



## HISTORY OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

## ИСТОРИЯ МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫХ ОТНОШЕНИЙ

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### Problems of Interaction Between the Diplomatic Missions of the Ukrainian SSR and the RSFSR in Warsaw in the Process of Creating the USSR

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**Abstract.** The article examines the most acute problems and their solutions in the relations between the diplomats of the RSFSR and the Ukrainian SSR in Poland during the establishment of the Soviet Union (1921–1923). The relevance of the study is due to the introduction of recently declassified archival documents into the scientific discourse, as well as the growing interest in the topic in connection with the centennial of the creation of the USSR. The purpose of the study is to reveal the previously silenced facts and problems that accompanied the work of the foreign policy departments of the Soviet republics up to the rigid centralization and regulation of their activities, which occurred in the second half of 1923. So far, the issues of interaction between the diplomatic departments of the Soviet republics have remained virtually unexplored in the Russian historiography. At the same time, researchers in other post-Soviet countries are undoubtedly interested in the subject, which is limited by the materials of mainly local archives. The work is based on the methods of comparative historical analysis. The source base is based on the previously classified documents of the Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, in particular, the correspondence of the RSFSR plenipotentiary representation with the central office of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs of the RSFSR in Moscow. As a result of the study, the author came to the conclusion that in 1921–1923 there were constant misunderstandings and conflict situations in the relations between the diplomatic missions of the RSFSR and the Ukrainian SSR operating in Warsaw. The higher officials in Moscow and Kharkov had to be constantly involved in their resolution. At the same time, it was not always possible to resolve disagreements and conflicts that arose promptly due to the lack of ready solutions in the specialized departments of the two republics. Many disagreements in the actions of Russian and Ukrainian diplomats reflected the numerous intra-party disputes over various issues of subordination and state structure that developed among the Bolsheviks who had won in Russia and Ukraine. The contradictions that arose, especially in the first stage of the establishment of diplomatic missions, were tried to be deepened and used for their own purposes by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

**Key words:** Russia, Ukraine, conflicts between the republics, Poland, Soviet Union, separate agreement, repatriation, Moscowophiles

**Conflicts of interest.** The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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## Проблемы во взаимодействии между дипмиссиями УССР и РСФСР в Варшаве в процессе создания СССР

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**Аннотация.** Рассматриваются наиболее острые проблемы и их решение во взаимоотношениях между дипломатами РСФСР и Украинской ССР (УССР) в Польше в период создания Советского Союза (1921–1923 гг.) Актуальность исследования обусловлена введением в научный оборот недавно рассекреченных архивных документов, а также ростом интереса к теме в связи со столетним юбилеем создания СССР. Цель состоит в выявлении ранее замалчиваемых фактов и проблем, сопровождавших работу внешнеполитических ведомств советских республик вплоть до жесткой централизации и регламентации их деятельности, пришедшихся на вторую половину 1923 г. До сих пор в российской историографии вопросы взаимодействия дипломатических ведомств советских республик остаются практически неизученными. При этом к теме проявляют несомненный интерес ограниченные материалами в основном локальных архивов исследователи в других постсоветских странах. Автор опирается на методы сравнительного исторического анализа, а также на ранее засекреченные документы Архива внешней политики Российской Федерации (АВП РФ), в частности, переписку полномочного представительства РСФСР с центральным аппаратом Народного комиссариата иностранных дел (НКИД) РСФСР в Москве. Установлено, что во взаимоотношениях между действовавшими в Варшаве в 1921–1923 гг. дипломатическими миссиями РСФСР и УССР возникали постоянные недоразумения и конфликтные ситуации. К их разрешению приходилось постоянно привлекать вышестоящих должностных лиц в Москве и Харькове. При этом не всегда возникавшие разногласия и конфликты удавалось решать оперативно из-за отсутствия готовых решений в профильных ведомствах двух республик. Многие разногласия в действиях российских и украинских дипломатов отражали многочисленные внутрипартийные споры по самым разным вопросам субординации и государственного устройства, развернувшиеся среди победивших в России и на Украине большевиков. Возникавшие противоречия, особенно на первом этапе становления дипломатических миссий, пытался углубить и использовать в своих целях МИД Польши.

**Ключевые слова:** Россия, Украина, конфликты между республиками, Польша, Советский Союз, сепаратный договор, репатриация, москвофилы

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### Introduction

A century has passed since the Second All-Union Congress of Soviets on January 31, 1924, finally approved the first Constitution of the Soviet Union, according to Articles 49 and 51 of which the all-union People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs (NKID) of the USSR was established.<sup>1</sup> In preparation for this event, the

entire second half of 1923 saw the reorganization of the NKIDs of the Union republics, accompanied by serious discussions, disputes and disagreements among the Bolsheviks. One of the most controversial and unstudied issues is the relationship between the plenipotentiary missions of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) and the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) in Poland in 1921–1923. This

<sup>1</sup> Constitution: The Basic Law of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics // History Department of Lomonosov

Moscow State University. URL: <https://www.hist.msu.ru/ER/Etext/cnst1924.htm> (accessed: 10.07.2023).

is evidenced by the correspondence between the RSFSR plenipotentiary mission in Warsaw and the central office in Moscow, which was declassified after the collapse of the USSR.

### Literature Review

In Soviet historiography, the inter-republican contradictions in the process of the USSR's creation were very poorly covered. In rare works one can find cautious attempts to highlight the questions that arose in the first years of Soviet power about the inexpediency of creating a separate Belarusian republic and the separation of Latvia from the RSFSR in 1918 (Kulichenko, 1973, pp. 108, 113), or indirect references to the possible existence of contradictions in foreign trade relations between the RSFSR and the Ukrainian SSR on the issue of concluding a trade agreement with Poland in 1921–1922 and Poland's attempts to play on them (Jezhula, 1965, p. 30).

Interest in the problematic issues of relations between the Soviet republics during the creation of the USSR grew during the years of perestroika, when previously classified documents began to be actively published,<sup>2</sup> and in the period after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The border disputes between the Soviet republics during the creation and early years of the USSR have been the best researched to date. Belarusian (Khomich, 2000; Baranouski, 2018; Raychenok, 2018), Russian (Korotkova, 2018), Azerbaijani (Mustafaeva, 2010; Hasanli, 2011), and Armenian<sup>3</sup> historians have addressed this topic. The publications of Ukrainian (Boyechko, 1991; Boyechko, Ganzha & Zakharchuk, 1994; Yefimenko, 2012; Sokyrskaya, 2018) and Russian<sup>4</sup> researchers raise

the disputes that unfolded in the 1920s during the definition and revision of the borders between the Ukrainian SSR and the RSFSR.

In the post-Soviet period, the confrontation over issues of national policy and state structure during the creation of the USSR between Moscow, primarily the supporters of “autonomism” in the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) (RCP(b)), and the leadership of the Ukrainian and Georgian SSRs is also studied in detail (Kupchik, 2010; Sakharov, 2012; Vdovin, 2018, pp. 12–20; Averyanov, 2019; Biyushkina, 2022; Belyavtseva, 2023).

However, the inter-republican contradictions in the diplomatic sphere are still very poorly researched. In particular, O. Kupchik briefly mentions the opposition of the RSFSR authorities in 1921 to the establishment of diplomatic relations of the Ukrainian SSR with the Belorussian, Armenian and Azerbaijani SSRs, as well as with the Georgian and Far Eastern republics (Kupchik, 2015). I.B. Matyash draws attention to the unsuccessful attempts of the Ukrainian SSR authorities to obtain in April–June 1923 from the Politburo of the Central Committee of the RCP(b) a revision of the issue of the merger of the NKIDs of the Ukrainian SSR and the RSFSR, as well as the disagreements between the consulates of the Ukrainian SSR and the RSFSR in the issue of the return of repatriates from America to the Ukrainian SSR (Matyash, 2016, pp. 312–316). In a number of works, one can find some aspects of the disputes between Kharkov and Moscow in the 1920s about personnel appointments to the USSR's diplomatic missions abroad.<sup>5</sup>

### First Manifestations of Contradictions Between Kharkov and Moscow in the Work of Soviet Diplomats in Warsaw and Their Causes

Given the formally independent status of Soviet Russia and Soviet Ukraine, which had concluded the Riga Peace Treaty with Poland as equal parties on March 18, 1921, the two Soviet

<sup>2</sup> From the History of the Formation of the USSR: Documents and Materials on the Work of the Commission of the Organizing Bureau of the Central Committee of the RCP(b) to Prepare the Issue “On the Relationship between the RSFSR and Independent Republics” for the Plenum of the Central Committee of the Party (6 October 1922) // *Izvestiya CC CPSU*. 1989. No. 9. P. 191–219. (In Russian).

<sup>3</sup> Nagorno-Karabakh in 1918–1923: Collection of Documents and Materials. Yerevan: Izd-vo AN Armenii publ., 1992. P. 609–670. (In Russian).

<sup>4</sup> Galkin Y. I. Collection of Documents on the Border Dispute Between Russia and Ukraine in 1920–1925 for the Taganrog-Shakhtinsk Territory of the Don Region. Moscow: Shherbinskaja tipografija publ., 2007. (In Russian). See also: (Borisenok, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> Ukraine — Poland 1920–1939: A History of Diplomatic Relations Between the Ukrainian SSR and the Second Polish Republic: Documents and Materials. Kiev: Dukh i Litera publ., 2012. (In Ukrainian). See also: (Rubliov & Gorburov, 2017).

republics established diplomatic relations with Warsaw. On August 3, 1921, L.M. Karakhan, plenipotentiary representative of the RSFSR, arrived in Warsaw, and on August 4, Titus Filipowicz, Chargé d'Affaires of Poland in the RSFSR, arrived in Moscow. The exchange of diplomatic missions between Poland and the Ukrainian SSR took place later: on October 6, A.Y. Shumsky, the Ukrainian SSR envoy, went to Warsaw, and Franciszek Jan Pulaski, the Polish Chargé d'Affaires in Kharkov. Prior to the arrival of full diplomatic missions, from February 1921, diplomatic relations between Poland, the RSFSR and the Ukrainian SSR were maintained by representatives of the Polish and Russian-Ukrainian delegations of the Joint Commission on Repatriation (Matveev, 2010a; 2010b, p. 44).

The Treaty of Union between the RSFSR and the Ukrainian SSR, concluded on December 20, 1920, provided for the “independence and sovereignty of each of the contracting parties.” According to the treaty, the two Soviet states created joint commissariats of military and maritime affairs, the Supreme Board of the People's Economy (VSNKh), foreign trade, finance, labour, railways, post and telegraph, which were at the same time part of the Council of People's Commissars (CPC) of the RSFSR and had their commissioners in the Sovnarkom of the Ukrainian SSR, “approved and controlled by the Ukrainian CEC and the Congress of Soviets.” The united commissariats were to be subordinate to the All-Russian Congress of Soviets and the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (CEC, VTsIK), to which the Ukrainian SSR was to delegate its representatives. Specific forms of administration of the united commissariats were to be established by “special agreements between the two governments.” At the same time, the Union Treaty was silent about the authorities responsible for foreign policy.<sup>6</sup>

Such a cumbersome and undetailed form of management of the newly created military and economic union of Soviet Russia and Soviet Ukraine left a wide field not only for theoretical discussions in the RCP(b) and the Communist

Party (Bolsheviks) of Ukraine (CP(b)U), but also manifested itself almost immediately in the activities of the RSFSR and the Ukrainian SSR Plenipotentiary Missions opened in Warsaw, as well as in the work of the Joint Commission on Repatriation, which continued its work. On a number of key issues, the positions of Kharkov and Moscow either diverged and needed to be harmonized, or were not formulated and approved by one of the parties at all.

On October 12, 1921, L.M. Karakhan, the RSFSR envoy, requested instructions from the RSFSR Deputy Commissar for Foreign Affairs M.M. Litvinov on how to conduct the negotiations at the Joint Commission on Repatriation on the issue of amnesty for the participants of the White Guard units interned in Poland. At that time the government of the Ukrainian SSR had already sent an instruction to the Russian-Ukrainian delegation, while the position of the RSFSR authorities had not yet been formed. According to the instruction, the Ukrainian SSR was to grant amnesty to the Petlyurovtsy who would “sincerely declare their readiness to be loyal citizens of the Ukrainian SSR.” At the same time, in order to prevent the infiltration of hostile elements with the repatriates, the amnesty was to be granted to “only ordinary and rare single officers and intellectuals whose sincerity is beyond doubt.”<sup>7</sup>

L.M. Karakhan had to insist on the exclusion from the demands of the Ukrainian side of the demand for the expulsion from Poland named of the “White Guards,” whose list had been brought to the Ukrainian SSR Plenipotentiary Representative A.Y. Shumsky by a note of the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars and Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the Ukrainian SSR Ch.G. Rakovsky. Insisting on not making such a demand, L.M. Karakhan, in a letter to the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the RSFSR G.V. Chicherin, dated November 5, 1921, insisted on not making such a demand, pointing out that it “would mean to defy both the Polpra (Polish government. — S.S.) and the Sejm and create a hopeless situation,” given the

<sup>6</sup> Union Treaty Between the RSFSR and the U.S.S.R. (June 28, 1920) // Pavlo Pavlovich Gai-Nizhnik. Osobistii site. URL: [http://www.hai-nyzhnyk.in.ua/doc2/1920\(12\)28.sojuznyi\\_dogovir.php](http://www.hai-nyzhnyk.in.ua/doc2/1920(12)28.sojuznyi_dogovir.php) (accessed: 15.03.2023).

<sup>7</sup> Foreign Policy Archive of the Russian Federation (AVP RF). Fund 04. Reg. 32. P. 209. Case 82 (52484). L. 114–115. (In Russian).

sharply negative attitude of the Poles to such demands.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the RSFSR's more lenient approach, the Polish authorities attempted to negotiate the fate of the interned servicemen of the Ukrainian People's Republic without the mediation of Russian diplomats, directly with representatives of Soviet Ukraine. As reported by L.L. Obolensky, Counsellor of the RSFSR Plenipotentiary Mission in Poland, in a letter to G.V. Chicherin dated December 6, 1921, Warsaw raised the question of the fate of the internees through the Polish Chargé d'Affaires in the Ukrainian SSR, F.J. Pulaski. Kharkov offered to send its representatives to the internment camps in order to draw up lists of the Petliurovtsy subject to amnesty, after which the camps were to be liquidated and those not subject to amnesty were to be expelled from Poland. In response, "Pulaski allegedly stated" that these internees would be expelled to Brazil, which aroused suspicions among the representatives of the Ukrainian SSR that in fact they would not be allowed to go from Poland to Brazil, but "to the Czech Republic and from there to Romania".<sup>9</sup>

Sometimes the inconsistency of the positions of the Union republics combined with the confusion between the NKIDs of the RSFSR and the Ukrainian SSR led to comical situations. L.M. Karakhan telegraphed about one of these situations on December 19, 1921, from Warsaw to G.V. Chicherin. In December, the Soviet side gave three contradictory answers to Warsaw's proposal to start negotiations on a trade treaty. G.V. Chicherin, in a note from the RSFSR People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, agreed on behalf of the RSFSR and the Ukrainian SSR to start negotiations in Moscow immediately. A.Y. Shumsky, in a preliminary exchange of views with the Polish side, agreed on behalf of Soviet Ukraine to start negotiations in Warsaw. At the same time, Ch.G. Rakovsky told the Polish representative in Kharkov that he rejected any negotiations until the liquidation of Petlyurovshchina. "The Poles have a full opportunity to ridicule us for this", L.M. Karakhan pointed out, calling for better

coordination and the exclusion of such discord in the future.<sup>10</sup>

### Disputes under a trade agreement

In 1921–1922, L.L. Obolensky constantly complained to Moscow about the attempts of the envoy of the Ukrainian SSR A.Y. Shumsky to conduct an independent policy without coordinating with him and the line of the RSFSR People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs. In November 1921, L.L. Obolensky reported to Moscow about A.Y. Shumsky's negotiations with representatives of the Polish Foreign Ministry on the possibility of concluding a separate trade agreement between the Ukrainian SSR and Poland.

The letters received in response — on November 28 from Commissar G.V. Chicherin and on November 29 from Y.Kh. Davtyan, a member of the staff of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs of the RSFSR — informed about the decision of the Board of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs of the RSFSR on the inadmissibility of concluding a separatist trade agreement between the Ukrainian SSR and Poland, and about the sending of a cipher to Ch.G. Rakovsky with a request to instruct A.Y. Shumsky in this respect. At the same time, the Russian People's Commissar pointed to the complaints of Ch.G. Rakovsky about the failure to observe "the necessary decorum of Ukrainian independence" by the RSFSR Ambassador in Warsaw L.M. Karakhan in the case of the Petliurovtsy invasion of Soviet Ukraine, because of which A.Y. Shumsky "is sometimes put in a ridiculous position." Recalling the complaints of Russian diplomats about "Shumsky's inclination to a more bellicose policy," G.V. Chicherin insisted on subordinating the representatives of the Union republics "to the directives of the RSFSR Plenipotentiary Representative, working under the directives of the RSFSR People's Commissariat, connected with the Politburo." In turn, Y.Kh. Davtyan reported on the necessity of direct subordination of A.Y. Shumsky "to the directives of our RSFSR Plenipotentiary Representative," adding that "we have already talked to the Politburo about subordination of the

<sup>8</sup> AVP RF. Fund 04. Reg. 32. P. 209. Case 82 (52484). L. 148. (In Russian).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. Case 83 (52485). L. 56–57. (In Russian).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. P. 215. Case 52628. L. 8–9. (In Russian).

Plenipotentiary Representatives of the Union republics to the RSFSR Plenipotentiary Representative.”<sup>11</sup>

Meanwhile, L.L. Obolensky continued to complain about his lack of control over Poland’s dialogue with Kharkov. In a letter of December 6, he informed G.V. Chicherin that the Poles had not taken any action against him regarding the beginning of discussions on the conclusion of a trade treaty between Poland and the RSFSR. At the same time, the day before, F.J. Pulaski had told A.Y. Shumsky that the Polish Foreign Ministry would send a note to the government of the Ukrainian SSR with a proposal to start negotiations on a trade treaty. In connection with this development of events, L.L. Obolensky reported that he had agreed with the Ukrainians to act in accordance with the instructions received from the NKID of the RSFSR.<sup>12</sup>

Only on December 8, 1921, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the RCP(b) issued a resolution on the prohibition of the Union republics to conclude treaties without the agreement of the NKID of the RSFSR and on the subordination of the Soviet republics’ Plenipotentiary Representatives to the RSFSR Plenipotentiary Representatives. “In case of a discrepancy, the decision of the RSFSR Plenipotentiary Representative should be implemented, with the matter being transferred to Moscow for agreement with the central departments of the republics concerned,” the decree said.<sup>13</sup>

In addition, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the RCP(b) prohibited the Soviet republics from concluding treaties with other countries without the consent of the RSFSR NKID. As an example of such a treaty, G.V. Chicherin cited the treaty concluded on November 25, 1921, by the Ukrainian diplomat Y.M. Kotsyubinsky with Estonia, about which he not only did not notify Moscow, but also did not specify the conditions under which it could be concluded. As a result, the treaty of the Ukrainian

SSR with Estonia contradicted Moscow’s policy on a number of issues.<sup>14</sup>

In 1922, a joint Soviet delegation headed by A.Y. Shumsky was entrusted with negotiating a trade treaty with Poland.

The decision of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the RCP(b), although it established the rules of subordination between the diplomats of the Ukrainian SSR and the RSFSR, did not make their relations warmer. The RSFSR NKID constantly received complaints from the RSFSR post mission about the behaviour of Ukrainian diplomats. Thus, in an unsigned letter dated May 12, 1922, addressed to Y.S. Ganetsky, a member of the board of the NKID, it was reported that the situation of the Ukrainian diplomatic mission in Warsaw was “more than strange, there are a lot of people, they spend a lot of money, they do nothing, and they do not want to do anything: they are not given self-styled independence.” In the absence of self-styled independence, according to the author of the letter, the work of the Ukrainian SSR diplomatic mission was reduced “to a very productive activity of Krylov’s monkey with a chump,” therefore he suggested to think about reducing tendencies, as there was “absolutely no help from Ukrainians here, but they can sometimes interfere with us, at least in the repatriation and in the case of Makhno.”<sup>15</sup>

### **Karakhan’s Project to Reorganize the NKIDs**

Echoes of the dispute between the “independents” and the “autonomists” in the projection of the organization of the work of the foreign policy department of the future union of republics can be found in the letter of the Russian envoy L.M. Karakhan to G.V. Chicherin dated February 3, 1922. L.M. Karakhan reported that he did not know how the unification of the republics was proceeding and what projects existed, but he considered it dangerous to create a federal People’s Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, since in such a case there was a risk of including “a ‘big and unhappy’ company in the collegium.” In his opinion, the functions of the general NKID should be transferred to the Russian NKID, and “for the general management of foreign policy” a separate

<sup>11</sup> AVP RF. Fund 04. Reg. 32. P. 215. Case 52637. L. 1–3; P. 209. Case 86 (52488). L. 17–19. (In Russian).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. Case 83 (52485). L. 56–58. (In Russian).

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. P. 209. Case 86 (52488). L. 23–24. (In Russian).

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. L. 21–22. (In Russian).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. P. 211. Case 131 (52533). L. 55–56. (In Russian).

all-federal body should be created, composed of representatives delegated by the Central Executive Committees of the Union republics. Russia, as “the greatest,” should have a majority in this body, and the other republics would delegate one representative each. L.M. Karakhan suggested that V.I. Lenin should head this body, and that it should meet “from time to time as needed.” In the intervals between the sessions of this body, the Presidium “i.e., Ilyich, i.e., the same as now” would be in charge of foreign policy. L.M. Karakhan assumed that under such a scheme of managing the foreign policy of the union, the ego of the individual republics would be wounded, but “what to do, one day we must begin and formally assemble Russia.” Such a scheme would allow the Russian People’s Commissariat of Foreign Affairs to speak on behalf of “Russia and the allied powers.”<sup>16</sup>

He also proposed to abolish the NKIDs in the republics, but to allow them to retain “the right of active and passive embassy,” citing the example of Bavaria, which had such a right. However, these embassies were to have “a largely representative character, not business.” In the future, L.M. Karakhan allowed the formation of an all-federal body to direct foreign policy, which would reduce the role of the republics to that of the US states or German states.<sup>17</sup>

L.M. Karakhan, foreseeing the disagreement of the Ukrainians with this formula, who, in his opinion, would agree to such a union without major disputes only if it was not called Russian, but, for example, East European, insisted that it was impossible to concede to them, because “Russia cannot be dissolved in the Union.” Only in the future, when the existence of the Union would be recognized by other countries, he allowed changing the name.<sup>18</sup>

Doubts and disputes among Russian and Ukrainian diplomats in Warsaw about subordination in the newly created union state continued practically throughout 1922 and 1923. This is not surprising, given the frequent change of conjuncture on this issue both in Moscow and Kharkov.

### **Warsaw’s Attempts to Deepen the Split Between the RSFSR and the Ukrainian SSR**

Separate negotiations on the trade treaty and the fate of the interned fighters of the Ukrainian People’s Republic army were not the only areas in which the Polish Foreign Ministry tried to intensify the differences between the RSFSR and the Ukrainian SSR.

In a letter dated September 1, 1922, L.L. Obolensky informed Y.S. Ganetsky about the content of a conversation between Roman Knol, Deputy Head of the Political Department of the Polish Foreign Ministry, and I.M. Siyak, an employee of the Plenipotentiary Mission of the Ukrainian SSR. R. Knol stated that the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Gabriel Narutowicz had been instructed to raise the question of the expediency of the work of the Polish representation in the Ukrainian SSR “with all the consequences for the Ukrainian Embassy in Warsaw.” He justified this question by the fact that practically all the issues raised by the Polish side before the authorities of the Ukrainian SSR were not actually solved in Kharkov, but were transferred to the NKID of the RSFSR. At the same time R. Knol advocated the establishment of direct relations between Poland and Ukraine. He also expressed his desire to receive from Kharkov an official statement that the Polish Foreign Ministry had misinterpreted the nature of relations between Poland, the Ukrainian SSR and the RSFSR in order to demonstrate that “Ukraine is quite independent.” In this case, he said, “the Polpra (Polish government. — S.S.) will agree to send its ambassador to Kharkov and will consider the Plenipotentiary Mission of the Ukrainian SSR in Warsaw as an embassy.”<sup>19</sup>

In a reply letter of September 12, addressed to I.L. Lorenz, Secretary of the RSFSR Mission in Warsaw, Y.S. Ganetsky, on the one hand, reported that “Siyak partly misunderstood Knol and partly inflated the question himself.” On the other hand, reporting on the intention of the Soviet republics to “unify foreign policy and foreign representation,” he noted the desire of the Polish authorities to quarrel the RSFSR and the Ukrainian SSR. At the same time, in Y.S. Ganetsky’s opinion, the Poles themselves

<sup>16</sup> AVP RF. Fund 04. Reg. 32. P. 209. Case 130 (52532). L. 13–14. (In Russian).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. P. 211 (a). Case 132 (52534). L. 125. (In Russian).

“are perfectly aware that such plans would not have succeeded,” but by making efforts in this direction, “they have to a certain extent hit the mark.”<sup>20</sup>

The news of the creation of the USSR disrupted the usual rhythm of work of Soviet diplomats. “I don’t know ... what you will think up in connection with the abolition of the RSFSR, will you force me to hand over the letter from the USSR for the second time — L.L. Obolensky, who foresaw difficulties with the recognition of the new form of Soviet statehood, wrote to Y.S. Ganetsky<sup>21</sup> — it would be inhuman of you.”<sup>22</sup>

After the creation of the USSR was announced on December 30, 1922, Warsaw not only refused to recognize the Soviet Union, but for almost a year continued to play the card of the independence of the Soviet republics, maintaining independent diplomatic missions in Moscow and Kharkov. It was not until December 13, 1923, after almost six months of negotiations, that Poland officially recognized the formation of the USSR. All this time Poland opposed the closure of diplomatic mission in the Ukrainian SSR.

As reported to L.L. Obolensky in a letter dated August 10, 1923 by V.L. Kopp, who replaced Y.S. Ganetsky in the board of the NKID as the curator of the Polish direction, the Deputy Chargé d’Affaires of Poland in the Ukrainian SSR Marzelius Sharotta refused to consider the formation of the Soviet Union and the transfer of the international relations of the Ukrainian SSR to the jurisdiction of the NKID in Moscow, continuing to send notes to the government of the Ukrainian SSR and to use the diplomatic courier service. A.G. Shlikhter, the commissioner of the Soviet NKID under the Council of People’s Commissars of the Ukrainian SSR, was to stop his activities. It was planned to return his notes to M. Sharotta with an indication “that the People’s Commissariat of the Union was in Moscow,

<sup>20</sup> AVP RF. Fund 04. Reg. 32. P. 209. Case 134 (52536). L. 74. (In Russian).

<sup>21</sup> After L.M. Karakhan left for Moscow in October 1922, L.L. Obolensky was actually in charge of the RSFSR Plenipotentiary Mission in Warsaw. On October 16, 1923, he was appointed USSR Plenipotentiary Representative to Poland.

<sup>22</sup> AVP RF. Fund 04. Reg. 32. P. 212. Case 52567. L. 5. (In Russian).

where diplomatic correspondence should be addressed.” As for the courier service it was proposed to point out the inadmissibility of its continuation, and in case “if this does not work, we shall deprive the Polish couriers between Warsaw and Kharkov of diplomatic immunity.”<sup>23</sup>

Direct courier communication with Kharkov and a “direct wire” were also deprived of Ukrainian diplomats transferred to the USSR Mission. In a letter to L.L. Obolensky dated August 14, 1923, V.L. Kopp justified this measure by the high cost of such communication and the fact that “it is inadmissible that Comrade Lebedinets or Besedovsky received any independent directives from Kharkov.”<sup>24</sup>

### **Russian-Ukrainian Disputes in the Process of Liquidation of the Ukrainian SSR Representative Office**

The proclamation on December 30, 1922 at the First All-Union Congress of Soviets on the formation of the USSR, which implied the centralization of foreign policy and diplomatic missions abroad, strained relations between the RSFSR and the Ukrainian SSR missions to the limit. Until July 1923, when the NKID of the USSR was formed, the foreign policy of the Soviet Union was placed at the disposal of the NKID of the RSFSR. However, the lack of an approved procedure for the establishment of the NKID of the USSR and the absence of clear plans about the fate of the already existing diplomatic missions of the Union republics and the diplomats working in them, contributed to the spread of various variants of developments, speculations and intrigues.

In a letter dated February 13, 1923, L.L. Obolensky asked Y.S. Ganetsky to “bring the Ukrainians to order” in connection with the rumours spread by them that in the course of the reorganization of the Soviet diplomatic missions in Warsaw, the RSFSR legation would be liquidated. According to L.L. Obolensky, “this is stupid, premature, and may have a corrupting influence on my public.”<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. Case 52565. L. 25–26. (In Russian).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. L. 28–30. (In Russian).

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. P. 209. Case 52567. L. 38. (In Russian).



It should be borne in mind that at that time the RCP(b) was simultaneously discussing various issues of state-building. At the same time, the party and the state did not yet have authoritarian rule, and in the conditions of intra-party pluralism that existed at that time, any decisions and their revision were possible. Thus, at the XII Congress of the RCP(b), held in April, the Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars of the Ukrainian SSR, Ch.G. Rakovsky, criticized, to the applause of the audience, the attempts of the USSR Commissars of People's Commissars to subjugate the Union republics, including the signing of international treaties on behalf of Ukraine, as no one had given them such powers. He called for a sharp restriction of the powers of the Union Commissars and the "Russian CEC" and their redistribution in favour of the Union republics.<sup>26</sup>

Even in July 1923, when Moscow had already decided to liquidate the republican missions abroad, it could not give concrete answers to many questions about the reorganization of the diplomatic missions. As follows from V.L. Kopp's letter to L.L. Obolensky of July 20, 1923, the central office of the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs did not yet have clear instructions "on the liquidation of the Ukrainian embassy"; they were promised to send them later. The question of introducing the institute of "Ukrainian counsellors" at the Plenipotentiary Mission of the USSR was discussed as an option, however, V.L. Kopp informed that it was not yet known whether it would be introduced, and he himself would prefer to limit himself to the introduction of a special Ukrainian desk at the Consulate and asked L.L. Obolensky for his opinion on this matter. But before the final decision on the question he pointed out that "it is necessary to take measures to secure for us the inventory and money of the embassy" so that they would not be sent to Kharkov. Also, speaking about the liquidation of the Ukrainian Plenipotentiary Mission, V.L. Kopp asked L.L. Obolensky, pending a speedy consideration in Moscow, to

immediately submit his considerations regarding "the use of the embassy staff."<sup>27</sup>

Only in a letter dated July 24, 1923, V.L. Kopp informed L.L. Obolensky about the agreement reached with the former Deputy Commissar for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, Comrade Yakovlev, to liquidate the Ukrainian missions by August 5. It provided for the transfer to the Plenipotentiary Missions of the USSR of all files and property and the establishment of a special desk for Ukrainian affairs at the consular section with the involvement of one or more members of the Ukrainian mission. It was envisaged to replace the post of counsellor in the Plenipotentiary Missions of the USSR with one of the Ukrainian diplomats. In Warsaw, the candidates for this position were G.Z. Besedovsky, Chargé d'Affaires of the Ukrainian SSR in Poland, and M.M. Lebedinets, Head of the Consular Service of the Embassy of the USSR. L.L. Obolensky was invited to submit his considerations on these candidates and other employees of the liquidated Ukrainian Plenipotentiary Mission, whom he would like to attract to work in new union missions. The other employees were proposed to be seconded back to the Central Committee of the CP(b)U. V.L. Kopp also reported on Comrade Yakovlev's proposal to enroll in the staff of the Plenipotentiary Mission of the USSR the staff of the Plenipotentiary Mission of the Ukrainian SSR, responsible for work with Ukrainian emigrants and asked L.L. Obolensky about the expediency of such a decision.<sup>28</sup>

In practice, the liquidation of the Ukrainian SSR diplomatic mission in Warsaw led to conflict among Soviet diplomats. Only certain Ukrainian staff members were included in the Plenipotentiary Mission of the USSR, which was formed on the basis of the Plenipotentiary Mission of the RSFSR. In particular, G.Z. Besedovsky became counsellor and M.M. Lebedinets became head of the consular service of the USSR envoy. Most of the staff of the Ukrainian legation was dismissed, and L.L. Obolensky tried to pay them according to the norms of the RSFSR legation, which were lower than those of the USSR

<sup>26</sup> Twelfth Congress of the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks): Verbatim report, April, 17–25, 1923. Moscow: Krasnaya Novya publ., Glavpolitprosvet publ., 1923. P. 436–441. (In Russian).

<sup>27</sup> AVP RF. Fund 04. Reg. 32. P. 212. Case 52565. L. 6. (In Russian).

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. L. 7–10. (In Russian).

legation, which caused protests. In a letter dated August 27, 1923, V.L. Kopp wrote to L.L. Obolensky that he discussed this issue with A.G. Schlichter and found out that most of the staff of the Ukrainian diplomatic mission had been reduced by M.M. Lebedinets earlier according to the norms of the Ukrainian SSR, so the remaining 6 people should also be calculated according to these norms, because “compliance with our norms ... would mean a sharp injustice to those who remained.” He also ordered to reserve for the Ukrainian Central Committee “until a special decision” the sums left by M.M. Lebedinets from the transfer of 4,000 USD he had previously received.<sup>29</sup>

In his reply dated August 31, 1923, L.L. Obolensky informed V.L. Kopp that he had finished the liquidation of the Plenipotentiary Mission of the Ukrainian SSR “according to our norms with some concessions,” that all but one of the incidents had been exhausted.<sup>30</sup>

Some employees of the Plenipotentiary Mission of the RSFSR were not satisfied with the personnel decisions made during the reorganization and had to give up their positions to Ukrainians. In Warsaw, I.L. Lorenz, who was to move from the position of Counsellor to the position of First Secretary of the Representative Office, found himself in such a situation. V.L. Kopp in his letter to L.L. Obolensky dated July 31, 1923, argued that I.L. Lorenz should not perceive this measure as directed against him, because such a decision on the liquidation of Ukrainian missions was approved by the Politburo, and in Berlin the former Plenipotentiary Representative of the Ukrainian SSR O.Kh. Aussem became the adviser of the Plenipotentiary Mission of the USSR in a similar way. In case of disagreement, according to V.L. Kopp, I.L. Lorenz was to return to Moscow and wait for a new appointment.<sup>31</sup> The incipient conflict was extinguished by the appointment of I.L. Lorenz as the Plenipotentiary Representative of the USSR to Lithuania in August 1923.

<sup>29</sup> AVP RF. Fund 04. Reg. 32. P. 212. Case 52565. L. 39–40. (In Russian).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. Case 52567. L. 178. (In Russian).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. Case 52565. L. 15. (In Russian).

### **Between Kharkov and Moscow: Problems of Subordination After the Merger of the Plenipotentiary Missions**

Serious disagreements erupted within the joint USSR Mission over the issue of support for the various political forces in Eastern Galicia, which had been annexed to Poland. Ambassador L.L. Obolensky focused on the Moscowophile-aligned Russian-Galician socialists, while the diplomats from the Ukrainian SSR focused on the Galician communists of Ukrainian orientation.

In a letter dated September 18, 1923, L.L. Obolensky complained to V.L. Kopp about the “bumping” given to him and G.Z. Besedovsky by the Commissar of Justice and Prosecutor General of the Ukrainian SSR, N.A. Skrypnyk, a well-known supporter of the construction of a united (*sobornaya*) communist Ukraine, who visited the Representative Mission. N.A. Skrypnyk accused the Mission of supporting the Russian press and Russification in Galicia, which went against the work of the Ukrainian Communist Party in this region. L.L. Obolensky pointed out that a year ago he had raised the question of the direction of work with the Russian-Galician socialists, that “if it were necessary to merge this group with the Communist Party of Galicia or the PCP (Polish Communist Party. — *S.S.*), it would be possible to influence them,” but since his enquiry remained unanswered, he did not take any initiative in this direction.<sup>32</sup>

In a reply letter dated September 28, 1923, V.L. Kopp, wrote that in October 1922, “the most authoritative institution” (usually the Politburo of the Central Committee of the RCP(b)) had entrusted the NKID and the State Political Directorate (GPU) with coordinating all measures on the Galician question. Since then, support was given mainly to national Galician groups and only sporadically to Moscowophiles. All inclinations of individual residents to the Moscowophilia side were subject to correction from Moscow. However, this does not mean that the Plenipotentiary Mission should follow the line of N.A. Skrypnyk, if he leans to the nationalist side, “Kharkov cannot give Comrade Besedovsky any

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. Case 52567. L. 187–189. (In Russian).

tasks not agreed with us.”<sup>33</sup> In fact, this letter did not contain any clear instructions.

In October, G.V. Chicherin reacted to the conflict. On October 25, a letter was sent to Warsaw in which he stated that N.A. Skrypnik had gone against Moscow’s directives, and that the Plenipotentiary Representative in Warsaw had complied with his demands, “the most useful people were pushed away,” “and in a very rude manner,” as witnessed by the head of the foreign department of the GPU, M.A. Trilisser. This issue was discussed in the presence of the then Chairman of the Sovnarkom of the Ukrainian SSR V.Y. Chubar and V.L. Kopp, and V.Y. Chubar said that N.A. Skrypnik had no mandate to interfere in Moscow’s policy, and if the lines of Ukraine and Moscow were to be crossed in any matters, Ukraine “does not wish to go against Moscow’s policy,” which should be pointed out to the Ukrainian counsellor.<sup>34</sup>

By the end of 1923, the disagreements between Russian and Ukrainian diplomats could not be completely overcome within the framework of a single USSR legation. In any case, in a letter dated December 14, 1923, V.L. Kopp informed L.L. Obolensky that he gave his consent to recall M.M. Lebedinets from Warsaw, “remembering your feedback about him,” and to replace him with a candidate “who is not in too close connection with Kharkov.”<sup>35</sup> In January 1924, M.M. Lebedinets would be recalled to Kharkov and appointed chairman of the Supreme Court of the Ukrainian SSR.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> AVP RF. Fund 04. Reg. 32. P. 212. Case 52565. L. 54. (In Russian).

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. L. 65. (In Russian).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. L. 87–88. (In Russian).

<sup>36</sup> Lebedinets Mykhaylo Musiyovych // Institute of Ukrainian History of the National Academy of Sciences of

## Conclusion

Initially, relations between the RSFSR and the Ukrainian SSR diplomatic missions in Poland were not straightforward. The formally independent character of the Ukrainian Soviet statehood extended to the diplomatic mission, which allowed the Ukrainian diplomats, in the absence of direct commands from Kharkov, to demonstrate their disagreement and special position on a number of acute issues with the line of the RSFSR diplomatic mission. At the same time, the Plenipotentiary Mission of the RSFSR, realising the actual subordination of the Ukrainian SSR authorities to Moscow’s policy, often expressed its dissatisfaction with the insubordination of the Plenipotentiary Mission of the Ukrainian SSR and its attempts to show independence in letters to the NKID. The situation was aggravated by the actions of the Polish Foreign Ministry, which, perfectly aware of the discrepancies between the formal and actual status of the Ukrainian SSR vis-à-vis the RSFSR, took initiatives aimed at aggravating the differences arising between the diplomats of the two Union republics.

The diplomatic correspondence of the RSFSR People’s Commissariat of Foreign Affairs shows that despite the ideological homogeneity of the Bolshevik regimes in the Soviet republics, their representatives had opposing views on a whole range of foreign policy and foreign economic issues. Even in the first year of the USSR’s existence it was not possible to overcome all the differences.

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