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**UKRAINE IN THE EASTERN  
FOREIGN POLICY OF MINISTER  
KRZYSZTOF SKUBISZEWSKI.  
BETWEEN SEPTEMBER 12,  
1989, AND OCTOBER 26, 1993**

**Abstract**

During the four years of Krzysztof Skubiszewski's leadership of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs between 1989 and 1993, the only stable element was Skubiszewski himself. In the first years after the political and social breakthrough, Poland underwent a tremendous transformation, not only in political terms, but also in the way of political thinking and strategic solutions that were best for the country. It should be remembered that Poland itself was a country which was an object of political games between the USA and the USSR/Russian Federation. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that during the described period of time, one could often encounter instability in the Polish eastern policy, as well as a desire to undertake bold solutions. Obviously, the constant vectors which had a considerable impact on Warsaw's position were the stationing of Soviet and later Russian troops on Polish territory, as well as a restrained attitude of Western Europe at that time towards the countries of the former Eastern Bloc, and the lack of a clear plan: what to do after the collapse of the USSR? Is this already the end of history?

Despite so many uncertainties, Krzysztof Skubiszewski's ministerial office led the Republic of Poland unscathed through international problems of the years 1989–1993, in the midst of which he

managed to mark, sometimes with great determination, the Polish *raison d'état*. Krzysztof Skubiszewski, with his academic knowledge of international law, was the person who laid a solid diplomatic foundation for the Republic of Poland for decades to come.

### Key words

USSR, Krzysztof Skubiszewski, Ukraine, foreign policy.

Krzysztof Skubiszewski was Poland's Minister of Foreign Affairs from September 12, 1989 to October 26, 1993. At the time of this important turning point for Poland and Europe, he was entrusted with the Ministry by five consecutive prime ministers, who probably perceived in him as a person capable of 'cutting the Gordian knot' of Poland's deeply rooted foreign policy anxieties. That is, those related to "Poland's eternal dilemmas: East–West, Russia–Germany".<sup>1</sup>

During the four years of his ministerial work, Prof. Skubiszewski became known as a man who was "an active participant in the processes changing the face of Poland and Europe at that time".<sup>2</sup> He created and implemented a difficult foreign policy of the Republic of Poland, which in 1989 regained the ability to sovereignly shape its foreign affairs, with all the consequences for the politically independent state. Despite the obvious diplomatic challenges, Skubiszewski's foreign policy – according to a 1991 CEBOS survey – was accepted by the Polish society of the time, which saw it as "serving the public well and in line with its interests".<sup>3</sup>

1. S. Stomma, *Pisma wybrane. 1976–2003* [Selected Writings. 1976–2003] (Kraków: UNIVERSITAS, 2017), 312–313.

2. "List Lecha Kaczyńskiego, Prezydenta RP, jaki został odczytany na mszy żałobnej w intencji K. Skubiszewskiego" [Letter of Lech Kaczyński, President of the Republic of Poland, which was read at the funeral mass for K. Skubiszewski], accessed December 5, 2020, <https://warszawa.naszemiasto.pl/warszawa-pogrzeb-krzysztofa-skubiszewskiego/ar/c1-2978904>.

3. "Popieramy Skubiszewskiego" [We support Skubiszewski], *Gazeta Wyborcza*, February 25, 1991.

## Biting through the 'dog collar'

The security of the Polish state in the late 1980s and early 1990s was strongly influenced by the changes in international relations under the influence of the Fall of Nations. Factors having a direct impact on the foreign policy of the Republic of Poland, and being related to the Polish *raison d'état*, were: a) the process of reunification of Germany,<sup>4</sup> b) evolutionary nature of the Soviet Union's disintegration that followed,<sup>5</sup> c) Poland's aspiration to become politically closer to the countries of Western Europe.<sup>6</sup> The latter was both difficult and urgent to implement, as the countries to the West of the fallen Iron Curtain did not hurry after 1989 with any clear-cut political declaration towards the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. There was an assumption that in the name of stabilization, Western Europe might once again recognize the primacy of Russia in this area.<sup>7</sup> Additional challenges for the Polish government included both the liquidation of the Soviet military bases on the territory of the Republic of Poland, and the plan of the Soviet command to withdraw the Soviet Army troops from the former German Democratic Republic through the territory of Poland.<sup>8</sup>

4. H. Kohl, *Pragnąłem jedności Niemiec* [I wanted German Unity] (Warszawa: Świat Książki, 1999); M. Tomala, *Zjednoczenie Niemiec. Reakcja Polaków* [German Reunification. The Reaction of Poles] (Toruń: Polska Fundacja Spraw Międzynarodowych, 2000).

5. Z. Brzeziński, *Wielkie bankructwo* [The Great Bankruptcy] (Paryż: Instytut Literacki, 1990); P. Kowal, *Testament Prometeusza* [Testament of Prometheus] (Warszawa–Wojnowice: PAN, 2019).

6. A. Towpik, "Polska polityka bezpieczeństwa okresu transformacji. Droga do NATO" [Polish Security Policy of the Transformation Period. The Road to NATO], [in:] *NATO w dwadzieścia lat po akcesji. Wspomnienia, analizy, pytania, wnioski* [NATO Twenty Years after Accession. Memories, Analysis, Questions, Conclusions], ed. M. Winiarczyk-Kossakowska, S. Półgrabi-Sanetra, P. Skorut (Warszawa: Aspra, 2020), 25–35.

7. *Ibid.*, 26.

8. J. Makarewicz, "Nowa polityka wschodnia" [New Eastern Policy], [in:] Krzysztof Skubiszewski, *Minister Spraw Zagranicznych RP 1989–1993* [Krzysztof Skubiszewski, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland 1989–1993], ed. P. Skubiszewski, J. Stańczyk (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2016), 47–60.

Because of the political and social changes that took place in the countries of the so called ‘people’s democracy’ in 1989 and afterwards, and in view of the goals set by the national interest, the political authorities of the Republic of Poland were aware of the need to organise its foreign activity around three centres: Moscow, Bonn, and Washington. According to Paweł Kowal, when analysing Polish foreign policy of the 1990s, it is necessary to mention one more centre, the Vatican, as the role of John Paul II at that time was a substantial support for the Republic of Poland.<sup>9</sup>

The creation of Polish foreign policy in the face of events beyond its eastern border was an example of combined action of both political realism and constant consideration of the changes occurring within the USSR. The attempt to combine these two factors was illustrated by the activity of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs led by Professor K. Skubiszewski, and the inclusion of his proposals in the content of the opening speeches made by successive prime ministers before the Sejm. For example, in the exposé delivered by Tadeusz Mazowiecki on August 26, 1989, the new prime minister assured:

The transformations in the Soviet Union arouse our positive feelings. We understand well their significance, also for the political opening in our country. We wish to maintain good neighborly and friendly relations with the Soviet Union. [...] We understand the importance of the obligations arising from the Warsaw Pact. I declare to all its participants that the government which I shall form will respect this Pact.<sup>10</sup>

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9. P. Kowal, *op. cit.*, 49–52, 355–361; *7 dni: Wschód. Testament Prometeusza. Paweł Kowal* [7 Days: East. Testament of Prometheus. Paweł Kowal], audio, accessed December 29, 2020, <https://www.polskieradio24.pl/130/5065/Artykul/2249143,Testament-Prometeusza-%e2%80%93-kszaltowanie-sie-polskiej-polityki-wschodniej-po-1989-r>.

10. J. Marszałek-Kawa, P. Siemiątkowski, eds., *Exposé Prezesów Rady Ministrów 1989–2019* [Exposés of the Presidents of the Council of Ministers 1989–2019] (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2020), 12.

It is worth mentioning that the philosophy behind Tadeusz Mazowiecki's strategy of planning Polish foreign policy towards the USSR was quickly (less than a year after he was sworn in) met with harsh criticism from some members of the Polish political scene, who perceived such a course of action as "mending the 'dog collar' instead of biting it through".<sup>11</sup>

Jan Krzysztof Bielecki, who after five months of Mazowiecki's premiership accepted, in January 1991, the mission to form a new government of the Republic of Poland, spoke in a similarly realistic tone, although somewhat more boldly in view of the events that had already taken place in the USSR, and had become known to the international public opinion. In his speech delivered before the Sejm, Jan Krzysztof Bielecki advocated cooperation with the USSR, but also with the Soviet republics:

The government will continue to pursue a foreign policy that strengthens the independence of the state. The government will pursue the Polish *raison d'état* and the national interest (...). We will maintain good relations with both the USSR and the Soviet republics, especially the Russian Federation, Ukraine, and Belarus, which are our neighbours. We shall manage our relations in these two directions – with the Union as a whole and with the republics – without interfering in the internal transformations beyond our eastern border; we shall strive to conclude a new treaty with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics that will govern the totality of our relations.<sup>12</sup>

Jan Krzysztof Bielecki, who led the work of the Council of Ministers for less than twelve months, was no longer in office when the world saw the event that definitively ended Vladimir Ilyich Lenin's

11. J. Kurski, "Rok Mazowieckiego" [The Year of Mazowiecki], *Konfrontacje*, no. 9 (1990).

12. J. Marszałek-Kawa, P. Siemiątkowski, eds., *op. cit.*, 28.

revolutionary work – the collapse of the Soviet Union. This fact undeniably and strongly contributed, among other things, to the strengthening of the sense of security by the countries of the former communist bloc, but also it became the harbinger of a utopian mirage, “the end of history”.<sup>13</sup> The collapse of the USSR – although symptomatically anticipated – took place on December 26, 1991, i.e. five days after the exposé in the Sejm by the new Polish prime minister, Jan Olszewski.

Jan Olszewski was aware not only of the obvious irreversibility of the events beyond the eastern border of the Republic of Poland, but also of the challenges that they were to entail. Here, the map of Europe was becoming a space in the middle of which the borders of new states were being drawn. And with their national interests at stake. States that had as much in common with Poland as they had in common with each other. States that were to become the Republic’s direct neighbours, as well as coalition partners in the common security policy:

Developments in the East make our relations with the Russian Federation, Ukraine and the Republic of Belarus of paramount importance. There are both opportunities and threats for us in the East. The Government will continue to strive to build lasting, comprehensive good neighborly relations and close cooperation. We will continue, develop, and intensify the policy of interaction with our eastern neighbours. We will strive to create treaty-based ties with them, facilitating economic, political and security ties, as well as cultural and people-to-people.<sup>14</sup>

The political transformation in Europe and the collapse of the communist bloc forced the Polish political authorities not only to

13. F. Fukuyama, *Koniec historii* [The End of History] (Poznań: Zysk i S-ka, 1996).

14. J. Marszałek-Kawa, P. Siemiątkowski, eds., *op. cit.*, 42.

make a realistic assessment of reality, but also to draw up new development plans for the country. The country which in 1991 was able to verbalize its condition as being at a crossroads:

We find ourselves today between two worlds: the Western world, which is peacefully forming and uniting, and the Eastern world, which is disintegrating. We do not yet belong to the former, we no longer belong to the latter. We have made a decision to join the structures of the West, but for the time being we have no alliances, no anchorage, no security. We must make an effort to change this risky state.<sup>15</sup>

The danger of staying at the crossroads for too long could involve not only political stagnation, but also lack of participation in creating a new political order in Europe. This seemingly trivial observation must have been realized also by Waldemar Pawlak, who, in his statement read out in the Sejm on July 1, 1992, assigned a new role to Poland as a political stabilizer of the new European order. And what is equally important, he announced the Republic of Poland's participation in active construction of the security system of Europe. Europe with new, democratic roots since 1989. According to Waldemar Pawlak, the fulfilment of such political goals was essential for Poland to strengthen its subjectivity and political sovereignty:<sup>16</sup>

Can Poland contribute to the stability of the new Europe? (...) Poland will contribute to building a new European order and to co-creating a pan-European security system. (...) We will consistently strive to develop good neighborly and partnership relations with independent states in the East: Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, Lithuania and other countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Our interests in

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15. *Ibid.*, 35.

16. *Ibid.*, 68.

this region require an active and long-term policy and commitment of greater resources.<sup>17</sup>

When, on July 10, 1992, Hanna Suchocka delivered her exposé as the new Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland, some troops of the North Soviet Army Group were still stationed in Poland, the Soviet Union had already ceased to exist for seven months, and in December 1991, Ukraine became politically independent by referendum. In addition, the Commonwealth, along with other states in the region, namely Hungary and Czecho-Slovakia, found themselves in the so-called grey zone of security, which gave no guarantee of protection against external threats. It is therefore no coincidence that Hanna Suchocka, in drawing up a plan for the development of Polish foreign policy, strongly emphasized the need to create situations outside the country that would strengthen its sovereignty, and saw Poland's potential for initiating such actions:

Poland's sovereignty and independence, the strengthening of its security and the creation of favourable external conditions for the civilizational and economic development of the country remain the lasting objectives of our country's foreign policy. We are convinced that our country is able to influence its international environment in a way that corresponds to our interests and at the same time contributes to the creation of a better, safe and prosperous Europe.<sup>18</sup>

The future security of Europe became a challenge also for the states that regained the ability to sovereignly determine their political existence after 1989. This issue became all the more urgent in the 1990s, as it was not uncommon in public discourse to raise suggestions of dissolving NATO:<sup>19</sup>

17. *Ibid.*, 57.

18. J. Marszałek-Kawa, P. Siemiątkowski (eds.), *op. cit.*, 75.

19. R. Zięba, "Security of NATO and EU member states", [in:] *International*



Today we live in a state neighbouring with countries towards which Poland can pursue a friendly policy. We also have every reason to believe that our foreign partners will be favorably inclined to maintain good relations with Poland.<sup>20</sup>

The consequence of such an approach to relations with Poland's immediate neighbours was the adoption of not only a clear orientation of Poland's foreign policy towards European affairs, which was obvious to Western European countries, but also a guarantee that Poland would actively participate in the creation of an active foreign policy in the East.

The foreign policy of the Polish state must be stable and open to changes taking place in our neighbourhood. Its success is not possible without a consensus on the foundations of the Polish *raison d'état*, and its unchanging priority remains the European orientation.

In the eastern policy there is a particular opportunity for an active policy. In our relations with Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania we are particularly interested in the following issues: security and balance, economic exchange and the situation of Poles living beyond our eastern border.<sup>21</sup>

Polish foreign policy in the first years after 1989 was strongly dominated by issues arising not only directly from the national interest of the Republic of Poland, but also from the changing conditions of reality, which took place outside the area of its direct influence, *Security after the Cold War*, ed. R. Zięba (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Akademickie i Profesjonalne, 2008), 263–296; R. Kupiecki, *Organizacja Traktatu Północnoatlantyckiego* [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] (Warszawa: Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych, 2016), 68–78.

20. J. Marszałek-Kawa, P. Siemiątkowski, eds., *op. cit.*, 76.

21. *Ibid.*, 82–83.

including the Soviet Union. It is not without a reason, therefore, that successive prime ministers of Poland in the years 1989–1993 paid great attention to this issue, and saw in the political changes taking place in this area not only a source of security for the democratic transformations, but also a space for political exploration for Poland.

### **The pains of German reunification**

On November 28, 1989, Helmut Kohl indicated a new coordinate in international relations – the reunification of Germany, which was an unexpected and unannounced tactical move by the chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. It also naturally became an issue that focused the attention of K. Skubiszewski's cabinet who perceived it not only as a result of the ongoing transition, but also as a challenge to Poland's sovereign policy. It put the country in a difficult position, since Poland, striving for socio-political changes itself, had to accept the changes taking place in the neighbouring countries while at the same time trying to secure the durability of its borders:

After all, history is not, and cannot be, a decisive factor in the perception and shaping of today's reality. Europe is changing. We do not deny these changes, we embrace them, and we are their co-creators. However, we must take care of our state interest.<sup>22</sup>

The other aspect for both countries – Germany and the Republic of Poland – was their growing awareness not only of the irreversibility of the changes that had already occurred, but also of the weakening political position of the USSR, which, however, was surely still to be reckoned with and was increasingly bolder in its political expectations. This audacity, though cautious, was

22. K. Skubiszewski, *Polityka zagraniczna i odzyskanie niepodległości. Przemówienia, oświadczenia, wywiady 1989–1993* [Foreign policy and the recovery of independence. Speeches, statements, interviews 1989–1993] (Warszawa: Interpress, 1997), 29.

undoubtedly underpinned by the dual-track strategy deliberately pursued by Poland: on the one hand, not ignoring Moscow's opinion, and on the other hand, consistently implementing the state's sovereign policy.

An important question which underlies the narrative of the 'Fall of nations', was the issue of the financial bankruptcy of the Soviet economic system, and consequently the lack of the USSR's ability to support the important security mainstays of the declining empire, such as the German Democratic Republic. The GDR itself was a country on the brink of economic collapse at the end of 1989, as reported by Hans Modrow, the last prime minister of the GDR, in his talks with Kohl.<sup>23</sup>

The sight of so many interrelated factors, which were strongly dependent on each other, must have inspired Krzysztof Skubiszewski's fear that an agreement could be reached between Bonn and Moscow on the reunification of Germany, without Warsaw taking part in it. Contrary to Helmut Kohl's judgment, the German unification was not only a matter of the German people, but it also entailed the question of recognition of the Polish western border by the united Germany, i.e. by a new political entity.

H. Kohl's consistency in advocating the idea of limiting the circle of participants in the talks on German reunification to only four countries of World War II's victorious coalition,<sup>24</sup> could not only awaken the stereotypes about the Vistula River, dating back to the communist period,<sup>25</sup> but also affect some of the priorities that were outlined in the Polish foreign policy and presented in the Sejm in April 1990:<sup>26</sup>

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23. H. Kohl, *op. cit.*, 149–166.

24. *Ibid.*, 156.

25. Perhaps the best example of the Polish People's Republic's endeavours to create stereotypical images of the German threat is the book by W. Gomułka, *O problemie niemieckim* [On the German problem] (Warsaw: KiW, 1968).

26. K. Skubiszewski, *op. cit.*, 43.

(...) As for our western neighbour, we have initiated the Polish-German cooperation that pursues common goals and interests. We will continue this work on the assumption that a unifying and then united Germany will confirm our western border as final.<sup>27</sup>

Hence, it was not without reason that the government of Tadeusz Mazowiecki exerted strong pressure on Bonn, through the United States and France, demanding, as soon as possible, the recognition of the Polish western border by the united Germany.<sup>28</sup> The pressure measures taken by Warsaw were motivated not only by the Polish *raison d'état*, but also by the perception of the geopolitical and geostrategic position of Poland, which, in the opinion of K. Skubiszewski, had an impact on the whole of Central and Eastern Europe:

(...) Poland as a European country had, and I think still has, a key role to play. This is due to its geostrategic location in the region and its geostrategic location between Germany and the Soviet Union. Hence, the position of Poland, both political and military, is significant. This affects the whole of Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>29</sup>

As a result of K. Skubiszewski's foreign policy, and following a clear signal sent to H. Kohl from the United States, France and Great Britain, over a month after the reunification of Germany, on November 14, 1990, a treaty was signed between the Republic of Poland and the Federal Republic of Germany confirming the

27. *Ibid.*

28. R. Romaniec, *Albo uznacie tę granicę, albo nici ze zjednoczenia. Traktat 2+4 i polsko-niemiecka granica* [Either you recognize this border, or there is no reunification. Treaty 2+4 and the Polish-German border], accessed May 3, 2021, <https://www.dw.com/pl/albo-uznacie-t%C4%99-granic%C4%99-albo-nici-ze-zjednoczenia-traktat-24-i-polsko-niemiecka-granica/a-18705885>.

29. K. Skubiszewski, *op. cit.*, 100.

existing border between them.<sup>30</sup> This document definitively dispelled Poland's concerns about the possible threat and instability of the Polish western border. Moreover, it strengthened – in the eyes of both the partners from the area of the so-called Western Europe, and the countries seeking independence from the Soviet Union – the position of the Republic of Poland as a state skillfully negotiating with European leaders, including both politicians and non-politicians.

### The issue of eastern borders

Poland and Canada were the first countries in the world to recognize the independence of Ukraine on December 1, 1991.<sup>31</sup> Warsaw sent congratulations a few hours after Kyiv had announced the preliminary results of the independence referendum, which was organized on December 1, 1991. It is worth emphasizing that the message from the political authorities of the Republic of Poland was not preceded by any political or territorial expectations, as was the case for example with Romania or Moscow.<sup>32</sup>

30. *Traktat między Rzeczpospolitą Polską a Republiką Federalną Niemiec o potwierdzeniu istniejącej między nimi granicy* [Treaty between the Republic of Poland and the Federal Republic of Germany on the confirmation of the border between them], *Journal of Laws* of 1994, no. 14, item 54.

31. W. Gill, N. Gill, *Stosunki Polski z Ukrainą w latach 1989–1993* [Poland's relations with Ukraine in 1989–1993] (Toruń: Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, 2002), 21–41; “Jako pierwsza na świecie Polska uznała Ukrainę” [Poland was the First in the World to Recognize Ukraine], *Gazeta Wyborcza*, December 2, 1991.

32. A consequence of Ukraine's awakening aspirations for independence was the growing expectations towards Kyiv by some of its neighbours. Moscow, representing the interests of both the collapsed Soviet Union and, additionally, the Russian SFSR, intervened in early December 1991 regarding Ukraine's possible secession from the USSR. Both M. Gorbachev, the then president of the USSR, and B. Yeltsin, president of the Russian SFSR, tried to force Kyiv to either remain within the Soviet Union, or sign a political treaty with Russia. Should Kyiv not agree, the planned retaliation included territorial and/or economic claims by Russia. As a result of the pressure, Ukraine joined the Commonwealth of Independent States, an organization created on December 8, 1991, after signing the so-called Belovezhsky

Incidentally, it should be noted that the issue of a possible post-1989 border regulation between the Republic of Poland and the politically independent Soviet republics – Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine – was discussed e.g. in the upper house of parliament, the Polish Senate, in September 1990. Responding to numerous senatorial inquiries, which indirectly also resulted from the position of the Polish government-in-exile, K. Skubiszewski unequivocally expressed his opposition to any attempts at border changes. He pointed out once again – just as he had done in his statement made before the UN in September 1989 on behalf of the Polish government – that the military-political treaties of the Third Reich and the USSR of 1941, which changed the borders of the Second Polish Republic, should be condemned unambiguously, being “invalid from the very beginning, since they violated the absolutely binding norms of international law, broke treaties, and were contrary to international moral standards”.<sup>33</sup>

In his attempt to justify the position of the Polish government regarding the eastern borders of the Republic, Skubiszewski raised three very important and significant issues, which, even today, would be difficult to question. First, in spite of the fact that the Yalta Agreements were perceived as actions inconsistent with

Agreement. The signing of the agreement by Leonid Kravchuk, as well as the ratification of the agreement by the Ukrainian parliament on December 10, 1991, was followed by the recognition of Ukraine’s independence by the USSR on December 26, 1991. In 2018, Ukraine withdrew from the CIS.

Contrary to Moscow’s intentions, Romania made territorial claims on the politically independent Ukraine. The Romanian Parliament demanded the return of the territories seized by the USSR in 1940 and annexed to the Ukrainian FSSR: northern Bukovina, southern Bessarabia, Hertsa and Khotyn. Bucharest, recognizing these territories as its own, made recognition of Ukrainian independence conditional on the return of the said territories. Formally, it was not until January 8, 1992 that Romania sent its acceptance of an independent Ukraine. See: “Ukraina od poniedziałku niepodległa?” [Ukraine Independent as of Monday?], *Gazeta Wyborcza*, November 29, 1991; “Moskwa grozi Ukrainie” [Moscow Threatens Ukraine], *Gazeta Wyborcza*, December 8, 1991.

33. K. Skubiszewski, *op. cit.*, 71.

Polish interest, it was on their basis that the territorial order was created, lasting uninterruptedly until 1989. Poland, which did not conceal its inclinations towards Western Europe, had to be aware that raising territorial claims against, for example, Ukraine or Lithuania, could not only be incomprehensible to its future ally to the west of the Oder river, but could also become an insurmountable obstacle in its attempt to establish more permanent relations with, for example, Western European Union countries. Moreover, almost at the same time, Tadeusz Mazowiecki's government demanded that Poland participate in a series of planned meetings between the two German states and the four powers of the so-called anti-Hitler coalition, i.e. the 2+4 conference. Also, the intended goal of K. Skubiszewski's cabinet was to obtain a guarantee for the Polish western border, issued by the new reunified German state.<sup>34</sup>

Secondly, being aware of the existing international order, including administrative control of territories that could be potentially claimed by neighbouring countries, one had to take into account the necessity of potential military action, or war. Only that way – with an optimistic assumption of the success – it was possible to force the countries to abandon their claims to disputed territories.

And thirdly, Belarus, Ukraine and Lithuania were still part of the Soviet Union in 1990. Therefore, taking military action to regain the lands lost under the Yalta agreements would mean a military conflict with the USSR. The Soviet Union, although in decline, still existed politically and had not only the largest army in Europe at the time, but also had their troops stationed in the GDR and Poland. Moreover, it was a country that had nuclear weapons, as did Ukraine.<sup>35</sup> Provoking the USSR by Poland to defend the territories of the republics of Belarus and Ukraine, and thus to restore the international order, would not only be 'a shot in the foot' for Poland, but also a fulfillment of the warnings addressed to the West,

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34. H. Kohl, *op. cit.*, 261–263.

35. *Ibid.*, 69–81.

in particular to the USA, by M. Gorbachev, who, in his book *Reconstruction and New Thinking for Our Country and the Whole World*, claimed that the collapse of the USSR would lead to the emergence of even greater military conflicts in the world.<sup>36</sup>

As a result of the judgement made by Tadeusz Mazowiecki's government and Krzysztof Skubiszewski as the head of the Polish foreign policy, with regard to the eastern borders of the Republic of Poland, a statement was included in the *Declaration on Principles and Basic Directions of Development of Polish-Ukrainian Relations*, signed on October 13, 1990, asserting that there were no bilateral territorial claims between the Republic of Poland and the Ukrainian SSR.

### **Between the Wiejska street and the Ukrainian nation**

The resolutions of the Polish parliamentary chambers, which were passed simultaneously with the events in the USSR, and the subsequent steps taken by the cabinet of Minister Skubiszewski, were closely related to, and undoubtedly contributed to the process of shaping the foreign policy of the Republic of Poland towards a sovereign Ukraine.

The Sejm's and the Senate's resolutions, often addressed directly to the Ukrainian people, should be read as an important signal sent by Poland apart from the official, governmental documents. These parliamentary acts of will – having a form of statements – were often issued in the wake of the important decisions taken by the Ukrainian

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36. A. Stępień-Kuczyńska, *Michaił Gorbaczow a idea i praktyka pierestrojki* [Mikhail Gorbachev and the Idea and Practice of Perestroika] (Łódź: Wyd. Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2016); P. Skorut, „Rewolucja czy ucieczka do przodu? Przebudowa i nowe myślenie Michaiła Gorbaczowa wobec zagrożeń destabilizacji bezpieczeństwa i układu bipolarnego w XX wieku” [Revolution or escape ahead? Reconstruction and new thinking of Mikhail Gorbachev in the face of threats of security destabilization and the bipolar system in the 20th century], [in:] *Obszar Europy Środkowej w geopolityce mocarstw. Od Mitteleuropy do integracji europejskiej* [Central Europe in the geopolitics of the superpowers. From Central Europe to European Integration], ed. G. Baziur, P. Skorut (Oświęcim: Wyd. PWSZ w Oświęcimiu, 2017), 231–241.



people, such as the vote of the Verkhovna Rada, or the result of the referendum vote. For example, the declaration of the Polish government's support for the Ukrainian people, sent on December 2, 1991, was followed on December 6, 1991 by a resolution of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland, being the third statement issued by the lower chamber of the Polish parliament on the Ukrainian question.<sup>37</sup> Wiesław Chrzanowski, the then Marshal of the Sejm, included in the document his congratulations on "the creation of the independent Ukrainian state" which – in the opinion of the signatories of the Sejm's resolution – became "an important event not only for Ukraine, but also for Europe and the whole world". Additionally, in the process of building the Ukrainian state based on the sources of democracy, Chrzanowski saw a sign of hope that the rights of national minorities living in Ukraine would be respected.<sup>38</sup>

Table 1: Resolutions of the Polish Sejm and Senate on the question of Ukraine, adopted during Krzysztof Skubiszewski's term of office.

Item	Document name	Date	Notes
1	Resolution of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland	July 28, 1990	Position of the Polish Sejm on the declaration of independence of Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia
2	Resolution of the Senate of the Republic of Poland	August 3, 1990	Resolution of the Senate condemning the actions carried out in the years 1947–1950 as part of the so called Operation "Vistula"

37. *Uchwała Sejmu Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z dnia 6 grudnia 1991 r. w sprawie niepodległości Ukrainy* [Resolution of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland of December 6, 1991 on the independence of Ukraine], *Monitor Polski* (Official Journal of the Republic of Poland), 1991, no. 45, item 316.

38. *Ibid.*

3	Resolution of the Senate of the Republic of Poland	August 30, 1991	The Senate's statement regarding Ukraine's declaration of independence
4	Resolution of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland	August 31, 1991	The position of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland towards Ukraine's declaration of independence on 24 August 1991
5	Resolution of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland	December 6, 1991	Sending congratulations following the independence referendum in Ukraine

Source: Own research.

It is worth noting that there was one more reason for the Polish Senate to pass its resolutions. The resolution of August 3, 1990 contributed to the process of creating positive Ukrainian-Polish relations in the first years of the 1990s. The adopted text condemned the actions carried out in the years 1947–1950 by, among others, the Polish Army and by a unit of the National Security Corps, as part of the Operation “Vistula”.<sup>39</sup> According to the senators' statement, the described pacification action, which was carried out by the communist authorities of Poland, was realized in a way “typical of totalitarian systems, based on the principle of collective responsibility”.<sup>40</sup> The adoption of the resolution by

39. *Deportacyjna akcja „Wisła”. Istota i skala problemu* [The “Vistula” deportation action. Essence and scale of the problem], electronic document (Gorlice, 2007), 2–4, accessed January 22, 2021, [http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/WydBAS.nsf/0/41dbefb1739cf039c12572d600486dcd/\\$FILE/Deportacyjna%20akcja%20Wis%C5%82a.pdf](http://orka.sejm.gov.pl/WydBAS.nsf/0/41dbefb1739cf039c12572d600486dcd/$FILE/Deportacyjna%20akcja%20Wis%C5%82a.pdf).

40. *Uchwała Senatu RP potępiająca akcję „Wisła”* [Resolution of the Polish Senate Condemning the Operation “Vistula”], of August 3, 1990, [in:] *Związek*

the Senate was met with a response from the Ukrainian side, and on October 9, 1990 the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine issued a statement which included a paragraph saying “that the people of Ukraine with understanding accepted the resolution of the Polish Senate”.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, it was also hoped that despite the negative common historical experiences, new and better contacts between the countries could be established.

### **Warsaw–Kyiv**

The announcement, at the turn of June and July 1990, of the independence aspirations of the Soviet republics: Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine, prompted Minister Krzysztof Skubiszewski to adopt a dual-track policy towards the events that took place beyond the eastern border of the Republic of Poland. This reaction was dictated by the realism of Warsaw, which was aware both of the changes in international relations and of the persisting threat of intervention – not only political – in Polish affairs by Moscow. Although the Vistula river region was undoubtedly aware of and convinced of the irreversibility of the changes which had taken place in Europe after 1989, it was difficult to draw the final line of those changes, even in 1990.

Therefore, Polish foreign policy, led by Krzysztof Skubiszewski, adopted a two-track approach to the perception of changes in the Soviet Union. This meant that, on the one hand, Moscow ceased to be regarded by Poland as the only point of reference for Warsaw in the prism of the implementation of foreign affairs in the East. The result was an attempt by the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs to treat Moscow, Minsk and Kyiv equally. The adoption of such strategy quite quickly had a positive impact on the develop-

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*Ukraińców w Polsce w dokumentach z lat 1990–2005* [Association of Ukrainians in Poland in Documents from 1990–2005], ed. R. Drozd, document no. 6 (Warszawa: Związek Ukraińców w Polsce, 2010), 21.

41. W. Gill, N. Gill, *op. cit.*, 22.

ment of diplomatic contacts between the Republic of Poland and the politically independent Soviet republics in the following years. On the other hand, in view of the political persistence of the USSR, for reasons including the security of the Republic of Poland, a constant contact between the Polish political authorities and their Soviet counterpart was maintained.

As a result of the foreign policy pursued by Poland, in the autumn of 1990, Warsaw drafted a declaration, which was sent in the form of a proposal to the capitals of the Soviet republics seeking political independence. This was undoubtedly an example of a pre-emptive move on the part of the Republic of Poland, as it made attempts to reach an agreement with the separatist republics at a time when they were not yet subjects of international law. One did not have to wait long for a reaction. Krzysztof Skubiszewski, who paid a foreign visit to the USSR in October 1990, including a visit to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, signed in Kyiv on October 13, 1990 a *Declaration on the Principles and Basic Directions for the Development of Polish-Ukrainian Relations*.<sup>42</sup>

Among the fourteen points included in this document, attention should be drawn to at least four elements whose conclusion undoubtedly raised hopes for the possibility of working out better relations between the two peoples. This point of view is supported by the reflection that the way of presenting the issues elaborated in the Declaration, i.e. in the tone of an interstate agreement, gave the parties of the Soviet republics confirmation of the rightness of their separatist agenda, and thus an incentive to continue their actions. First, Article 1 states that the parties to the Declaration are “sovereign states” whose actions are aimed at “maintaining and developing mutual cooperation” and the actions are “not directed against

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42. It is worth noting in passing that during his visit to the USSR, K. Skubiszewski also signed the Declaration in Moscow on October 14, 1990. See: K. Skubiszewski, *op. cit.*, 405.

third parties”.<sup>43</sup> It should be noted that in the following part of the discussed article 1, the parties to the Declaration, in the manner customary for sovereign states, supported themselves with reference to both the Charter of the United Nations, the Helsinki Final Act, or the documents of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe.<sup>44</sup> A significant addition to the content of Article 1 was Article 2, which strongly emphasized the rights of the Ukrainian and Polish peoples to self-determination in the international arena *without outside interference*, as well as the independent right to determine their economic or political development. The form and content of the expressed bipartisanship were not coincidental, since each side was guaranteed by this article what they most expected at the time. The Republic of Poland sought to secure the social and political changes that took place in and after 1989, and to have its sovereign foreign policy decisions recognized, while Ukraine’s goal was to ensure that the USSR does not oppose to Kyiv’s attempts to gain national and political independence.

Secondly, an extremely important issue addressed by the Declaration was the question of common borders. In Article 3, both sides confirmed to each other both the absence of any territorial claims and – which was particularly significant – the commitment that they would not be disputed in the future. An important accent of the findings of this article was the declarants’ attention to the fact that care about maintaining the inviolability of their borders should be seen “as an important element of peace and stability in Europe”.<sup>45</sup>

The third and equally important issue was the commitment of the parties to establish diplomatic missions on their territory. It

43. Декларація про принципи та основні напрямки розвитку українсько-польських відносин, 13 жовтня 1990 р. [Declaration on the principles and main direction of the development of Ukrainian-Polish relations, October 13, 1990], accessed January 28, 2021, [http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi?nreg=616\\_176](http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi?nreg=616_176).

44. *Ibid.*

45. *Ibid.*

should be noted that this was a bold assertion, as the Ukrainian SSR was not an independent political entity at that time, which would be a subject of international law. And Poland itself, as was later pointed out by Kyiv, was in no hurry to establish a high level diplomatic representation in Ukraine.<sup>46</sup>

The fourth element, which was fundamentally incorporated into the Declaration, was the mutual obligation to develop political, economic and cultural cooperation. The actions through which these goals were to be achieved included the will to mutually respect the rights of minorities on their territories, as well as the striving to support their cooperation “by recognizing the ethnic and cultural kinship of the Ukrainian and Polish peoples, and taking care to preserve the positive heritage of their centuries-long relations”.<sup>47</sup> It must be admitted that the reverse of these arrangements was the inclusion of the role of the Republic of Poland in the process of introducing Ukraine to “direct and equal participation in the pan-European process and in European structure”.<sup>48</sup> Which effectively meant Kyiv moving away from Moscow, and Ukrainians orienting themselves towards Western Europe.

The dynamically developing events in 1991 across Poland's eastern border were not situations that left the Republic of Poland unprepared. The declaration of independence by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on August 24, 1991 and the announcement of the holding of a referendum in this matter met with much goodwill on the part of Poland, which pointed to the Declaration of October 13,

46. E. Mironowicz, *Polityka zagraniczna Ukrainy 1990–2010* [Foreign policy of Ukraine 1990–2010], (Białystok: Wydawnictwo Uniwersyteckie Trans Humana, 2012), 60–72.

47. *Декларація про принципи та основні напрямки розвитку українсько-польських відносин, 13 жовтня 1990 р.* [Declaration on the principles and main direction of the development of Ukrainian-Polish relations, October 13, 1990], accessed January 28, 2021, [http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi?nreg=616\\_176](http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/cgi-bin/laws/main.cgi?nreg=616_176).

48. *Ibid.*

1990 as an example of “how both states treated each other as sovereign entities”.<sup>49</sup> Krzysztof Skubiszewski, in a statement he made on 26 August 1990, referring among other things to Ukrainian independence, additionally pointed out that the establishment of consular relations was already agreed and that “the establishment of diplomatic relations had been the subject of consultations even before the recent changes”.<sup>50</sup>

Table 2: Polish-Ukrainian agreements and accords signed during the office of K. Skubiszewski, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland

<b>Item</b>	<b>Document name</b>	<b>Date of adoption</b>	<b>Prime Minister in office</b>
1	Declaration on principles and basic directions for development of Polish-Ukrainian relations	October 13, 1990	Tadeusz Mazowiecki
2	Agreement on cooperation and exchange of young people	June 22, 1990	
3	Communication on the exchange of government envoys and the establishment of diplomatic relations in the near future	September 7, 1991	Jan Krzysztof Bielecki
4	Treaty of good neighbourhood, friendly relations and cooperation	May 18, 1992	Jan Olszewski

49. K. Skubiszewski, *op. cit.*, 165.

50. *Ibid.*, 166.

5	Declaration on cooperation in the Carpathian Euroregion	February 14, 1993	
6	Agreement of administrative and self- governing bodies of border areas of Poland, Slovakia, Ukraine and Hungary creating the Carpathian Euroregion	February 14, 1993	Hanna Suchocka

Source: Own study

K. Skubiszewski's project of the gradual establishment of diplomatic relations with Ukraine after the Verkhovna Rada's announcement of the country's independence aspirations was, in Kyiv's view, lacking in dynamism. The first Polish diplomatic representative in Ukraine was appointed in 1991 and it was Jerzy Kozakiewicz. He served as consul general and special representative of the Polish government in Ukraine. The establishment of mutual diplomatic representations at the level of embassies took place in January 1992. The former Consul General, Jerzy Kozakiewicz, became the head of the Polish diplomatic mission in Ukraine. While in Warsaw, he presented his letter of credentials to Hennadii Udovenko, who served as Ambassador Extraordinary and later Ambassador Plenipotentiary to the Republic of Poland from 1992 to 1994. In August 1994, he became the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine.<sup>51</sup>

It must be admitted that the caution and slight restraint demonstrated by Warsaw towards Kyiv's expectations e.g. in September 1991, resulted directly from the Polish government's rational assessment of the situation in Europe and in the USSR. However, the

51. "Jak ułożyć się z Rosją?" [How do you settle with Russia?], *Gazeta Wyborcza*, August 28, 1992.



Polish government could not be accused of passivity towards partnership relations with Ukraine. It can only be accused of a consistent implementation of the dual-track policy. An example of Polish openness to Ukrainian affairs was, as already mentioned in the article, the Polish congratulations and support for Ukraine after the results of the independence referendum were announced. It is worth mentioning that Poland was the first European country to recognize the independence of this country, while other countries, including but not limited to the USA, West Germany, Great Britain or France, recognized Ukraine's independence only after Mikhail Gorbachev resigned as president of the USSR on December 25, 1991.<sup>52</sup>

According to Krzysztof Skubiszewski, an independent Ukraine was as necessary for a sovereign Poland as a sovereign Poland was for an independent Ukraine. The head of Polish diplomacy, understanding Polish priorities, expressed it in his statement:

On the other hand, new states are emerging, especially in the western zone of the former USSR: Ukraine, Belarus, the Baltic states. This creates a completely new geopolitical situation, very convenient for Poland compared to the last centuries. It is in our vital interest to support the independence of these states. For their independence and security will to some extent determine our independence and security. And Poland's independence and sovereignty are for us supreme values.<sup>53</sup>

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52. A. Graczow, *Gorbaczow*, [Gorbachev] (Warszawa: ISKRY, 2003); A. Stępień-Kuczyńska, *Michaił Gorbaczow a idea i praktyka pieriestrojki* [Mikhail Gorbachev and the Idea and Practice of Perestroika] (Łódź: Wyd. Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2016).

53. P. Skubiszewski, J. Stańczak, eds., *Krzysztof Skubiszewski. Minister Spraw Zagranicznych RP 1989–1993* [Krzysztof Skubiszewski. Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland 1989–1993] (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2016), 44.

## Nuclear weapons, between challenge and policy

The creation of the Ukrainian state in December 1991 was one of the final touches, a definitive burial of the old world order, bipolarly divided for over four decades in the second half of the 20th century. The collapse of the USSR, the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance were already seen as a thing of the past in 1992. However, the collapse of the old world did not mean that Poland did not face new challenges, not only in the political field, but also in the security area.

A major challenge for the emerging new international order in Europe was the problem of post-Soviet nuclear missiles. The independent Ukraine, which inherited from the USSR nearly 12% of its nuclear arsenal, became the third nuclear power in the world at that time.<sup>54</sup> This issue quickly became the subject of multilateral political debates among countries which either urged Ukraine to disarm itself in order to preserve the military balance in the European region (e.g. the Republic of Poland), or made the further development of diplomatic relations directly dependent on the liquidation of nuclear warheads (e.g. the U.S.). A separate issue was the position of Russia which, apart from its claims to the Crimean Peninsula, demanded that nuclear warheads be kept under surveillance on Ukrainian territory, a demand to which Kyiv was unwilling to agree.<sup>55</sup>

It is necessary to emphasize that in its mutual relations with Kyiv, Warsaw did not reach for political pressure regarding Ukraine's nuclear arsenal. However, this does not mean that Minister Krzysz-

54. J. Kozakiewicz, *Rosja w polityce niepodległej Ukrainy* [Russia in the politics of independent Ukraine] (Warszawa: Instytut Studiów Politycznych PAN, 1999), 213–235 and 261–268.

55. It is also worth noting that Ukraine has been pressured to disarm from nuclear warheads by NATO, among others, which has made Kyiv's participation in the Partnership for Peace program conditional on getting rid of its nuclear arsenal. See: K. Fedorowicz, op. cit., 163–225; "Partnerstwo lub broń" [Partnership or Weapons], *Gazeta Wyborcza*, December 3, 1993.

tof Skubiszewski did not make efforts to persuade Ukraine to disarm itself of this type of weapon in the name of the new order being created, the pillars of which were to include, among others, participation in the Vienna negotiations and OSCE membership. Skubiszewski informed Polish parliamentary committees about his aspirations towards Ukraine in November 1992:

We emphasized the issue of the status and commitments of the republics at the Vienna Disarmament Forum. We were the first to advocate the earliest possible inclusion of Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus, and possibly other republics, in the CSCE. We would like to see these states as participants in the Vienna negotiations, we would be in favor of their accession to the NPT, and we would be in favor of their close political, economic, and cultural cooperation with regional and subregional groupings.<sup>56</sup>

Discussing the issue of Ukraine's nuclear arsenal, it is worth quoting Krzysztof Fedorowicz's opinion, according to which General Konstantin Morozov, Ukraine's Minister of Defense, who visited Poland on 14 January 1992, was to propose to the Polish authorities close political and military cooperation, which would become an alternative to Russian attempts to reintegrate the post-Soviet area.<sup>57</sup> However, given Ukraine's reluctance to hand over its arsenal to Russia, as well as its suspicion of Kyiv's true intentions, Warsaw has been cautious about the suggested proposal.<sup>58</sup>

A very important document in this context, which was signed on May 18, 1992, during the visit of Leonid Kravchuk, President of Ukraine, to Poland, was the *Treaty on Good Neighbourhood, Friendly Relations and Cooperation*. The document, preceded

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56. K. Skubiszewski, *op. cit.*, 273.

57. K. Fedorowicz, *op. cit.*, 176.

58. *Ibid.*, 176.

by a preamble, referred in its introduction to, among others, the Charter of the United Nations, the building of a just and peaceful order in Europe, and the building of European solidarity, and confirmed, in its Articles 1 and 2, the Agreement of October 13, 1991 on the Inviolability of the Borders and the Absence of any Territorial Claims.<sup>59</sup> Additionally, in Article 1, both parties pledged “not to use or threaten to use force”, to “settle disputes peacefully”, and “not to interfere in internal affairs”.<sup>60</sup>

Article 3 complemented the Treaty’s provisions referring directly to the issue of limiting weapons of mass destruction. Its content was divided into three paragraphs, in which bilateral obligations were included. What should be noted in the first paragraph of Article 3 is the expression of Poland’s and Ukraine’s desire not only to build “mutual security, trust, stability, and cooperation”, but also to participate in “mechanisms and structures” of organizations that pursue nuclear non-proliferation. These aspirations are even more strongly emphasized in the second paragraph, which explicitly includes a commitment to “cooperate for security and stability in Europe”, which is to be achieved by agreeing to support the process of disarmament in the field of “nuclear weapons” or other means of mass destruction.<sup>61</sup>

The climax of the efforts of K. Skubiszewski’s ministerial office, which was concerned about a possible threat to Poland from WMD, was the provisions of paragraph 3 of the article in question. In it, both parties to the Treaty renounced the “possession, acquisition and production” of weapons, including weapons of mass destruction; in addition, the signatory states guaranteed themselves

59. *Traktat między Rzeczpospolitą Polską a Ukrainą o dobrym sąsiedztwie, przyjaznych stosunkach i współpracy, sporządzony w Warszawie dnia 18 maja 1992 r.* [Treaty between the Republic of Poland and Ukraine on Good Neighbourhood, Friendly Relations and Cooperation, signed in Warsaw on May 18, 1992], *Journal of Laws of 1993*, no. 125, item 573.

60. *Ibid.*

61. *Ibid.*

the right to maintain “full control over the production and storage of materials and substances that serve peaceful purposes but can be used in the production of mass destruction”.<sup>62</sup>

K. Skubiszewski’s unquestionable success in convincing Ukraine to remain an atomic free state was communicated to members of the Polish parliamentary committees on November 18, 1992, before whom the head of Poland’s foreign policy delivered a speech that included an account of his talks with Leonid Kuchma:

Ukraine is a nuclear power. We take seriously Ukraine’s assurances about its desire to become a non-nuclear state. According to a recent statement by President Leonid Kravchuk, the START Treaty will be approved by the Ukrainian Parliament later this year.<sup>63</sup>

On December 30, 1992 in Kyiv, there was an exchange of documents ratified by the parliaments of both countries, which was recorded, among others, in the Journal of Laws in 1993. The treaty signed by the presidents of Poland and Ukraine was to be concluded for a period of fifteen years, and then – in the absence of termination by either party – automatically extended, each time for a period of five years.<sup>64</sup>

## Poles in Ukraine

Since the beginning of Tadeusz Mazowiecki’s government, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also paid attention to the issue of the Polish minority located outside the borders of the Republic of Poland. In the opinion of Krzysztof Skubiszewski, “Poles in the

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62. *Ibid.*

63. K. Skubiszewski, *op. cit.*, 282.

64. *Government Statement of October 27, 1993 on the exchange of instruments of ratification of the Treaty between the Republic of Poland and Ukraine on Good Neighbourhood, Friendly Relations and Cooperation, drawn up in Warsaw on May 18, 1992*, Journal of Laws of 1993, no. 125, item 573.

East were particularly affected by the communist system”, which is why this issue was so important to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs when establishing diplomatic relations with the Soviet republics that were becoming politically independent.<sup>65</sup> A voice echoing the government of the day was the concern of the Polish chambers of parliament, the Sejm and the Senate, which in their resolutions of 1990 and 1991, called for respect for the rights of national minorities living in Ukraine.

The documents confirming mutual respect for the rights of national minorities on their territory were: Declaration on Principles and Basic Directions of Development of Polish-Ukrainian Relations of October 13, 1990, and Treaty on Good Neighbourhood, Friendly Relations and Cooperation of May 18, 1992. Aware of the importance of these documents, which guarantee the rights of the Polish national minority in Ukraine, Minister Skubiszewski, in reporting on Poland’s foreign policy in the east, drew attention to the needs of the Poles living there. Among the needs of the Polish community at that time, Skubiszewski enumerated: a) the lack of premises for Polish organizations, b) financial support of cultural life, c) the development of state education in the Polish language, d) the restitution of religious buildings, e) the care of national memorials and Polish cultural sites.<sup>66</sup>

Another issue of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ activity, which was part of the context of the Polish Diaspora, was Polish graves on the territory of the former USSR. On the Ukrainian territory, there were not only well-known Polish necropolises, but also war graves from the time of World War II and burial places of Poles murdered in Kharkov by the NKVD on the orders of J. Stalin. Through the efforts of the ministerial office of K. Skubiszewski, as early as 1992, attempts were made not only to legally regulate the protection of Polish memorials and resting places, but also to undertake exhu-

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65. K. Skubiszewski, *op. cit.*, 286–290.

66. *Ibid.*, 288.

mation work in Kharkov in order to identify the remains of Polish soldiers and build a cemetery, the construction of which was scheduled for 1994.<sup>67</sup>

*Translated by  
Michelle Atallah and Zbigniew Landowski.*

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67. *Ibid.*, 289.

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