

MSS

RUSSIA No. 2 (1923).

CORRESPONDENCE

BETWEEN

His Majesty's Government and the  
Soviet Government

RESPECTING

The Relations between the Two  
Governments.

*Presented to Parliament by Command of His Majesty.*



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**Correspondence between His Majesty's Government and  
the Soviet Government respecting the Relations  
between the two Governments.**

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No. 1.

*Mr. Hodgson to M. Chicherin.*

Sir, *Moscow, March 30, 1923.*  
UNDER instructions from His Majesty's Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, I have the honour to approach you in the matter of the condemnation to death, now confirmed by the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee, of Mgr. Butkevich, and to make an earnest and final appeal for a stay of execution. I am to submit that the execution of the sentence cannot fail to produce throughout the civilised world a feeling of horror and indignation, which the Russian Government, even from the point of material interest apart from other considerations, can hardly wish to invite.

I avail, &c.

R. M. HODGSON.

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No. 2.

*M. Weinstein to Mr. Hodgson.*

Sir, *Moscow, March 31, 1923.*  
I AM instructed by the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs to point out, in answer to your note of the 30th March, that Russia, being an independent country and a sovereign State, has the undeniable right of passing sentences in conformity with its own legislation on people breaking the law of the country, and that every attempt from outside to interfere with this right and to protect spies and traitors in Russia is an unfriendly act and a renewal of the intervention which has been successfully repulsed by the Russian people.

It is necessary to mention that, simultaneously with your note, M. Chicherin received a telegram from the representative of the Irish Republic in France on the same subject, in which the signatory, in asking for mercy on behalf of Cieplak, says that he is doing so "in spite of the hypocritical intervention of the British Government, which is responsible for the assassination in cold blood of political prisoners in Ireland, where 14,000 men, women and young girls are treated in a barbarous and inhuman fashion in conformity with the will of Great Britain, while British control

over cables prevents the civilised world from learning the horrible details of these atrocities."

If similar facts which have taken place under British rule in India and Egypt are taken into consideration, it is hardly possible to regard an appeal, in the name of humanity and sacredness of life, from the British Government as very convincing.

Permit me, &c.

G. WEINSTEIN.

No. 3.

*Mr. Hodgson to M. Weinstein.*

Dear M. Weinstein,

*Moscow, April 1, 1923.*

I AM sorry to say that I cannot accept the note of the 31st March, bearing your signature, in its present form.

No one has questioned the right of the Russian Government to exercise jurisdiction within its own territory, so that I intend to make no observations on your first paragraph.

When, however, you impugn the sincerity of the British Government in its appeal for clemency on behalf of condemned persons, and adduce, in support of this charge and as representing facts, the irresponsible utterances of some individual in France whom you style "the representative of the Irish Republic," and who, *inter alia*, accuses the British Government of being responsible for the murder in cold blood of political prisoners, the position is different, and I must ask you, if you wish me to accept this note, to couch it in such terms as will make it possible for me to do so.

I have, &c.

R. M. HODGSON.

No. 4.

*M. Weinstein to Mr. Hodgson.*

(Translation.)

Dear Mr. Hodgson,

*Moscow, April 4, 1923.*

I ACKNOWLEDGE receipt of your letter of the 1st instant.

Taking into consideration that your note of the 30th March cannot be qualified otherwise than as an entirely inadmissible attempt at interference in the internal affairs of the independent and sovereign R.S.F.S.R., the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs cannot acknowledge that the expressions employed in its answering note were inapt or not suitable to the circumstances of the case.

The People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs regrets that you do not find it possible to transmit to your Government the note handed to you but intended for it and that, consequently, it only remains for it to find other means for acquainting the British Government with its contents.

In any case, in view of the publication both of your note and of the reply, the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs trusts that the contents of the latter are already known to your Government and that in the future it will refrain from attempts of any kind at interfering in the internal affairs of the Soviet Republic.

I have, &c.

G. WEINSTEIN.

No. 5.

*The Marquess Curzon of Kedleston to Mr. Hodgson.*

Sir,

*Foreign Office, May 2, 1923.*

I TRANSMIT herewith a copy of a memorandum explaining that the tone and character of the notes recently received by you from the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs have obliged His Majesty's Government carefully to consider, in connection with a large number of similar incidents, whether it is desirable that the relations between the two Governments should remain any longer on so anomalous a footing, and that His Majesty's Government have therefore decided to address to the Soviet Government a considered statement of their views with the desire to arrive at a definite conclusion.

2. I request that you will without delay read this memorandum to M. Chicherin, M. Litvinof or M. Karakhan, and leave with him a copy. Should you fail to obtain such immediate personal interview, you should transmit a copy of the memorandum to the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs with the request that the Soviet Government will give it their urgent consideration.

3. You will observe that His Majesty's Government state in the final paragraphs of the memorandum that unless the Soviet Government will undertake to comply within ten days with the requests which it contains, His Majesty's Government will consider that the Trade Agreement of the 16th March, 1921, is terminated in accordance with the provisions contained in the third paragraph of article 13.

4. If, on the expiry of the ten days, you should receive no reply from the Soviet Government, you will return to this country with your whole mission and will bring with you Mr. Preston and his British staff. If a reply is received from the Soviet Government before the expiry of the ten days, and it is clearly unsatisfactory, you and your staff should leave Moscow without further delay.

I am, &c.

CURZON OF KEDLESTON.

Enclosure in No. 5.

## MEMORANDUM.

1. THE tone and character of the notes recently received by the British agent at Moscow from the Russian Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, in reply to certain representations made by the former under instructions from His Majesty's Government, have imposed upon His Majesty's Government the duty, which has perhaps been already too long delayed, of considering carefully, and *seriatim*, in relation to a large number of similar incidents, whether it is desirable, or indeed possible, that the relations of the two Governments should remain any longer upon so anomalous and indeed unprecedented a footing, and whether His Majesty's Government can with due self-respect continue to ignore the repeated challenges which the Soviet Government has thought fit with apparent deliberation to throw down. His Majesty's Government have therefore decided that the moment has arrived to address to the Soviet Government a considered statement of their views with the desire to arrive at a definite conclusion.

2. It is now just over two years since His Majesty's Government signed a trade agreement with the Soviet Government, with a view to promoting commercial relations between the two countries, the question of political relations being postponed until the above agreement had been tested in practice, and until the Soviet Government had satisfied certain indispensable conditions. In taking this step, which was in advance of any similar action by any other foreign Government, His Majesty's Government not only signified their willingness to establish a friendly understanding with the Russian Government and the Russian people, but they made a material contribution to the stability and prosperity of the Russian State. At the same time, they were careful to prefix to the agreement the stipulation, incumbent upon both parties, to refrain from hostile action or propaganda, the one against the other. This undertaking, which has been loyally and scrupulously observed by His Majesty's Government, has from the start been consistently and flagrantly violated by the Soviet Government, and correspondence between the two Governments in the autumn and winter of 1921, which has been published, sufficiently indicated the grounds of complaint of His Majesty's Government, as well as the nature of the Russian reply. After this, there was some slight curtailment of the activities of Russian agents in Asia, the Soviet authorities apparently realising that the Trade Agreement, from which they derived such substantial advantage, might be imperilled by unduly rash conduct. More recently these pernicious activities have been vigorously resumed. It would be easy to fill many pages with a narrative of these proceedings resting upon unimpeachable authority. Such a narrative would doubtless provoke, as it did before, an indignant denial from the Soviet Government with allegations as to false

information and spurious documents. His Majesty's Government have no intention to embark upon any such controversy. They are content to rely exclusively upon communications which have passed in the last few months between the Russian Government and its agents, and which are in their possession, and upon the recorded acts of members of the Soviet Government itself.

3. Among the most useful bases for Russian anti-British propaganda has always been the area which comprises Persia, Afghanistan and the Indian border.

#### I.—*Persia.*

4. The Russian Minister at Tehran has been the most tireless, though not always the most successful, operator in this field. He has housed Indian seditionists within his hospitable walls, and has sped them on their mission to India. His Majesty's Government know the exact sums which have been sent to him from time to time by the Russian Government largely for the purpose of anti-British intrigue; and they have seen instructions that have passed between him and his superiors, and between him and his subordinate agents, with a view to stirring up anti-British movements and rebellion in that part of the world. The activities of this agent have even extended to the neighbouring territory of Irak, and Kermanshah, where there is a Soviet consul, the instructions to whom are known to His Majesty's Government, has been made the active centre of these benevolent intentions. That these activities are well known to, and have been authorised by, the Soviet Government at Moscow is demonstrated by a report from M. Shumiatsky, the Russian representative at Tehran to the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, in February 1923, which contains the following interesting paragraph: "Our mission, in carrying out the instructions which your telegram amplifies, had decided on this political line of action, especially in North Persia and Tehran: a good group of workers has been organised who can act in an anti-British direction with real activity . . . . If the Commissary for Foreign Affairs will agree to the plan of the mission, for the first expenditure 300,000 tomans will be necessary as a credit to enable us to work."

#### II.—*Afghanistan.*

5. Afghanistan affords an even more favourable base for enterprise, owing to its proximity to the turbulent tribes within the Indian border. Here M. Raskolnikov, the Soviet representative in Kabul, has distinguished himself by exceptional zeal. On the 17th February, 1923, he informed the Soviet authorities in Tashkent that every possible means should be used "to aggravate the undoubted existing crisis by making a breach between Afghanistan and the English," and that "the immediate delivery of arms and money would have an immense significance." The Russian Commissariat for Foreign Affairs will no doubt recognise the following communication dated the 21st February, 1923, which

they received from M. Raskolnikov : " I am making arrangements for giving help to Waziristan, probably to the extent of the outlay of 3,000 roubles and ten boxes of cartridges " ; and a further communication dated the 17th March, in which M. Raskolnikov implored the Commissariat not to curtail his work for " Indian work and extraordinary expenses," as this would cause " an irretrievable loss to the work of the Legation in its most vital spheres." These extraordinary expenses for the year October 1922 to October 1923 were estimated by M. Raskolnikov in November 1922 at 800,000 out of a total Legation expenditure of about 1,200,000 Kabul rupees.

6. The Commissariat for Foreign Affairs will also doubtless recognise a communication received by them from Kabul, dated the 8th November, 1922, to the following effect : " Your instructions as regards the caution with which our intelligence and propaganda work should be done are being complied with exactly. Special attention is now being given to the region north of Peshawar, among the Mohmands, but in this respect we cannot do much owing to the insufficiency of funds."

7. Nor will they have forgotten a communication, dated the 16th March, 1923, from M. Karakhan, the Assistant Commissary for Foreign Affairs, to M. Raskolnikov, in which he said : " Bring with you a concrete proposal with regard to the form the co-operation in assisting the tribes should take. On the settlement of this question will depend the question of the delivery of arms. Please inform us of your ideas as to the form of co-operation necessary to ensure local supervision in the distribution of the arms."

8. These communications throw an interesting light on some recent events in the Indian Borderland.

### III.—India.

9. The Soviet Government has also not failed to carry its activities further into India. Already, in November 1922, seven Indians, who had been trained as Communist agitators at Tashkent and, after the conclusion of the Russian Trade Agreement, at Moscow, were arrested on their arrival in India from Moscow, whence they had travelled under the charge of Russian civil and military officials by a circuitous and very difficult route, in order to avoid detection.

10. In the same year a number of banknotes of 100*l.* each, issued through Lloyd's Bank and the Russian Commercial and Industrial Bank in London to Nikolai Klishko, Assistant Official Agent of the Soviet Government in London in June 1921, were cashed in India on behalf of a revolutionary Panjabi in touch with other Indian seditious who are known to have been closely associated with the Russian representative in Kabul.

11. In the light of these incidents, it is not surprising to learn that in a recent communication to M. Karakhan, M. Raskolnikov thus expressed himself : " I consider it most important to maintain

personal touch with and render at least the minimum amount of assistance to Indian revolutionaries. At the very lowest it is necessary to assign at least 25,000 gold roubles. Failing this, the existing organisation will collapse."

12. In their note of the 27th September, 1921, the Soviet Government indignantly repudiated any connection between themselves and the mischievous body known as the Third International. It is singularly unfortunate, if this be the case, that a member of the Soviet Government, M. Sokolnikov, People's Commissary for Finance, and presumably a responsible official, should at a meeting of the Financial Commission of the Fourth Congress of the Third International held at Moscow on the 25th November, 1922, have been one of the body of three by whom the sums of 80,000*l.* and 120,000*l.* were allotted to the British and Indian Communist parties respectively. Of this sum 75,000*l.* had arrived in England by the beginning of January 1923. A little earlier, in September 1922, the Soviet Government had borne the expense of equipping and despatching to India and other Eastern countries sixty-two Oriental students trained in propaganda schools under the Third International.

13. The above paragraphs contain but a few selected examples among many scores of similar incidents, covering in their wide ambit Egypt, Turkey, the British Dominions, and even Great Britain, which testify to the consistent manner in which the Soviet Government has flouted and infringed the preliminary condition upon which the Trade Agreement was signed. It is clearly impossible that an arrangement should be perpetuated which is faithfully observed by one party and as systematically violated by the other. Unless such acts are repudiated and apologised for, and unless the officials who have been responsible for them are disowned and recalled from the scene of their maleficent labours, it is manifestly impossible to persevere with an agreement which is so one-sided in its operation.

#### IV.—*Outrages on British Subjects.*

14. Nor do these cases stand alone. They have been accompanied or supplemented by a series of outrages inflicted upon British subjects in the past few years, for which no apology has been offered and no compensation given. The most conspicuous of these cases are the murder of Mr. C. F. Davison, in January 1920, and the arrest and imprisonment on a false charge of Mrs. Stan Harding in the summer of the same year. A prolonged correspondence has taken place on both of these subjects and has been published in both countries. It has produced the most painful impression in the British Parliament and in the press of this country, where public opinion is at a loss to understand how such treatment as that accorded to these unfortunate and innocent persons should be meted out by a Government to which the British Government has gone out of its way to extend a friendly hand, or how the latter Government can consistently with its own dignity and with the adequate protection of legitimate British interests acquiesce in the continuance of such a scandal.

15. As to the case of Mr. Davison, His Majesty's Government in their memorandum of the 25th January, 1922, requested to be allowed to examine the record of the evidence brought before the Russian court by which he was condemned to be shot, and insisted on the payment of full compensation to his widow. Neither of these demands was granted, but a number of irrelevant and easily refutable charges were brought by the Soviet Government against the British authorities in reply. His Majesty's Government cannot acquiesce in so impotent and unjust a conclusion.

16. In the case of Mrs. Stan Harding, the details of which are well known throughout the world, and have elicited but one opinion in all civilised countries, a similar demand for compensation to the injured lady was made by His Majesty's Government and was similarly rejected by the Soviet Government.

17. In both these cases His Majesty's Government are unable to allow the matter to be trifled with any longer. They must now require that the Soviet Government should admit their liability and should undertake to pay such equitable compensation as may be awarded by an arbitrator to be agreed upon by His Majesty's Government and the Soviet Government, or failing such agreement, by the President of the International Court of Justice at The Hague, or by some other impartial person of similar standing.

18. The demand for compensation in these cases is without prejudice to any other claims that may be made by, or on behalf of, other British subjects. The manner in which these claims should be dealt with is a legitimate matter for discussion.

#### V.—*Treatment of British Trawlers.*

19. The feelings aroused in this country by the above treatment of British subjects, without justification, and so far without redress, have been greatly aggravated during the past year by a series of acts perpetrated by the Russian authorities in contravention of the generally accepted conventions of international law, and involving a wholly indefensible interference with British shipping and acts of indignity against British subjects. Prolonged correspondence has taken place upon the arrest of the steam trawler "Magneta," while fishing about 9 miles off the Murman coast on the 31st January, 1922, the trawler, while under Soviet compulsion, being subsequently wrecked and the crew of ten men drowned; and also upon the arrest of the steam trawler "St. Hubert" on the 3rd March, 1922, when fishing more than 12 miles from the coast, that vessel being confiscated by the Soviet authorities and being still detained in the harbour at Murmansk. The reiterated demands of His Majesty's Government for the admission of liability and the grant of compensation in these two cases have been persistently refused by the Soviet Government. More recently, another flagrant case has occurred, the steam trawler "James Johnson" having been seized in March while fishing in the same waters, the vessel and the catch confiscated by the Soviet Government and the master sentenced to forced labour.

20. It is time that the Soviet Government should be made aware that it cannot with impunity behave towards British subjects and British shipping in this arbitrary and intolerable manner. His Majesty's Government are compelled to insist upon (a) the grant of compensation to the owners and relatives for the loss of the "Magneta" and the death of the crew; (b) the release of the "St. Hubert" and "James Johnson," as well as the crew of the latter, with the grant of suitable compensation; and (c) an assurance that British fishing vessels will not be interfered with in future outside the 3-mile limit.

VI.—*Return of Notes relating to Religious Persecution.*

21. During the past year a series of events have occurred in Russia involving the trial, the condemnation, and, in more than one case, the execution of prominent Russian ecclesiastics, occupying a high place in the hierarchy of the Orthodox or Catholic churches in that country. In July 1922 the Metropolitan Benjamin of Petrograd and ten other priests were tried and condemned to death, and, it is believed, executed for opposing the confiscation of church property. At the end of March 1923 Archbishop Cieplak and Mgr. Butkevitch, the leading Roman Catholic prelates in Russia, were tried for alleged acts of hostility to the Soviet Government, and were condemned, the former to ten years' solitary confinement and the latter to death, the sentences being duly carried out. The Catholicos of Georgia and the Bishop of Kutais, in the Caucasus, are under arrest in Tiflis and awaiting trial. The Patriarch Tikhon, of the Russian Orthodox Church, was in May 1922 placed under close arrest and is shortly to be tried (the trial having apparently been only temporarily postponed) on a charge of counter-revolutionary activity.

22. His Majesty's Government have refrained from expressing an opinion upon the nature or validity of the charges brought against these ecclesiastics, conceiving that that is a matter on which they are not called upon to pronounce. No attempt, however, is made in Russia itself to deny that these prosecutions and executions are part of a deliberate campaign undertaken by the Soviet Government, with the definite object of destroying all religion in Russia, and enthroning the image of godlessness in its place. As such they have excited the profound consternation and have provoked the indignant remonstrance of the civilised world. When Mgr. Butkevitch was sentenced to death, appeals were made to the Soviet Government from Governments and religious bodies in many countries. It was in sympathy with this outburst of the affronted moral sentiment of mankind that on the 30th March the British representative at Moscow, acting under instructions from His Majesty's Government, approached M. Chicherin with a "submission that the execution of the sentence cannot fail to produce throughout the civilised world a feeling of horror and indignation which the Russian Government can hardly wish to invite" and "with an earnest and final appeal to that Government for a stay of execution." On the following day Mr. Hodgson received a reply signed by M. Weinstein claiming the undeniable right of

Russia to pass sentences in conformity with its own laws, and declaring that "every attempt from outside to interfere with this right and to protect spies and traitors in Russia is an unfriendly act." Further, M. Weinstein proceeded in the same letter to make an irrelevant and insulting reference to a communication received by M. Chicherin from the alleged representative of a so-called Irish Republic in France. This note, unexampled in the case of Governments affecting to be on friendly terms, was at once and rightly returned by Mr. Hodgson, at the same time that he repudiated all desire to interfere with the right of the Russian Government to exercise jurisdiction within its own territory. On the 4th April, Mr. Hodgson received a further reply from M. Weinstein couched in terms even more offensive. Mr. Hodgson returned no answer. But the Soviet Government, in accordance with a practice which usage has now rendered familiar, published the correspondence to the world.

23. It must be clear that the exchange of correspondence conducted by one of the two parties in the above temper and language is not merely inconsistent with that standard of courtesy which ordinarily prevails in the relations between Governments, but places the continuance of those relations in grave jeopardy. When, further, it is remembered that this is only the latest incident in the long series of studied affronts which have been recorded in this memorandum, it seems difficult to arrive at any other conclusion than that the Soviet Government are either convinced that His Majesty's Government will accept any insult sooner than break with Soviet Russia, or that they desire themselves to bring the relations created by the Trade Agreement to an end.

24. His Majesty's Government would on general grounds, and in the interest of the economic recovery of a country with whose people (as they have recently had many opportunities of testifying in a practical way) they have genuine ties of sympathy and old alliance, much regret that an abrupt termination should be made to an experiment which was entered into by them in sincerity, and has been pursued with undeviating loyalty and good faith. But it is not possible for them to acquiesce in a continuance of the treatment which has been summarised in this memorandum and which is incompatible alike with national dignity and with mutual respect.

25. In the above note have been stated the requests which His Majesty's Government feel constrained to make. They are requests for :—

1. The actions and assurances by the Soviet Government with regard to propaganda and hostile action which are contained in paragraph 13.
2. The admission of liability by the Soviet Government and the undertaking to pay compensation in the case of the British subjects and the British ships as demanded in paragraphs 17 and 20.

3. The unequivocal withdrawal of the two communications signed by M. Weinstein which have been described in paragraph 22.

26. His Majesty's Government have no desire or intention to enter into a prolonged and possibly acrimonious controversy on any of those subjects; but, unless, within ten days of the receipt of the above communication by the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs, the Soviet Government has undertaken to comply fully and unconditionally with the requests which it contains, His Majesty's Government will recognise that that Government does not wish the existing relations between them to be maintained. In that case His Majesty's Government, on their part, will, in view of the manifest infringement of the Trade Agreement by the Soviet Government, as set forth in the earlier part of the present memorandum, consider themselves immediately free from the obligation of that agreement, in accordance with the provisions of the third paragraph of its thirteenth article.





