

AIRWAYS AS A FACTOR IN THE SURVIVAL OF THE STATE (BY THE EXAMPLE OF UKRAINIAN PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC)

Attempts to organize air traffic of UPR with foreign countries during the War for Independence (in 1919) are investigated. Special attention is paid to usage for this purpose bomber aircrafts produced in Germany.

Key words: UPR, aviation, aircraft, air traffic.

The political map of Europe in 1918–1920 changed very quickly – new states that arised from the ruins of the Russian, Austro-Hungarian and German Empires were having brutal struggle for survival and living space. Apart from external threats there was internal instability in many newly countries – different factions fought for power, trying with strength to finish with its political rivals. In the heart of that struggle was a young Ukrainian state. Monarchical regime of Hetman Pavlo Skoropadskiy, who ruled it, with the support of Germany, was doomed after the defeat of the latter in the First World War. In December 1918 the Hetman was eliminated after uprising and a republican and socialist in their beliefs Directory headed by Simon Petlyura, which proclaimed the revival of the Ukrainian People’s Republic (UPR) camet to power.

At the beginning of 1919 the military-political situation of the Ukrainian People’s Republic was critical. Directory was unable to establish an effective resistance to numerous enemies surrounding the state – especially the Bolsheviks. On the western borders were also restless – there was a war for Galicia with a young Polish state and Romania take a position of friendly neutrality Ukrainian government tried to establish contact with the Antanta and maintain relations with Germany, which, despite the fact that it had lost the war,

maintained its sovereignty. However, ground transportation, in those conditions, was long and dangerous. The only way of communication with Europe remained an air way that could be used to carry not only people (primarily diplomatic representatives), but the most important goods.

Some experience of air routes connections on the territory of Ukraine already existed. In particular, Austro-Hungarian regular air route Vienna-Krakow-Lviv-Kyiv worked from March 20, 1918. Air routes network was created by the German occupation forces, using Brest-Litovskas as stronghold. Their planes were using the routes of Brest-Lutsk–Berdichev–Kyiv–Poltava and Berdichev–Odessa–Nikolaev–Kherson [1]. In the spring of 1918 the authorities of the Ukrainian People's Republic attempted to establish internal air mail traffic. In the structure of the Ministry of Post and Telegraph an Airmail department was formed on the military aviators initiative. They intended to create a network of air lines in order to establish courier connection between the main cities of the country. Military aviation planes were supposed to be used for this. Despite the difficulties of that period, they still managed to begin postal flights. "Military Science Journal of UPR General Staff" wrote in April 1918: "Between Kyiv–Odessa and Kyiv–Poltava Airmail already operates. The draft on it was passed to the Central Council" [2]. However, this idea did not gain further development.

It should be noted that in Ukraine at that time there was a real base for organization of air transportation – quite well developed aviation industry. Management of the largest enterprise – Odessa company "Anatra" – realizing that because of reduction in military orders there is a risk of being left without work issued a curious proposal in January 1918: to build some airplanes in the mail format. A single-engine reconnaissance aircraft "Anasal" – with the engine biplane "Salmson" 150 hp was taken as the basis for this. While being rebuilt the post plane was made from single-seated into double-seated, and the place of the second cabin crew member turned into a cargo compartment. Calculations showed that with one pilot and payload of 8–10 pounds (128–160 kg) the post plane

could cover the distance of 400 km without landing with an average speed of 130 km/h. There was a proposition to proceed with the development of promising post aircraft [3]. However, this proposal of “Anatra” was rejected as untimely.

The government of Hetman Pavlo Skoropadskiy turned to aviation services, when arised the question of establishing contacts with centers of anti-bilshovyk movement in the south of Russia. It was decided to organize regular avia mail line Kyiv-Novocherkas’k. Its technical support and functioning relied on Poltava aviation squadron. On October 18, 1918 its commander was ordered to urgently prepare for work on this line six two-seated planes with six pilots and two air observers. The posts of the line Kyiv – Novocherkas’k on the territory of Ukraine were to be deployed in Kiev, Lubny and Poltava [4]. But actually “communication flights” to Don turned to be banal attempts to drive Ukrainian planes to Russian anti-Bolshevyyk militias that a big part of Hetman’s army officers were sympathetic to.

While organizing air transportation the Directory Government, first of all, set the task of creating international routes, and not domestic ones. Unfortunately, Ukrainian military aviation (civil aviation at that time in Ukraine simply did not exist) was not numerous and too weak to be able to implement this task. It was therefore decided to apply to a foreign firm – Deutsche Luft-Reederei GmbH-DLR.

DLR firm was established in May 1918 in Berlin. Its first priority was to establish air links of then belligerent Germany with neutral Sweden. For those purposes converted military airplanes, including those taken from combat units aircraft giants were intended to be used – Risenflugzeug, created by “Zeppelin-Shtaake”. There wasn’t enough time to implement the “Sweden project” before the end of the war but DLR continued to work after the defeat of Germany. On February 5, 1919 “demilitarized” single-engine military aircraft AEG J.II, which got a temporary civil registration DLR 13, made its first flight on the route Berlin-Weimar. On March 1 of that year air links between Berlin and Hamburg opened. Over several months, DLR union managed to amass quite a

significant number of former military aircraft converted to carry passengers and mail.

Just at the time when the DLR expanded their activities, the Directory government was trying to deliver the banknotes printed in Germany to Ukraine. Using land transport for such cargo was unrealistic that is why the Ukrainian government appealed to the German one requesting to use German planes for that purpose. The talks held with “Deutsche Luft-Reederei” were successful. However, they did not dare to carry such precious cargo immediately, without a trial flight, which would confirm the possibility of flights between Germany and Ukraine. That is why one of the DLR planes performed a flight from German territory – most likely from Breslau (Wroclaw) – to Kamianetz-Podilsk, where was the UPR Directory. The attempt was successful, and the government of the UPR rented from DLR three five-engine planes “Zeppelin-Shtaaken” R.XIVa, and six two-engine “Friedrichshafen” G.III and G.IV with crews. Rented “Shtaakens” had serial numbers R.69/18, R 70/18 and R.71/18, as well as civil registration D 129, D 130 and D 131, respectively. “Friedrichshafens” had serial numbers G.505/17, G.506/17, G.507/17, G.510/17, G.511/17 and G.513/17 [5]. In addition to transporting cargos, they could be used as passenger planes: five-engine airplanes took on board 13 passengers and twin-engine – up to six. Tickets cost varied depending on the destination and was 10000 or 20000 hryvnyas. If a passenger cancelled the trip only half the ticket price was returned [6].

The first flight to Kamenetz-Podilsk with cargo was successfully completed by aircraft R.69. Around 4:00 on July 29, 1919, it flew a return flight, taking on board some of the UPR government officials and two former German POWs returning home. But while flying two of the five motors of the giant came down, and the pilots decided to make an emergency landing at the airport Vienna-Aspern.

Around noon on July 29 a few people who were at the Vienna airport, noticed a large aircraft that was approaching. After landing it became clear that it was not a British or French machine, as it seemed at first, but a German “Shtaaken” with the civil registration D 129. Aircraft arrival became a

sensation – a giant photo appeared on the front pages of newspapers of Vienna, even a short film was made about it. But all the hype in the media did not facilitate its peaceful repairs. On July 30 representatives of the Antanta military mission in Vienna arrived at the airfield. The aircraft was announced confiscated as German property and Italian soldiers were put around to guard it. No hangar at the Aspern airfield could place the giant, so “Shtaaken” remained in the open, in addition, not docked – it didn’t occur to anybody that somehow the weather could affect such a large plane. And a few days later an extremely strong storm threw “Shtaaken” at the hangar, and the plane was completely broken.

The second “Zeppelin-Shtaaken” was lost in the tragic and still not completely understood circumstances. On August 4, 1919 near Ratibor (Lower Silesia, near the German-Polish border) around 9:00 am, the plane crashed and it had on seven people – the crew, led by Lieutenant Ohlerau and two passengers. One of them was Colonel Dmitry Vitovsky, former commander of the Galician Army, but at the time - a member of the Extraordinary Commission of UPR Directorate on peace talks with Poland. The colonel, returning from Paris, was accompanied by his aide - Captain M. Chuchman. In addition, the aircraft was carrying another batch of notes. All those who were on board were killed [7]. Eyewitnesses described this tragic event, “there was a sudden explosion at distant height and the plane in the form of a fire ball began to go down, behind it a stream of black smoke stretched, like the tail of a comet One person jumped from the burning airplane in a machine to land, but the device did not open” [8].

Created by German authorities investigation committee excluded technical failure and terrorist act from the list of possible causes of the disaster. According to the Commission, the plane was hit by anti-aircraft fire of Polish border guards. However, this seems unlikely – at that time the boundary line was not clearly defined, and no Polish military unit was near Ratibor. Thus, one could argue that the cause of the accident is still unclear. Furthermore, it is unknown what kind of “Shtaaken” crashed near Ratibor. Perhaps it

was a machine with a serial number R.71/18. However, some sources indicate an earlier version of the plane “Zeppelin-Shtaaken” R.VI, serial number R.39/16. However, this seems unlikely, because the airplanes of this modification were not exploited by DLR company.

To avoid unfortunate incidents like Vienna in the future on board of “Shtaakena” R.70/18 the crosses were painted over and instead them a wonderful combination of Ukrainian Air Force (trident) markings and abbreviation of the firm DLR were put. The aircraft made several flights in Ukraine, but the details of only the last flight is known.

On September 19, 1919 R.70/18 plane flew from Breslau to Kamianetz-Podilsk. On its board were seven crew members, led by Hauptmann Hans Wolf von Harah. Aircraft was carrying 303 million hryvnyas (interestingly, the issue date of the notes were 5, 6 and 24 October 1919!), credit notes worth 80 million hryvnyas, as well as details of the printing press for the production of banknotes and pharmaceuticals. Because of the damaged engine the pilots had to perform an emergency landing in Romania – near the town Kristineshty. Ukrainian passengers, including a delegate of the Ministry of Finance of the UPR, which accompanied the banknotes was taken to the left bank of the Dniester – the territory of the UPR. The German crew was temporarily checked. Ukrainian diplomats worked hard to make if not the plane, at least cargo, free. The biggest problem in this case arose from medicines that local customs declared contraband, “because these things have nothing to do with money or to machines for the printing of the last ...”. To somehow get out of this situation and avoid a “major new spending in this case”, the diplomats had to admit these things the property of the personnel of the Emergency UPR Diplomatic Mission in Romania, “this is why was a note verbale was submitted with the annexed list of the staff, “who the things belonged to”. The Romanians gave the things back under this condition, but not to export them as intended for personal use by the mission members and their families. “Since these things “could not be imagined by the Romanians otherwise as contraband, and carrying them by

the state plane as a completely unacceptable act...” it was ordered “to confiscate the drugs, sell at auction and the put the money in the Mission cash department on the account of the Ministry of Finance”, which was done. The money was received by the Mission and the cash was spent on the needs of transportation and protection of the hryvnya fund from Romania to Ukraine [9]. Aircraft R.70/18 was taken to Bucharest by Romanian pilots, but was never later risen in the air. For several years it stood at the edge of a giant airfield, and then was dismantled. Now only a wooden screw is preserved that is kept in the military museum of Bucharest.

Thus five-engine airplanes operation on the lines connecting Ukraine with Germany ceased. Twin-engine “Friedrichshafen” continued to fly, though not without incidents. In October 1919 two of these aircraft (serial numbers G.506/17 and G.511/17) made a forced landing in occupied by the Polish Galicia - respectively, near Delyatyn and Uhrynkitsi. The Polish delivered the aircraft to the 3rd fleet, located in Lviv, and started repairing them. However, due to lack of spare parts they failed to complete the repair of “Friedrichshafen”, and in March and April 1920 they moved them to Poznan. Subsequently, both machines were repaired and operated by the Polish Air Force. It should be noted that the DLR flights over the territory of Poland, were treated by the authorities of the latter as a violation of sovereignty. Aviators of the 7th Polish squadrons were ordered to intercept DLR aircraft, but always failed to do so [10].

Archival documents indicate that passenger transport services were used by different agencies. Thus, on October 14, the Ministry of Finance received a request “to use an airplane to go from Kamianets in Podol to Breslav” by Otto Wilke, which read: “By the order of W.O.U.P.R. dictator I go abroad on official business, and given that the case is important, enable me to go by an airplane. The money for the flight has been put in the People’s Bank of Berlin through Director Dr. Emmermaher from Dresden” [11] In the same month the services of Ukrainian pilots were used by the political representatives of the Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the UPR,

Committee for the Affairs of Galician teachers, “Czecho-Slovak Press Bureau” and others [12].

In autumn 1919 air services acquired for the UPR and its army, literally, life meaning. Epidemic of typhus was raging at the time, put the army on the edge of death. I.Mazepa in his work “Created state (Struggle of 1919)” wrote: “The typhus that spread throughout Ukraine, mowed thousands of his victim in the army. Due to bad weather shipping of our hryvnias from abroad by our airplanes halted. All this contributed to the fact that Galician command ... began to recede before Denikin troops ... Blocked from the West Ukrainian People's Republic, which the Allies suspected of “Bolshevism” did not have the right medication. I remember how sincerely glad was the president of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences famous bacteriologist Professor Zabolotny, when he learned that in October 1919 Dr. Pisnyachevskyy flew on an airplane from abroad,... and brought all sorts of drugs” [13].

History of the Germany-Ukraine air line ended in December 1919, when the army of the UPR under the pressure of superior enemy forces had to resort to the guerrilla forms of struggle, losing control of the territory remains of the UPR.

Along with the DLR aircraft company for overseas flights the aircraft of UPR Air Fleet were engaged. Their main task was to service the foreign diplomatic missions. As of September 12, 1919, according to incomplete statistics, at least five pilots were in service at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the UPR, four of them at that time were in the foreign missions [14]. Diplomatic courier service was not always easy. Often dangers were awaiting for the pilots, not smaller than in combat flights and the foreign flights were quite dramatic. In the archives there is a preserved description of one of these flights, undertaken by pilot Arvatov and observer Alekseev [15]. This crew started on October 10, 1919 from Kamianetz-Podilskiy with the diplomatic post. Having done one intermediate landing for refueling, the pilots with little difficulties reached the goal of their trip – Bucharest. However, the return flight could have ended tragically. The task was very urgent, so the pilots took off from Bucharest on October 15, defying extremely

bad weather. The pilot had to fly almost blind at an altitude of around 10–15 meters above the ground. Eventually the crew had to make an emergency landing near Hawtin, the territory, controlled by the Romanians. The pilots were not injured, but the airplane was damaged in chassis and fuselage. Local authorities detained the aviators, and in Kamianetz-Podilskyj they got only 1 month later.

In order to implement the idea of communication and air traffic in Ukraine and its accession to the International Organization of air travel and communications in September 1919 in Kamenetz-Podilsk an “Initiative group on establishing air routes to Ukraine” [16] was created. Members of the group, including such well-known Ukrainian pilots as Victor Pavlenko (Head Air fleet of UPR), Alexander Egorov (Aviation Inspector), Konstantin Kalinin and many other military pilots and pilots observers of UPR and Galician Armies drafted air traffic between Ukraine and Central Europe [17]. It was planned to establish a foothold in the Czechoslovak town of Koshitse. From there light planes had to fly to other European cities - Vienna, Prague, Breslau, Berlin. Heavy multi-engine planes were to fly between Koshitse i Kamianets-Podilsk. It was also planned to establish a separate airline in the southern direction, which would have connected Kamianetz-Podilsk with Bucharest. According to the aviators’ calculations to cover all foreign network lines they needed seven large and 16 small planes, and a little more than 100 pilots and ground personnel. Aircraft was supposed to buy abroad – in Germany or other countries. Calculations of economic efficiency of the project were also made, perhaps a bit too optimistic. In particular, it was claimed that a heavy airplane would pay its value after one or two flights with cargo to Kamianetz-Podilskiy. It should be mentioned that the project of international connections was never realized in full. Members of the group also developed one interesting project that envisaged, in case of liberation of all the territory of Ukraine, establishing regular air post communication between fifteen its greatest cities (Kyiv, Kharkiv, Poltava, Zhitomir, Odessa, Katerynoslav etc.)

[18]. It is clear that this project also stayed only on paper. However, the work of the initiative group is the evidence of the fact that even in times of most difficulties Ukrainian aviators wanted to work for the future and for the good of their country.

Further on, in connection with a political and military alliance between Poland and the Ukrainian People's Republic the latter gained a possibility to obtain the necessary goods by land, and the idea of air communication for some time lost its relevance.

Despite weak development, airways became a real factor in survival of Ukrainian People's Republic in 1919. They guaranteed the UPR communication with the outside world in the most critical moment, when it was surrounded by enemies from all directions.

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Ткачук П.П.
ВОЗДУШНЫЕ СООБЩЕНИЯ КАК ФАКТОР ВЫЖИВАНИЯ ГОСУДАРСТВА (НА ПРИМЕРЕ УКРАИНСКОЙ НАРОДНОЙ РЕСПУБЛИКИ)

Рассмотрены попытки организации воздушного сообщения УНР с иностранными государствами во время войны за независимость (в 1919 г.). Особое внимание обращено на использование с этой целью самолетов-бомбардировщиков немецкого производства.

Ключевые слова: УНР, авиация, самолет, воздушные сообщения.

Ткачук П.П.
ПОВІТРЯНЕ СПОЛУЧЕННЯ ЯК ФАКТОР ВИЖИВАННЯ ДЕРЖАВИ (НА ПРИКЛАДІ УКРАЇНСЬКОЇ НАРОДНОЇ РЕСПУБЛІКИ)

Досліджено спроби організації повітряного сполучення УНР із закордонними державами в часи війни за незалежність (у 1919 р.).

Особлива увага звернута на використання для цієї мети літаків-бомбардувальників німецького виробництва.

Ключові слова: УНР, авіація, літак, повітряні сполучення.