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THIRTY YEARS LATER (PERSONAL)

Abstract. The article outlines the making of Ukraine's diplomatic service as seen by a person who was directly involved in the process as well as the entire arduous journey during which a new generation of Ukrainian diplomats was born. The author recounts his trips abroad and the way they influenced the future of the Ukrainian state in the world arena along with meetings with brilliant young diplomats and anti-Ukrainian KGBeasts. The article also contains his stance with regard to the steps taken by the first presidents, which had an impact on the role and future lot of Ukraine in the context of the world community. Mention is made of the organisational stage in the formation of Ukrainian diplomacy, search for specialists to be employed at the MFA, as well as challenges that confronted the already independent and sovereign Ukraine.

Keywords: Ukraine, diplomats, independence, MFA, KGB, international relations, nuclear weapons.

After the restoration of its independence and statehood in 1991, Ukraine has annually celebrated 22 December as Diplomatic Service Day. On this day in 1917, Volodymyr Vynnychenko, Head of the UPR General Secretariat, signed the Draft Law on the Establishment of the General Secretariat for International Affairs, which was immediately approved at the Cabinet session. Oleksandr Shulhin took over as head of the General Secretariat.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of Ukraine's revived diplomatic service. The making of modern Ukrainian diplomacy is as interesting as it is exciting. Its history can be found in archival documents stored not only in Ukraine but also in archives of the U.S., Canada, Great Britain, and many other countries in Europe, Asia, and Latin America. The latest history features in documents of the Verkhovna Rada, the Office of the President, the Cabinet of Ministers, memories of diplomats, and people's deputies of the first convocation. It is enlightening not only for students of history but also for the new generation of Ukrainian diplomats and everyone interested in the history of international relations of our state in the nascent years of its making after the proclamation of independence.

Neither will I stand idly by but rather share my own page from the history of independent Ukraine associated with the making of its diplomatic service, where I happened to be directly involved.

As a point of reference, I would start from the late 1970s, when after almost 15 years away studying at the Moscow Institute of International Relations –

as the eponymous department at Kyiv State University was temporarily dismantled – and then working at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR, my wish to return to the native city of Kyiv was finally granted.

Truth be told, as early as the late 1960s, after graduating from the institute, I had also arranged to pass my pre-graduate internship in Kyiv, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the UkrSSR under the guidance of Volodymyr Vasylenko, then associate professor and now full professor and ambassador. Nor can I fail to mention Ambassador Oleksandr Slipchenko, who then served as second secretary. My internship was formally supervised by now late Ivan Hryshchenko, who came across as an unpretentious person and a Ukrainian who spoke his mother tongue naturally, with a pronounced Dnipro Ukraine accent. His son, Kostiantyn, who came from the Russian MFA to Kyiv after Ukraine's independence was proclaimed, carved out a meteoric career during Leonid Kuchma's tenure, becoming foreign minister and, later on, an active member of the pro-Russian political bloc 'Ne tak!' ('Not Yes!'), followed by his membership in the Party of Regions during the presidency of Viktor Yanukovych, who appointed him Vice Prime Minister of Ukraine.

As incomprehensible as it may be for those in the high-rise building of the Soviet Foreign Ministry at Smolenska Square, there is hardly any need to explain my desire to permanently return to Ukraine to those for whom this country is forever the homeland. It bears mentioning that my national consciousness was formed in early childhood, courtesy of my parents. I also extend my sincere appreciation to teachers and my school, some of whose pedagogues were eyewitnesses to the Ukrainian national revolution and sometimes ventured to share their memories with us.

Hence, in 1979, I managed to get transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the UkrSSR, which primarily dealt with activities in international organisations, most notably the UN, its offices in Geneva, and UNESCO headquartered in Paris. Despite the fact that the UkrSSR did not have its own foreign policy and given Moscow's viewing the Ukrainian Ministry as an additional handy tool in Soviet multilateral diplomacy, primarily for voting in appropriate international organisations, the team in the mansion at Pylyp Orlyk Street, formerly known as Chekisty Street, was immensely close-knit, patriotic, and willing to take any suitable opportunity to disassociate itself from the Moscow-dictated track and emphasise its Ukraineness – all of that in spite of the wakeful eye of the international department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine and the Ukrainian branch of the KGB at Volodymyrska Street. In some measure, the forging of patriotic identity was also facilitated by the fact that the ministry was accumulating a library and an archive of printed publications from Ukrainian expatriates in the U.S. and Western European countries, which could be used to obtain objective data on Stalinist repressions, the Holodomor, the truthful history of Ukraine, as well as the life of the diaspora in settlement countries, its struggle against Moscow's occupation regime in Ukrainian territories.

It was then that I was fortunate enough to meet young but already brilliant Ukrainian diplomats, namely Yurii Kochubei, Mykola Makarevych, Borys Tarasiuk, Anton Buteiko, Ihor Turianskyi, Yurii Kostenko, Volodymyr Khandohii, Volodymyr Ohryzko, Serhii Mishustin, Yurii Malko, Viktor Batiuk, Serhii Borovyk, etc. Towards the end of my term of office in this team, Anatolii Zlenko, one more prominent diplomat, came back from his service in UNESCO. All of them would later become the backbone of the diplomatic service of independent Ukraine, its ambassadors, and even ministers or deputy ministers. Alas, four of them – V. Batiuk, M. Makarevych, A. Buteiko, and S. Mishustin – have shuffled off the mortal coil.

I gained an additional portion of interesting experience during a trip to the 34th session of UN General Assembly in New York as part of the Ukrainian delegation. The delegations of Ukraine, the USSR, and the Belarusian SSR worked in the same building but on different floors. One of them was reserved for Ukrainians, where in one of the rooms we worked on the speech of Minister Heorhii Shevel to be delivered from the high rostrum of the General Assembly, speeches of delegation members in appropriate committees, and draft resolutions on behalf or with the involvement of Ukraine. Given Ukraine's subjugated position, it did not come as a revelation to me that all of these documents had to be agreed upon with, as we put it, Muscovites. I was amazed, however, that all of these projects, including the speech of our minister, were submitted only to 'minnows' of the USSR mission ranked no higher than first secretary, yet in the KGB uniform. Them being well below the level of Moscow celestials, it underlined the insignificance of the Ukrainian delegation, disregard and contempt to Ukrainians.

All of us felt such an attitude, which must have been another contributor to our cohesion and immunity to Muscovite superciliousness. Ukrainians, for their part, distanced themselves from arrogant Muscovites wherever possible, avoiding unnecessary meetings with them.

In spare time, we familiarised ourselves with places of interest in New York, looking over our shoulders to see if KGB bloodhounds were tailing us. We would go into the prohibited area in Downtown, inhabited by 'dreadful emigrants', 'Ukrainian bourgeois nationalists', St Volodymyr's Cathedral, and a local Ukrainian bookstore. We knew the path thanks to Yurii Kochubei, who had worked in New York for a couple of years prior. Around the same time, a part of our delegation went on an excursion to Washington to visit a memorial to the Great Kobzar in the historic city centre, sponsored by the U.S. Government and the Ukrainian expatriate community and unveiled by U.S. Presidents Dwight Eisenhower and Harry Truman. On our way, we stopped by at Philadelphia to see the Ukrainian blue-and-yellow flag billowing in the breeze. That trip came as an additional impetus to our national pride, the sense of belonging to the Ukrainian nation esteemed and cherished in the American continent, and the belief that Ukraine will live, despite the Kremlin's oppression and the Muscovite colonial yoke.

The aforedescribed period of my brief and, through no fault of my own, interrupted activity in this genuinely wonderful Ukrainian and Ukrainian-language team can be defined as 'psychological maturation' of the Ukrainian diplomatic service.

Regrettably, at this part of my life the work in the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in Kyiv in general was very short-lived. In late 1979, the Consulate-General of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in Kyiv arranged the opening of an art exhibition in Kreshchatyk Street, which brought together representatives of the Ukrainian cultural intelligentsia and the consular corps in Kyiv. Also in attendance were American diplomats from the forward team of the US Consulate-General, which was soon to have opened, but never did so due to the Soviet incursion into Afghanistan. I, too, was allowed to be present. 'Allowed' is decidedly the word, as it is my understanding that the directive on the presence of Ukrainian officials at such events was approved somewhere in the high-level cabinets of the international department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine and in the KGB of the USSR at Volodymyrska Street.

During the exhibition, I came over to American diplomats to have a brief conversation. As it turned out in a few days, this short talk with U.S. representatives in Kyiv would be a defining moment in my career for the next ten years. A week after this minor – as I thought it was – event, when the working day was finished, I was approached by a man, who showed me his KGB identification card and offered to go the Dnipro Hotel, at the present-day European Square. In one of its suits, probably reserved for the organisation, I was given a third degree: 'Why did you come up to the Americans? Who allowed you to? What did you talk about?' The questions asked were so inane as to make me laugh – or amazed at the KGBeast's folly. Once it dawned on him, he ordered me to come again, in a few days, for a 'conversation', this time to the Moscow Hotel, the former name of the Ukraine Hotel. This time, there were two KGBeasts sitting, who explicitly offered me to cooperate by watching and reporting about conversations and meetings of Ukrainians with American diplomats in Kyiv. At that moment, I made up my mind to act dumb and insisted that I could do that only if so instructed by the authorities of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The whole situation assumed the look of a tragicomedy, with them harping on the same thing and me returning the favour. Eventually, after an hour of exhortation and threats, the two fools, their faces red with rage, shouted, 'Do you take us for idiots?', and hissed that I would never work in Kyiv again.

On the very next day, I was invited to Minister Heorhii Shevel, who together with his then-deputy Volodymyr Martynenko, with eyes cast downward, informed me that I had to leave the ministry and had better move away from Kyiv as soon as possible. That was how I became unemployed for some time and was forced to return to Moscow.

There, the pressure of the KGB was far weaker than in national republics, especially if compared with Ukraine, which was considered the most reactionary union republic in the USSR. For it was here that obsequious and shape-shifting menials with the Central Committee and KGB identification cards went out of their way to please their Muscovite master in their allegiance by persecuting dissidents. When in Moscow, I was fortunate enough to meet Les Taniuk, who had been similarly forced to leave Ukraine and work in Moscow-based theatres, fleeing from the Ukrainian KGB. At that time, there was a popular saying, 'When Moscow sneezes, Kyiv spikes a fever'. We first met each other in a cellar of an abandoned house in Moscow, at a regular organisational sitting of the local Slavutych Society of Ukrainian Culture. In the late 1980s, a soft breeze of Gorbachev's perestroika could already be felt, and patriotically-minded Ukrainians studying or working in Moscow decided, albeit guardedly, to find their own form of self-organisation. Apropos of this meeting, it saw a very active involvement of Yevhen Siaryi, who in the latter half of the 2000s became consul of Ukraine in Munchen (unfortunately, he passed away due to severe illness). Occasionally, these meetings would be visited by the now popular journalist, political scientist, and analyst Vitalii Portnikov, then a student of the Department of Journalism of Lomonosov Moscow State University.

After a while, I was able to took a job as junior research fellow at a scientific laboratory engaged in applying mathematical methods in foreign policy forecasts; it was here, too, that I wrote my PhD thesis on international legal issues in regional security systems, which I defended at the Diplomatic Academy.

One may therefore be tempted to ask why I am giving such a detailed account of the aforementioned events. The reason is to illustrate, with experience of my own, the extent to which the KGB jaws and the all-seeing eye of Lubyanka along with its servants from Volodymyrska Street seized the sprouts of self-conscious and patriotic Ukrainian, though UkrSSRian, diplomacy; to show how KGBeasts went out of their way to squash, smash, and strangle any signs of Ukraineness. As I later came to understand, the time of my exile from Kyiv coincided with the launching of a new wave of repressions against Ukrainians in Ukraine, with the blessing of Volodymyr Shcherbytskyi and Valentyn Malanchuk, the so-called secretary of the Communist Party of Ukraine on ideology. This period of repressions was later named after him.

The latter half of the 1980s saw the beginning of the so-called Gorbachev-led Perestroika. The parliamentary election to the Supreme Council of the USSR was won by some representatives of patriotic forces. Meanwhile, Baltic republics started to explicitly demand the restoration of their independence and liberation from the Muscovite yoke. Ukraine saw the emergence and full-scale development of the People's Movement and the resumption of the Prosvita (Enlightenment) Society, now known as Shevchenko Ukrainian Language Society. Against the background of the growing national sentiment, there took place an election to the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Representatives of national and patriotic forces, of whom 125 were elected to the parliament, formed a People's Council, which opposed the 239 Group consisting of the old communist establishment (that would now be referred to as *sovky* (soves) or *vatnyky* (cotton padded jackets)). Though relatively outnumbered, the People's Council (comprising former political prisoners repressed in the past for supporting Ukraine's independence, prominent representatives of the Ukrainian creative intelligentsia, adherents of decommunisation in Ukraine) managed to push through the adoption of the Declaration of State Sovereignty of Ukraine in July 1990.

The dawn of the restored Ukrainian independence was getting closer. Realising this and understanding that the KGB machine in the UkrSSR was in its dying bed, I immediately returned to Kyiv and, thanks to Les Taniuk, Ivan Drach, and Dmytro Pavlychko (whom I met as early as my first term of office in Kyiv), I was appointed chief consultant of the secretariat of the Commission (later on – Committee) on Foreign Affairs. Back then, the secretariat was chaired by future Ambassador Heorhii Cherniavskyi, who mainly dealt with protocol issues for the Verkhovna Rada. Under Dmytro Pavlychko's watchful guidance, I immersed into political and foreign political affairs. Those were fantastic times, when the history of Ukraine was so tangible that one could literally hold it in hands; when the tiniest step could turn it into either the path to dependence from Moscow or place it in a rigidly mounted vice of the Kremlin labelled the 'renewed Union'.

The cabinet of Dmytro Pavlychko, Chairman of the Commission of Foreign Affairs, first located at the premises of the Ukrainian Language Society and later at Bankova Street and turned into a sort of a headquarters of the People's Council, regularly hosted members of its leadership, who discussed and resolved matters on the further advancement towards Ukraine's coveted independence. Among them, a lion's share was occupied by issues of international politics. These events enjoyed a close involvement of Professor Volodymyr Vasylenko, the future Ambassador of Ukraine to Benelux countries and, later, Ambassador to Great Britain and non-resident Ambassador to Ireland, Representative of Ukraine to the UN Human Rights Council (2006–10). It was under his editorship that the international legal section of the Declaration on State Sovereignty of Ukraine was prepared and, in a year's time, the Act on the Proclamation of the Independence of Ukraine authored by Levko Lukianenko.

It is worth noting that voting for the Act was not unimpeded. The majority in the Verkhovna Rada Hall was comprised of communists. Stanislav Hurenko, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, served as member of parliament, Leonid Kravchuk, Secretary for Ideology of the Communist Party of Ukraine, was Head of Parliament, while the People's Council was in the minority. However, the tenacity of its members, their resolve, passion, and, to some extent, the fear of the communist faction in the Verkhovna Rada due to events in Moscow, the attempted coup d'état organised by the State Committee on the State of Emergency, and the advent to power of Borys Yeltsin contributed to the fact that on the 24 August 1991 the Act was endorsed by an overwhelming majority of MPs.

Mr Kravchuk, however, was afraid of putting it to vote until the very last moment. Psychologically pressured by Dmytro Pavlychko and Ivan Zaiats, he was forced to do so. The latter allegedly shouted to him, 'Put it to vote, or you'll get into trouble'. It is possible that a different phrase was used, of which I am not sure. This prompted Kravchuk, who, in his usual manner, had prepared an alternative forum on the off chance, to put forward a compromise decision on holding a referendum on 1 December.

This trade-off left Ukraine and its diplomacy up in the air. With Yeltsin vehemently insisting on the supremacy of his power and turning the erstwhile RSFSR into a separate state, and Mikhail Gorbachev, still President of the USSR, fiddling with turning the late USSR into a renewed 'Commonwealth of Independent States', Moscow preserved a relative diarchy.

It is worth recalling that a few days before the Act was adopted, U.S. President George H. W. Bush came to Kyiv on his way from Moscow to deliver his famous Chicken Kyiv speech in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. In the airport, he was accompanied by Gennadiy Yanayev, Gorbachev's forever inebriated deputy, whom I was instructed to delay until Chief of Protocol Heorhii Cherniavskyi had got G. Bush and L. Kravchuk in a separate car, without Yanayev. And so I did, causing the Vice President of the agonizing USSR to be late for the negotiations in Kyiv and wait behind the door until L. Kravchuk and G. Bush had done the talking.

The supreme body of power in Ukraine at that time was the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. As repeatedly stated by Ivan Pliushch, Chairman of the VRU, 'After Kravchuk, only God is above us'. Therefore, all the state-building activity during the period, including that in foreign policy, was concentrated under the parliamentary dome and its committees. That was when I got to know Mr Kravchuk better, who was always hesitant on whether to go to Gorbachev or follow Yeltsin's example and pursue the path of independence. It was on numerous occasions that Dmytro Pavlychko took me to Ivan Pliushch's cabinet, where we would have a hard time convincing Kravchuk that there was no way back and that the wording 'Commonwealth of Independent States' concealed nothing but the old USSR. We enjoyed crucial and tremendous support from the secretariat of Volodymyr Hryniov, Deputy Head of the Verkhovna Rada, and the head of his secrertariat, Oleh Bai, soon-to-be minister counsellor of the first Embassy of Ukraine in Moscow and, later, Consul-General of Ukraine in Kazakhstan. The matter was finally put to rest in November, when Bohdan Horyn invited me to the cabinet of Vasyl Durdunets, First Deputy Head of the VRU, where we managed to convince the latter and Leonid Kravchuk that all thoughts and offers of the president of the agonizing USSR had to be set aside in favour of moving along the chosen path of building an independent Ukrainian state.

The memorable thing from that time was Kravchuk's handshaking manner. His little palm was somewhat soft and inanimate. He would hold his hand out straight, motionless, inserting his palm into yours without any sign of emotion. Psychology-wise, such a handshaking manner indicates insincerity and craftiness of the person concerned. Nevertheless, national and patriotic statements by the head of the Verkhovna Rada, which were becoming increasingly pronounced in the run-up to the referendum, told an altogether different story. It was only later, after his refusal to meet with Ihor Kasatonov, Commander of the USSR Black Sea Fleet, and go to Sevaslopol for taking the oath of allegiance to Ukraine from the fleet, which led to the demolition and plunder of the world's biggest merchant navy inherited by Ukraine, coercive introduction, upon his order, of priests and monks of the Moscow Patriarchate to the Kyiv Monastery of the Caves and Pochaiv Monastery, despite the resistance of Ukrainian patriots, and his joining the Medvedchuk-led 'Not Yes!' bloc that I realised that psychologists had been right after all.

In all fairness, it has to be noted here that the first President of Ukraine cannot be accused of renunciating nuclear weapons, the third largest stockpile globally at the time. Despite immense pressure, especially from the short-sighted American diplomacy led by G. Bush, Snr, Leonid Kravchuk was able to avoid a final decision on this matter for a long time, with support from the patriotically-minded wing of the Verkhovna Rada. I reckon that all the blame for the hasty nuclear disarmament of our state – without receiving equivalent dividends at that (of which many could be negotiated) – lies squarely with Leonid Kuchma and his closest associate, Dmytro Tabachnyk. The latter openly served the interests of the Kremlin and worked in an anti-Ukrainian spirit. It was at this time that tactical nuclear weapons were transferred, in contemporary parlance, in a turbo regime to Russia; on top of that, it was done well in advance of the deadline, to the astonishment of Moscow. At about the same time, there took place the hasty signing of the Budapest Memorandum with its weak security guarantees for nuclear-free Ukraine, Ukraine's hasty accession to the Non-Proliferation Treaty, and Ukraine's acquiescence to Russia's admission to the UN Security Council in a breach of the UN Charter. Let me stress that Ukraine could have negotiated a far better deal. Some Western European diplomats were amazed at such short-sighted pliancy on the part of Ukrainians.

It bears mentioning that during those first challenging months of restoring our independence, Ukrainian diplomacy seemingly did not fit into state building processes. There was neither organisational structure, nor overseas missions; the renewed MFA did not even have decent premises. This stemmed from an old habit of not taking too much initiative to avoid punishment, instead waiting for instructions from on high.

The national and democratic part of the Verkhovna Rada felt far less constrained, both legally and psychologically: It used all the opportunities it had at its disposal to put pressure on the communist majority and Kravchuk himself in terms of so-called red lines, due to which no one could deviate from the path of state building. The Commission and, later, the Committee on Foreign Affairs in the first convocation of the Verkhovna Rada consisted of outstanding figures, including Dmytro Pavlychko, Chairman, a former political prisoner Bohdan Horyn, Deputy Chairman, joined by such members of parliament as Ivan Drach, Roman Lubkivskyi, and scholar Taras Kyiak. The commission enjoyed the involvement of leaders of the People's Movement, particularly Leontii Sunduliak.

Back then, the commission sought, to the extent possible, to at least partially mend the mistakes of the newly elected president. By joint efforts, it managed to convince Ivan Pliushch, Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada, not to put the Treaty on the Establishment of the CIS signed in Białowieża Forest to vote as contravening Ukrainian legislation, which prohibited the accession to supranational organisations, and define Ukraine's status as a 'founder' and not a member of the CIS. By the way, Moscow did not like the step at all.

At that time, the aforementioned commission had a very close interaction with the newly appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine. He sought support from members of parliament in funding and building the ministry, as well as reserving for the MFA its current premises at Mykhailivska Square in Kyiv. Almost everything had to be agreed upon – from the network of Ukrainian diplomatic missions, consular institutions, and categories of diplomatic ranks to the design of Ukrainian diplomatic passports and appointment of Ukrainian ambassadors.

As regards parliamentary diplomacy, Dmytro Pavlychko was invited to attend a congress of the European Party in Salzburg, where he had an off-the-books meeting with NATO Secretary-General Manfred Wörner and already then brought up the issue of Ukraine's accession to NATO. I was also present at the meeting and heard Mr Wörner ask in reply, 'And what will Russia say?' It was clear that, in spite of everything, the West continued to focus on Russia. Together with Bohdan Horyn, I was fortunate enough to partake in the session of the North Atlantic

Assembly (currently NATO Parliamentary Assembly) in Banff, Alberta, to which Ukraine was invited, and the submission of Ukraine's application to be admitted to the Assembly as an associate member. In addition, I was also part of the Ukrainian parliamentary delegation led by Ivan Pliushch at the session in Budapest, where Ukraine was admitted to the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

Work was also being done on building bilateral relations. One month prior to the referendum on 1 December, a delegation from Croatia led by Franjo Tudjman paid an unofficial visit to the Verkhovna Rada and the commission. The country had proclaimed its independence and separation from Yugoslavia in June 1991. However, just as Ukraine, it long remained unrecognised by the outside world. Croatians insisted on effecting mutual recognition as soon as possible, as it would enable them to put a little pressure on Western diplomacy. At the same time, mutual consent was reached on reciprocal recognition. On 5 December, Croatia recognised Ukraine, a move mirrored by Kyiv on 11 December.

In those months, decisions had to be made intuitively. As I have already mentioned, at the session of the North Atlantic Assembly in Banff we were invited to obtain associate membership. Bohdan Horyn and me virtually wrote a jury-rigged application to that effect. Truth be told, we ran this past Leonid Kravchuk, at which time Ukraine obtained the membership.

In early 1992, the Moldovan parliament invited Ukrainian MPs to Chișinău for discussing matters of bilateral ties. Our delegation to Moldova consisted of Bohdan Horyn, Deputy Chairman of the Commission of Foreign Affairs, and me, head of the secretariat of the said commission. Quite expectedly for us, the Moldovan side asked firmly about a mutual exchange of territories. They proposed that we concede part of Odesa region west of the Dnister up to the Danube, including Izmail, the so-called Southern Bessarabiia, whilst Moldova would give up lands eastwards of the Dnister, Transnistria. We rejected the proposal immediately and, following a few hours of negotiations, swiftly returned to Kyiv.

The Verkhovna Rada and the Commission of Foreign Affairs were almost daily visited by guests from the territories and countries of the former USSR. Among the most active were representatives of Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Caucasian republics located in Russia, Abkhazia, and Transnistria. All of them requested Ukraine to recognise their independence, whereas Transnistria also offered to become part of Ukraine. With Ukrainians steadfastly insisting on the observance of the borders inviolability principle, the process did not go beyond the talking stage.

The Verkhovna Rada and the Commission of Foreign Affairs were daily visited by reporters of the world's leading media, among which particularly notable was a young correspondent of *Financial Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Economist* and the incumbent Vice Prime Minister of Canada, Chrystia Freeland. By the way, children of some second-wave emigrants carved out a brilliant political and economic career after the proclamation of Ukraine's independence, thanks to which the West was reminded of the existence of quite a sizeable Ukrainian nation, with a no small country of its own. At Boryspil Airport, I also happened to meet Zbigniew Brzeziński, his son Ian, and Henry Kissinger. Back then, Americans flew by their own planes and with their own fuel, which Ukraine did not possess in the early months of independence. The Brzezińskis ardently supported the strengthening of our state's independence, which they often underscored during negotiations at the Verkhovna Rada. During our conversation in the car on the way from Boryspil and back to the airport, Z. Brzeziński repeatedly stressed that the U.S. would support our country if it decidedly followed the path of democratic transition. Returning to his VIP plane, he asked me: 'What would a Ukrainian choose: independence of bread?' Given the terrible economic situation in the country, I hesitated before answering, to which Brzeziński replied, 'And a Polish would answer at once: independence'. Thanks God that in 1991 Ukrainians, in responding to the same question, chose independence without hesitation. As for H. Kissinger, either due to advanced age or his admiration for Moscow, he would sometimes nap at meetings and did not seem to be excited about the restoration of Ukraine's independence. His behaviour resembled that of another American, President George Bush, Sr, with his Chichen Kyiv speech a few days prior to the proclamation of Ukraine's independence.

Already in the very first days of independence, the commission embarked on developing the fundamentals of the diplomatic service of what this time was the Ukrainian state. There were drafted and adopted the Laws of Ukraine on State Succession of Ukraine and on the Application of Treaties in the Territory of Ukraine. Anatolii Zlenko was appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs. In all fairness, another person beating down doors of the commission was Anatolii Merkulov, formerly head of the Foreign Affairs Division at the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, but no one took this option seriously.

That was the beginning of the organisational phase in the formation of Ukrainian diplomacy. The kernel of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the new state consisted of such already seasoned Ukrainian diplomats as Hennadii Udovenko, Yurii Kochubei, Mykola Makarevych, Borys Tarasiuk, Anton Buteiko, Ihor Turianskyi, Yurii Kostenko, Volodymyr Khandohii, Volodymyr Ohryzko, Viktor Kyryk, Serhii Mishustin, Yurii Malko, Viktor Batiuk, Serhii Borovyk, Borys Korneienko, and many other (if I have left out anyone's name, I hope you will forgive me). Nonetheless, this quantity of staff was not sufficient to form a fully-fledged foreign ministry of the independent state and establish foreign diplomatic and consular missions. Before independence, as I have already mentioned, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had focused solely on multilateral diplomacy in international organisations. After 1991, it faced the task of gaining competence in bilateral diplomacy, too.

With a view to finding a new personnel reserve, it was suggested that we appeal to scientific and educational establishments. The basic requirements were the knowledge of foreign languages, international relations, and international law. The ministry then admitted to its ranks Professor Volodymyr Vasylenko, a long-standing member of the People's Movement, an outstanding student of international law, and co-author of the Declaration of State Sovereignty of Ukraine, Act on the Proclamation of the Independence of Ukraine, and other fundamental legal acts on matters of nation-building and foreign policy. He became the first ambassador to Benelux countries. Serhii Komisarenko became the first ambassador to Great Britain with concurrent accreditation in Ireland. Oleh Bilorus became the first ambassador to the United States. Volodymyr Kryzhanivskyi, a People's Deputy of Ukraine, was appointed ambassador to Russia. Levko Lukianenko, a People's Deputy of Ukraine, longtime prisoner of Muscovite jails, and knight of the struggle for Ukraine's independence, served as ambassador to Canada. The ministry's activities also enjoyed the involvement of Professor Oleh Semenets, international legal specialist Oleksandr Kupchyshyn, world-class Spanish language expert, author, and translator of Spanish and Latin American literary luminaries Serhii Borshchevskyi, immaculate connoisseur of Armenia and the Armenian language Oleksandr Bozhko, etc. All of them joined the renewed ambassadorial corps of the country.

Support was also sought from Ukrainians who had already been engaged in the diplomatic service of the former USSR. Consequently, Dmytro Tkach and Petro Sardachuk became ambassadors to Hungary and the Slovak Republic, respectively, and swore fealty to Ukraine shortly after the proclamation of independence. At the same time, there were applications from many other Ukrainians working at the Russian Foreign Ministry in Moscow, but our ministry could not provide accommodation to them due to lack of resources, naturally making it a dead option.

Erroneous selections were also made. I reckon that particularly egregious was the appointment of Anatolii Orel as ambassador to Italy, a person who later, together with Mr Tabachnyk in the secretariat of L. Kuchma, pursued a policy that failed to reflect Ukrainian national interests.

It should be noted that immediately after the restoration of independence, an excessive romantic euphoria held its sway among politicians. Many of them considered their lifelong ambition – Ukrainian independence – to have been fulfilled, thus quitting politics to become ambassadors. Among these there were Levko Lukianenko, Ambassador to Canada, Roman Lubkivskyi, Ambassador to the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic, Dmytro Pavlychko, Ambassador to Poland, and Volodymyr Smetanin, Ambassador to Uzbekistan with concurrent accreditation to Tajikistan.

Following the selection of ambassadors, we were faced with the task of finding premises for overseas missions. There was an air of hope attached to dividing the heritage of the former USSR, but it all ended, as it always happens in dealing with Moscow, with a consistent fooling of Ukraine. All the premises, except for some diplomatic and consular missions as well as trade representations of the former Soviet Union, were impertinently seized by the Russian Federation, and former Soviet diplomatic and consular officers mostly became Russian. It seems that, of all formerly 'fraternal' republics, only Ukraine attempted to offer resistance. Partly owing to courts and partly due to spirited resistance to Russian raidership on common property, young Ukrainian diplomacy managed to preserve a part of assets of the former USSR, to which it was fully entitled, both historically and legally. In Warsaw, for instance, thanks to Dmytro Pavlychko's engagement, we were able to eject insolent Muscovites from one of the houses to settle our embassy there. At about the same time, our diaspora extend its helping hand to Ukraine. At their expense, there were purchased, either completely or partially, embassies in the US, Great Britain, France, Italy, and other countries, consulates-general in Chicago, New York, etc. The effort was intensively supported by the great Ukrainian Bohdan Hawrylyshyn.

A separate matter was the seat of the central office of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It had previously been trapped in two two-storey houses at the current Pylyp Orlyk Lane. Back then, thanks to Anatolii Zlenko's persistence and support of Dmytro Pavlychko, Chairman of the Commission of Foreign Affairs, the ministry was – and still is – fortunate enough to take the building at Mykhailivska Square, which in the pre-independence period was occupied by the regional committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine and the Central Committee of the Leninist Communist League of Youth of Ukraine. Truth be told, former communists continued to cling to some of its premises for a couple of years at the ground and fourth floors of the building.

In parallel, there emerged new problems for Ukraine in terms of its global geopolitical strategy, particularly regarding the recognition of the newly independent Ukrainian state, search for its place in the international system, and resolution of the nuclear weapons issue. The Americans insisted that we renunciate the strategic components thereof at the earliest convenience, a condition they linked to our recognition. The Bush and Clinton administrations were constantly elated, looked into Yeltsin's 'kind eyes', and cherished rosy expectations about the emergence of a 'democratic' Russia. They were exerting constant pressure on Ukraine, which after the demise of the USSR unexpectedly became the world's third mightiest nuclear power, and forcing it to dismantle this capability as soon as possible and transfer it, as they naively assumed, to the already 'peace-loving Russia'. Our arguments to Americans were decisively refuted. Addressing the Atlantic Council in Washington, a renowned U.S.-based think tank, as well as the RAND Corporation in Santa Monica, California, I myself repeatedly drew the attention of American partners to the fact that Moscow could not be trusted, as it was not able to be democratic by virtue of its imperial essence; Russian diplomatic missions employed the same people who worked there during the Cold War; the only things that changed were façades and flags. I also emphasised that the same people were sitting in the cabinets at Lubyanka, who continued devising subversive action against Western democracies.

Nonetheless, it was as if Americans were zombified and further demanded that Ukraine dismantle its nuclear potential in return for the recognition of its independence. This zombification prevailed among U.S. authorities during the Bush administration as well, who also liked looking the Russian President in the eye. And now the President of Ukraine has come down with the same illness.

Unfortunately, at the time, in the very first months of Ukraine's free floating in the international system, and, perchance, due to insufficient experience, Ukrainian diplomacy took the matter of taking the late USSR's seat in the UN Security Council rather lightly. Instead, it was swiftly and, of which I am certain, in contravention of the UN Charter seized by Moscow diplomats, a result not so much of their trickery but of our inferiority and debility of the then leadership of Ukraine. This has been recently highlighted by Viktor Shyshkin, People's Deputy of Ukraine of the first, second, and third convocations, the first Attorney-General of Ukraine, a Constitutional Court.

It was in this same period that many other bitter mistakes were made, among which there were the extremely expeditious and emergency giving up of tactical nuclear weapons, which, in my view, could have been preserved and also receive permanent membership in the UN Security Council; the loss of the Black Sea fleet, which was ready to pledge allegiance to Ukraine, due to the reluctance, as they said in the corridors of power, of the newly elected president to go to Sevastopol and swear the naval personnel in (which he probably considered it beneath him); the adoption of 'multi-vector' foreign policy. Western diplomats were, even back then, amazed at the number of mistakes still bitterly felt by us today.

But despite the inexperience of politicians, certain difficulties and erroneous steps, these years saw the laying of the foundation of Ukrainian diplomacy. The Ukrainian flag was hoisted on Mykhailivska Square, and the trident of Prince Volydymyr the Great replaced the coat-of-arms of the UkrSSR.

In the very first months of independence, for the purpose of training young specialists of the Ukrainian diplomatic corps, there were opened departments of international relations and international law at universities of Lviv, Kharkiv, and Odesa, while the appropriate department at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv was transformed into the Institute of International Relations. Besides, there was established a Diplomatic Academy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The network of Ukrainian diplomatic and consular missions was growing and expanding, first in Europe and North America and then in Asia, Latin America, and Africa.

A new design of Ukraine's diplomatic passport was approved. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs at Mykhailivska Street and our diplomatic and consular missions gradually organised systemic and daily workflow. In the early decades of independent Ukraine's diplomacy the vanguard of our ambassadors, envoys, and consuls-general hoisted the flag of freedom, independence, justice, truth, security, and protection of national interests, following the example of the patriotically-minded part of members of the Verkhovna Rada. Ukrainian diplomats carried the flag with distinction across Independence Square during the 2004 Orange Revolution and the Revolution of Dignity in 2013–2014.

Regrettably, in recent years the body of Ukrainian diplomacy has been increasingly trapped in the clutches of young Ukrainian bureaucracy, presumptuously discarding the entire history of the early decades of independence and going as far as to say that there was no diplomacy before it, removing from the walls of embassies and consulates photos of their previous chiefs. With no relevant experience and knowledge, bureaucrats deal with resolving complicated international issues, although mistakes in this realm can jeopardise the very existence of the Ukrainian state. Particularly inappropriate are beggarly pensions of heads of diplomatic and consular missions of the early decades of independence; of those who laid the foundation and first bricks into the edifice of Ukrainian foreign policy and the country itself, established and developed the network of Ukraine's bilateral and multilateral ties with the outside world.

These problems, however, are the topic of further surveys.