Volodymyr Vynnychenko’s mission to Moscow and Kharkiv in 1920 is an aspect of Soviet history that has long been neglected. The reasons for this are manifold. Records relating to the mission are not plentiful. The only existing testimonies to the outcome of the mission are a diary kept by Vynnychenko, several copies of statements to the Russian Bolsheviks that he collected, and a number of pamphlets published after he returned to the West.

Vynnychenko was sponsored in this enterprise only by a small group of sympathizers in Vienna. Therefore, the failure of the mission can be seen as the failure of one man’s attempt to change the course of Ukrainian history. Vynnychenko, a popular literary figure in his time, was greeted by his Russian and Ukrainian contemporaries with deep hostility for his political efforts. His political reputation became so tainted that in time even his literary achievements were disregarded. Vynnychenko became a forgotten man, and his unique ideas, both literary and political, fell into obscurity. The facts concerning his mission of 1920 suffered a similar fate.

Vynnychenko’s purpose for embarking on this political venture and his observations on events in Moscow and Kharkiv remain an invaluable source of information on the nature of national consciousness and socialism in Soviet Russia and Ukraine. Vynnychenko was a confirmed Marxist who advocated statehood for Ukraine. He had taken part in the struggle for Ukrainian autonomy, federation, and finally independence. However, as a socialist he maintained contacts with revolutionary organizations, including the Bolsheviks. Because of both his patriotism and his ideology, Vynnychenko was to become completely isolated from each of the movements—both nationalist and socialist. Although his alienation from the vital political movements in Ukraine and Russia after the mission resulted in his failure to make an impact on later developments, his observations of this period deserve close study.

Vynnychenko inadvertently initiated his mission after the Germans capitulated and overtures of peace came to Kiev from Moscow. At this time the armies of the Directory were still quite strong, while the Bolsheviks, who had to contend with the White Russian armies, were at a military disadvantage. As Chairman of the Directory, Vynnychenko sent his delegate, Semen Mazu-
renko, to Moscow to negotiate a treaty involving the following issues: (1) complete independence for Ukraine; (2) help from the Bolsheviks to rearm the Ukrainian army; and (3) a temporary military alliance between Moscow and Kiev against the Whites.\(^1\) Vynnychenko claimed that these demands were acknowledged by the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party as valid issues for negotiation, but the members of the Directory never received Mazurenko’s telegram containing Lenin’s positive response. When Mazurenko attempted to come to Kiev with the information, Vynnychenko charged that he was prevented from crossing the border into Ukraine by Petliura’s Ukrainian army and forced to return to Moscow. The telegram remained in the possession of Petliura. Although this is impossible to verify until Soviet archives are opened to Western historians, the existence of such a delegation and the success of the mission is affirmed by another member of the Directory, Mykyta Shapoval, in his work Velyka revoliutsiia.\(^2\) Another Directory official, Isaak Mazepa, claimed that Mazurenko had indeed notified the Directory that prospects for a successful settlement of the differences between the Directory and Khristian Rakovsky’s Soviet Ukrainian government in Kharkiv seemed good.\(^3\) The date when the members of the Directory received this telegram, however, is not cited by Mazepa, which may explain the reason why Vynnychenko and Shapoval were not aware of this message until years later, since they both resigned from the Directory at the same time.

The proposed military alliance with the Bolsheviks was not viewed favourably by the majority within the Directory and therefore was not given the opportunity to develop. Nonetheless, Vynnychenko felt that he had reason to believe that the Soviet state was well disposed to the idea of an alliance with the UPR (Ukrainian People’s Republic). On February 6, 1919, the day after the Soviet government approached the Directory with a proposition which would radically alter the foreign policy of the Directory, he wrote in his diary:

Yesterday it was announced over the radio that the Soviet Russian government offered to become the peace negotiator between the Directory and the Soviet Ukrainian government. The head of that government is Rakovsky, who is a member of the Russian govern-

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\(^1\) Volodymyr Vynnychenko, Rozhliad i pohodzhennia (n.p., n.d.), pp. 11-12.

\(^2\) Mykyta Shapoval, Velyka revoliutsiia (Prague, 1924-26), p. 74.

\(^3\) Isaak Mazepa, Ukraina v ohni i buri revoliutsii (n.p., 1950-51), 1:104.
ment. So, in other words, the Sovnarkom proposes to be the intermediary between themselves and ourselves.\footnote{Volodymyr Vynnychenko, “Shchodennyk,” bk. 6, p. 11, Vynnychenko Archive, Columbia University, New York. In Mazepa, p. 103, the date is erroneously cited as March 5, 1919.}

This was written in reference to two telegrams which arrived on February 5, 1919, bearing similar information. One was from Rakovsky in Kharkiv, the other from Chicherin, Soviet Commissar of Foreign Affairs in Moscow. To Vynnychenko, who had no news from Mazurenko, here at last was an indication that Moscow was still interested in peace negotiations. Since he belonged to the political milieu in Kiev which sympathized with the Bolsheviks, such news undoubtedly inspired him to take full advantage of the invitation to open talks, even if he was indifferent at the manner in which the proposal was presented—suggesting virtual capitulation.

Meanwhile, it was decided that the Directory would continue negotiations with the Entente concerning political recognition and military cooperation against the Bolsheviks.\footnote{Mazepa, p. 104.} As an elected Chairman of the Worker’s Congress, Vynnychenko felt that he could not take part in the drastic decision to enter into an alliance with the Entente, which he regarded as part of the counterrevolutionary camp.

Continued negotiations with the Entente and the establishment of a nonsocialist government in Poland convinced the socialists of the need to resign from the Directory. Mazepa, however, was opposed to this action on the grounds that the socialists were deserting the Directory at the moment when they were most needed by it. He argued that the Ukrainian peasants and workers would follow the parties or otamans delivering the most radical statements to the masses. Only the socialist parties could manage to control the internal situation in Ukraine by offering the masses those programs which would turn them away from the Bolsheviks. Instead, the Ukrainian socialists were voluntarily abandoning the government at a time of internal chaos within Ukraine to politicians who would do nothing but promote the UPR on the international forum.\footnote{Ibid. p. 106.} But Mazepa’s criticism of the socialist action and Vynnychenko’s role in it did not take into account the fact that Vynnychenko had no political alternative but to act in the manner he did. His antagonism toward the Entente stemmed from his concern that Ukraine might once again become the puppet of a
major power. The lesson of the Central Rada could not be overlooked. E. H. Carr wrote that the Directory's "weakness made it constantly amenable to foreign pressure and thus precluded any real freedom of action." His observation coincides with Vynnychenko's thesis on Ukrainian independence: that a psychologically and physically weaker state cannot forge a positive alliance with a stronger state. A positive alliance has to be more than an artificial contrivance creating an illusion of statehood for the weaker partner. Allied with a stronger power, the weaker state would sooner or later accept its ideology, thus precluding any real manifestation of independence. Only a federated union based on economic cooperation, Vynnychenko claimed, could produce a positive alliance. Due to the radical economic programs of Soviet Russia and its relative military weakness in 1919, Vynnychenko believed a positive alliance could be forged between the UPR and Soviet Russia, whereas an alliance with Poland or France at this time would be detrimental to the people of Ukraine. As a strict, uncompromising moralist, Vynnychenko felt he could not accept responsibility for the consequences he believed such an alliance would entail. Vynnychenko's break with the Kiev government on February 11, 1919 was definitive and evident to all parties.

The most controversial period of Vynnychenko's career began after he moved to Vienna in March 1919. Was this a conscious action or merely the product of chance?

Most historians feel that Vynnychenko emigrated to Vienna in order to devote himself to his literary pursuits. The rapidity of events, however, lends itself to another interpretation: that before Vynnychenko left Kiev, the willingness of both sides to take part in discussions was already determined, and that the preliminaries between Vynnychenko and Lenin with Bela Kun, the Hungarian Bolshevik leader, acting as mediator, had been arranged. For on February 9, 1919, Vynnychenko emigrated to Vienna. On March 21, a Soviet Hungarian government was proclaimed by Bela Kun. On March 28, a Ukrainian emissary in Budapest sent Vynnychenko a telegram telling him to depart immediately to Budapest. Vynnychenko arrived in Budapest on March 30, accompanied by Iurii Tyshchenko, and on the following day Kun and Vynnychenko held their first conference.

9 Vynnychenko, "Shchodennyk," bk. 6, p. 11.
On April 1, another conference took place between the two men. They discussed the five points Vynnychenko would present to Lenin. These were: (1) independence for the Soviet Republic of Ukraine; (2) the execution of the Republic's official business in the Ukrainian language; (3) an independent Ukrainian economy and finances; (4) the independent management of foreign affairs; and (5) the separation of the Ukrainian army, militia, and political party system from those of Soviet Russia. The agenda for the discussion was accepted by Lenin with the reservation that it would also have to be approved by the peasants' and workers' soviets in Ukraine. But on April 3, 1919, Vynnychenko received word that Khristian Rakovsky, chairman of the Ukrainian People's Soviets, refused to take part in the discussions.

Another meeting was scheduled with Bela Kun, at which Vynnychenko was presented with a telegram from Moscow. It confirmed Moscow's eagerness to mediate between Vynnychenko's and Rakovsky's delegations if Vynnychenko provided Moscow with a list of parties which would take part in the future government. Vynnychenko responded with the same terms as before. All left-wing, revolutionary, and socialist parties would be invited to participate in the coalition government. The demands for an independent Ukrainian government and the use of Ukrainian as the language of state were reiterated. Towards the end of May, Mykyta Shapoval sent Vynnychenko news of rumours from Budapest that Moscow had accepted his points for discussion.

The Foreign Group of the Ukrainian Communist Party to which Vynnychenko belonged had been formed from the more radical faction which split with the Ukrainian Social Democratic Labour Party at a conference held in Vienna on September 9, 1919. The main cause for the cleavage was the Group's belief in the virtual necessity of sending a delegation to Moscow and Kharkiv and the need for an organization to act as the sponsor of this mission. Its initial move was to send a representative to Moscow to arrange the official details. The man nominated was Semen Mazurenko, the same man who had been in charge of the Directory's delegation to Moscow and had been very influential in convincing Vynnychenko of the importance of such a mission. Mazurenko departed on October 14, 1919. The emigré Left Socialist Revolutionaries were not opposed to the idea of such a

10 Ibid., p. 22.
12 Ibid., p. 6.
13 Vynnychenko, "Shchodennyk," bk. 8, pp. 4-5.
mission and met with the Foreign Group on February 25, 1920 to devise a joint platform and outline.

In his diary, Vynnychenko mentions being visited by Bolshevik agents who alluded to the desirability of his coming to Moscow. Radical Ukrainian groups in the West also pressured Vynnychenko to embark on the mission. Even though they lacked a knowledge of the actual state of affairs, they believed that a person chosen from amongst their ranks would be capable of influencing politics within Ukraine to suit their own doctrines. Whether Lenin would tolerate an independent communist Ukraine was an issue that was not even considered. A letter housed in the Vynnychenko Archive is typical of these naive emigré assumptions:

In early April of this year, there is to be a conference of [Ukrainian] peasants’ and workers’ soviets to decide their relationship to Soviet Russia.

In this important moment, the presence of a person capable of leading this movement is a necessity. We consider you [Vynnychenko] to be the only leader able to direct this movement...

Prague, March 3, 1920.15

By May 1920, the formal preliminary procedures were concluded and the mission became a reality. On May 4, Lenin sent this telegram:

Felix Kon
Kiev
Copy to Rakovsky
Kharkov
Regarding Vinnichenko we agree in principle. Reach agreement with Rakovsky on details...

Lenin
May 4, 192016

On May 24, the delegation, consisting of Volodymyr and Rosa Vynnychenko, Jaromir Nechos, a Czech SD, and Oleksander Badan, Vynnychenko’s secretary, departed for Moscow.17 On the way Vynnychenko was struck by the difficulty in crossing the barriers which served to isolate western Europe from the territory

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occupied by the Bolsheviks. The artificial contrivances imposed on a traveller, wrote Vynnychenko, made one feel as if he were leaving one world and entering another:

We advance towards our goal with almost imperceptible movements. Minute instances absorb all our attention—passes, visas, permits, tickets. Enclosed in a barbed wire through which worming one’s way is a matter of singular difficulty, Europe has been blockaded and barricaded from Russia.  

Vynnychenko’s pessimism en route gained substance upon arrival in Moscow. From the inception, the Bolshevik leaders assumed an air of distrust and suspicion towards the man who had once been so hopeful about the success of his mission and who gave himself up to the cause, completely abandoning any personal interests. They were completely tactless and inhospitable—the delegation was not met at the railroad station, nor were living quarters prepared for them, although the Petrograd Commissariat had telegraphed Moscow of their impending arrival.

What was the cause for this show of disrespect toward an individual willing to sacrifice himself for the ideals of the revolution? Vynnychenko only gradually began to perceive the reasons behind the slighting of the delegation by the Politburo. It stemmed from the theoretical and personal motives with which Vynnychenko had come to retake the lead of the Ukrainian revolution. The revolution, Vynnychenko claimed, would be maintained only after Ukrainian and non-Ukrainian elements united in a working coalition to bring revolution to the peasants and petit bourgeois intelligentsia. He reasoned that the Bolshevik Party could not achieve this because it did not adhere to his theory. Firstly, it was a party of the Russian or Russified proletariat. Secondly, the presence of the Entente forces in Ukraine prevented the Bolsheviks from organizing the masses for revolutionary action, since any revolutionary demonstration would certainly be used by the Entente as an excuse to occupy Bolshevik-held territories with their own troops. According to Vynnychenko, these factors limited Bolshevik policy and precluded the cooperation of the non-Ukrainian Social Democrats and the politically aware proletariat with the Ukrainian peasantry, which was essential for the economic growth of the countryside. The lack of orientation toward the peasantry by the Bolsheviks was inconsistent with and detrimental to their theories

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18 Ibid., p. 3.
19 Ibid., p. 5.
20 Ibid.
Journal

of workers’ and peasants’ soviets and their attempts at engaging the working class in administrative and military organizations.

The Bolsheviks, displeased that even in Moscow Vynnychenko maintained his criticism of their political system, resisted any influence he might exert by attempting to weaken the delegation psychologically. The members of the delegation were treated as unimportant entities and second-rate politicians who could be dealt with only after more important matters were settled. Yet Vynnychenko’s popularity as a writer in Ukraine could not be disregarded, particularly at a time when the Bolsheviks were in need of prominent Ukrainian figures to present the Bolshevik cause in a form palatable to the Ukrainian people.

Vynnychenko’s first formal conference in Moscow was held with Commissar Radek, on the day of his arrival. He described the mood of that and other meetings in his diary:

The meeting’s character, though haphazard and superficial, with much scurrying to the telephone and jumping from topic to topic, was nevertheless comradely. But at this point all friendliness came to an end. Afterwards, tension, coolness, and near hostility emerged and continued to this moment.  

Antagonism to the delegation’s demands also came from other members of the Politburo. On the question of independence for the Ukrainian economy, politics, and culture, Chicherin simplified the matter by concluding that a Ukrainian problem was purely imaginary, since all those living on Ukrainian territory spoke Russian.  

These meetings served as Vynnychenko’s initiation into the world of Soviet bureaucracy. Vynnychenko was completely stunned by the insensitivity of the bureaucrats to the true ideals of communism.

My first words, that the Foreign Group had sent me to devote all my strength to the revolution, these words, which had sounded so real to the Group as well as to myself, so sincere and so full of meaning, to Chicherin “the wall” were simply words which were tossed at the masses at every revolutionary meeting. He was more interested in finding out the concrete proposals I would present. What would happen to the Donets Basin? the Kuban? Whom would they belong to?

For Vynnychenko the communist effort inspired a sense of internationalist community, and he therefore could not compre-

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21 Ibid., pp. 5-6.
22 Ibid., p. 6.
23 Ibid.
hend the emphasis placed on the national ownership of regions like the Donbas. He had come to Moscow to promote the cause of the revolution—one which could lead to a federation of communist states working in solidarity and cooperation. Ownership of property for him was an antiquated concept. The system of federated states, which he anticipated would come into existence, would determine the distribution of the world’s resources. One could consider the question in which ethnographic territory the Donbas was located only on a purely academic level. It had obviously been incorporated into Ukraine centuries ago. Under a truly communist system, however, the Donbas’s riches would be utilized by all, not only by Ukraine.

Soon after the preliminary sessions with members of the Politburo, Vynnychenko realized that his mission, as it had been planned in the West, would produce no results. His program, he felt, had not taken into account the centralism that was beginning to dominate the foreign policy of the Bolsheviks and was eradicating all semblance of true communism. “As a result,” he wrote later, “the activity of the governing party has two aspects: one formal, programmatic, declaratory; the other—practical, real, undeclared.”

Vynnychenko and the Foreign Group, as émigrés, had been aware only of the declarative activity in Soviet Russia and Ukraine and had badly misconstrued the actual state of affairs. They had accepted that Bolshevik policies would be somewhat compatible with their own program.

Vynnychenko’s discoveries in Moscow made him realize that the Bolshevik government would not foster a regeneration of national consciousness in Ukraine. This would not be in its economic interests. Although this realization was a source of great personal suffering, he continued to maintain that a cultural regeneration of the populace remained a probable occurrence. But he felt still greater consternation when he witnessed the lack of enthusiasm and the defeatist spirit amid the formerly revolutionary Russian proletariat. Vynnychenko deplored the tactics of the Politburo, which fostered and encouraged passivity:

It is evident that the Russian Communist Party acts on the basis of tactical principles which are incapable of successfully guiding the proletariat in its psychological transformation or organization of its consciousness in a communist spirit. On the contrary, such tactics reaffirm in the psychology of the masses the old individualistic forms of thought, the old psychological habits, the old deviations in social

ethics, adopted and imprinted through centuries of absolutism and capitalist monarcho-individualism. Because of such methods, the working masses are not drawn into the revolution, and they appear to be passive material which is authoritatively operated by a small group of people.25

It was this small group of people which had invited Vynnychenko to Moscow. Yet by June 3, 1920, he complained in his diary that not one of them met with him despite his attempts toward such an end. Radek did not keep his second appointment with Vynnychenko, nor did Stalin meet with him, although he was authorized to confer with Vynnychenko. Finally, when Vynnychenko petitioned for a conference with Lenin, he was told that Lenin was too busy.26 At first, Vynnychenko had assumed that the Bolsheviks were treating him with such great disregard because of a deep personal distrust and suspicion of his character. He therefore issued a comradely statement to Lenin in which he affirmed his equal status with every Russian Communist Party member, saying: “I came as a member of the Third International, Viennese Chapter.”27 He informed Lenin that the Foreign Group had authorized him to fulfill various obligations, particularly that of establishing a Union of the Ukrainian Communist Party and the CP(b)U. Once this task was accomplished, the Foreign Group wished to join the new Communist Party of Ukraine, and Vynnychenko, acting as a disciplined member of the party, would be ready to accept all directives issued to him.

His brief to Lenin also criticized the appointment of Khristian Rakovsky, a Rumanian, to head the Politburo of Soviet Ukraine. It was not simply Rakovsky’s ethnic background that Vynnychenko protested against, but also the symbolism inherent in appointing a non-Ukrainian to that high office. Rakovsky’s designation by the Russian Bolsheviks represented Russification and imperialism to the conscious Ukrainian elements. Thus, although Vynnychenko had been invited by Radek to join Rakovsky’s government, he declined this offer.28 He knew that his literary popularity made his presence in the cabinet appealing to the Bolsheviks, but he refused to accept a titular position which would gain sympathy for Rakovsky’s government. He was, however, not averse to becoming an active participant in the governing of a

27 Volodymyr Vynnychenko, “Lyst do Lenina,” Vynnychenko Archive, no. III, 1, 2; 3a.
28 Vynnychenko, “Shehodennyk,” bk. 9, pp. 5-6.
The communist Ukraine and, therefore, gave Lenin an ultimatum—his entry into the government would take place only after Rakovsky’s dismissal.

Vynnychenko informed Lenin that he had not arrived in Moscow with concrete plans of the nature that Kamenev had anticipated, namely ownership of territory. Instead, his concrete proposal concerned the formation of a front by joining the Soviet Communist Parties and the Foreign Group. The purpose of such a front would be to split the politically conscious Ukrainians into two camps—the socialist Russo-Ukrainian union and the counter-revolutionary Polish-Ukrainian union. These two opposing coalitions would inevitably become involved in a civil war, and Vynnychenko had no doubt that the socialist coalition, with the support of the masses, would be victorious. As a revolutionary Marxist, he saw the development of civil war as an advantage and would then have accepted Radek’s offer to become a government official within the framework of a Ukrainian socialist cabinet. “Then my admission into the government,” he wrote, “would bring benefit, because it would divide Ukraine into two camps, stop the dangerous elements in opposition to the current government, and weaken the Petliurivshchyna.”

For such a development to materialize, it was essential that the foreign influence within Ukraine’s government be removed. The presence of foreign elements in a revolutionary situation would give the struggle a character of foreign occupation rather than one of socialist civil war.

In his diary, Vynnychenko described how he was interrupted during the writing of his letter to Lenin by the announcement that he was being summoned to report to Kharkiv, where he would receive his next instructions from Rakovsky. This announcement drove Vynnychenko to doubt the chance of any success in Moscow, and he concluded his letter by stating his desire to return to Vienna. Why could not the Politburo release its decision concerning the delegation while it was still in Moscow? Obviously the time gained in sending Vynnychenko to Kharkiv would strengthen the Russian Bolsheviks’ position. On June 9, Vynnychenko was told of yet another change of plans during a conference with Chicherin, Trotsky, and Kamenev: a two-week trip was being arranged for him to Petrograd to familiarize him with the mechanics of rule of the workers’ and peasants’ soviets. Following

29 Ibid., p. 8.
30 Vynnychenko, “Lyst do Lenina.”
Journal

this change in schedule, Vynnychenko began seriously to suspect that the Politburo was stalling in order to have time to decide how to destroy the dangerous influence he was exerting by stubbornly refusing to accept promises of official positions, luxury, and comfort in exchange for discarding his program.

This incident crystallized Vynnychenko’s opinion of the centralist element in the Russian Communist Party. While deliberating on the necessity of such a trip, Vynnychenko was visited by a group of older Russian Bolshevik participants in the October Revolution. They told Vynnychenko that he would be used as a puppet if he agreed to the trip and informed him that neither Kharkiv nor Petrograd were centers of decision-making. Hence, to have any influence one had to remain in Moscow and initiate radical changes at the center. Now that his suspicion that such a trip could only further harm his mission was reaffirmed by the older Bolsheviks, Vynnychenko refused to travel to Petrograd. This decision displeased the Politburo.

Vynnychenko now began a campaign to expose the centralism in the party structure, hoping that this would encourage other communists, heretofore silent, to become active in reversing this trend. He issued a statement demanding that the Central Committee explain in print its position on Ukraine. In this severe indictment of the Bolshevik abuse of Ukrainian nationhood and consciousness, Vynnychenko recalled how, in 1917, he abandoned the Central Rada during its flight to Zhytomyr and went on foot to that area occupied by the Bolsheviks because he wanted to work as a socialist. Yet he, like many others, was being spurned by the Bolsheviks in his attempt to work with them directly. Vynnychenko ended his statement by blaming the Russian Communist Party for bringing the Ukrainian intelligentsia and proletariat closer to counterrevolution. Rather than becoming a pawn in this degeneration of social consciousness, Vynnychenko decided to leave Russia for Ukraine.

Vynnychenko was skeptical of any positive result coming from his proclamation. He in particular did not believe that he would be allowed to visit Ukraine. But on June 16, 1920, Vynnychenko met Lev Kamenev and Grigorii Zinoviev, then head of the Third International. Although they claimed not to have read the proclamation, they were of the opinion that Vynnychenko should be sent to Ukraine. This made Vynnychenko aware

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32 Ibid., p. 11.
33 Ibid., p. 9.
34 Volodymyr Vynnychenko, “Ne dokladaiaa zapyska, a pysmo Ts.K.RKP,” Vynnychenko Archive, no. 2, 5b.
that his statement to the Central Committee had indeed been very carefully perused.\textsuperscript{35} He had been wrong in his prediction of its decision.

Vynnychenko was very anxious to visit Ukraine once he received information which led him to reevaluate the political situation there. In Soviet Russia, he believed the Party and even Lenin were losing control over future developments because petit bourgeois elements dominated the Party. Although Lenin, Trotsky, and Kamenev felt that the antiquated habits and modes of operation contrary to the spirit and reality of communism were being eradicated, this was not actually so. As long as the petite bourgeoisie remained an elemental force in government, bureaucratic and militarization of the Party, the lack of control and accountability to the next official, and the irresponsibility of workers in important positions create the opportunity for many dubious characters—unproletarian and unrevolutionary—to fill the Party ranks. As a result, one notices an abnormal phenomenon, especially in Ukraine where this principle of absolute centralism is most thoroughly applied. . . . that the largest percentage of Party members is composed of elements of the petite bourgeoisie—strangers amid the local population who are unfamiliar with the people’s circumstances and therefore only harmful.\textsuperscript{36}

However, on June 14 Vynnychenko was visited by a recently arrived inhabitant of Halych, Paliiv, who led him to believe that the Ukrainian faction in the Party was growing in strength and was preparing to overcome the trend towards Russian centralism, and that Vynnychenko would find comrades in Ukraine who would share his convictions and beliefs.\textsuperscript{37} These comrades, who supposedly comprised half of the membership of the CP(b)U, were undergoing a political maturation which would soon threaten the inertia at the top. Vynnychenko responded with enthusiasm and optimism:

\begin{quote}
The final resolution of my concrete points [of discussion] is supposed to take place in Kharkiv with Rakovsky, Zinoviev, and Stalin. Fine. There I will discuss with my own people. I am supposed to become a Party member when I arrive. But not directly in the RCP, only in the CPU. To them it makes no difference, but for me there is a difference. The RCP will never become an organization of
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\textsuperscript{35} Vynnychenko, “Shchodennyk,” bk. 9, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{36} Vynnychenko, \textit{Revoliutsiia v nebezpekti}, pp. 28-29.
\textsuperscript{37} Vynnychenko, “Shchodennyk,” bk. 9, p. 15.
Journal

Ukrainian strength, but the CPU already exists as such, if only in small instances.38

Vynnychenko travelled to Ukraine at the end of the month. However, prior to the trip on June 19, Trotsky offered Vynnychenko a position in the recruitment and organization of the Ukrainian army. This could have been an opportunity for Vynnychenko to mobilize his campaign of active structural change from above. He, however, felt it was wiser not to accept this commission on the grounds that he was not admitted into the Politburo, the sole body which Vynnychenko knew had a monopoly on the decision-making process:

I just engaged in a discussion with Trotsky, who excellently described the position of the RCP. . . . my commissions have been secured for me. I will become a commissar in charge of the army, and a member of the Military Soviet. To my question—what would my functions and sphere of influence consist of—he did not reply, but spoke of these and those functions of this and that person. In other words, I would perform no function. I would act as a figurehead. To my subsequent question—would the army divisions organized in Ukraine remain there or would they be relocated outside the Ukrainian borders?—he answered it would happen one way and the other. In other words, the divisions would be resettled, as I had been previously warned. . . . As a result, any new formations which would be attracted to the army through my efforts would be absorbed into Russian divisions and would be organized there. . . . there is no possibility for a Ukrainian Army, and no opportunities or tendencies to form one exist. . . .

But I agreed to this, thinking that the political situation would advance in the proper direction by itself. The indispensabilities of nature are stronger than people's wills. . . . This means that the steering center of the Party—the CC and the Politburo of the CC in particular—must undergo an alteration, no matter how slight [the inclusion of Vynnychenko in the Politburo]. However, just when the conversation touched upon this topic, it suddenly became obvious that all the nice words and ramblings were one thing, while reality was completely different. No changes in Party politics can come about. No additions to the Politburo can be made. . . .

I said, then, that under these circumstances I deem it impossible that my position in government would bring any benefit.39

38 Ibid., p. 16.
39 Ibid., pp. 19-20.
The discussion with Trotsky and subsequently with Kamennev, as well as Vynnychenko’s rejection of commissions offered him after being refused admittance into the Politburo, created great difficulties in sanctioning passage for the delegation to Kharkiv. But they finally arrived on June 25. Vynnychenko’s stay in Kharkiv did not last long—he returned to Moscow on July 6, 1920—and he kept no record of what happened there. (He was however, due to return to Kharkiv again on August 17, 1920, and this trip was recorded.) Vynnychenko returned to Moscow with the sad recognition that there was no work for a man like himself in Kharkiv. His writings of this period are filled with gloom and confusion over future courses of action. He was faced with the choice of rejecting his nation and becoming a communist in the Bolshevik sense, or disassociating himself from the Bolsheviks and living as a Ukrainian. Neither choice was acceptable to him, and were it not for his literary activity—the one inspiration he had in those days—Vynnychenko felt he would have succumbed to death. Again he began to petition for permission to leave for Vienna. Since May 24, 1919, after Lenin sent Rakovsky a memorandum on the matter, foreigners leaving the country on their own initiative was considered a criminal act.40

The best channel for Vynnychenko to attain permission for the delegation to leave the country became the Third International. He wrote a letter to Radek on July 15, asking him for three tickets to the Second Session of the Congress of the Third International, and that Radek discuss with responsible authorities the feasibility of sending Vynnychenko as an agent of the International to the United States since he could not serve the cause of communism in Ukraine.41 Although he had already spent two months in Russia, no constructive work could be found for him. The mission had disintegrated into the writing of petitions and proclamations with no effect. Vynnychenko, previously a defender of the Bolshevik state, now acknowledged the fact that there was no place for Ukrainians in it. Conscious Ukrainians were no longer considered useful, especially after the Red Army’s victories over Petliura’s forces. Because Vynnychenko disapproved of this, he was denied a responsible position in the Kharkiv Politburo, and the Foreign Group was refused membership in the CP(b)U.

The reason for Vynnychenko’s desire to attend the Congress of the Third International and to be appointed as a representative to

41 Vynnychenko, “Shchodennyk,” bk. 9, p. 18.
the United States was to extend his attempts at curtailing the centralism within the RCP beyond the borders of the Soviet state. In the International, Vynnychenko hoped to find comrades who would listen to his eyewitness reports whom he could then motivate to take control of the revolution away from the hands of the Party officials in Moscow. Again he would try to achieve the same goal—an independent socialist Ukraine—but this time his tool would be the International. Because of the hostility between Soviet Russia and the West, it was difficult for the Bolsheviks to install one of their agents in the United States. Vynnychenko felt that his Austrian passport would facilitate this. Chicherin became sincerely interested in his proposal and agreed to discuss the matter at the conference.\(^{42}\) This plan, however, did not materialize.

As a delegate to the Congress, Vynnychenko was dismayed by the lack of representatives there from the Ukrainian parties. His observations of the Bolshevik experiment in Ukraine suggested to him that, should communism fail in Ukraine, it would also fail in the West. Unfortunately, Western capitalism had not deteriorated in the face of the Bolshevik experiment:

Judging by the statements about conditions in Europe assiduously and purposefully gathered in the Soviet press, one cannot be secure in the thought that capitalism will capitulate in this historical epoch. [Capitalism] is still strong. The number and strength of strikes does not increase. Elections to the parliaments do not register a decrease in bourgeois influence. On the contrary, the results of the German elections, when compared with the elections held soon after the revolution, indicate a lapse of revolutionary energy .... The fall of prices of certain products sold in Europe, however one attempts to explain it, is a phenomenon which ameliorates the dissatisfaction of the masses and evokes hopes of better conditions within the capitalist mode of economy.\(^{43}\)

Vynnychenko believed that the establishment of a revolutionary proletarian state in Ukraine would have an adverse effect on western-European capitalism. Since this did not occur, he thought that some programmatic amendments, based on the observations of Ukrainian communists living in Ukraine, were in order. Thus the lack of Ukrainian representatives at the Congress proved to be a crucial problem. The UCP was not admitted into the Congress on the grounds that each state could only be represented by one party. The CP(b)U, on the other hand, had its


rights revoked at the Congress, the rationale being given that it was an outgrowth of the RCP and not a separate party.\textsuperscript{44} An embittered Vynnychenko wrote that it seemed the workers and peasants of Ukraine had not achieved the right to exist as a nation.

However, because one of the official tasks of Vynnychenko’s mission had been to unite the UCP and CP(b)U, he therefore avoided harsh criticism of the Ukrainian Bolsheviks:

Every Ukrainian communist, including every member of the UCP, must steadfastly remember that there can be no animosity towards the CP(b)U. This is a native party . . . . our stronger brother who, by virtue of specific objective and subjective elements, is making mistakes.\textsuperscript{45}

Vynnychenko’s experiences of Soviet rule had not altered his regard for a system of government based on workers’ and peasants’ soviets. He felt in 1920, and later in life, that the democratic system of soviets was the ideal form of government, but that this system was incapacitated by the centralism in Moscow.\textsuperscript{46} He was certain that if all communists in Ukraine and abroad worked together, a successful national revolution would occur. Although the two major Communist Parties in Ukraine were not in agreement in 1920, he anticipated that in the future they would have common goals. Vynnychenko appealed to the parties not to be antagonistic towards each other, but to unite and not to entrust national liberation to foreign entities. In the autumn of 1920 he drew up a platform of three points to be followed in future by the Foreign Group and the UCP:

1) to expose the mistakes made by the Bolsheviks to the CP(b)U, the RCP, the European proletariat, and the working masses of Ukraine.

2) to correct these mistakes, not through adverseness or sabotage, or refusing to cooperate with the Bolshevik Parties, but through the more active organization of revolutionary activity among the Ukrainians.

3) to support the Soviet Ukrainian government in the most vehement way by entering into all its institutions and departments, by organizing a stronger Red Army, by revitalizing the economy,

\textsuperscript{44} Volodymyr Vynnychenko, “Vidchyt pro poizdku do SRSR,” Autumn, 1920, Vynnychenko Archive, no. 2; 6b, pp. 9-10.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., p. 16.

\textsuperscript{46} Mykyta Shapoval, “Do prohramy Ukr. vyzvolennia,” Nova Ukraina (Prague), vol. 2, no. 9, p. 69.
and by defending with words and deeds the existence of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic.47

Why was Vynnychenko so muted in his criticism of the Ukrainian Bolsheviks? His idea of what was beneficial for Ukrainian statehood differed from that of his former colleagues of the Rada and the Directory. He did not consider the Ukrainian Bolsheviks to be enemies of the Ukrainian state, but rather its comrades who had developed inferiority complexes as communists because of feelings projected onto them by Russian chauvinism. The Ukrainian Bolsheviks, Vynnychenko reasoned, had to be convinced that in Ukraine national and social liberation are one, and that to be both a Ukrainian and a communist was not a contradiction in terms. As Mykyta Shapoval wrote in 1923:

A stateless nation which consists overwhelmingly of peasantry always represents “an incomplete nation” and occupies a place among the oppressed classes in the social structure of a given territory. An incomplete nation has only one class—that of the socially, nationally, and politically oppressed. And therefore the national revolutionary movement poses as a movement of progressive and even revolutionary liberation in its political, cultural, and economic aspects.48

Permission to depart for Vienna was finally granted on August 4, 1920, and the delegates were already seated on the train when they were asked to disembark. They were told that the war in Poland made travel difficult for foreigners.49 Eight days later Vynnychenko met with the Secretary of the Central Committee of the RCP, Krestinsky, who advised him to remain either in Moscow or in Petrograd. Although he admitted that there was no reason why the delegates should not be allowed to return to Vienna, Vynnychenko understood that they were being forcibly detained.

But on August 15, they received permission for their second trip to Kharkiv, where Vynnychenko found that indeed, as he had been told, peasant demonstrations and uprisings against the regime were a reality. Poltava province was rallying under the slogans of Makhno, the anarchist, whose troops captured and distributed Soviet goods to the populace. Not only the peasantry, but even the intelligentsia, which had once leaned toward socialism, was becoming Makhnovite. Rumours of the occupation of the Danzig Corridor and the capture of the Red Army stationed

48 Shapoval, “Do prohramy…” p. 3.
49 Vynnychenko, “Shchodennyk, bk. 9, p. 37.
there were rampant. General Wrangel’s White Russian forces occupied the Don and the Kuban regions.

Vynnychenko held conversations in Kharkiv with various members of the UCP concerning these outbursts of national consciousness. However, just like its rival in Ukraine, the CP(b)U, the UCP refused to become involved in the leadership of the masses. Both parties were repeating the error perpetrated by the RCP, the inducement of revolution externally and from the top.

This added to the critical situation by increasing the masses’ disenchantment with the regime. Though the Moscow officials were sending reinforcements to help those divisions of the Red Army that were fleeing in panic, Vynnychenko was skeptical of a Bolshevik victory. The workers and peasants took no initiative to involve themselves in the struggle, although local commissars anticipated armed peasant revolts if General Wrangel’s troops were to occupy the area. This, reasoned the commissars, would provoke the Ukrainian intelligentsia to go out into the countryside to organize the peasants against the Whites. The local Bolsheviks were so frightened of the thought of Ukrainian cooperatives or communes becoming sympathetic to the Petliurites in the future that the commissars crushed any attempts at an organized movement. These tactics, based solely on the conjecture that a Petliurite organization might evolve in the future, would only help the counterrevolutionary forces, Vynnychenko wrote. They would result in the destruction of Soviet rule in Ukraine and also in Russia.

Further discussions concerning permission to return to Vienna brought Vynnychenko in contact with Manuilsky and Rakovsky of the Kharkiv Politburo. The talks again led to the topic of his membership in the CP(b)U and in the government. Although Manuilsky promised him that, as a government official, he would have the right to promote any forms of Ukrainization he thought desirable, Vynnychenko understood the relationship between Moscow and Kharkiv too well to believe him. The commissions offered to him—People’s Commissar of Foreign Affairs and Chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars—would only be positions on paper. Vynnychenko did not desire only the privilege of being named a commissar; rather, he wished to become involved in the solution of problems. He asked how could one integrate the

50 Ibid., p. 46.
51 Ibid., p. 52.
52 Ibid., p. 55.
53 Ibid., p. 62.
countryside into the industrial market so that the peasants could also benefit from industrialization; what methods would serve to minimalize speculation, bribery, and illegal trade in the economy while the people were starving.\textsuperscript{54}

Vynnychenko’s entry into the government was to be finalized by a written declaration from him to the Politburo of the CP(b)U. On September 9, 1920, Rakovsky informed him that his declaration had been reviewed and rejected.\textsuperscript{55} The Bolsheviks had anticipated that the declaration would contain Vynnychenko’s written approval of the policies and program of the CP(b)U as well as a refutation of the repression of Ukrainian statehood. Vynnychenko, however, refused to alter his statement in any form. Thus he was barred from the Politburo, and he refused to join either the CP(b)U or the government, even though his appointments to official positions had already been printed in the press and Manuilsky had ratified them with his signature. Rumours of Vynnychenko’s appointment to the premiership in place of Rakovsky thrived, and a few nonpartisan Ukrainians visited him to discuss the possibility of a new reawakening of Ukraine with Vynnychenko in the government. This prompted the Kharkiv Politburo to telegraph the Moscow Politburo, asking it to review Vynnychenko’s case.\textsuperscript{56} That the Ukrainian Politburo found it more important to indulge in this purely bureaucratic gesture than to establish an alliance with the Foreign Group so infuriated Vynnychenko that he refused to maintain any formal ties with the Kharkiv officials. On September 16, 1920, Vynnychenko returned to Moscow, and on September 23 the delegates were on their way back to Vienna.

Upon returning to his own political emigré milieu, Vynnychenko initiated a campaign to expose the mistakes of the Bolshevik parties to the European proletariat and socialist intelligentsia at public meetings and by writing pamphlets and articles in the journal \textit{Nova doba}. He said that by refusing to join the ideas in the program of the Foreign Group to their own programs, the UCP and, in particular, the CP(b)U were negating their very raison d’être—the dictatorship of the proletariat—in favour of economic and political expediency. By destroying the centers of economic planning in Ukraine and prohibiting the Ukrainian state from realizing its own economic life, the regime prevented the reorganization of society by the workers and peasants along communist lines.\textsuperscript{57} Even if the Central Committees of the UCP and

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., p. 63.
\textsuperscript{57} Vynnychenko, “Vidchyt pro poizdku ...” p. 10.
the CP(b)U were sincere in their desire to promote the cause of revolution in Ukraine, the apparatus for carrying out this revolution had to come from the Ukrainian centers themselves—the cities and villages—and only then could the Party engage in the organization and coordination of revolutionary activity. Therefore it was very important that the economy and the political programs of the Ukrainian state remain exclusively in the hands of a Ukrainian communist party, along the lines of what Vynnychenko envisioned a communist party to be, because revolution could not be imported from a foreign state, and any efforts on the part of the Russian communists to do so would mean oppression for the Ukrainian people. Instances of such a policy could already be cited.

As a communist, Vynnychenko grasped the necessity to consolidate and concentrate the economy and program of a given state. However, what he objected to in the relationship between Ukraine and Russia was the centralization benefitting only one state—Russia—and only one class—the petite bourgeoisie. His alternative to the existing structure was a federated and consolidated utilization of resources according to a policy voluntarily drawn up by internally independent and equal states.\(^{58}\)

Although Vynnychenko was critical of the Russian and Ukrainian communists whom he had come to know so well in Moscow and Kharkiv, he continued to believe that only a program of a communist party, realized in its every aspect, could fulfil all the demands of the spiritual and material development of the masses. Only a government possessing a socialist character could undertake the education of the abandoned and most oppressed population. Interspersed throughout his criticism of the regime in Ukraine was praise for the government for having created immense opportunities for the masses along limited avenues of development.

However, Vynnychenko was decreed a counterrevolutionary and, after the publication of a few derogatory articles against him in Ukraine, his mission, his literature, and his very existence were forgotten. But his criticism of the Soviet state as well as of the Rada and the Directory has not gone entirely unnoticed. Perhaps in the future his works shall gain popular appeal, and his uncompromising and severe judgement will no longer remain in the form of obscure treatises withering away on the shelves of the Vynnychenko Archive collection at Columbia University. The span of time separating the revolutionary period in Ukraine from the

present is long enough to warrant a sober analysis of Vynnychenko's political career, as well as of his socialist and communist comrades. His arrogance, his indulgence in faultfinding, and his antagonism towards other politicians have all contributed to the omission of Vynnychenko from scholarly studies. It is important, however, to realize that the problems which men like Vynnychenko had tried to deal with from 1917 to 1920 have not yet disappeared. They still recur daily in different aspects and degrees in the Soviet bloc. Bureaucracy, national discrimination, and the exclusion of the countryside from enjoying the benefits of industrial consumer goods are only some of the contemporary problems of the Soviet Union which have their roots in the early revolutionary period. The controversy surrounding Vynnychenko, his colleagues, and the revolutionary years in which they worked should compel historians to make a fresh analysis of that period.