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Free Cossacks and the Second Polish Republic

STRESZCZENIE

Wolne Kozactwo i II Rzeczpospolita

Począwszy od XVI w. Kozacy byli jednym z narzędzi ekspansji Imperium Rosyjskiego. Służyli również do tłumienia antyrosyjskich i antycarskich powstań oraz buntów. Jeszcze w trakcie wojny domowej w Rosji Kozacy byli przez bolszewików poddawani represjom, a często i eksterminacji. Po zakończonej wojnie rozpoczął się proces rozkozaczania społeczności kozackiej i likwidacji jej odrębności. Nic zatem dziwnego, że Kozacy szukali sojuszników, w tym również w nowo odrodzonej Rzeczypospolitej. W latach 1919–1920 do Warszawy przyjeżdżali przedstawiciele wojsk kozackich w celu nawiązania współpracy wojskowej przeciwko Armii Czerwonej. W trakcie wojny polsko-bolszewickiej u boku Wojska Polskiego walczyło około 6000–7000 Kozaków. Po zakończonej wojnie tysiące Kozaków pozostały na emigracji w Polsce. Inne większe ich skupiska znajdowały się we Francji, w Niemczech, Jugosławii, a także w Czechosłowacji. Jednym z najaktywniejszych działaczy kozackich był Ignat Biłyj. Dzięki jego zabiegom władze polskie udzieliły wsparcia finansowego kozackiej akcji niepodległościowej, która uzyskała większą przychylność po dojściu do władzy marszałka Józefa Piłsudskiego. W 1927 r. w stolicy Czechosłowacji – Pradze powstał Komitet Wolnego Kozactwa złożony z Kozaków dońskich i kubańskich. Organizacja ta miała swym zasięgiem objąć



możliwie najszerszej emigrację kozacką rozszaną w różnych państwach Europy, a nawet poza nią, w celu zjednoczenia jej do walki przeciwko Związkowi Sowieckiemu. Pomoc udzielana tej emigracji była jednym z elementów akcji prometejskiej zainicjowanej przez Józefa Piłsudskiego. Patronat nad akcją prometejską objął Oddział II Sztabu Generalnego / Głównego Wojska Polskiego (czyli organ wywiadu i kontrwywiadu wojskowego II Rzeczypospolitej), przy współpracy z Ministerstwem Spraw Zagranicznych i innymi instytucjami.

Słowa kluczowe: Polska 1918–1939, ZSRR, Kozacy, wywiad wojskowy (Polska), prometeizm

ABSTRACT

In the 19th and early 20th centuries, the Cossacks were used to suppress anti-Russian and anti-tsarist uprisings and revolts. However, during the Civil War in Russia, the Cossacks were subjected to repression and often extermination by the Bolsheviks. After the end of the war, the process of decossackization and elimination of the Cossack separateness began. It is therefore not surprising that the Cossacks sought allies, also in the newly reborn Republic of Poland. In the years 1919–1920, Cossack army representatives came to Warsaw in order to establish military cooperation against the Red Army. About 6–7 thousand Cossacks fought in the Polish-Soviet War. After the end of the war, thousands of Cossacks remained in exile in Poland. Other major clusters of Cossacks were found in France, Germany, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. One of the most prominent Cossack activists was Ignat Bilyi. Thanks to his efforts, the Polish authorities gave financial support to the Cossack independence campaign, which gained more favour after the coming to power of Marshal Józef Piłsudski. In 1927, in Prague, the capital of Czechoslovakia, the Free Cossacks Committee was established, consisting of Kuban and Don Cossacks. This organization was meant to cover as widely as possible the Cossack emigration scattered across Europe and even beyond, in order to unite it in the fight against the Soviet Union. The help given to this emigration was one of the elements of the Promethean action initiated by Józef Piłsudski. The Promethean campaign was held under the patronage of the Second Department of Polish General Staff (i.e. the body of military intelligence and counterintelligence of the Second Polish Republic) in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other institutions.

Keywords: Poland 1918–1939, USSR, Cossacks, military intelligence (Poland), Prometheism

Introduction

AS Tsar's subjects, Cossacks were used for the expansion of the Russian Empire from 16th century onwards. Russian authorities gradually reduced their autonomy while adapting their organization to their own military needs.

Cossack elders were given officer ranks and Russian nobility titles. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, Cossacks were regarded as a mainstay of tsarist rule and assigned to suppress uprisings and independence movements. During the Russian Civil War, a significant number of them sided with the Whites.

Bolshevik authorities fought the Cossacks almost from the moment the new government was formed. As early as December 1917, the Council of People's Commissars abolished compulsory military service for Cossacks' and the associated tours of duty and drills. The uniforms and military equipment in their possession were transferred to the state. This primarily harmed the Cossack tradition¹. Later, the Bolshevik authorities also undertook to create a split among them by, among other things, calling on "working Cossacks" to disobey "officers, landowners and the rich".

From the beginning of Soviet rule, Cossack territories were subjected to so-called "de-Cossackization", which involved the extermination of the Cossacks as a social group. Men were often shot, while women, children and the elderly were deported. Lenin was fond of comparing the crackdown on Cossacks to events in the Vendée during the French Revolution².

Cossack emigration started in late 1919. The first political emigrants were ten members of the Kuban Regional Council, sent to Constantinople by the leadership of the Volunteer Army. Later, wounded and sick Cossacks were transported abroad, particularly to Serbia and Bulgaria. In November 1920, after the Bolsheviks captured Crimea, the Volunteer Army and the Cossacks that comprised it were evacuated to Turkey. However, many of them did not manage to leave and were captured by the Bolsheviks. Forced to join the Bolshevik army and fight on the Polish or Crimean fronts, they hoped to part with the Bolsheviks at the first opportunity³.

¹ *Obraszczeniye Sowieta narodnykh komissarov ot 12 diekabria 1917 goda "Ob otmienie obiazatelnoj wojskoj powinnosti i ob ustanowlenii połnoj swobody pieriedwiżeniya kazakow"*, Muzeum istorii rossijskich rieforn im. P.A. Stołypina, "Voennye zakony 1917–1922" 2012, <http://museumreforms.ru/content/voennye-zakony-1917-1922> (accessed: 12 II 2023).

² S. Courtois, N. Werth, J.L. Panné *et al.*, *Czarna księga komunizmu. Zbrodnie, terror, prześladowania*, Warszawa 1999, pp. 29–30.

³ Ruch wolno-kozacki. Krótki zarys historyczno-informacyjny Ekspozytury nr 2 Oddziału II Sztabu Głównego, 1939, Archiwum Akt Nowych w Warszawie (Central Archives of Modern Records in Warsaw), Ministerstwo Spraw Zagranicznych / Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ref. 5322, sheet 304.

Cooperation with Cossacks during the Polish-Bolshevik war

It is therefore not surprising that the Cossacks were looking for allies. In June 1919, a delegate of the Don Army – General Alexander Cherachukin – came to Poland with a proposal for military cooperation against the Red Army, as well as with a request for supplies and armaments, and the release of Cossacks in Polish captivity in order to form volunteer formations. This mission is said to have been favorably received by the Polish side, although it failed achieve its intended goals⁴.

A year later – in June 1920 – the Kuban government sent a special mission to Warsaw to discuss coordinating a joint struggle against Soviet Russia. The purpose was not only to hold talks with the Polish government, but also with the Ukrainian government, in Poland at the time, also at war with the Bolsheviks. The mission consisted of Ignat Bilyi, Ivan Ivasyuk and Pavlo Sulatitsky⁵.

The mission was received by the foreign minister⁶ and its chairman, Bilyi, by Józef Piłsudski. However, it did failed to accomplish the set goals, as the war quickly ended⁷. Nevertheless, Cossack troops fighting on the Polish side in 1920 were formed while it lasted.

In 1920, after the Bolsheviks captured the Cossack territories of Don and Kuban, a significant number of Cossacks were enlisted in the Red Army. Some joined their former enemy voluntarily in the hope of saving their families from repression, while others were conscripted under duress. Many served in Semyon Budyonny's

⁴ S. Mikulicz, *Prometeizm w polityce II Rzeczypospolitej*, Warszawa 1971, p. 183.

⁵ *Tezy dopowidi Holowy Ukrajinskoji dyplomatycznoji misiji na Kawkazi I. Kraszkovskoho "Ukrajina, Kavkaz, musulmanstvo"*, Tarniv, 20 sichnia 1921, Centralnyy derzhavnyy archiv vyshych orhaniv władzy ta upravlinnia Ukrainy, Kyiv (Central State Archive of Higher Authorities and Government of Ukraine in Kyiv) [hereinafter: CDAWOU], f. 1429, op. 2, spr. 108, ark. 1.

⁶ It could have been Stanisław Patek – head of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs until June 9, 1920 – or Eustachy Sapieha – from June 20.

⁷ *Zarys historyczny powstania ruchu wolno-kozackiego* – oprac. majora Jerzego Krzymowskiego z 29 I 1937 r., Centralne Archiwum Wojskowe Wojskowego Biura Historycznego w Warszawie (Central Military Archives of the Military Historical Office in Warsaw) [hereinafter: CAW WBH], Oddział II Sztabu Głównego / Generalnego Wojska Polskiego (Branch II of the General Staff / General Headquarters of the Polish Army) [hereinafter: O II], ref. I 303.04.5474; V.L. Komar, *Kozatska emihratsiya v politytsi prometyizmu Polshctchi (1919–1939 rr.)*, "Hileya: naukowy visnyk" 2011, no. 5(47), p. 57.

famous Horse Army dispatched to the Polish front in April 1920. However, Bolshevik ideology remained foreign to most Cossacks. Cases of them crossing over to the Polish side were therefore not uncommon⁸; this even applied to entire units⁹.

On May 31, 1920, near Bila Tserkva, part of the Cossack division that was part of Budyonny's cavalry, headed by yesaul Alexandr Salnikov, defected to the Polish side. At the beginning of June, these soldiers, approximately 800 Cossacks, formed the Don Brigade¹⁰.

The commander of another Cossack unit fighting on the Polish side was yesaul Vadim S. Yakovlev¹¹. This brigade consisted of Cossacks from General Alexander Bredov's corps interned in Poland in March 1920¹², Cossacks residing in Poland, and Bolshevik prisoners of war. By July 21 it managed to assemble 1180 Cossacks. Yakovlev's brigade consisted of two regiments: the Don one and the Terek one.

As of October 20, as a result of the efforts of its commander, V.S. Yakovlev's brigade submitted to army command of the Ukrainian People's Republic (UPR)¹³ and appeared in official documents under the name: yesaul Yakovlev's Free Cossack Division.

⁸ M. Kożemiakin, *Kazaczji czasti w Sowietko-Polskiej wojnie*, "Samizdat", http://samlib.ru/m/mihail_kozhemjakin/belokazaki.shtml (accessed: 12 II 2023); *Relacja esaula Jakowlewa pt. Położenie Kozaków podczas bytności bolszewików w okresie od 24 do 28 V 1920 r.*, Instytut Józefa Piłsudskiego w Ameryce (Józef Piłsudski Institute of America) [hereinafter: IJPA], Adiutantura Generalna Naczelnego Wodza / Adjutant General's Office of the Commander-in-Chief [hereinafter: AGNW], ref. 701/2/25, sheets 147–151.

⁹ From May to September, the following Cossack units, among others, went over to the Polish side: the 3rd Brigade of Don Cossacks, the 59th Orenburg Cossack Regiment, the 1st Kuban Cossack Regiment, the Trotsky Regiment, the 22nd Ural Cossack Regiment (Accurata zapiska o priniatii kazakov na polskuju służbu, avgust 1921 g., Rossiyskiy gosudarstvennyy voyennyi arkhiv, Moscow [Russian State Military Archive in Moscow], f. 461/k, op. 1, d. 141, l. 7).

¹⁰ Z. Karpus, *Wschodni sojusznicy Polski w wojnie 1920 roku. Oddziały wojskowe ukraińskie, rosyjskie, kozackie i białoruskie w Polsce w latach 1919–1920*, Toruń 1999, p. 142; Informacja na temat nastrojów wśród oficerów i żołnierzy Brygady Kozaków Dońskich wraz z sugestią by dowództwo dokonało podziału jednostki na mniejsze części i przydzieliło je do pułków polskich z 1 IX 1920 r., IJPA, AGNW, ref. 701/2/28, sheet 37.

¹¹ J. Gdański, *Kozacy, Rosjanie i Ukraińcy po stronie polskiej w wojnie 1920 r.*, "Inne Oblicza Historii" 2011, <http://ioh.pl/artykuly/pokaz/kozacy-rosjanie-i-ukraicy-po-stronie-polskiej-w-wojnie--r,1044/> (accessed: 12 II 2023).

¹² This corps was part of the Volunteer Army.

¹³ In late September and early October Yakovlev corresponded on this subject with representatives of the Ukrainian Military Mission in Poland (Informacyja

Only these two Cossack formations fought independently. However, in the second half of 1920, there were also other Cossack units and subdivisions on Polish territory, which were part of the army of General Stanisław Bułak-Bałachowicz, the 3rd Russian Army and the UPR army. In total, there were about 6,000–7,000 Cossacks in various formations on the Polish side in 1920¹⁴. These formations were not affiliated with the Cossack government, and consisted largely of a non-Cossacks. Cossacks, according to Polish documents, were often considered persons of “dubious moral reputation”.

After the armistice in October, the Don Brigade, like other national formations fighting on the Polish side, lost its status as an ally of Poland and had to leave the country. The command intended to join General Wrangel’s army, however, the plan failed. A. Salnikov’s Cossacks returned to Poland, where they were interned¹⁵.

In 1917–1920, the Don, Kuban and Terek Cossacks formed their own governments and fought battles against the Bolsheviks, but no military and political collaboration was undertaken with the Polish government, even though the Cossacks made efforts to initiate such alliance¹⁶. To this end, as already mentioned, in June 1919 the delegate of the Don Army – Gen. A. Cheryachukin – arrived in Warsaw, but his three-month stay failed to yield any concrete results. Admittedly, he was met with goodwill, but the Poles at that time associated the Cossack question primarily with the UPR government, whom they saw their main partner in any negotiations. The following year, a delegation of the Kuban government, also mentioned above, visited Poland¹⁷.

naprawlena do predstawnykiw Ukrajinśkoji Wijskoweji Misiji Informaciya naprawlena do predstawnykiw Ukrajinśkoji Wijskoweji Misiji, IJPA, Ukrainśka Misja Wojskowa w Polsce / Ukrainian Military Mission in Poland, ref. 701/7/1, k. 247; Informaciya naprawlena do Szefa Samostijnoji Kozackojoj Bryhady Esauła Jakowłewa, *ibidem*, k. 251).

¹⁴ J. Gdański, *op. cit.*, pp. 152–154.

¹⁵ Z. Karpus, *Wschodni sojusznicy Polski...*, pp. 145–146. For a broader discussion of Cossack troops, also *idem*, *Oddziały kozackie formowane w Polsce (czerwiec–listopad 1920 r.) i ich udział w wojnie polsko-sowieckiej*, [in:] *Kawaleria przeciwników i sojuszników Wojska Polskiego w latach 1918–1921*, ed. A. Smoliński, Toruń 2003, pp. 211–238.

¹⁶ I. Bilyi, *Kozacy i zagadnienie kozackie*, “Wschód-Orient. Kwartalnik poświęcony sprawom Wschodu”, X 1932 – V 1933, vol. IV, nr 1–2(9–10), p. 20.

¹⁷ S. Mikulicz, *op. cit.*, s. 183; Informacja naprawlena do Szefa Samostijnoji Kozackojoj Bryhady Esauła Jakowłewa 2002, no. 4, <http://vivovoco.astronet.ru/VV/JOURNAL/NEWHIST/POLAND.HTM> (accessed: 12 II 2023).

Rise of the Free Cossacks

Józef Piłsudski and his entourage considered the Cossack issue to be quite important for Poland; they believed that through Polish-Cossack relations it was possible to effectively “blackmail certain possible Ukrainian initiatives”, and moreover, in order to win in southern Russia the support of the Cossacks was essential. The Polish Army Command also considered the territories of Kuban, the Don and Southern Ural as the primary territories for the formation of the Red Army cavalry¹⁸.

In the spring of 1921, a delegation of the Don Military Circle arrived in Warsaw, led by the deputy chairman of the Circle – Colonel Mikhail Gnilorybov. At that time I. Bilyi and M. Gnilorybov were looking for aid and allies in order to develop the Cossack independence campaign¹⁹. On August 7, 1921, the first issue of the weekly “Voice of the Cossacks” came out in Warsaw²⁰. It was published in a small circulation and distributed to Cossacks interned in Poland after the end of hostilities with the Bolsheviks. The weekly’s mission was “to unite forces in the fight against the communists and Wrangel’s men”²¹. A. Prokhorov²² became the magazine’s editor-in-chief. The contributors included I. Bilyi, M. Gnilorybov and yesaul Mikhail Frolov²³. The weekly was financed by “number two”²⁴, and probably also by Boris Savnikov. It promoted the idea of a separate Cossack state (called “Cossackia”). In addition to articles on political issues, it printed literary works by Cossack authors. The last issue came out on May 7, 1922. The magazine was said to have been discontinued [mainly?] because of the Polish authorities’ desire to improve Polish-Soviet relations and the cessation

¹⁸ Zarys wojskowej polityki zagranicznej – oprac. Oddziału II, [no date], CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.04.5741, sheet 14.

¹⁹ Zarys historyczny powstania ruchu wolno-kozackiego – oprac. majora J. Krzymowskiego z 29 I 1937 r., CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.04.5474, sheet 179.

²⁰ V. Gubarev, *Entsyklopediya czatchestva*, Moscow 2007, p. 101.

²¹ Zarys historyczny powstania ruchu wolno-kozackiego – oprac. majora J. Krzymowskiego z 29 I 1937 r., CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.04.5474, sheet 179.

²² The full name could not be determined.

²³ I.A. Yelkin, *Russkaya emigrantskaya priessa v Polshe v 20–30-ye gody XX vyeka*, “Visnik Kharkivs’kogo natsyonalnogo universytetu im. V.N. Karazina. Sier: Istoriya” 2007, no. 762, p. 155.

²⁴ Colloquial popular name for Branch II of the General Staff / General Headquarters of the Polish Army – that is, the organ of Polish military intelligence and counterintelligence.

of Polish funding for it²⁵. According to Polish military sources, other reasons for its closing included the departure of M. Gnilorybov and B. Savnikov from Warsaw in the spring of 1922, as well as a change in the magazine's orientation.

In the fall of 1922, I. Bilyi, aided by Senator Stanislaw Siedlecki²⁶ and writer Andrzej Strug, tried to establish an understanding with the Head of State in hopes that Poland would provide assistance to the Cossack independence campaign. Marshal Piłsudski replied that if he remained in power, he would provide such assistance. In view of Piłsudski's departure for Sulejówek, however, this matter was postponed for several years²⁷.

At that time, the Cossack emigration was organizing in Paris, where representatives of the former Cossack republics settled, primarily the Don and Kuban, but also the Kalmyk republics, under the leadership of Shamba Balinov²⁸.

More than a year after the May coup and Piłsudski's return to power – in the summer of 1927, I. Bilyi again made efforts to get the Polish government to provide assistance to the Cossack independence campaign – this time through Andrzej Liwicki²⁹. The response of the Polish authorities was positive. As a result, I. Bilyi and Col. Mikhail Frolov traveled to Warsaw for talks on financing the organization of the Cossack independence movement. Thanks to their initiative, on December 10, 1927, the first issue of the weekly "Free Cossacks" came out³⁰. Its actual editor was I. Bilyi³¹. The editorial of the first issue of "Free Cossacks"

²⁵ A.I. Skrylov, G.V. Gubariev, *Kazachiy slovar'-spravocznik*, Klivlend 1966–1970, p. 124; I. Bilyi, *Rossiyskoye zarubezhnye vo Frantsii, 1919–2000: Biograficheskiy slovar'*, eds L. Mnuchin, M. Avril, V. Loskoy, vol. I, Moscow 2008, p. 25.

²⁶ One of Poland's leading Promethean activists.

²⁷ *Zarys historyczny powstania ruchu wolno-kozackiego* – oprac. majora J. Krzymowskiego z 29 I 1937 r., CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.04.5474.

²⁸ W. Komar, *op. cit.*, p. 3; Notatka o pracy Władysława Pelca jako Attaché Ambasady RP w Paryżu, 1937–1944, Biblioteka Polska w Paryżu (Polish Library in Paris) [hereinafter: BPP], Akta Władysława Pelca / Władysław Pelc file, ref. 1, sheet 2.

²⁹ Former head of the UPR Foreign Ministry.

³⁰ The actual founder of the weekly was said to be M. Frolov, who "through contacts and hard work" obtained the funds to publish it. Before his death, he handed over the funds he obtained to Bilyi. Until 1934, the magazine was published in Prague, and later, until 1939, in Paris, where the organization's leadership emigrated.

³¹ Although initially the weekly formally had, for courtesy reasons, two editors – "A Don one" and "a Kuban one".

addressed the martyrdom of the Cossacks at that time. It stated that almost eight years of ruthless occupation of “our lands by the Red Moscow victors [have already passed]. Eight years of organized looting, economic devastation, de-Cossackization, merciless executions”. A statement was also made that the main reason for the Cossacks’ failures was their lack of preparation for the coming events, thus it is important to develop a detailed program of organizational work. The liberation of the Don and Kuban territories from the Soviet rule, followed by the convening of a joint Legislative Assembly – as the supreme authority – was considered a primary goal. Another important issue addressed in the editorial was the resolution of the peasant question in the Don region and the problem of “*inogorodnie*”³² in the Kuban region, in order to “ensure internal peace, strengthen statehood and economic development”, as well as to clarify the rights and obligations of all citizens living in the above-mentioned Cossack territories before the outbreak of war. Establishment of basic principles for the equal national and cultural development of the Don and Kuban regions, as well as the restoration of private property in place of everything that was nationalized and socialized in the Bolshevik period were considered further program points³³. The biweekly “Free Cossacks” was published in Russian, although some materials were also printed in French, English, Ukrainian, Polish and English³⁴.

On the initiative of I. Bilyi and M. Frolov in the capital of Czechoslovakia, Prague, the first Committee of Free Cossacks was also organized, consisting of the Don and Kuban Cossacks³⁵. From the onset it was meant to operate as a federation consisting of individual Cossack organizations³⁶. The purpose of its formation was to spread the Free Cossack movement and the idea of

³² *Inogorodnie* (*innogorodniye*) – this was the name given to peasants living in Cossack regions before 1917 who did not belong to the Cossack state.

³³ *Volnoe kazachestvo*, “Wolnoje kazaczestwo – Wilne Kozactwo”, 10 XII 1927, pp. 1–3.

³⁴ *Volnoe kazachestvo* [= *Vilne kozatstvo*], official website of Indiana University, <http://www.iucat.iu.edu/catalog/2154655> (accessed: 12 II 2023).

³⁵ It was comprised of the following Don Cossacks: Gen. T. Starykov, Gen. I. Bykadorov, P. Frolov, Viklanchev, Mikhail Kolesov and V. Glazkov, and Kuban Cossacks: I. Bilyi and S. Frolov.

³⁶ *Zarys historyczny powstania ruchu wolno-kozackiego* – oprac. majora J. Krzymowskiego z 29 I 1937 r., CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.04.5474.

the separateness of the Cossack state and nation in exile, and in the future, whenever an opportunity arose, to fight against both Soviet and monarchist Russia, and to win and organize an independent Cossack state – “Cossackia”. In order to create this state, it was necessary to unite the following districts of the Cossack army: the Don, Terek, Astrakhan, Ural and Kalmyk districts³⁷.

The ideas presented by the “Free Cossacks” weekly met an intransigent opposition of Russian White Guard intellectuals, whose articles, critical of the Cossack organization, appeared in the Paris editions of *Posledniye novosti* (“Latest News”) and *Vozrozhdenie* (“Revival”). This is because they considered the Cossacks to be an integral part of the Russian nation. However, in the circles of the Russian emigration opinions on the Cossack issue were polarized³⁸.

The intermediary between the leading activists of the Free Cossacks and Branch II at the time was an employee of the Polish Consulate in Prague, Tadeusz Lubaczewski, who also gave opinions on the Cossacks’ financial desiderata relating to organizational activities. He sent reports on Cossack affairs directly to the head of Branch II³⁹.

After the Kalmyk Cossacks⁴⁰ and Terek Cossacks⁴¹ joined, the Free Cossacks Committee consisted of four organizations that were friendly towards one another. As late as the summer of 1927, I. Bilyi invited the Kuban-Ukrainian group of Kuzma Bezkrovny⁴² to join but they declined⁴³. The common goal was to unite the Cossack territories along the following borders: in the north it was to be the line established during General Pyotr Krasnov’s atamanship over the Don army in 1918, in the east it would run along the Ural

³⁷ Organizacja “Wolnoje Kozaczestwo” – oprac. Oddziału II z IX 1935 r., CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.04.5474.

³⁸ W.Ł. Komar, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

³⁹ *Pismo pracownika konsulatu RP w Pradze, Tadeusza Lubaczewskiego, do szefa Oddziału II Sztabu Generalnego, płk. Tadeusza Schaetzla, w sprawie sytuacji wśród emigracji kozackiej nr 62/28 z 7 grudnia 1928 r.*, [in:] *II Rzeczpospolita wobec ruchu prometejskiego*, ed. P. Libera, Warszawa 2013, pp. 148–150.

⁴⁰ Over the course of 1928, at least two Kalmyks, Sh. Balinov and S.B. Balykov, joined the organization.

⁴¹ At the beginning of 1929, the Terek organization (E. Prokopov, S. Medvedev, Filipchenkov) was established.

⁴² Among its most important activists were Bezkrovnyy, Ivanis, Sulatitskiy.

⁴³ *Zarys historyczny powstania ruchu wolno-kozackiego* – oprac. majora J. Krzymowskiego z 29 I 1937 r., CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.04.5474.

River, in the south along the Terek River and the Black Sea, and in the west – the Don–Ukraine border, which was defined in 1918⁴⁴.

Shortly after the Committee was established, as early as the spring of 1928, the first conflicts arose. They stemmed primarily from General Isaakiy Bykadorov dissatisfaction with his assigned role, as he had his sights set on the position of the Committee's chairman. The dispute was resolved in the summer of 1928, when General Terenty Starykov was elected chairman, General I. Bykadorov became head of the organizational branch, and General I. Bilyi became head of the press and propaganda branch.

In May 1929, the first convention of the Free Cossacks was held, where the union's delegates came to take stock of the result of the eighteen months of its activity. The organizational work was found to be insufficient. However, the Delegates' Assembly⁴⁵ recognized at the same time that the press and propaganda branch had done its job well. Besides, during the convention, the Terek group was formally admitted to the organization and a new Allied Committee of the Free Cossacks was elected⁴⁶.

Free Cossacks in the first half of the 1930s

However, already in the summer of the same year there was a split among the Free Cossacks, which divided into the Kuban organization and the organization of the Don, Terek and some of the Kalmyk Cossacks. The leader of the former group was I. Bilyi, while the latter was headed by General T. Starykov, who also presided over the newly formed Allied Council⁴⁷. The dispute boiled down primarily to which group would take the leadership of the Free Cossack movement led jointly so far⁴⁸.

⁴⁴ V.L. Komar, *Kontsepsiya prometeyzmu v politytsi Polshetchi (1921–1939 rr.)*, Ivano-Frankivsk 2011, p. 187.

⁴⁵ The composition of the Delegate Assembly was as follows: the Dons – Starykov, Bykadorov, Kundryukhov, Samsonov and Polyakov; the Kubans – Bilyi, Fedorov, Balabas, Berezhnyi and Tereshchenko; the Kalmyks – Balinov, Balykov; the Tereks – Prokopov, Medvedev and Filipchenkov.

⁴⁶ The committee was composed of the Dons – Starykov and Bykadorov; the Kubans – Bilyi and Balabas; on the part of the Tereks – Prokopov, and as a representative of the Kalmyks – Balinov.

⁴⁷ Rozłam w W[olnym] K[ozactwie] – oprac. Oddziału II, 6 XI 1933, CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.04.5788, sheet 573.

⁴⁸ That is, the Dons and the Kubans.

Negotiations between the groups dragged on, without result, for over two months in late 1929 and early 1930. There was a temporary agreement reached between the leaders of the two factions – on February 24, 1930, T. Starykov and I. Bilyi signed an agreement stating that the settlement of the dispute was postponed to a special congress, which would be convened within six months. However, they could not agree on the issues to be raised at the convention. In addition, at that time T. Starykov created an additional institution – the Don Council. On August 25, 1930, the two parties announced the formal termination of the February 24 agreement and each continued to operate independently.

T. Starykov was removed from formal cooperation with the “Free Cossacks” weekly. On the other hand, on the initiative of I. Bilyi the Central Committee was formed, consisting mainly of people who had not participated in the previous dispute⁴⁹. On December 26–29, 1930, the first meeting of the Central Committee was held, at which I. Bilyi delivered a detailed report on the previous activities of the Free Cossacks, as well as on its new initiative, which was approved. Also approved was a draft of the new program of the organization⁵⁰. It was decided that in the future a closed, centralized and discipline-based organization should be formed, staffed by the active workers in the Free Cossack movement. Material matters were handed over to the chairman of the Central Committee – I. Bilyi.

The Central Committee also adopted a general program for its future work, which included learning about the relations within the Cossack lands and the territory of the USSR, compiling records of Cossack emigration, learning about Russian emigration and the international situation, and establishing contacts with representatives of other nations fighting for freedom. As regards the promotion of the Free Cossacks idea, it was decided, in addition to continuing the “Free Cossacks” weekly, to focus on publication of books, pamphlets and leaflets. I. Bilyi was appointed to represent the Free Cossacks “externally”. The presidium of the Central Committee was also elected, with I. Bilyi as chairman, V. Yeliseyev⁵¹ and S. Balinov as his deputies, and K. Berezhnyi⁵² as secretary.

⁴⁹ The Central Committee at the time included: Bilyi, Berezhnyi, Fesenko, Karpushkin, Balinov, Kudinov and Yeliseyev.

⁵⁰ It was published in issue 72 of “Free Cossacks”.

⁵¹ The full first name could not be determined.

⁵² The full first name could not be determined.

The presidium lasted in this composition until mid-1932. On July 5–6, 1932, another congress of the Central Committee (transformed into the Small Circle of the Free Cossacks) was held⁵³. Its most important resolutions included the formation of a new Central Committee⁵⁴ and the drafting and submission to the future congress of the Free Cossacks (which would be called the Large Circle) of the Constitution of “Cossackia”⁵⁵.

According to the new statute of the Committee, the head of the Free Cossack movement was the Central Committee of the Free Cossacks. Its powers included program-related and ideological matters, as well as any issues submitted for consideration by the organization’s chairman. The Central Committee consisted of at least three members and was convened by the chairman, and meetings could be held only if absolute majority of members under his chairmanship were present. The Committee’s resolutions, on the other hand, could be passed by a simple majority, and in the event of an even split vote, the chairman’s vote prevailed.

All meetings of the Committee were closed, and resolutions were published only on the authority of the chairman. Also, its activities were not subject to public disclosure. Committee members were bound to secrecy regarding its work under threat of exclusion. The permanent active executive body of the Central Committee was its chairman, who represented it externally and elected the Small Circle. Committee members were elected by the Small Circle from candidates presented by the chairman⁵⁶.

Over time, more and more accusations of fraud and of “dictatorial inclinations” arose against I. Bilyi. He was also accused of being inaccessible, “looking down on his interlocutors and turning his back on them during conversations”⁵⁷. Conflicts intensified. At one meeting of the Committee, Bilyi “was bruised and thrown out of the Hall”⁵⁸.

⁵³ It was composed of I. Bilyi, A. Zukov, V. Karpushkin, I. Bezuglov, M. Minayev, V. Yeliseyev, B. Kundryukhov, P. Polyakov, V. Kurtin, S. Balyakov.

⁵⁴ It was formed by I. Bilyi, V. Yeliseyev, Sh. Balinov, V. Karpushkin and B. Kundryukhov.

⁵⁵ In an earlier version, the constitution of “Cossackia” was published in No. 96–99 of “Free Cossacks”.

⁵⁶ *Zarys historyczny powstania ruchu wolno-kozackiego* – oprac. majora J. Krzymowskiego z 29 I 1937 r., CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.04.5474.

⁵⁷ Konferencja z inż. Tułajewem Sergiuszem przeprowadzona przez Górskiego w Wilnie w dniu 23 VI 1934 r., *ibidem*.

⁵⁸ Krótka wzmianka na temat ośmioletniej pracy I. Biłego pod sztandarem “Wolnego Kozactwa” [most likely dated 1935], *ibidem*.

At the time, it was of no concern to the Polish side what organizational forms of work the Cossacks would adopt. Branch II sought above all to unify work in the Cossack section. It wanted to avoid supporting separately operating and clashing groups, which could further contribute to deepening internal disputes among them. “Number two” took a wait-and-see position towards those conflicts⁵⁹.

As a result of the aforementioned conflicts, another split occurred in the Free Cossacks community in May 1933. According to Ivan Bezuglov, in order to clarify the situation, a meeting of board members was convened, which I. Bilyi was said to have turned it into a “private chat” without inviting V. Karpushkin, with whom he was conflicted⁶⁰. However, the board decided to convene a Small Circle meeting, which I. Bilyi had been postponing, aware of the hostile attitude of the majority of members toward him. He tried to gain time and win their favor. In the end, however, he unlawfully dissolved the strongly opposed Small Circle. All the Cossacks opposed to Bilyi joined the members of the dissolved Circle and formed a strong group, in which a *stanitsa* in Slovakia and a *kuren* in Brno played a leading role. This group convened in Czechoslovakia and elected the District Board⁶¹. The opposition was headed by the chairman of the Kalmyk organization⁶² – Shamba Balinov. The conflict was purely personal. The goal of the opposition was to remove I. Bilyi from his position as chairman of the Free Cossacks, as well as editor-in-chief of its periodical. In addition, S. Balinov explained that he represented the Kalmyks within the authorities of the organization; I. Bilyi disagreed, claiming that Balinov was acting there just as a Cossack – on behalf of all Cossacks, without

⁵⁹ Sprawy ukraińsko-kozackie. Protokół ze spotkania z Ukraińcami z 28 I 1930 r., CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.04.5389; *Notatka kpt. Edmunda Charaszkiwicza dla płk. Tadeusza Schaetzla z zebrania polsko-ukraińskiego w sprawie organizacji audycji radiowych ukraińskich i uregulowania stosunków polsko-ukraińskich z 28 stycznia 1930 r.*, 841/II.Inf./2/III, [in:] *II Rzeczpospolita wobec ruchu...*, pp. 156–157; *Pismo kpt. Edmunda Charaszkiwicza, szefa Ekspozytury 2 do mjr. Włodzimierza Dąbrowskiego, szefa placówki „Martin” w Paryżu w sprawie stanowiska wobec rozłamu w ruchu wolnokozackim*, no. 2023/33/24, Warszawa 11 grudnia 1933, [in:] *ibidem*, pp. 278–280.

⁶⁰ It probably refers to Viktor Karpushkin.

⁶¹ Referat Bezugłowa na temat rozłamu w ruchu wolnokozackim, [no date], CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.04.5474.

⁶² The Kalmyk organization was called Khalmak Taugchuk Tük.

the right to represent the Kalmyk organization separately. The conflict caused a break in personal and organizational relations between the two politicians. The antagonism continued until 1938 and gradually grew stronger⁶³. The Small Circle was filled with new members, and the magazine “Cossackia” was established⁶⁴.

In 1929, Bureau No. 2 was established in Warsaw, within Branch II, to organize diversion, primarily political, in neighboring countries. One of its most important tasks was Promethean activity, and therefore also the affairs of the Free Cossack movement. The Bureau was headed by Capt. (from January 1, 1936 – Major) Edmund Charaszkiwicz⁶⁵. In the second half of the 1930s, Bureau No. 2 continued its attempts to bring about unification in the Free Cossack movement⁶⁶. In late May 1937, Major Charaszkiwicz met with one of the leaders of the Kalmyks – Shamba Balinov, who continued to blame I. Bilyi for the split in the Free Cossack movement. However, he did not rule out a return to the organization on the condition that the Kalmyks were guaranteed autonomous rights within its structure⁶⁷.

This conflict was reported in October 1933 by, among others, the outpost “Martin”⁶⁸. According to its head – Major Vladimir Dabrowsky, I. Bilyi made accusations against S. Balinov that the latter was “conducting some conspiracy” to make the Kalmyk organization independent, disobeying him as chairman of the Central

⁶³ Organizacja „Wolnoje Kozaczestwo” – oprac. Oddziału II z IX 1935 r., CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.04.5474; W.Ł. Komar, *Kozačka emihracija...*, p. 5; *Pismo kpt. Edmunda Charaszkiwicza, szefa Ekspozytury 2, do mjr. Włodzimierza Dąbrowskiego, szefa placówki „Martin” w Paryżu, w sprawie stanowiska wobec rozłamu w ruchu wolnokozackim, Warszawa 11 XII 1933 r.*, no. 2023/33/24, [in:] *II Rzeczpospolita wobec ruchu...*, pp. 278–280.

⁶⁴ This group also included G. Glazkov, I. Kolesov, S. Fedorov, S. Eremienko (V.L. Komar, *Kozačka emihracija...*, p. 6).

⁶⁵ More extensively on Bureau No. 2, among others: A. Szymanowicz, *Na tajnym froncie polsko-niemieckim. Polski wywiad w Prusach Wschodnich*, Gdynia 2013, pp. 237–242.

⁶⁶ *Pismo kpt. [Edmunda] Charaszkiwicza, szefa Ekspozytury 2 Oddziału II Sztabu Głównego do A. Kawałkowskiego w sprawie dwutygodnika „Wolna Kozaczyzna” w 1933 i 1935 r.*, Warszawa 21 III 1933, BPP, Akta Aleksandra Kawałkowskiego / Aleksander Kawałkowski file, ref. 1155, sheet 162.

⁶⁷ *Notatka mjr. Edmunda Charaszkiwicza dla Placówki Wellstone w Paryżu w sprawie konferencji z Szambą Balinowem dotyczącej sytuacji w ruchu wolnokozackim, Warszawa 27 V 1937 r.*, [in:] *II Rzeczpospolita wobec ruchu...*, p. 413.

⁶⁸ Paris outpost of Branch II dealing with Promethean emigration.

Committee, and “imbuing the Kalmyk organization with materialism”, *etc.* In fact, he sent a proclamation on this subject to the members of the “Small Circle”⁶⁹.

In response to these accusations, S. Balinov sent Major Jerzy Krzymowski – head of the “Taras” outpost⁷⁰, an 18-page letter in which he reproached I. Bilyi for, among other things, his aspirations for dictatorial power, disloyalty in the sense of being oriented towards Berlin, and excessive attention to detail. He also threatened to publish secret correspondence concerning the Free Cossacks in order to clear himself of his adversary’s accusations. On another occasion, he accused I. Bilyi of buying himself a villa, a piano and expensive furs, among other things, for his allegedly “selfless” work. The accusations made by both parties were also repeated in a pamphlet by I. Bilyi titled *Moy otwyet* (“My answer”) on the one hand, and in an article by S. Balinov and S. Balykov titled *Nash otwyet* (“Our answer”) on the other⁷¹.

Major J. Krzymowski concluded that the ongoing conflict should be considered a personal dispute between the two politicians over the Kalmyk organization’s attitude towards the Free Cossacks. As a result, he sided with I. Bilyi, declaring S. Balinov’s argument “to be non-subjective and unacceptable for us, since Bureau No. 2 should maintain a consistent line of support for the organization as a whole and strive for its consolidation, and not support individual Cossack groups”. This position was also supported by the head of Bureau No. 2⁷².

A Provisional Central Board of the Free Cossacks was formed in Bratislava, which opposed I. Bilyi⁷³. Its founders considered it necessary to maintain contact with the “old” Central Board and the Small Circle, which were the supreme bodies, as well as the gathering of delegates of the Free Cossack society in Czechoslova-

⁶⁹ Rozłam w W[olnym] K[ozactwie] – oprac. Oddziału II, [no date], CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.04.5788, sheet 573.

⁷⁰ Outpost “Taras” – an outpost of Branch II that existed in the first half of the 1930s in Prague and dealt with, among other things, Ukrainian and Cossack emigration in Czechoslovakia.

⁷¹ Rozłam w W[olnym] K[ozactwie] – oprac. Oddziału II, [no date], CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.04.5788, sheet 573.

⁷² Konflikt w Wolnym Kozactwie – oprac. Oddziału II [probably late 1933], Przebieg sprawy, CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.04.5588.

⁷³ It consisted of Prof. Shcherbina, M. Minayev, V. Karpushkin, Eng. Fesenko, Eng. Kolesov, Dr. Boyko, yesaul V. Yeliseyev, WO. I. Bezuglov and S. Balykov.

kia⁷⁴. In a proclamation, the Board stressed its provisional nature. Efforts were also made to convene a Grand Circle, which was promoted in the “Cossackia” periodical and two issues of “Bulletin of the Board”⁷⁵. A number of proclamations were also issued and more than a thousand letters were distributed⁷⁶.

At that time, the publishing activities of the Free Cossack movement were also developing in other countries. In Paris, two issues of the magazine “Edinstvo i Nezavisimost” and three issues of “Kovilnie volny” were published, while in Germany and Bulgaria “District Bulletins” were printed. Many initiatives were hampered by lack of funds, as their financing depended on the generosity of members.

According to I. Bezuglov, the Provisional Central Board succeeded in countering the efforts of I. Bilyi, who tried “by means of slander and insinuation” to isolate the Board from Cossack society and to force it “to promote the necessity” of convening the Great Circle⁷⁷. “A mood of solidarity arose” – I. Bezuglov wrote – “of joint propaganda for the convening of the Congress”.

However, I. Bilyi, realizing that he would suffer defeat at the Congress of the Great Circle, tried to delay its convening at all costs hoping to “cool the enthusiasm of the opposition”. According to his critic, he sought to break up the districts – German and Bulgarian, and to generate artificial difficulties in organizing the Polish district. In Poland, I. Bilyi had influence and support in the “Warsaw section for Cossack affairs”, which hampered the activities of those who opposed him in the area. However, at the same time he was losing the support of districts in Yugoslavia and France. He therefore strongly opposed the convening of the “Great Circle” and inspired conventions of individual districts with an artificially selected delegates who supported him. The purpose of these conventions was to consolidate his power within the Free Cossacks. This was the case at the Yugoslav district congress, which, according to I. Bezuglov – was held under the chairmanship

⁷⁴ It was for this purpose, among others, that the District Convention delegates Kolesov, Boyko and Shcherbina were introduced to the Board.

⁷⁵ The third issue could not be published due to lack of funds.

⁷⁶ Protokół z narady w dniach 24–25 VIII 1935 r., CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.04.5474, sheet 184.

⁷⁷ Although it was to be held without the representatives of “Cossackia”, who were not registered in the previous organizational activities led by I. Bilyi.

of three paid emissaries of Bilyi. The same was said to be the case at the French⁷⁸, as well as the Bulgarian district congress of the Free Cossacks⁷⁹.

On May 15, 1934, I. Bilyi left for Paris. Formally, it was to prepare the convention of the Great Circle, although it seems that the real reason was in fact to test whether the Free Cossack Headquarters and the office of its press could be transferred to Paris. In Czechoslovakia, opposition to the chairman was too strong, while in France he had many supporters. As a result, Capt. E. Charaszkiwicz telephoned Maj. W. Dabrowski concerning assistance to I. Bilyi.

Based on the correspondence between Maj. J. Krzymowski and Capt. E. Charaszkiwicz, it appears that I. Bilyi presented Bureau No. 2 with *fait accompli* and, without the knowledge and final approval of its leadership, moved the headquarters of the Center to France. For this purpose, he rented a house in Paris by borrowing 1000 francs from Major W. Dabrowski. Through Major J. Krzymowski, he sent a letter to the Bureau, demanding special funds for the move.

At an earlier meeting between E. Charaszkiwicz and I. Bilyi in Prague in March of that year, the latter was given permission to go only in order to prepare the congress and gauge the conditions of the potential move, but there was no talk of renting any premises. Captain E. Charaszkiwicz eventually agreed, through Major J. Krzymowski, to the move, but within the existing budget, possibly at the expense of sacrificing one or two issues of the magazine "Free Cossacks"⁸⁰.

According to accusations from the opposition in France, I. Bilyi allegedly found – "for good money" – new collaborators not in line with the idea of the Free Cossacks – people from the opposite camp. One of them – Makarenko⁸¹ – was said to promote the idea of one and indivisible Russia within the 1913 borders. According to the opposition, another of Bilyi's supporters – a certain Ko-

⁷⁸ Referat Bezugłowa na temat rozłamu w ruchu wolnokozackim, [no date], CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.04.5474.

⁷⁹ Krótka wzmianka na temat ośmioletniej pracy Biłego pod sztandarem Wolnego Kozactwa – oprac. Oddziału II, [likely dated 1935], CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.04.5474.

⁸⁰ Przeniesienie Centrum Wolnego Kozactwa do Paryża w maju 1935 r. Przebieg sprawy, [no day date], CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.04.5474.

⁸¹ Most likely Petro Leontikowych Makarenko.

zlovsky⁸² – was not a Cossack at all and also “promoted pro-Russian political direction and worked for large sums of money”. In their complaints to Branch II Bilyi’s opponents alleged that his activities were bringing “great harm to the free Cossacks, as well as to the supporting state”⁸³, and contributed to their defection to the “opposing camp”, i.e. the Russian monarchist emigration milieu⁸⁴.

Cossack centers in France⁸⁵, Germany, Yugoslavia and Romania sided with I. Bilyi. The strongest opposition was in Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria. The Cossack emigration in Poland was mostly in opposition towards I. Bilyi. However, the community was not yet fully consolidated, as it did not have a unified organization or a statute; the latter was not submitted to the Government Commissariat for registration until September 1935. As a result, since the opposition in Poland did not have a legal organization, Branch II was of the opinion that it could be easily eliminated.

Organization of Free Cossacks on the territory of Poland

In July 1935, I. Bilyi came to Poland in order to eliminate the opposition⁸⁶. The Cossack emigration in the Polish Republic was estimated at about 1,000 people. They resided in the eastern provinces, particularly Volhynia and Polesie. They mostly worked as farm laborers or did seasonal work, such as road construction. The emigrants were exclusively men. If they married, it was mostly to Russian or Ukrainian women, but they raised their children in the Cossack spirit⁸⁷.

The leader of the Free Cossacks in Poland in 1930 was Engineer Fessenko⁸⁸. In September 1930, he submitted a proposal to the

⁸² The first name could not be determined.

⁸³ Namely Poland.

⁸⁴ Krótka wzmianka na temat ośmioletniej pracy Biłego pod sztandarem Wolnego Kozactwa – oprac. Oddziału II, [probably from 1935], CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.04.5474.

⁸⁵ Although in France, the opposition organized a new center of the Free Cossacks, independent of I. Bilyi. Its chairman became a Kuban Cossack – A. Shcherbina.

⁸⁶ Organizacja „Wolnoje Kozaczestwo” – oprac. Oddziału II z IX 1935 r., CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.4.5474.

⁸⁷ Konferencja pomiędzy inż. Biłym i por. Gutrym w sprawie ruchu wolnokozackiego z dnia 7 VIII 1935 r., CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.4.5627.

⁸⁸ The first name could not be determined. Fessenko was employed, probably under the patronage of “number two”, at the State Land Office in Warsaw. He was

Government Commissariat to legalize the Association of Cossack Technicians in Poland. Accordingly, at the end of October of that year, he met with Capt. Stefan Nowaczek to expedite the legalization of the association. He also took the opportunity to communicate that at that time the Central Committee of Cossacks in Poland was formed in Warsaw, without the consent of the “leading factors” of the Free Cossacks. The initiator of the establishment of this association was a certain Aksyonov – a personal friend of I. Bykadorov. The board included Aksyonov – as chairman, and Rudakov, Romanov, Stukaprinov and Anglikovsky⁸⁹ – as members. The Committee’s premises were located at 23/25 Wileńska Street in Warsaw. The Committee submitted an application to the Government Commissariat with a request for legalization. Moreover, Aksyonov launched an intensive propaganda campaign to gain supporters by traveling around Poland to towns and villages where Cossacks resided and persuading them to sign up and pay dues. Another innovative was the proclamation entitled *Obrashtchenye k Cossakam vsyekh Kasatchekh Voysk* printed in a Ukrainian printing house⁹⁰.

The administration of Bureau No. 2 took an interest in both the newly formed organization and its leader. It was found that Aksyonov worked in Warsaw as a private surveyor, and his income was certainly insufficient to cover his considerable travel expenses. It was suspected that he had obtained funds from an unknown source, the purpose of which may have been to continue the “disruption” within the ranks of the Free Cossacks. It was also established that the owner of the Committee’s premises located on Wileńska Street was a Russian, suspected of being in the service of the GPU.

later dismissed from this position, in connection with which, in January 1933, he intervened with the then head of the “N” Desk of Bureau No. 2, Capt. S. Nowaczek. However, the latter found that Fessenko had not taken any active action as a representative of the Free Cossacks in Poland for more than three years, and reported that to the head of Bureau No. 2, who decided to deny Fessenko’s request (List Fessenki w sprawie sytuacji w Wolnym Kozactwie. Przebieg sprawy z 19 II 1934 r., CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.4.5474).

⁸⁹ Fessenko counted Pavlov, Romanov and Karpov among the more prominent activists of the new organization.

⁹⁰ Konferencja z inż. Fessenko z 31 X 1930 r., CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.4.5474.

Thus, Capt. S. Nowaczek appealed to the leadership of Bureau No. 2 to prevent the legalization of the Cossack Committee in Poland and to expel all the prominent activists of the suspected Committee from Poland as troublesome foreigners. In addition, he considered it necessary to invigilate the owner of the premises on Wileńska Street, who had lent his apartment to the Committee, and also recommended intervening with Professor Roman Smal-Stocki regarding the proclamation of the self-appointed Committee printed in a Ukrainian printing house.

Also interesting is the attitude of Bureau No. 2 to the opposition to I. Bilyi in Poland and abroad, since, according to Capt. S. Nowaczek, “for technical reasons, it is necessary that Polish factors tolerate individuals known to conduct destructive activities in exile (Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia) with regard to the ideology of the Free Cossacks, but it cannot take place on our own territory, since this would lower the authority of Polish statehood and make it possible for dark individuals to be installed in Poland, who, under various guises, as a result of the efforts of the organization officially supported by us – would infiltrate Poland in order to do us harm”⁹¹.

The leaders of the opposition to the “Free Cossacks” in Poland were Engineer Tulaev, Yermeev and Alexandrov. The opposition accused I. Bilyi of financial misconduct. As stated in one of the Branch II documents, they were as follows: “Usually, it starts with some unemployed person turning to Bilyi for an allowance. Bilyi, who has no means – refuses. Then such a Cossack moves to the opposition, accusing Bilyi of appropriating money for Cossack purposes from the coffers of the Polish General Staff. In such cases, Bilyi cannot justify himself because he would have to provide evidence of the truth, and thus expose the source of the subsidy”⁹².

At the time, the head of Bureau No. 2 was critical of the performance of I. Bilyi as the leader of the Free Cossacks. He stated, among other things, that the Cossack press that opposed him was published in a incomparably higher circulation than that of the “Free Cossacks”, which translates into larger readership. Furthermore, the opposition, which, as E. Charaszkiwicz stated, took “most of the valuable individuals from him and already managed

⁹¹ Informacje o Centralnym Komitecie Kozaków w Polsce – oprac. Oddziału II, [probably from November 1930], CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.4.5474.

⁹² *Ibidem*.

to take control over the Cossacks in general in several countries”; the opposition was also more active than I. Bilyi’s organization. The head of Bureau No. 2 wondered whether the Bureau should continue supporting I. Bilyi, since, as he stated, “for us, the principal value is represented by the idea, and not by the individual, who may have a lot of advantages, but at the same time also a lot of disadvantages, especially since the opposition follows the same ideology as him, and is therefore useful to the general cause”.

In his directives, E. Charaszkiwicz called for a general convention of the Great Circle, i.e. one that would include all Cossack independence activists, as he believed that Bilyi should first and foremost have in mind the good of the general movement of which he “became the leader, and not the satisfaction of his own ambition”, as well strive to eliminate all misunderstandings. In conclusion, the head of Bureau No. 2 recommended warning I. Bilyi that “unless in the near future he manages to raise the entire WOK organization to at least the level from several years earlier, then there will be consequences”⁹³.

In June 1935, the opposition held a district convention in Białystok, attended by 24 people from four states⁹⁴. At the convention Alexandrov was elected an ataman – I. Bilyi doubted whether he was a Cossack.

After arriving in Poland in July 1935, Bilyi held a series of meetings with representatives of the Cossacks. Among other places, he visited Białystok, Grajewo, Augustów and Lutsk. According to his report, he allegedly encountered difficulties when trying to rent an establishment for a gathering, as owners refused him, demanding that he show police permission. While in Lutsk, he visited the starost and notified him of his intention to hold a meeting with local Cossacks in one of the restaurants. He received permission to do so, but at the same time fifteen police officers in plain clothes arrived at that restaurant – five Cossacks were allegedly frightened and left the meeting. It convinced I. Bilyi that it was necessary to legalize the activities of the Free Cossacks in Poland as soon as possible⁹⁵.

⁹³ *Wytyczne kpt. Edmunda Charaszkiwicza dla placówki w Paryżu w sprawie postępowania wobec kryzysu w ruchu wolno kozackim z 29 IV 1935*, no. 1017/35/34, [in:] *II Rzeczpospolita wobec ruchu...*, pp. 323–324.

⁹⁴ These included stanitsas in Białystok, Ostrów Mazowiecki, Białowieża and Milejewo.

⁹⁵ *Informacje o Centralnym Komitecie Kozaków w Polsce – oprac. Oddziału II, [probably from November 1930], CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.4.5474.*

Incidentally, it was found that in many cases I. Bilyi made material promises in exchange for joining the Free Cossack organization. This was confirmed, among others, by the head of intelligence of the Border Protection Corps – Major Tadeusz Skinder. Accordingly, the leadership of the “B-u” Subsection⁹⁶, on the recommendation of the head of Bureau No. 2, pointed out “the inexpediency, ineffectiveness and inadmissibility of such an approach to campaigning, especially since he was making promises he was unable to fulfill”⁹⁷.

On July 19, 1935, Bilyi took part in a conference attended by Lt. Col. Joseph Englicht⁹⁸, Capt. Edmund Charaszkiwicz and Włodzimierz Bączkowski⁹⁹. Its purpose was primarily to clarify the position of Bureau No. 2 towards the split in the Free Cossack movement.

Captain Charaszkiwicz stated that the split in the organization was “detrimental to the cause”, and stressed the lack of ideological differences between Bilyi and his opposition. In addition, he advocated the need to normalize internal relations within the Free Cossack movement and re-establish cooperation between the various groups.

I. Bilyi replied¹⁰⁰ that previous attempts to reconcile with the opposition had not yielded any positive results, and that among the oppositionists there were people with whom, for fundamental reasons, it is impossible to establish any cooperation. He blamed “Polish factors” for supporting the opposition, thus allegedly reinforcing the latter’s belief that it was “on the right track”. In his view, the Bureau’s failure to support the opposition would result in an automatic resolution of the conflict. Capt. Charaszkiwicz stated categorically that there could be absolutely no question of Polish factors supporting the opposition, and especially of reinforcing the obstruction and hostility towards Bilyi. After this statement, the issue of the final settlement of the conflict and further methods of work and activities of the Free Cossacks was postponed until E. Charaszkiwicz’s visit to Paris in the fall of that year¹⁰¹.

⁹⁶ Bureau No. 2 subsection dealing with Ukrainian and Cossack affairs.

⁹⁷ Sprawa obietnic Biłego w przypadku przystąpienia do ruchu wolnokozaćkiego. Przebieg sprawy, [no date], CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.4.5474.

⁹⁸ From 1930, deputy chief of Branch II of the General Staff of the Polish Army.

⁹⁹ Polish publicist, Sovietologist and activist in the Promethean movement.

¹⁰⁰ As noted in the minutes of the conference, I. Bilyi was “visibly irritated” and responded “in a rather categorical tone, marking significant civil courage”.

¹⁰¹ Konferencja pomiędzy przedstawicielami Oddziału II a I. Biłym w sprawie rozłamu w ruchu wolnokozaćkim w dniu 19 VII 1935 r., CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.4.6527.

Next, I. Bilyi met with Lt. Władysław Guttry, providing a report on the situation of the Free Cossack movement in Poland. He stressed, first of all, that the lack of a legal organization reflected negatively on the social life of the Cossacks, as it made it impossible to hold joint meetings and cultural events. Moreover, in many cases, when it came to, for example, receiving aid, work or care from the Ukrainian or Russian Committee¹⁰² – they were forced to conceal their separatist beliefs and pass themselves off as Ukrainians or Russians¹⁰³.

At another conference¹⁰⁴ with representatives of Branch II I. Bilyi asked to bring about the legalization of the Free Cossacks and its statute, a draft of which he presented. In addition, he raised the issue of creating an archive for the Free Cossacks in Warsaw, establishing a scholarship for Cossacks who lived in Poland and carried out propaganda activities, finding a position in Warsaw for Engineer Shtovhan, who, in his opinion, would be suitable for a Cossack ataman in Poland, and obtaining funds to hire an associate at the Free Cossacks Center.

Another issue he raised was the question of Cossack emigration in France. As a result of the Franco-Soviet rapprochement, there was a fear of creating unfavorable conditions for any work directed against the USSR from French territory. Thus, the idea was, in practice, to prevent Promethean activity, as well as the activities of the Free Cossacks. The French authorities also sought to reduce the employment of foreigners in the workshops, which could have forced many Cossacks to leave the country. According to information from I. Bilyi, the Germans were ready to accept them on the condition that it would be an organized arrival. He asked, therefore, how Polish authorities planned to address that matter.

¹⁰² This refers to the Russian Social Committee in Poland (Rossiyskiy Obshtchestvennyi Komitet v Polshe) – a representative office of the white Russian emigration. Until 1931, it operated as the Russian Committee. It had its own press title. It provided legal and material assistance to White Russian emigrants. It also ran a canteen. It operated until December 1939. *Russkij obszczestwiennyj komitet, g. Warszawa. 1919–[1939], Putiewoditel*, vol. IV (*Fondy Gosudarstwiennogo archiwa Rossijskoj Fiedieracyi po istorii bielogo dwizenija i emigracyi*), ed. S.W. Mironienko, Moskwa 2004, p. 540.

¹⁰³ Konferencja pomiędzy inż. Biłym i por. Gutrym w sprawie ruchu wolnokozackiego w dniu 7 VIII 1935, CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.4.5627.

¹⁰⁴ This conference was held on August 10, 1935, and was attended by Lt. Col. Jozef Englicht, Capt. Aleksander Jabłonowski, Lt. Władysław Guttry, Włodzimierz Bączkowski and Ihnat Bilyi.

Other issues raised included the admission of Free Cossacks to the “Prometeusz” club¹⁰⁵, as well as matters of “preparing Cossacks for active combat”. As I. Bilyi stated, former Cossack officers “are already out of battle practice and are not suitable for commanders at the moment”, therefore, he would like some Cossacks to train in the Polish Army, like Georgians and Ukrainians¹⁰⁶.

The chairman received an answer to some of the issues raised directly at that conference, while the rest was given to him at a later date by Lt. Guttry. Col. Józef Englicht stated that the draft statute of the Free Cossacks in Poland provided by I. Bilyi was incomplete and required legal consultation, and only after that it would be presented for approval. This task was entrusted to Lt. Guttry. It was agreed that a Free Cossack archive should be established in Warsaw, and I. Bilyi would appoint a suitable person for the task. It was suggested that this could be a student who would be awarded a scholarship. The question of housing funds or employment for Engineer Shtovhan in Warsaw was not addressed. It was agreed that Bilyi’s deputy would be hired as a full-time employee, albeit within the existing budget.

As for the possible prevention or obstruction of Promethean work as a result of the French government’s activities, Lt. Col. J. Englicht said that in such a case, arrangements would be made to move the headquarters to another country, most likely Switzerland. In the event of Cossacks losing employment in France, Branch II recommended accepting the German offer and continuing the Free Cossack campaign there. However, I. Bilyi was instructed not to disclose information about contacts with Polish intelligence in talks with the Germans. He was also warned that the arrival of Cossacks in Poland could only take place legally, while large-scale arrival would be undesirable and unwelcome due to the unemployment that affected Polish citizens. Cossacks crossing the border illegally would be arrested and then deported from Poland.

The admission of the Free Cossacks to the “Prometeusz” club encountered significant difficulties. The leadership of Branch II did not have confidence in Cossack activists, primarily because most of them “put material issues before ideals”. For example,

¹⁰⁵ Promethean movement center, which was established in 1928 in Warsaw on the initiative of Branch II. It was headed by a representative of Ukraine – Prof. Roman Smal-Stocki.

¹⁰⁶ Konferencja w dniu 10 VIII 1935 r., CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.4.5627.

in the event of a loss of material resources received from the Free Cossacks' funds, all Cossacks without exception moved to the opposition and, fighting each other, exposed the movement's ties to Branch II and other Promethean organizations. It was explicitly stated that the Free Cossacks, as an organization, lacked "strength or much of ideological value". In addition, representatives of the Promethean nations stated that the territorial aspirations of the Cossacks "were too far-fetched and, as a result, did not deserve to be taken seriously". For these reasons, it was considered impossible that Cossacks be accepted into the Polish Army.

Other doubts raised by Branch II against the Cossack movement included the belief that the Cossacks could not be called "100% a nation, but only a state with its own traditions, its own culture and a separate way of existence".

Responding to these allegations, I. Bilyi replied that he could not do much to counter the harmful activities of the oppositionists, since they were probably acting at the instigation of foreign factors hostile to the Polish statehood. The Cossacks' territorial ambitions, on the other hand, he considered minimal, and the proposed borders were, in his opinion, based on Soviet administrative solutions that took into account the distribution of Cossack *khutors*. As for the lack of Cossack nationality, he stated that "no Cossack ever claimed Russian or Ukrainian nationality and always claimed to be a Cossack, just as every Pole under the various partitions did not consider himself a German, Russian or Austrian. In conclusion, he also added that the Cossacks represent a very positive element, and he hoped that in the future struggle against Russia they would accomplish more than the Caucasian peoples, who, when fighting the Bolsheviks, put up very little resistance, unlike the Cossack troops"¹⁰⁷.

The issue of legalization of the Free Cossacks in Poland was finally resolved in 1935. The draft statute was legally modified by Counselor Stanislaw Laniecki of the Nationalities Department at the Ministry of Internal Affairs in consultation with I. Bilyi. It was finally approved at the Security Department of the Government Commissariat on December 10, 1935¹⁰⁸. At the beginning

¹⁰⁷ Konferencja w dniu 16 VIII 1935 r., CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.4.5627.

¹⁰⁸ Rejestracja Wolnego Kozactwa w Polsce. Przebieg sprawy, [no date], CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.4.6527.

of the following year, the first statutory organizations of the Free Cossacks in Poland began to form¹⁰⁹.

According to the statute, the purpose of the Free Cossacks was “to bring together all those who support the idea of Free Cossacks – Cossacks, without distinction of their origin, residing in the territory of the Republic of Poland, and moreover, to take care of the cultural and educational development of the members, to preserve the Cossack customs and traditions and to implement the principles of self-help”. Any person without a criminal record who was accepted by the board of the local branch could become a member of the association. This board also decided to expel a given member in the event of non-payment of dues for six months, “failure to comply with the statute, bylaws and instructions, and disobedience to the association’s authorities, for activities to the detriment of the association, and in the event of committing dishonorable acts”.

The supreme authorities of the association were the General Assembly of the Association and the General Board, while the authorities of the branches were the general assemblies of *kurens*, *khutors*, *stanitsas* and their boards. The association’s resolutions were passed by a simple majority, and in the event of an even split vote, the chairman’s vote prevailed. Within the association, branches were established as basic organizational units. These were *kurens* of 5–10 people, *khutors* of 10–15 people, and *stanitsas* of more than 15 people¹¹⁰.

On April 26, 1936, the first congress of representatives of Free Cossack organizations in Poland was held in Warsaw. The purpose of the convention was to form the Free Cossack district and elect its authorities. It was held at the Eastern Institute in Warsaw. Representatives of Cossacks from Volhynia (Lutsk and Tomaszówka), Polesie (Hajnówka and Pińsk), as well as Białystok and Augustów came. As a result, Engineer Shtovhan from Lutsk, who had already

¹⁰⁹ According to Sergei Tkachov, the first statutory field organization of the Free Cossacks was established in Lutsk on February 22 1936. It was also the largest, with 83 members. In March, ataman Nazarov’s stanitsa in Augustów (56 members) and ataman Platov’s stanitsa in Stare Koszary in the Kovel district (59) were legalized. A fairly large center operated in Vladimir Volynskiy (70). Other centers operated in Tomaszyszki (32) and Warsaw (48 members). C. Tkaczov, *Vilne kozatstvo na Volyni*, http://www.cossackdom.com/cossack21/tkachov_volin.htm (accessed: 12 II 2023).

¹¹⁰ Statut Stowarzyszenia Wolnego Kozactwa w Polsce, [no date], CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.4.5627.

been supported by I. Bily, was elected head of the Free Cossack movement in Poland. Fourteen representatives of the Free Cossack states were also introduced.

Ataman Bilyi arrived from Paris a few days earlier. From April 23 to 27, he held daily conferences with representatives of the “B-u” Subsection of Bureau No. 2 – Wladyslaw Pelc and Stefan Sipa. In his conversations with them, he presented a number of desiderata concerning both the overall Free Cossack affairs and those relating to the Cossack movement in Poland, asking for a definitive answer to be provided by the head of Bureau No. 2, Major E. Charaszkiewicz.

Most demands related to financial matters. In view of the “pile of technical work” – as Bilyi put it – with which the Free Cossack Center in Paris was overburdened, he asked for an additional monthly subsidy of 1,200 French francs to employ a technical secretary. He also requested funding for the third part of a study entitled *The Tragedy of the Cossacks*, which was already prepared for publication, as well as for the publication in French and English (and possibly Italian) of a propaganda book on “Cossackia” and the Free Cossack movement, subsequently distributed in Western European countries, and for a permanent monthly subsidy of 600 francs to continue his research and development of more works, which would appear in installments in the “Free Cossacks” magazine.

Activities of the Free Cossacks in the second half of the 1930s

In 1936, I. Bilyi planned to hold a district convention of the Free Cossacks in Germany, for which he intended to spend at least 500 zlotys. He also applied for an “organizational subsidy for an inspection trip” to Bulgaria and Yugoslavia in the amount of 1000 zlotys. He repeated his request for a scholarship at the Warsaw University of Technology for one of his Cossack students. Citing his conversations with Major E. Charaszkiewicz during his inspection trip to Paris, he asked for an indication of the time and place of a possible transfer of the Free Cossack Center from Paris, “so as the organizational activity not be paralyzed there, as a result of the unfavorable political situation in France”.

He also asked for an explanation of “the plans of the Polish side with regard to the Free Cossacks in the event of any complications in the East... and potential military steps, and whether the Poles would accept the formation on Polish territory or elsewhere, and what assistance from the Polish side such an already organized force could expect”. He also pointed out that Cossacks’ military service in the French army is detrimental (which, however, he did not clarify) and asked what Polish factors thought about that and what remedial steps they would offer. Another issue concerned the possibility of the Cossacks establishing underground communications with their native country and the possibility of the Polish side financing it.

I. Bilyi devoted relatively little space to the affairs of the Free Cossack movement in Poland. First of all, he reiterated his request for the employment of the district Cossack leader, Engineer Shtovhan, in Warsaw, where the local organizational center of the movement would also operate, as well as for a room or subsidy for the headquarters of the organization. He requested funding for a Free Cossack periodical in Poland titled “Kozachya Vola”, which was already published in Lutsk with Engineer Shtovhan as the editor-in-chief. He also inquired about the possibility of obtaining a loan from the Polish government to aid the Free Cossack emigration in Poland¹¹¹.

“As a result of general budget restrictions” Major E. Charaszkie-wicz did not agree¹¹² to allocate additional funds to hire a technical secretary at the Paris Center. He made the same decision regarding the provision of a fixed monthly subsidy to continue work on further chapters of the *Tragedy of the Cossacks* and financial support for the Center’s clandestine communications with the homeland¹¹³. For the same reasons, it was impossible to rent a room for the Center in Warsaw. Free Cossack activists were advised to approach the Eastern Institute in Warsaw and ask if they could hold their gatherings there; organizational correspondence

¹¹¹ Konferencja z atamanem Ignacym Bilym w dniach 23–27 IV 36 r., CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.4.5627.

¹¹² Charaszkie-wicz conveyed his decision through Władysław Pelc.

¹¹³ Although it was stated that “Polish factors have nothing against the establishment by the Free Cossack Center of a clandestine communication with the homeland, but the difficult financial situation makes it impossible to assign special loans for this purpose”.

should sent to the private address of one of the organization's members residing in the Polish capital. The situation was similar with social welfare – regarding a loan to support the Free Cossack emigration Major E. Charaszkiwicz suggested that the Cossack activists should turn as a social organization to the Ministry of Social Welfare.

However, the head of Bureau No. 2 was favorably disposed to covering the cost of printing the third part of *The Tragedy of the Cossacks*. He asked for a detailed cost estimate to be sent through the “Milton” post¹¹⁴. He was just as supportive of the initiative to promote the ideas of the Free Cossacks in French and English. The final decision depended on the cost. The same applied to financing “Kozachya Vola”, once Engineer Shtovhan presented a detailed budget. The decision on financing the Free Cossack convention in Germany would be made at a later date – when it was established whether such an event was needed. The same applied to covering the costs of an inspection trip of I. Bilyi to Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. The issue of the scholarship for a Cossack student would be decided once accurate information was provided about him and his moral and academic qualifications.

Major E. Charaszkiwicz decided that the transfer of the Free Cossack Center from Paris would depend on whether other Promethean centers were moved from that city. As for the Polish declaration regarding Cossacks organizing themselves militarily in the event of an armed conflict with Russia, it was assessed as premature, although it was stated that the Free Cossacks could and should always count on Poland supporting their cause. The employment of Engineer Shtovhan depended on talks with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, although Major E. Charaszkiwicz pointed out that he should not count on the matter being settled quickly, given financial difficulties and widespread unemployment¹¹⁵.

As for the political activities of the Cossacks in Poland at the time, it should be said that Branch II took action with the help of the state administration; in April 1936 county starosts of the Volhynia province received instructions from province governor Henryk Józefski¹¹⁶ on how to deal with Cossack activists. The

¹¹⁴ Paris branch of Branch II dealing with nationality issues.

¹¹⁵ Odpowiedzi Szefa Ekspozytury nr 2 na wnioski atamana I. Biłego z kwietnia 1935 r., CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.4.5627.

¹¹⁶ Governor of Volhynia in 1928–1929 and 1930–1938 and a Promethean activist.

governor acted in consultation with Branch II and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The instruction advised district governors to ensure that the members of the Free Cossacks in their area included only emigrants “from the area of the Cossack army”, i.e. from the area of the organization of the Don, Kuban, Ural, Orenburg, Astrakhan, Kalmyk and Terek armies. This was intended to prevent “local Ukrainian nationalist elements” from joining. Moreover, local organizational meetings should be prevented, since “the central and only outpost of the Free Cossacks was exclusively Lutsk”.

Moreover, the instruction ordered to “firmly oppose” the spread of the Ukrainian Cossack movement¹¹⁷ founded by Voloshin, who fled to Germany. This organization was particularly active in the Horokhov county. It was to be treated as an illegal structure. Furthermore, the instruction reminded that the distribution of the “Free Cossacks” periodical published in Paris and the “Kozachya Vola” printed in Lutsk should not be restricted. Starosts were obliged to send detailed reports on all aspects of the activities of the Free Cossack¹¹⁸.

Conclusion

By the end of the 1930s, the activity of the Free Cossack movement, like that of the Promethean movement, was dying down. This was related, among other things, to the ever-increasing German threat, to which Polish authorities began to pay much more attention.

The Cossack emigration organized under the motto of creating one common nation and state – “Cossackia”. Its main concentrations were in the territories of the Balkan countries, France, Czechoslovakia and Poland. Given that their main enemy was Soviet Russia, the Cossacks turned to Poland for help. The Polish Republic, in turn, tried to use the Cossack potential in the implementation of its Promethean policy. However, conflicts within the Cossack milieu, often of a personal nature¹¹⁹, as well as the

¹¹⁷ The organization in question was *Ukrainskyi Natsionalnyi Kozachyi Rukh*, formerly operating under the name UNAKOTO – Ukrainian National Cossack Society.

¹¹⁸ Pismo wojewody wołyńskiego, Henryka Józefskiego, do starostów powiatowych w sprawie Wolnego Kozactwa z 24 IV 1935 r., CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.4.5474.

¹¹⁹ Much of the conflict in émigré circles was inspired by the Soviet special services.

inability to reach an agreement with the emigration associated with the UPR or North Caucasus, prevented the Cossacks from entering Promethean organizations. Circles associated with Petlura did not recognize the existence of a separate Cossack nation, regarding Cossacks as Ukrainians. This position remained unchanged¹²⁰. The fierce polemic in the press between Professor Roman Smal-Stocki, a prominent figure of the UPR emigration government, and I. Bilyi was mitigated by Bureau No. 2¹²¹. On the other hand, Cossacks' cooperation with the North Caucasus emigration activists was hampered, among other things, by the fact that during the civil war some Cossack communities fought together with the White Guard forces against the Mountain Republic¹²².

The Cossacks were not a priority in Polish Promethean plans, if only because of their relatively small numbers¹²³. The fact that part of the Cossack emigration remained in close contact with Russian emigration was certainly also a contributing factor. In addition, in the second half of the 1930s, more and more Cossack émigrés were inclined to cooperate with the Third Reich, including the establishment of the All-Cossack Union in Prague at the end of 1939 on the initiative of the Germans, which in 1940 was renamed the All-Cossack Association in the German Reich¹²⁴. This foreshadowed further German-Cossack collaboration. During World War Two, thousands of Cossacks fought on the side of the Third Reich¹²⁵.

¹²⁰ Program działalności kozaków nacjonalistów, [no date], CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.4.5433.

¹²¹ Prof. [Roman] Smal-Stocki – inż. I. Biłyj – polemika, 1 II 1937, CAW WBH, O II, ref. I 303.4.5477.

¹²² Ch. King, *Widmo wolności. Historia Kaukazu*, Kraków 2011, p. 153.

¹²³ About 9,000 Cossacks were supposed to be in exile, of which 3,000 were in Yugoslavia, 2,000 in Bulgaria, 1,000 each in Poland, France and Romania, about 300 in Germany and 700 in other countries (S. Mikulicz, *op. cit.*, pp. 192–193). In contrast, the group centered around I. Bilyi was said to have about 300 people in 1934 (*Ustne sprawozdanie mjr. Włodzimierza Dąbrowskiego z sytuacji organizacji prometejskich w Paryżu. Załącznik do L.dz. 69/1934 z 9 marca 1934 r.*, [in:] *II Rzeczpospolita wobec ruchu...*, p. 293).

¹²⁴ *Ot atamana Obshtchekazachyego Obyedinyeniya general-leytenant Je. I. Balabin*, “Vestnik Obshtchekazachy Obyedinyeniya v Protektoratye Chekhiya i Moraviya” 1940, no. 1, pp. 1–2.

¹²⁵ For more on this topic, see, among others: S. Newland, *Kozacy w Wehrmachcie 1941–1945*, Warszawa 2010; W. Krause, *Kozacy i Wehrmacht*, Kraków 2006; A. Szymanowicz, *Kozackie formacje w służbie III Rzeszy*, “Wschodnioznawstwo” 2018, no. 12, pp. 243–259.

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