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The Influence of the "Non-Aggression Pact" of 1932 on the Development of Trade Relations between the USSR and Poland

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I. Introduction

According to Article XXI of the Riga Peace Treaty of 18 March 1921, the Soviet and Polish parties had to start negotiations on the conclusion of a particular trade agreement and an agreement on compensatory goods exchange no later than six months after agreement ratification. Article XXII of the Treaty obliged the parties to organize the unimpeded transit of goods "through all railways and waterways free for transit" before the conclusion of the international documents mentioned above [1, p. 640]. High-quality commercial relations were urgent for both parties. Most of trade routes to the West passed through Poland. This country was a giant neighbour of the Soviet republics: the length of the border line with it was about 1,400 kilometers. Moreover, the long-term presence of some Polish lands within the Russian Empire strongly connected the economy of these countries. However, according to the People's Commissariat for Foreign Trade, Polish imports to Soviet Russia in nine months of 1921 amounted to 486 thousand rubles, only 0.2% of all imports of the Soviet state. Exports for the specified time amounted to only 24 thousand rubles [2].

To improve Soviet-Polish trade relations, immediately after the conclusion of the Riga Peace Treaty, negotiations began between representatives of the Office of the Plenipotentiary People's Commissariat of Foreign Trade of the RSFSR under the Council of People's Commissars of the BSSR and Polish business circles (joint-stock companies "Britapol", "Palantsina", "Zachodneles", "Gratenau"). They resulted in the conclusion of several commercial contracts for the supply to the Soviet country of agricultural instruments of labour, some types of foods (rice, canned fish, cocoa beans, and others), chemical compounds (Berthollet's salt, red phosphorus, paraffin) [3]. On 4 August 1921, the first diplomatic and trade delegations led by L. M. Karakhan arrived in Poland. From their arrangement, a representative office of the RSFSR and the Ukrainian SSR was opened in Warsaw, and trade missions from the BSSR were included in their composition. For its part, Poland introduced the position of the trade adviser at the diplomatic mission in Moscow.

Numerous attempts to sign a Soviet-Polish trade agreement (meetings of Stefanski-Ganetski, Strasburger-Litvinau, Narutovich-Chycheryn, Darouski-Kop) did not bring a good result. Gradual preparation for the conclusion of the "Non-Aggression Pact" with Poland raised the issue of improving Soviet-Polish trade relations on the agenda. The "Non-Aggression Pact" signed by the USSR and Poland in July 1932, ending one of the stages of Soviet-Polish relations, could become the basis for their rise to a new and higher level. However, it could also become the peak in their development. One or another of its roles depended on how well it corresponded to the strategic goals of the foreign policy of both states. By signing the Pact, the Soviet government seemed to declare that in shotrly it would not use the national movement in Western Belarus and Ukraine to try to collapse the Polish state, as it was done before. Poland, for its part, attested that its active policy in Central-Eastern Europe, along the western borders of the USSR, was not aimed at creating an aggressive anti-Soviet bloc.

II. Research Methodology (Theoretical Fundamentals)

Simultaneously with the normalization of political relations, there is a well-known recovery in economic ties - the conclusion of customs agreements, the extension of the agreement on "Soviet-Polish trade" (17 February 1933), an inevitable increase in mutual commodity circulation, the normalization of railway tariffs, the signing of the convention on rafting of timber along border rivers (19 June 1933) and the agreement

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on the export of wood, the revival of mutual transit through Polish and Soviet seaport terminals. In turn, positive changes in bilateral relations were reflected in the pages of the Polish periodicals. The key topics that worried the Polish periodicals (from the end of July 1932 to the middle of November 1933) was the question of intensification trade operations between the Soviet and Polish parties; plans for concluding a trade agreement were actively discussed.

The source base of the study was the "Summaries of the Polish Periodicals" for July 1932 - November 1933, which was prepared by the press office of the Plenipotentiary Representation of the USSR in Poland, other materials of the Polish periodicals ("Codzyonna gazeta gandliowa", "Kurijr polski", "Ilyustravany kurjer codzionny", "Gazeta polska", "Gazeta Warszawska"). The "Summaries of the Polish journals" was prepared either daily or for several days, consisting of sections: Poland-USSR, foreign policy (usually an overview of Polish-German relations was given), domestic policy, and economic situation. At the same time, some subsections could be missing, depending on the availability of news. The absolute majority of materials are kept in the National Archives of the Republic of Belarus (fund 126 (Office of the Plenipotentiary People's Commissariat of Foreign Trade (PCFT) of the USSR under the Council of People's Commissars of the BSSR), part of which is published in the collection of documents "Documents and materials on the history of Soviet-polish relations" [4].

The initial understanding of the topic happens in the framework of journalistic articles (I. Adamaitsis [5], I. Teumin [6]) and on the pages of the annual reviews of the activities of the Office of the Plenipotentiary People's Commissariat of Foreign Trade of the USSR under the Council of People's Commissars of the BSSR [7]. In Soviet historiography, attention should be paid to P. K. Krauchanka's dissertation [8], which considers the temporary improvement of economic Soviet-Polish relations following the signing of the "Non-Aggression Pact" in July 1932 to be natural. Modern Russian and Belarusian historiography is emphasized by the works of A. V. Barykin [9] and D. U. Ramanouski [10]. For the most part, research on the problem contains a thesis about the interdependence of political contacts and the growth of export and import operations, the expansion of scientific and cultural ties between the USSR and Poland.

The objective of the study: To show the impact of the signing of the "Non-Aggression Pact" on 25 July 1932 on the Soviet-Polish commercial relations based on the Polish periodicals of the end of July 1932 - mid-November 1933. The specified chronological frame is limited expressly: from the moment of signing the "Non-Aggression Pact" as of 25 July 1932 and until 16 November 1933, when the Polish-German Non-Aggression Convention was signed. The study attempts to trace the interdependence of the political factor on the development of commercial relations between the USSR and Poland. The main problems specified in the pages of Polish periodicals were the following: the influence of the "Non-Aggression Pact" on the commercial relations (plans to sign a trade agreement), the issue of extending the "Soviet-Polish trade" agreement, the sending of a Soviet trade delegation headed by the Deputy People's Commissar of Foreign Trade of the USSR T. I. Boeu.

III. Results and the Discussion

A day earlier of the signing of the "Non-Aggression Pact", on 19 July 1932, "Tsodzyonna gazeta gandlyova" published an interview with the Director of the Polish-Soviet Chamber of Commerce, S. Yablonski, who stated that "in the trade turnover between Poland and the USSR, the decisive role is played not so much by tariffs as by general political thoughts". In 1930, imports of goods from the USSR to Poland amounted to 45.8 million zlotys, and exports to Poland amounted to more than 2 million zlotys. In 1931, further improvement of the trade balance was observed, which amounted to 89.2 million zlotys (import) – 36, export 125 million zlotys. A very touchy subject is the lack of capital needed to finance Polish-Soviet trade [11, sheet 139].

The signing of the "Non-Aggression Pact" on 25 July 1932 between Poland and the USSR caused an immediate reaction from the official Polish periodicals. Thus, on 26 July "Gazeta polska" assessed of this Pact as "an agreement that will be of significant importance for the development of mutual trust between both parties and their ever closer peaceful coexistence. Thus, the Polish-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact becomes a factor of great importance for peaceful relations in Europe" [11, sheet 121]. In the same publication on 28 July, a thorough interview of the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland A. Zaleski with a correspondent of the "Chicago Daily News" is published. He stated that the signed Pact was an extension of the Kellogg–Briand Pact, i.e. an attempt to give this pact greater regionality, adapted to the particular regional conditions prevailing in Eastern Europe. Similar pacts were concluded simultaneously between the Baltic States and the USSR. The Pact rejected war as a national policy [11, sheet 104].

The expectations of the Polish public that the political Soviet-Polish rapprochement would influence the strengthening of bilateral economic ties are pretty clear. On 28 July 1932, " Ilyustravany kurjer codzyonny" published an interview of a Warsaw correspondent with the former Minister of Industry and Trade, Director of the Central Union of Polish Industry, M. Shydlouski, who stated "the Non-Aggression Pact is undoubtedly of great importance for our economic life. Among the obstacles to increasing the level of export and import operations, the difficulties of commodity credits were noted". The

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interview showed hopes that the political rapprochement of the countries would somehow lead to the conclusion of a trade agreement and an increase in mutual commodity circulation [11, sheet 105].

In turn, despite the positive attitude from the "Non-Aggression Pact", negative assessments were also present. On 24 August 1932, an article by U. Studnitsky was published in "Vilenskae slova". According to the author, "the neighbours of the USSR did not receive any new guarantee; it did not give any obligations that would bind it in any way. On the contrary, conclusion of the Pact with each of the limitrophe states of the USSR, resulted in the possibility of breaking the united front of the Baltic states, Poland and Romania" [11, sheet 31]. On 26 August 1932, an article by S. Rymar on the prospects of Polish-Soviet trade appeared on the pages of "Gazeta Warszawska". It lists the main obstacles to the conclusion of a trade agreement between Poland and the USSR. Among the main ones, the state monopoly of Soviet foreign trade is mentioned, which "on the one hand facilitates the agreement, but on the other hand introduces an element of uncertainty, as it often mixes campaign and political aspects with trade issues". The author concludes that after the signing of the Riga Peace Treaty, the Non-Aggression Pact, the economic rapprochement of Poland and the USSR would be the second step forward toward complete pacification of Eastern Europe [11, sheet 28].

A frequent phenomenon of Polish leading articles of the mentioned period was the posting of information that was not always verified. First, it concerned information about the beginning of Soviet-Polish negotiations on the conclusion of a trade agreement, which began immediately after the signing of the "Non-Aggression Pact". Thus, on 29 August 1932, the "Codzyonna gazeta gandlyova" contained reflections on the usefulness and practicality of the agreement and provided unverified information about the "immediate start of bilateral meetings on the preparation of a trade agreement" [11, sheet 12]. On 15 September 1932, an article by S. Natanson, a representative of Polish industrial circles, about the prospects of Polish exports to the USSR in connection with the implementation of the second five-year plan appeared on the pages of the noted periodical. The author cites several figures that testify to the rapid growth of industrial and agricultural production in the USSR. At the same time he emphasizes that the implementation of the second five-year plan "undoubtedly directs the trade policy of the Soviet government to satisfy domestic consumption and present other states with the opportunity to export to Russia". In contrast to this perspective, the author points out that precisely in the first half of 1932, severe decline in Polish exports to the USSR was noticeable, as it decreased from 72 million zlotys in the first half of 1931 up to 7.3 million zlotys in 1932. The author proves that "the absence of a trade agreement with our eastern neighbor impacts negatively on Polish economic relations" [12, sheet 144]. On 15 October, the same author proposed a settlement-compensation trade project in the pages of "Czas", which would make up 70% of Polish exports and 30% of Soviet imports on credit. For this purpose, he proposes the creation of a unique Settlement Chamber (Clearing House) and a syndicate of Polish financial institutions with a capital of 30 million zlotys. S. Natanson predicts the volume of Polish exports to the USSR at 250 million zlotys, and imports into Poland from the USSR at 170 million zlotys per year [12, sheet 79].

One of the problems that Polish newspapers drew attention to was the drop in the volume of Polish-Soviet trade in the second half of 1932 compared to the first half of 1931 and the same period in 1931. On 11 November 1932, "Gazeta polska" attempted to find the reason for this event. Among the prerequisites are "excessive dependence of Polish and Soviet imports on the German market", the desire of the Soviet party to provide long-term credit, and "the absence of such goods for the Soviet export to Poland, the sale of which would be permanently ensured in Poland". On 29 November 1932, "Gazeta polska gaspadarcza" also notes "the catastrophic drop in Polish-Soviet trade, which amounted to only about 30 million zlotys in 9 months of 1932 against 161 million last year". At the same time, it is noted that "the reduction of Soviet exports to Poland corresponds to the general reduction of all Soviet exports.

Meanwhile, Polish exports to the USSR have recently declined incomparably more than Polish exports. As a result of the extreme poorness of the vocabulary of Polish exports, the latter very strongly feel the various restrictions of Soviet orders". At the same time, it is indicated that a significant part of the blame falls on the representatives of Polish industry themselves, who underestimated the importance of the USSR as a sales market, starting negotiations on the placement of their products on the Soviet market only under the pressure of a sharp economic depression [12, sheet 130].

For bilateral discussion of trade problems, at the end of November 1932, the magazine "USSR and Poland" began to be published in Warsaw, with articles in Russian and Polish. The editors define the purpose of the periodic as "the desire to promote the renewal of cooperation between Poland and the USSR in the context of economic relations", and consider the program of their magazine to be "a business discussion on the topics of practical trade policy and practical information" for business circles. The magazine consists of several articles by Soviet and Polish trade and industrial figures, and several pages of advertisements. On 7 December 1932, this magazine published an article by F. Asel, a representative of "Saupolgandl", which strongly emphasized all the difficulties

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encountered by Soviet trade in Poland, the default of the Soviet trade balance with Poland, and answered the Polish periodicals which accused the USSR of excessive demands for credit. The article establishes the complete dependence of the further development of Soviet-Polish trade on Polish trade policy. The possibility of concluding a new contract for supplies to the USSR based on of commodity compensations was considered. First of all, the issue of import quotas for Soviet goods to Poland for 1933 and the financing of orders in Poland should be resolved.

Negotiations between Polish and Soviet representatives on extending the agreement with the "Soviet-Polish trade" became a significant news event. On 31 December 1932, the "Codzyonna gazeta gandlyova" noted that Polish business circles showed increased interest in these bilateral meetings because "during these negotiations, the possibilities of revitalizing and deepening industrial and trade relations between Poland and the USSR are simultaneously discussed". In the opinion of the newspaper, these possibilities are very significant and so far very little used. However, the newspaper expresses its fear that "in its desire to increase Polish exports, the Polish party would not make very far-reaching concessions, which consist in a liberal interpretation of Soviet imports", which could cause a "dumping price policy on the part of the Soviets", would hurt some branches of Polish industry, "for example, on the Polish chemical industry, which is facing the threat of Soviet imports". Therefore, the newspaper calls for "negotiations with the Soviets to be conducted with great caution" [13, sheet 454]. This issue was discussed on the pages of the "Codzyonna gazeta gandlyova" on 6 and 11 January 1933. In turn, on 18 January 1933, "Gazeta Warszawska" noted the difficulties that arose during the negotiations between the representatives of "Polish-russian" and " Soviet-Polish trade" [13, sheet 434, 428]. According to the publication, the critical problem was the determination of the economic exchange plan between Poland and the Soviets within the framework of the activities of the Mixed Import-Export Company "Soviet-Polish trade". The Soviet delegation made several proposals related to the recognition by the Soviet party of customs benefits for the import of Soviet goods in Poland. The Polish party agreed and met some of these demands. At the same time, Polish representatives agreed to reduce exports from Poland to the USSR in 1933 in 500 million zlotys. The main obstacle to the completion of negotiations was the issue of financial credit to 250,000 dollars. This Polish proposal was vehemently opposed by the Soviets and eventually caused a break in the negotiations [13, sheet 356]. Alongside that, on 20 January 1933, "Gazeta Warszawska" noted the "difference in points of view between the Polish and Soviet delegations based on the demands of the Soviet representatives to maintain the financial credit at the former levels" as the reasons for the breakdown of the negotiations on the extension of the " Soviet-Polish trade" agreement [13, sheet 349]. On 30 January 1933, "Nova Tribuna" contained an interview with the Deputy Trade Representative of the USSR in Poland, M. I. Nyumberg, who noted that an agreement had been reached between the Polish and Soviet parties, all controversial points had been removed, "the ground is being provided for re-negotiations. They should start soon in Moscow" [13, sheet 310]. As a result, on 17 February, the agreement with "Soviet-Polish trade" was extended for five years.

According to the interview of the Head of the Delegation of Polish industrialists, E. Ivanouski, with the Iskra Agency regarding the export-import plan of the "Soviet-Polish trade" for 1933, its main content is to determine the number and nomenclature of goods that will be exported from Poland to the USSR and vice versa from the USSR to Poland. "In the current year, the negotiations on the extension of the agreement on "Soviet-Polish trade" went on for quite a long time, about four months, which should be explained mainly by the need to introduce new goods into the mutual exchange. If we are talking about exports from Poland to the USSR, then in 1933, according to the export plan, the Polish party will be able to export goods worth approximately 20 million zlotys, while in the first half of the year, textile goods, as well as agricultural products, will be included in the nomenclature for the first time. As for imports from the USSR to Poland, it provides for the import of goods of Soviet origin of about 10 million zlotys, while the nomenclature includes fish, skins, cloth, mushrooms and for the first time, automobile tires.

The visit of the Soviet trade delegation to Poland from 1 to 19 May 1933 was an essential piece of news. Its members included Deputy People's Commissar of Foreign Trade of the USSR T. I. Boeu, members of the PCFT collegium A. M. Tamaryn, M. I. Firsau, a chairperson of "Technapramimpart", "Sayuzmetimpart", "Stankaimpart". During of this visit, there were meetings with the Director of "Soviet-Polish trade" Yu. Ziabitski, the Director of the Chamber of Commerce of Poland and the USSR S. Yablonski, a visit to some Polish metallurgical enterprises. Members of the Soviet delegation (M. I. Firsau, T. I. Boeu) gave an extensive interview on the pages of "Kurjer polski" and "Codzyonna gazeta gandliova".

IV. Conclusions

The normalization of bilateral relations, which followed the signing of the "Non-Aggression Pact", became an additional impulse to the improving of Soviet-Polish trade relations. However, one cannot exaggerate the political factor, except for the expansion of the list of goods (at the expense of the products of the metallurgical, chemical, and textile industries), the determination of the size of credit benefits for the Soviet party, the extension of the agreement for "Soviet-Polish

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trade". There is no sharp increase in trade between the parties, on the contrary, there is a clear drop in its level in the second half of 1932 compared to the first half of the year and the same period in 1931. This is clearly visible from the materials of the Polish periodicals of the end of July 1932 - mid-November 1933. The main reason for this state of affairs was the lack of necessary means for financing Polish-Soviet trade turnover, the general decline of the world economy (severe economic depression), and the state monopoly of Soviet foreign trade.

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