

THE BELORUSSIAN NATIONAL REPUBLIC (BNR)

I. A Brief History

1. The Belorussian National Republic (in exile) derives its authority and justification for existence as the "legal" Belorussian government in exile from the actions of the First Belorussian Congress, formed at Minsk in December, 1917. At this meeting Belorussia was declared a democratic republic by 1812 delegates, present from all the provinces of Belorussia.

2. The delegates to the Congress elected a President, Peter KRETCHEVSKI, and Rada, or legislature, which was given unlimited authority until there should be free national elections in Belorussia. According to the BNR, such elections have not as yet been held. Therefore, they, as heirs and assigns of the original Rada, possess the authority to act as the Belorussian Government-in-exile.

3. After a three-year period of tenuous existence under the Soviets, Bolshevik government dissolved the Rada in 1920 and those of its members who could escape set up new headquarters in Kaunas, Lithuania. In 1923, Prague was selected as the center for the Rada.

4. Until the German occupation of central and eastern Europe the Rada remained in Prague. Prior to 1939, 12 governments of European states recognized the existence of the Rada as the de jure authority of the Belorussian government, and other European nations gave them de facto recognition.

5. During World War II the existence of the Rada was suppressed, although some of its members collaborated with the Nazi government. In 1943, Vasil ZACHARKA, second President of the Rada, died and was replaced by Mikole ABRAMCHIK. The latter maintains that he was ZACHARKA's deputy and named by him to be his successor.

6. In 1942, ABRAMCHIK called together the Rada at Prague, apparently feeling that danger existed that the Rada might become just another political party. This supposition was based on the fact that the German government had formed a Congress supposedly for autonomous government of Belorussia during World War II and had not acceded to the wishes of the Rada. Composed of 100 members, the Council called by ABRAMCHIK was based on three parties: (1) the Belorussian Democratic Independence Union, (2) the National Democratic Party (composed chiefly of refugees from the Belorussian Soviet Republic) and (3) the Belorussian Independence Party. The Christian Democratic Party was reported leaning towards membership in this group, but made no definite commitments as to joining the delegates who would act as the Rada. Three meetings of this Council were held, in December 1947, June 1948 and November 1948.

7. The BNR in recent years has indeed come to be more of a political party than the undisputed representative of the Belorussian people in exile. Its once leading role has been lessened by the activities of other Belorussian emigre groups.

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8. One operational contact with the BNR was initiated in January 1951 with a meeting in Brussels between [] and Boris RAGULA - liaison man for the BNR (reported in MUNIF 2544). Since that time the BNR has provided agent candidates for three missions, one unsuccessful, one abortive and one now in progress. Three P/A candidates have also been furnished.

9. The BNR today claims a total of some 5,000 members. Of these, 150 constitute the Rada, which has not met in recent years due to the difficulty of getting its members together. The Rada is intended to function as a parliament, but its duties are at present carried out by a 13-man Presidium, of which ABRAMCHIK is the President. A member of the Rada has been appointed to represent its interests in each European country in which it is active, and to coordinate the activities of the affiliated Belorussian groups in the area.

9. The headquarters of the BNR is now located in Paris, ABRAMCHIK's place of residence. The largest branch organization is that existing in the United States, composing approximately 3,000 members. A small group exists at Louvain University, Belgium, and a still smaller one remains in Germany.

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Questions:-

1. How does one become (a) a member and (b) an ex-member of the Rada?
2. How many members does the BNR claim?
3. How many times has the Rada met since November 1948 -- when and where?
4. More details are desired on:
 - a. Increase or decrease in BNR membership since WW II.
 - b. History of the BNR during WW II.
 - c. Complete list of Rada members -- when elected and term of service.
 - d. Name and leading membership of political parties directly responsible to BNR; indirectly responsible.
5. Complete biography of ABRAMCHIK.
6. Efforts made in US, if any, to organize a unified BNR.

II. Structure and Organization

1. Diagrams of BNR organizational relationships I and II.

2. The membership of the BNR today may be divided into two groups: those members who live in Europe or S. America, including those with whom CSOB has operational contact; and those who have emigrated to the United States. In the former category are listed:

- a. Mikola ABRAMCHIK - President of the BNR
- b. Boris RAGULYA - Head of Belorussian Student Union and designated by ABRAMCHIK as our chief operational contact.
- c. A. LASHUK - BNR Council Sector President in England
- d. Evgeni KAKHANOVSKI - heads the Belorussian National Democratic Party (Natsdemiye) and also listed as foreign minister of the BNR
- e. Yanka STANKEVICH - editor of "The Fatherland", party newspaper published in Munich
- f. Yanka ZHYTTKO - BNR representative of the Belorussian Anti-Communist Front which cooperates with the American Committee for the Liberation of the Peoples of Russia.

3. Among those who are now living in the United States and who hold "official" positions in the BNR are:

- a. Alexander MAKHNOVSKI - senior member of the Executive Committee of BNR
- b. Bronislav GRABINSKI - leader of the Belorussian Christian Democrats (50 members)
- c. Anton ADAMOVICH - leads East Belorussian wing of Krwicheskaya Party (30 members)
- d. Mikola GAROSHKA - leader of Belorussian Peasant Party (50 members)
- e. Frantisek KUSHAL - President of the Union of Veterans (or Combatants) and Chairman of the Belorussian American Association (claims 500 members in N.Y.)

4. The World Union of the Belorussian Emigration (SABE) with some 40 participating organizations, is believed "sympathetic" to the BNR, but there is no direct affiliation between the two. SABE will therefore be discussed separately under #IV.b.

5. As far as is known, no official of the BNR holds a position in one of the US "emigre affairs" agencies. ~~with the exception of the following: [illegible]~~

6. The best available estimate of membership in the BNR is _____. This figure includes active members who have participated directly in some portion of BNR activities, and is the one given by the BNR itself, and not from an objective point of view.

III. Political and Other Aims

1. The chief political aim of the BNR is to restore Belorussia to the list of free nations, with the corollary that the BNR itself be the supreme authority in determining the composition of the government of free Belorussia.

2. In determining the nature of the government-to-be, the BNR bases its desires on three legislative documents published by the Rada in 1918. These documents provide for the establishment of a republican regime with socialist tendencies featuring the following points:

- (1) A democratic republic is to be established in that territory in which a numerical majority of Belorussian people exists.
- (2) The principal laws of the Republic are ratified by the Rada, convoked on the basis of general, equal, direct, secret and proportional voting rights without regard to sex, nationality or religion.
- (3) Until the parliament is elected, legislative power is put in the hands of the Rada of the First All-Belorussian Congress, supplemented by representatives of national minorities in Belorussia.
- (4) The executive authority is in the hands of the BNR Government, which is appointed by and responsible to the Rada.

3. Other portions of these documents provide for freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly, and freedom to form unions and to strike. Arable land belongs to those who work on it -- forests, lakes and underground resources are the property of the Government. The BNR guarantees national and personal autonomy to minority groups.

4. The Rada and the BNR are in favor of federation "in principle". But they state that federation is feasible only if all peoples and nations relinquish their sovereign rights to an equal extent. This statement is an attempt to prevent federation with equal rights being promised to and not actually given the Belorussian people.

5. In general, the political aims of the BNR may be summarized as follows:

The BNR feels itself still the legal representative of the Belorussian people, due to the authority given it by the first Belorussian Congress in 1917. Since, according to the BNR, the principles laid down by this Congress have never been revoked, its stand on autonomy, self-government, methods of voting, and ownership of land stand today as they did in 1917. The BNR attempts to identify itself completely with the Rada, and therefore hold in its hands the only legal authority for the government of Belorussia. In order to maintain this attitude, its overtly expressed political beliefs must conform to those established by the Rada. Privately, many members of the BNR would perhaps favor a more autocratic government, but this aim must be filed away, they feel, until the Soviets have been driven from their country.

6. As far as is known at CSOB, no members holding official positions in the BNR have made attempts to contact representatives of the United States Department of Defense or State. United States policy towards the group as the legal representative of the Belorussian people has not been officially expressed, and the United States has not recognized the BNR as the legal Belorussian government. No commitments have been made by this Agency as regards any promises for support to the BNR in case Belorussia once again becomes a free state.

IV. Relations with Other Emigre Organizations

a. Position in the minority emigration.

Once supreme leader of the Belorussian emigration, the BNR has today been relegated to a position in which it must compete as merely another political party for the support of Belorussian emigres. Although the Rada, which the BNR today represents, was given supreme authority by the First Belorussian Congress of 1917, events during World War II did much to dispel the idea that the BNR was the only supreme authority in Belorussian affairs. The Nazis revived the Belorussian government during the Second World War, but they used quite a different cast of characters than that which would have been recommended by the BNR. And it is the men chosen by the Nazis, today calling themselves the BCR, who represent the chief opposition to the leadership of the BNR.

After the defeat of Germany, the men who formed the short-lived Belorussian government during World War II proclaimed themselves the true leaders of the Belorussian emigration. They said that the second Belorussian Congress had been called during World War II, under German sponsorship, and that, since they had been elected leaders of that Congress, they should therefore take control of the Belorussian emigration. They accused the BNR of hiding in cowardly fashion until the dangers attendant upon the War were passed, and then sticking their heads out again above the protective barriers of anonymity and crying to the world that now the actual leaders of Belorussia had returned.

Fortunately, the Belorussian emigre situation is one of the less complicated ones existing today, among exiles from the Soviet Union. The two principal forces, discussed above, are the BNR and the BCR. The only other faction contending for leadership is termed the "Third Force", an anomalous group of emigres not aligning themselves on one side or the other in the factional BNR-BCR struggle, but remaining interested solely in the reformation of a free Belorussian government-- its political structure to be decided after the government itself again exists. Adherents of the "Third Force" seem generally less interested in premature internecine warfare, and often treat quite scornfully the attempts of BNR or BCR members to "convert" them.

To summarize -- the BNR probably retains today the leadership in the Belorussian emigration, but it holds that position by the slenderest of margins. At any time, either outside support or more vital activity within the BCR could raise it to the place of leader in the Belorussian emigration.

b. With other individual groups

The two categorized groups in the Belorussian emigration, the BNR and the BCR, have often proved themselves more willing to insult and defile each other's program and personalities, than they have been adept in serving as a focal point and directorial arrow in the fight against Communism.

Despite frequent protests of objectivity, and expressions of desire only to see their country free again, with a blind emotionalism more suiting to adolescent gangs, they throw their rocks not at the common enemy but at each other. On one occasion the BNR newspaper will insult OSTROVSKI, chief of BCR. Shortly thereafter, an ~~anonymous~~ publication might appear defiling ABRAMCHIK, BNR president. The emotions of their adherents, therefore, are stirred up not against Communism, but with relationship to just how the government of Belorussia will be constituted once the country is independent. Their entire attitude has as much relationship to their real objective (freeing Belorussia) as had the medieval argument concerning the number of angels who could rest on the head of a pin to the problem of religion.

(The "Third Force" remains aloof from the emotional outbursts so characteristic of)

The BNR is probably even guiltier of this type of outburst than is the BCR. Recently the front page of "The Fatherland", official BNR newspaper, was filled with long and quite involved insults directed at the BCR and paid for with DYCLAIM funds. The more lenient attitude of the BCR is due to the fact that it is now "on the outside looking in" -- and in order to acquire American support probably feels it must go gently in attacking the U.S. supported BNR. However, if the BCR is also subsidized, it will not be surprising, unless a firmer policy towards both organizations is established, to witness the disheartening situation which occurs when two opposing factions, both U.S. supported, make endless political attacks on each other, meanwhile completely neglecting the actual enemy.

The "Third Force", probably because it is so loosely organized, if indeed it possesses any appreciable homogeneity, has remained aloof from the Wild West war-whoops so characteristic of the BNR and BCR. Each man decides what he can do to combat Communism, and then he proceeds to carry it out. The disadvantage of this "force" is, of course, that when each man is pulling in a different direction, it is difficult to progress towards a common goal. Therefore, the "Third Force" remains today more a classification of those who belong neither to the BNR or BCR than of those men who are closely banded together in pursuit of common interests.

Addendum. An organization has been formed in the Belorussian emigration which acts as a coordinating center. Its name - The World Union of Belorussian Emigration (SABE). Containing about 40 member groups, it attempts to unite Belorussians into a cohesive force a little less separatist in nature than the BNR. However, SABE has been described as definitely sympathetic to the BNR. A list of its officers and member groups follows:-

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(Cut III, p 50 of Virgil's report -- leaving out introductory sentences.)

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V. Relations with Intelligence Services other than AIS or RIS

Little is known about any relationships which now exist or may have existed between the BNR and other intelligence services. It is possible that information has been divulged to two other services, namely, the French and Polish. Penetration by the first-named service may well have come about during the long residence of the BNR president, ABRAMCHIK, in Paris. The Polish service had, it is assumed, ample opportunities to infiltrate the BNR during the period during and after the First World War, when the BNR held its first Congress in Minsk (1917).

Other penetrations may have occurred from the Belgian service, resulting from opportunities offered by the existence of a large, pro-BNR Belorussian community in Louvain, at the University located in that city. The Czech IS might have garnered information regarding the BNR during the period from 1923 to 1939 when the BNR made its home in Prague. However, no penetration by foreign intelligence services has been proved.

The only penetration known to exist seems to have come from the BCR, rival Belorussian emigre organization. During 1952, the president of the BCR, OSTROVSKI, reported to an AIS officer that he had complete information of one of the BNR meetings held in Munich. Apparently this information was quite complete, indicating that OSTROVSKI either had defected one of the BNR members attending the meeting, or that he had received the details of the meeting from an unwitting informant.

VI. Indications of Soviet Penetration

The earliest instance of Soviet penetration of the BNR occurred in 1925, in Prague. Two ministers of the BNR, TSVIKEVIC and LASTOVSKI, attempted to persuade their colleagues to cooperate with the Soviet government. Their efforts did not meet with success, and the two ministers thereupon returned to the BSSR. At first they were given prominent positions -- TSIVIKIEVIC became a professor at the University of Minsk, -- but later both were liquidated. The best documented case of attempted Soviet penetration of the BNR and Belorussian emigration as a whole reached its climax in January 1952 with the arrest of Nina SIEMS, a Belorussian woman employed by the Soviets as a recruiter. She had attempted to engage the services of Dr. Stanislav STANKIEVIC, former editor of a Nazi-published newspaper and in 1951 resident of a DP camp in Schliessheim. STANKIEVIC, when threatened with punishment of his relatives if he did not turn over information on the Belorussian emigration to SIEMS, reported the affair to CIC. As a result, he furnished SIEMS with bogus information until the time of her arrest. SIEMS also was reported to have been in contact with Alexander KASATKIN, a Russian national and leader of Block 61, DP Camp Funk Kaserne, Munich. KASATKIN has since emigrated to the United States. On 28 September Iosefa BRECHKA, an employee of the newspaper BATSKAVSCHINA, was visited at the Schleissheim DP Camp by a man unknown to her. The stranger asked BRECHKA if she knew what had

ZAYETZ,

happened to SIEMS. Two Belorussians in the Belorussian House, BRADFORD, expressed openly Soviet attitudes early in 1952 and were expelled from the house.

The BNR makes a fairly serious attempt to screen its members to prevent Soviet penetration. The existence of the Rada, as a sort of governing body for the BNR, allows a nucleus of supposedly reliable men to exist, be tested, and then be assumed reliable. It is doubtful that a Soviet agent could penetrate the Presidium of the Rada, a group composed of 13 men, because each member of the Presidium has usually been known to the other members for some time before his election.

Any penetration which has been made has not noticeably affected the policy of the BNR, and is, if such does in fact exist, probably for the purpose of finding out the details of the BNR organization rather than attempting to influence its policy decisions.

THE BELORUSSIAN CENTRAL RADA

1. Brief History (To be taken with more than a grain of salt, since the information was supplied primarily by OSTROVSKI himself)

The Belorussian Central Rada was born on December 20, 1943, with a handful of Nazi midwives. Attendant at the birth were three Belorussians: R. Ostrovski, Yuri Sobolevski, and Shkelenko, one of whom was to be named chairman, or father of the child, with the other two acting as his assistants. The statutes of the BCR were read out by German General von Gottberg. At his side stood the chief of the Minsk SS Security Service, Sepp, and the chief of the SS Personnel section in the area, Dr. Markus. Two requests made by the newly "elected" chairman, Ostrovski, were reluctantly granted: one that any Belorussian army should fight for the Germans on the Eastern front only; the other, that within six months the German government would help the triumvirate of Ostrovski, Sobolevski and Shkelenko to form a second Belorussian Congress (doubtless with the idea of giving the new Rada some air of legitimacy). No one could accuse the new Rada of a democratic beginning.

The next day a "celebration" was held in Minsk at which 300 Belorussian activists saluted the birth. Von Gottberg read aloud the program and announced the appointment of Ostrovski. Thus the BCR was formulated, serving the German government by giving an air of semi-autonomy to their Belorussian efforts; and serving Ostrovski and his friends by giving them hopes of increasing that autonomy, and incidentally of course, their own power.

The original statutes provided for a Council of 15, including the President. The officers chosen were as follows: (page 11 of "The BCR, Past and Present").

The first public meeting of the new Rada took place on 22 January, 1944, attended by Germans, the clergy, and the civilian population. Ostrovski spoke; a declaration of the Council, taking over from the Germans such departments as public education, local self-government, and the courts. He attempted to put through a program organizing Belorussian armed forces and supplying them with weapons and food. On March 10, an order for mobilization of the Belorussian Krai Defense was issued, and 28,000 people appeared for induction in the next few days.

Forty battalions were organized and assigned to areas considered most threatened by Red partisans. The administration of these areas was put into the hands of the Rada, and there was a deputy of the BCR present at every district "commissar's" office, without whom the commissar was not to take action in matters relating to local self-government.

In April, 1943, Ostrovski began holding mass meetings in the countryside near Minsk, urging the partisans to come from the woods and return to peaceful endeavor. Apparently many men did indeed come out of hiding, most of whom were later inducted into the new Army.

On June 27, 1944, the second Belorussian Congress was held at the Minsk Municipal Theater, attended by 1,039 delegates. As to the manner of their election, Ostrovski said, "Of course they were not delegates elected in national elections, since the war time circumstances did not allow this, but nonetheless they had been elected in their villages and cities and by Belorussian organizations." Ostrovski was unanimously elected president of the Rada, his being the only name put forward.

The Congress, after hearing two reports on political themes, adopted the following resolutions:

1. Confirmation of the act of March 25, 1918, of the Council of the BNR, declaring Belorussia a free and sovereign power.
2. Nullification of all pacts and treaties concluded between Poland and the USSR without the participation of the Belorussian people.
3. To withhold recognition of any treaties made without the participation of the Belorussian people between the Polish government in exile at London and the USSR and bearing on Belorussia and the Belorussian people.
4. Recognition of the Belorussian Central Rada, headed by Prof. Ostrovski, as the only legal representative of the Belorussian people.

At the conclusion of the meeting the Belorussian national anthem was played and a telegram sent to Hitler.

Unfortunately, the Soviets desecrated the idyllic Belorussian picture before the paint had dried. The next day Ostrovski and those of his friends for whom the Nazis had room on their evacuation specials entrained for Vilna in the face of an oncoming Soviet army.

The BCR battalion retreated and most of them got back to Germany to be reorganized into the First Belorussian Division, under (fnu) EIGLING, from SS headquarters. After several months in Hirschau, Bavaria, on March 25, 1945 Ostrovski secretly told his officers to contact the Allies. A Rhine crossing was held by the First Belorussian Division until the Allied Army arrived. (how many men lst BR div?) "For that", Ostrovski wrote, "our division was taken prisoner by the Americans, and those who did not escape were later turned over to the Bolsheviks."

Prior to the American advance, new statutes of the Rada were adopted, in January 1945. Two partisan groups, 31 men in all, were dropped under German sponsorship into the NALI BOTSKEYA Forest.

After the German capitulation, Ostrovski called a plenary meeting of the BCR near Wurzburg to suspend all overt BCR activity because the Americans were turning over collaborators to the Bolsheviks. At the same time, he suggested that a new organization be formed covertly, the Belorussian National Center. This group was established near Regensburg, and Ostrovski turned over the BCR funds to it.

However, in 1947, Abramchik, president of the BNR, returned from "retirement". Ostrovski realized he must reorganize the BCR or be counted out of the Belorussian emigration. Therefore, in May, 1948, a plenary session of the BCR was called in Elwangen, attended by: (cut in page 16, "BCR Past and Present", bottom third of page and first para p 17.)

The present membership of the Rada includes the following permanent members: (cut in page 17 para 2)

At each plenary session, at least an equal number of non-permanent members is chosen by the social organizations and political parties comprising the BCR.

Because of lack of funds and distances separating the members, no plenary session of the BCR can, according to Ostrovski, be called at this time. Therefore, local sessions will be held in the various countries in which the Belorussian emigration is centered.

In Germany, the proposed membership of the BCR includes the following: (cut in page 18, 1st para)

Ostrovski said that others might be delegated from the social parties and groups helping to comprise the membership of the BCR.

At the present time, the BCR seems to offer the only concrete channel through which agent candidates might be obtained, primarily due to the drying of the never more than thin stream of trainees from the BNR. As such, our relationship with the BCR promises to be of approximately the same nature as that existing with the BNR: a tenuous one at best, held together by the funds supplied by American authorities, plus a sometimes honest desire on the part of the BCR to fight Communism and not the BNR, and threatening to split apart at any minute from highly explosive protons in the shape of arrogant party leaders, more often than not intent on their own careers and giving merely a back-handed kick in the direction of some potential trainee in hopes of booting him in the direction of Belorussia and agent missions.

II. Structure and Organization

The BCR claims members in Germany, France, Spain, England, Argentina, Canada and the U.S., but no information is available as to their number. ~~Since our collaboration with the BCR is still in its first stages,~~ a detailed analysis of the BCR structure and organization has been impossible. With the anticipated drawing together of forces, more data on the organization should be available and will be included, as discovered. A list of the plenary council members in Germany has been included in part I. As far as is known, no members of the BCR hold jobs in other U.S. organizations.

III. Political and other Aims

The political aims of the BCR seem to have been based on those of the BNR, doubtless due to the fact that at first the BCR hoped to attract members from the latter group. No definite statement has been made as to the kind of government they would like to realize in Belorussia once that country becomes free,

but it is assumed that they desire the same type of republic as that wanted by the BNR. Ostrovski maintains that the exact form of government should be left to the Belorussian people once they have regained their freedom, and not debated by exile groups prior to that time.

U.S. Policy towards the group has not been officially expressed.