.)

Three issues should be pointed out also for the galactic consular communication system.

Firstly, the system was based on a highly advanced technology beyond Enoch's understanding, also after his centennial long service. He established a practice to check everything prior to the Ulysses's arrival, to be on the safe side. However, he knew he could not do anything in case of a malfunction.

Secondly, along with the written exchange of messages, emergency calls were possible as well. They were bound directly to the Galactic Central, to a relevant point of contact in the Administration. Enoch used it, when one of the Hazers died in the station (we discuss it from the consular point of view in the next part of the text): "He put in a call for a connection direct with the Galaxy Central, then stood waiting, gripping the sides of the machine with both hands" (*ibid.*, p.92). He was tense and expecting instructions in this highly new, unusual and sensitive case. In a brief, exact and instructive discussion, he received all the information he needed to take care of the body.

Thirdly, keeping the journal of the daily work. From one point of view, such practice is rare in consular and diplomatic business. It used to be well dispersed and provided many outstanding reports, studies and memoirs as well. From another one, nowadays, when diplomats are in a possession of advanced and diverse communication and related technology, daily journal could rather easily be constructed from various reports, cables, face book, instagram and e-mail messages.

In Enoch's case, the reader can follow his journal practically from the very beginning and gets acquainted with the way he works, contemplates and gets more and more into the heart of galactic diplomatic business. Keeping the journal appeared as an inherited part of his job: "It had been a rule he'd set himself from the first day that the station had begun its operation - that he never skipped the journal" (*ibid.*, p.148). He simply felt a need that "he must record in detail exactly what had happened (...)" (*ibid.*, pp.147-148).

However, keeping the journal demanded a lot of notebooks and ink: "... he does a lot of writing. He buys these big, bound record books. In lots of a dozen at the time. He buys ink by the pint" (*ibid.*, p.7). That fact moreover helped the CIA agent to reveal the unusual business that Enoch was occupied with.

## FROM THE STATION KEEPER TO A CONSUL AND HENCEFORTH TO A DIPLOMAT

Whatever the author's ambition and plan with this novel were, Simak skillfully presented and developed transition of his main protagonist from a simple station keeper to a learning by doing consul and henceforth to an experienced and in a galactic crisis proven as well as successful diplomat.

Enoch Wallace was from the beginning on engaged as a station keeper, nothing more, what he was well aware of by himself: "There had been certain instances when, chatting with the travelers, they had told their purpose, but with the most of them he never learned the purpose – nor had he any right to learn it. For he was the keeper only" (ibid., p.63). Certainly, at the beginning of his employment, one could speculate, Enoch could hardly wish for something more. Everything was so unimaginably new for him. Though, already as a simple keeper, to put it that way, he was before now performing a consular job – taking care of passersby, their wishes and needs.<sup>24</sup> In particular, when there was a special need or a special official purpose.

Generally speaking, his task was the protection of interests or, practically speaking, consular protection, as presented in the already mentioned second function of a diplomatic mission: "Protecting in the receiving State the interests of the sending State and of its nationals, within the limits permitted by international law."<sup>25</sup> Since the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations in its Article 5 defines consular functions more detailed, listing and presenting 13 of them, he was not entrusted all of them. That was also not necessary, since he was primarily engaged as a station keeper.

In any case, he was not just a simple keeper, despite not being aware of this, since he did not know that profession and the way it functions. As a matter of fact, he was *de facto* a consul from the very beginning. And as it always is in the diplomatic profession, urgency polishes and improves the engaged one. In Enoch's case, it was the death of the Hazer, who afforded himself a short stop over at the Earth's way station: "There had been many of them since that day in 1915 and there was one he remembered in particular – the old, wise one, the philosopher,

<sup>24</sup> As we already indicated, referring to the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, it is all about taking care of interests of bodies of private and corporate law of the sending state in the receiving state or at their transiting through third states.

<sup>25</sup> Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, Article 3.

who had died on the floor beside the sofa" (ibid., p.91).

That was the first time that Enoch the keeper faced such an awkward and exceptional situation. Still, he reacted professionally; one could speculate that also due to his tough wartime experience.<sup>26</sup> During the direct emergency phone call with the Galactic Central, which he took immediately, he explained the situation, received concrete instructions, clarified the procedure, although much remained opened and left to his immediate improvisation, as he only best knew: "PROCEED AS IF THE VEGAN WERE ONE YOUR OWN" (ibid., p.94).<sup>27</sup>

Consequently, Enoch cleaned the room, took care of the luggage,<sup>28</sup> prepared the grave, read a quote from the Bible and buried the late one in his courtyard, close to his long-gone parents. Even more, on a simple tombstone he carved a modest epitaph dedication in their language, to show the last sympathy: "Per instruction, he followed the Vegan habit: "The Vegan must remain upon the planet of its death, its body to be disposed of according to the local customs obtaining on that planet" (ibid., p.93). The newborn consul did it all well and with human touch. The latter is not exactly necessary in a consular business and would hardly be part of any rules, but shows instead dignity, respect and raises impressions high on the other side. It is personality that provides the efficiency of any business, including the diplomatic one. The reader can see the confirmation of it during the later course of the narrative, where diplomatic aspects come in the forefront.

Taking care of the dead ones is one of the most difficult parts of a consular work.<sup>29</sup> The reader should therefore not be surprised by the Aesopian description of the Central's reaction to the news: "There was no hesitation and there were no questions from the other end. Just the simple directions (as if this was something that happened all the time) of how the situation should be handled" (ibid., pp.92-93). And the reader should as well not be surprised by the following: yes, each career consul would support that impression. Such situations do

26 "He was with the Iron Brigade, which was virtually wiped out at Gettysburg in 1863. But Wallace somehow managed to get transferred to another fighting outfit and fought down across Virginia under Grant" (Simak, 1988, p.3).

27 This whole case is presented on pages 91-97 of the novel. For a career consul there is an interesting detail that Enoch was not in a need of providing the death certificate, since Vegans used telepathic capabilities also for such purposes (what would make work of consuls much easier from this point of view, had it been true, of course).

28 "His luggage? There is a trunk"? "Keep it. It is yours. It is a token for the services you perform for the honored dead. That also is the law" (ibid., pp.93-94).

29 This author started his diplomatic career as a consul. His first major task in that capacity was to take care of four of his nationals that died in a heavy snowstorm on the skiing resort. He felt exactly as Enoch did: "There was a coldness and a loneliness in the station (...)" (ibid., p.92).

happen frequently and hence they present a routine process for the consul. Routine in a sense that each step in the procedure should be well known, trained and performed without any hesitation, almost automatically. Each such case (and many other in a consul's life) is highly touchy, since they deal with a person's destiny. And exactly for this reason, the consul must somehow be protected so that the constant repetition of such feelings does not get into him too deep. When going home after the daily shift is finished, the consul must not remain to live among such cases, but in the vicinity of his closest ones. The routine of the procedure is the best guarantee for this and a fence from that pressure.

Speaking of the Enoch's diplomatic metamorphosis, one should point out two aspects.

Firstly, since the adoption of both Vienna Conventions on diplomatic and on consular relations<sup>30</sup>, diplomatic agents (i.e., diplomats) and consular officers (i.e., consuls) are both formally and by the rule diplomats. Their status is to a certain extent different (like the scope of diplomatic and of consular immunity) and their work as well (diplomats deal with issues that are in their final essence political, and consuls pursue protection of interests), but these differences do not influence the already made general statement. According to this, Enoch was diplomat in the service of the galactic diplomacy from the very first day on. For the purpose of this paper and for the diplomatic analysis of the discussed novel, we do not see a need to discuss terminological and status issues of his position in details, according to both the conventions and definitions of terms they define and use.

Hence and secondly, Enoch's transition from primarily consul to more of a diplomat has been steady and in a manner taken for granted. It basically followed the stream of events and was the way Enoch reacted to them, in particular those which were out of his main and primary task of the station keeper. Here, his personal characteristics (reliability, responsibility, human touch, devotion to the job and identification with it) and skills (discipline, determination, taking things as they were, discussing, but not questioning the basic aspects of a task) helped him to perform what he needed to do and enabled him to be up to a challenge. At the same time, it was the way he professionally matured, coming deeper in the understanding of what his occupation was as well as

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30 The diplomatic convention was done in 1961 and ratified in 1964 and the consular one in 1963 and in 1967.

transiting from a kind of possible local employee at the very beginning to a diplomat at the end.<sup>31</sup>

It brought him self-assurance and also credit of the employer. The latter was obvious from the offer of Ulysses, when discussing Enoch's professional and personal future in an optional case the way station on Earth would possibly be closed: "You can stay here and live out an ordinary life on Earth or you can be assigned to another station. Galactic Central hopes that you would select to continue on with us" (*ibid.*, p.119). This clear statement and further employment offer confirmed how Enoch made his name in the galactic consular service and how much his work was appreciated. He for sure must have stand out for both his professional proficiency as well as for his personal qualifications. Ulysses the inspector brought him this message on behalf of the galactic authorities, what confirms that in the human resources department they were discussing his case. But one can also be sure, judging from the novel and its narrative that must have been for sure also Ulysses's strong personal belief. Additionally, this illustrates how, in spite of all the spectacular public impressions about diplomatic work, this profession is demanding, while diplomats need broad education and strong personal qualifications.

### **THE GALACTIC UPHEAVAL AND THE DIPLOMATIC ENGAGEMENT**

With a method of induction, as if one would be reading a scientific essay, Simak brings the reader to the galactic crisis, which, for Enoch, turned out to be an opportunity. We briefly present the plot with an aim to make its diplomatic analysis henceforth more approachable.

Enoch's age, after serving the Galaxy authorities for a century, awakened the attention of CIA for him. To support his presumption, the agent Claude Lewis secretly uncovered the remnants of the Vegan and took them to Washington. In parallel, a Cold War alike confrontation leading to a probable war, was gaining heavily on momentum, in spite of diplomats doing their best in New York to prevent it. When the case of the missing alien body was discovered, the Vegans, despite having some understanding for Enoch, could not keep that unprecedented scandal unnoticed. Some of the civilizations in the Galaxy were not

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31 We are not exactly aware of this status transition, but according to a variety of terms and their definitions in both conventions, one could possibly discuss them in detail. However, for this diplomatic interpretation of the novel, these aspects do not play any significant role.

in favor of a further expansion of the commuting network across the universe that the Vegans and others were pursuing. Hence, those entities used this affair as an additional pretext for their case. The chances were high that the way station on Earth would be closed, with all the humiliation for the Earth's civilization and its lost cosmic future. At the peak of the crisis, the so-called Talisman, the galactic Holy Grail to use a popular comparison, was stolen. It appeared that the galactic thief tried to hide himself and the trophy on Earth, arriving through its way station. However, the thief was caught by Enoch and the Talisman saved by Lucy, his young deaf-mute neighbor with meta-human capabilities. This breakeven part revealed Enoch as a diplomat and Lucy as the talisman saver, but also as its future keeper, the person for whom the Galaxy was desperately in a search for. From the stream of events on a remote Earth and its even more remote location, we arrive to a solution for the galaxy.

As for Enoch, the crisis started when he learned that the alien body was excavated and taken away. He understood it as his fault, although there was no way how he could do otherwise - also without the epitaph in a strange language, the third, new grave would raise the attention of the watchers.

His second mistake to be, was when he brought - without hesitation as well as thinking - Lucy in the house to protect her from his cruel father: "She came seeking my protection. Her father used a whip to beat her" (ibid., p.112). She was there, when Ulysses arrived, being surprised twice: first with her presence there. "Nobody should (...), and then when she was not afraid of him: "You see," Ulysses cried, delighted, "I think she may like me" (ibid., p.113). In spite of this, Ulysses wasn't bothered too much with that mistake: "It's not that," Ulysses told him. "She's just a complication and I do not like further complications. I came to tell you, Enoch, that we are in trouble" (ibid.). As we indicated earlier, Lucy proved to be a solution for the lost Talisman issue and even more, a materialization of a person the Galaxy was in search for, to keep Talisman safe and useful. It would be safe to say that Lucy getting acquainted with Ulysses presents the breakeven point of the whole story.<sup>32</sup> The key to the solution was presented in a form of a complication.

Two situations in the aftermath stand out as typical diplomatic ones,

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32 This part is presented in Simak, 1988, pp.113-120.

with Enoch in their focus. They show diplomatic environment, circumstances and the stream of activities through which Enoch both diplomatically matured and emerged as a diplomatic crisis manager.

Firstly, when Ulysses explained him what everything the stealing of the body initiated, he also told him that a formal representative of the Vegans will arrive to hand over a diplomatic protest to him as the Earth representative:

“The Vegan who will be arriving here this evening is an official representative charged with delivering an official protest.”

“To me?”

“To you and through you, to the Earth.”

“But the Earth is not concerned. The Earth doesn't even know.”

“Of course it doesn't. So far as Galactic Central is concerned, you are the Earth. You represent the Earth.” (ibid., pp.117-118)

Enoch was by circumstances made a representative of the Earth and found himself in the midst of galactic diplomatic business. Even more, although being an employee of the Galactic Central, he was at the same time treated as a representative of the Earth. Technically speaking there could exist different views upon this his position, but symbolically and in a diplomatic language and message, he was recognized and, in this case, also accepted as such. This was neither automatic nor self-understandable. On the contrary, it was a conscious decision of a relevant galactic authority to treat him like that. This is diplomacy.

The protest was handed over in a typical diplomatic manner, though with an audience: Ulysses was present and Lucy as well, the former on the Galaxy's part and the latter on the Earth's one, however without any formal recognition as such by either side. It was her accidental presence that de facto put her this status. It is the way diplomacy works. The fact of the audience itself gave additional importance to Enoch's status and to the whole diplomatic procedure he was an active part of.

It was, of course, Hazer, who started the formality:

“I am sorry”, he told Enoch, “that our meeting must be such as this. Although under any circumstances, I am glad to meet you. I have heard of you. It is not often that a being of an outside planet is the keeper of a station” (ibid., p.120).

Hazer's opening follows a typical diplomatic handbook. For Enoch and his position, the continuation is of even greater importance: he learned that he was not one of a vast majority of anonymous station keepers. And his stakes were higher also due to the fact that he was recruited from one of the outside planets, what was not common practice as well.

While acquainting himself with Lucy ("... she is not afraid." Ulysses chuckled. "Not even me," he said. - *ibid.*, p.121), the formal act of the protest took place:

"You know why I am here?" he asked.

"I believe so."

"It's a matter I regret," said the Hazer. "But I must ..."

"If you'd rather," Enoch said, "we can consider that the protest has been made. I would so stipulate."

"Why not?" Ulysses said. "There is no need, it seems to me, to have the three of us go through a somewhat painful scene." (*ibid.*, p.122).

Ulysses, who informed Enoch about the protest, telling most probably more than he should have in a formal situation, acted highly diplomatically. As a matter of fact, he was the only one speaking most clearly on the galactic position: Enoch was representing Earth, being at the same time an employee of the Galaxy, while the Hazer was speaking on behalf of the Vegans, but had to take care as well at least partially of the Galactic interests (pushed by those who were opposing the Vegan approach).

"The Hazer hesitated.

"If you feel you must," said Enoch.

"No," the Hazer said. "I am satisfied if an unspoken protest be generously accepted." (*ibid.*, p.122)

Upon Enoch's insistence, they left afterwards to check the grave. Inspecting it, the Hazer got shocked:

"No one told me," said the Hazer, speaking softly.

"Told you what?"

"The memorial. And what is written on it. I was not aware that you knew our language. (...)"

"What matters, and matters very much, is that when you wrote, you thought as one of us." (*ibid.*, p.125)

The whole experience gave Enoch additional self-assurance: "This

business touches Earth and I must approach it from an Earthman's viewpoint. In this particular instance I am not simply the keeper of a galactic station" (ibid., p.123). He was starting to be formally aware of his professional evolution, becoming a diplomatic representative as well as of symbolic and practical aspects of this. His statement raised no objections from the galactic diplomatic audience. Hence, it was for the first time that Enoch became so deeply conscious of his diplomatic mission and that he also gave her a public elaboration.

Secondly, as for a possible war on Earth, chances were high.<sup>33</sup> During the discussion between Enoch and Ulysses, the latter showed some slight optimism: "There is a way," Ulysses said, "to prevent a war" (ibid., p.137). It became clear there could be an intervention from the galactic authorities, upon a formal request from the Earth's side. Ulysses continued with presenting the idea:

"You could apply for its application."

"I?"

"As a representative of the Earth." (ibid.)

His possible appearance and the procedure would look like this:

"You could appear before Galactic Central and appeal for us to use it. As a member of your race, you could give testimony and you would be given a hearing. If there seemed to be merit in your plea, Central might name a group to investigate and then, upon the report of its findings, a decision would be made." (ibid.)<sup>34</sup>

Enoch was again in the position to be the formal representative of Earth in front of the Galactic authorities. He was fully aware he was not in possession of any authorization or credentials from any of the Earth's bodies to appear in such capacity. More to that, he was not expecting to be received by the Galactic authority in that capacity. Generally, and primarily, he still was a station keeper, nothing more. So, there might be persons, more qualified and suitable for this ad hoc diplomatic task. However, as a brief deduction showed, he was the only one:

"You said I. Could anyone on Earth?"

"Anyone who could gain a hearing. To gain a hearing, you must know about Galactic Central and you're the only man of Earth who does.

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33 See Simak, 1988, p.136.

34 The reader should be aware of a diplomatic style of this explanation, which is built primarily on conditional: could, would, might, and not on binding expressions.

Besides, you're a part of Galactic Central's staff. You have served as a keeper for a long time. Your record has been good. We would listen to you." (ibid.)

This serves as the best, most direct and unconditional acknowledgement of Enoch as a diplomat: accepted as a formal representative of the Earth and at the same time the staff member of the Galactic Central, i.e., its diplomatic wing. States send and accept envoys in international relations and with these facts, they recognize each other. It is not enough to be sent, the envoy, a diplomat, must be received as well. Enoch was recognized as a diplomat in a double sense. From one point of view as a possible representative of the Earth and from another as a staff member of the Galactic Diplomatic Service.

This offered him a possible opportunity to act on behalf of the Earth in front of the Galaxy Central, and being accepted, being listened to. Diplomats of the sending authority at the receiving authority use all their potential to gain audience at the receiving authority, the higher, the better. Only then are they in a position to do, what they are supposed to: to forward the message and to receive the feedback. Enoch was granted this already in advance with being promised he will be accepted and listened to.

Whether Enoch was a diplomat or not and whether he was an official representative of the Earth or not he performed skillfully in both situations. He proved himself a diplomat and was taken as such. The only missing formal point was that his credentials for the Earth's destiny were not known and even less recognized by the relevant Earth authorities. However, for the practical aspects of this galactic diplomatic crisis management and its outcome, it hardly made any difference. One could, of course, speculate, would this all have happened, hadn't there been a severe crisis (the Earth's and the galactic one as well) - or not? But, following the narrative, it did happen and Enoch proved to be a diplomat. Or to put in an additional way, became one, emerged as a one.

## CONCLUSION

As another in a series of classical science fiction masterpieces, the *Way Station* provides a highly useful, intriguing and substantial insight in the way diplomacy functions as a part of this genre's narrative. With a liaison, a way station keeper, situated on Earth, in his hometown, the central character offers an educating view in this particular aspect of diplomatic, i.e., consular business.

Enoch Wallace, as the main protagonist of the novel, had one diplomatic task only: to provide all the necessary support services that being from various parts of the galaxy were able to commute through this region of the interstellar space. He was posted in his home place, but neither as a local staff nor as a fully authorized consul or diplomat. The postings premises presented his old family house, transformed from within for official purposes. His diplomatic immunity materialized in a form of immortality, judging by the Earth's standards.

After almost a century of an undisturbed and routine, but highly interesting, diverse and useful service, things got complicated, with the destiny of Earth, but as well as that of the Galaxy at stake. Drastic change of the dynamics in the whole narrative also offered Enoch opportunities to show his capabilities and potentials that spanned beyond his formal and narrow consular task. He proved to be an outstanding diplomat, tested in a galactic crises management episode, while also proving the proficiency of a station keeper. From this position, the reader follows his transformation to a consul and to a diplomat, respected and fully accepted by the Galactic Central, de facto the Galactic Diplomatic Service, his employer.

Apart this focal finding, our research points out as well some of the main characteristics of the station keepers, i.e., liaison's occupation.

This is, in the first place and having in mind the outer postings, an individual task. Next, it could be, not only generally, defined as a job of a consul. For its efficiency, such activity also demands strong knowledge of protocol (consistency, formal and human touch, operational flexibility, sticking to the rules of the profession). Further on, in any case it is advisable to possess certain expertise and knowledge from the broader field of diplomacy (i.e., politically diplomacy). Additionally, basic knowledge and skill from negotiation is advisable as well. Sub-

sequently, because of a variety of formal and informal passersby, that could produce a mixed diplomatic environment, in parallel or at the same time, also having a certain dose of persuasion skills is welcome. Last but not least, the feeling of staying off the scene is a must. Officials, who commute, by the rule neither need nor want publicity. This set of skills includes or should rest upon a package of diplomat's qualities, like accuracy, calm, responsibility, determination, patience, modesty and loyalty as well as knowledge, hospitality, courage and tact.

This toolbox is heavily supported by examples in the novel, from which many quotations were taken to support these findings. They present a rather rounded up view upon the presence and role of diplomacy, in particular bilateral one, with the emphasis on consular specifics and its richness. At the same time, this serves as a clear illustration of the author's understanding and usefulness of diplomacy. Even more, the main narrative and the stream of its development rest on diplomacy, though hardly being in the forefront (apart, for example, the scene of the diplomatic protest).

The Way Station's contribution to diplomatic studies, within the intersection and correlation between diplomacy and science fiction literature, is important, focused and also innovative, i.e., the main protagonist is in the service of the Galactic Diplomacy, posted in his remote home place on Earth, dealing with issues of galactic importance. Hence, one could easily claim that in addition to its broader diplomatic frame and approach, the novel could also serve as a mini manual for a diplomatic liaison's job. Combining both these aspects together within a science fiction novel with the theatre here and now, Simak produced a text that uncovers rich, educating and particular implementation of diplomacy.

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