

September 24, 1951

SUBJECT: Negotiations in Paris between ABRAMTCHIK, President of the Byelorussian National Rada (BNR) and KERENSKI representing the Council for Liberation of the Peoples of Russia.

Following a preliminary exchange of views with [] regarding the possibility for the Byelorussian National Rada to adhere to the Council for the Liberation of the Peoples of Russia, ABRAMTCHIK, President of the Rada, discussed the conditions for the establishment of cooperation between these two organizations with KERENSKI, who acted as representative of the Council. Abramtchik expressed himself highly gratified at the turn taken by these negotiations and the results achieved and stated that Kerenski had shown himself to be less intransigent than Abramtchik had been led to expect by rumor and Kerenski's reputation. Consequently, in the opinion of Abramtchik, there were possibilities that an understanding would be reached between the Rada and the Council provided the latter agreed to accept certain conditions submitted by the Rada. Specific points made by Abramtchik with regard to the two conversations he had with Kerenski are given below:

1. Relations between Great Russians and Byelorussians.

The recognition of the Byelorussian people as an independent people and negotiation with them as equals are the developments which proved particularly gratifying to Abramtchik. That alone, he pointed out, is a tremendous step forward since his conversations with Kerenski were the first occasion in 30 years when Great Russian and Byelorussian exiles had conducted serious political negotiations. He expressed himself particularly satisfied that no publicity had so far been given to the program approved by the Council. He saw in this discretion another indication of political wisdom since he was given to understand by Kerenski that it was a step decided by the Council with a view to make it possible to amend the program should this be desired by the representatives of the other peoples invited to join the movement.

While Kerenski refrained from reading the program to Abramtchik, various problems relating thereto were discussed during the conversations. There is no doubt, according to Abramtchik, that points such as "collaboration for struggle against Bolshevism" would meet with the wholesale approval of the Byelorussian exiles. Other points, among them the title of the organization, found Abramtchik less responsive. He declared, however, that a change in the title could possibly be introduced by means of negotiation. He is willing to concede to the Great Russians that they are not responsible for Bolshevism and its policies, but insists that the Rada be admitted to the Council as representing an independent Byelorussian state, and that the question of the ultimate fate of Byelorussia, whether it should be an independent

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country or an integral part of Russia, be postponed until the liberation of Byelorussian territories and the holding of a plebiscite. (Privately, in his conversations with Embassy officials, Abramtchik has expressed the views that he does not believe total independence of any country in Eastern Europe to be possible after its liberation, but that all countries would be federated in one unit in accordance with political trends now popular in the West of Europe.)

One of the most important problems treated during the interviews between Kerenski and Abramtchik pertains to the borders of Byelorussia. In this connection, Abramtchik raised the question of the Council's actual views on the subject. He said that Kerenski had made no specific statement with regard to the territories inhabited by Byelorussians, while SOLOVIEV in conversations with Dr. STANKOVIC, a Byelorussian representative in Germany, had limited the field to "territories occupied by the Soviet Union in 1939". Such limitations are considered with disfavor by Abramtchik, who sees therein an attempt to transform the Byelorussian question into an internal Russian affair. (In this connection, Abramtchik expressed his regret that negotiations with Byelorussian representatives were conducted simultaneously by several Council representatives and his hope that in the future following his complaints on the subject to Kerenski, these conversations would be carried on by one duly authorized person only.) In the opinion of Abramtchik, the question of borders should be left open and extremely vague, as was done by the Poles who recognized Byelorussia de jure (by writing a letter to Abramtchik addressed to him as the President of the Byelorussian Rada), but refrained from concluding an agreement concerning its borders.

2. Approval of Council and adherence thereto by Byelorussian exiles.

In his conversations with Kerenski, Abramtchik cautioned him against rashness and excessive speed. The Byelorussian exiles had been subjected to anti-Russian propaganda for many years and one false step in attempting to bring the two groups of exiles together might bring catastrophe. He pointed out that he could not sign any agreement with the Council or give his oral support thereto without first obtaining the necessary authority from the Rada. Otherwise, he would be considered a traitor to the Byelorussian cause and would probably be compelled to resign from the Rada.

Abramtchik outlined his plans in dealing with this question as follows: in October, he will discuss the possibility of cooperating with the Council with the Byelorussian exiles in Paris, Belgium, and England. He will then call together the Sixth Session of the Rada, which was to have met in December, 1951, in the United States, but which he will convoke instead for November, 1951, and will request the Rada, the members of which are for the most part residents of the United States (70 members of a total of 120 in exile, and a former total of 160), for authority to adhere to the Council should the latter accept the conditions presented by the Byelorussians.

3. Byelorussian representation at the next meeting of the Council.

Abrantchik turned down the suggestion of Kerenski to attend as a representative of Byelorussia the Council's meeting in late September or early October, 1951. His presence at the meeting could give rise to misunderstanding and might cause unfavorable comment on the part of the Byelorussians, since he was the President of the National Rada. He agreed, however, to appoint two Byelorussian representatives to the meeting in the capacity of observers, but refused Kerenski's request that these representatives act as spokesmen for the Byelorussians on the grounds that they lacked sufficient authority and could note complications by a mis-statement of Byelorussian views. The observers whom Abrantchik plans to delegate to the meeting both reside in Germany. They are Dr. Stanislas STANKEVIC and BORTNIK, editor of BAIKOVSHCHINA, a Byelorussian publication appearing in Germany.