

PROMETHEISM

A POLISH COVERT ACTION PROGRAM



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PROMETHEISM A POLISH COVERT ACTION PROGRAM

Philip Wasielewski

Center for the Study of Intelligence and Irregular Warfare

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About the Author

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KEY FINDINGS

Between World War I and II, Poland conducted a covert action program known as Prometheism to undermine the Soviet Union by supporting the national independence movements of non-Russian peoples within its borders. Poland hoped this program could blunt Russian imperialism, then with a Communist veneer, by redirecting Moscow's attention internally toward irredentism within its own borders.

Prometheism had four dimensions: political, military, intelligence, and cultural/educational. It supported governments in exile and émigré groups from states that had temporarily gained independence during the Russian Civil War only to lose it once the Bolsheviks reconquered much of the former Russian empire. The program created two secret armies of Ukrainians and Georgians in case the Soviet Union imploded or another world war broke out. To penetrate the veil of secrecy regarding the domestic situation in the Soviet Union, Poland used Promethean contacts to conduct intelligence operations, and the Soviets conducted their own intelligence activities to penetrate the program and assassinate key leaders. Prometheism included a massive covert influence campaign supported by journals, clubs, news outlets, and publishing houses to spread Promethean messages inside the Soviet Union and around the world.

Prometheism failed to achieve Poland's national security objectives, partly due to the massive Soviet police state apparatus and use of terror during Joseph Stalin's era. However, its activities did help preserve the languages, literatures, and cultures of non-Russian nationalities during this period. When the Kremlin's willingness to use repression and terror dissipated in the 1980s, what followed vindicated the Promethean vision as the Soviet empire broke apart into its basic ethno-national constituent parts and Poland and other satellites on its periphery regained their sovereignty.

1



INTRODUCTION

A Trip to Tokyo

Shortly after the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War in February 1904, a Polish revolutionary, Joseph Piłsudski (1867–1935), arrived in Tokyo to persuade Japan to create a Polish legion to fight against a common enemy, Imperial Russia, and to offer intelligence on Russian troop movements. As a leader of the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) and dedicated to restoring Polish independence, he believed that for Poland to rise again, Imperial Russia must fall apart.

Enroute to Tokyo, Piłsudski wrote a report for his hosts emphasizing that Russia was not a homogenous state but a collection of conquered nations, which was its Achilles' heel. Besides creating a legion in the east, Piłsudski wanted Japan's help to foment revolution in the west to free Poland from Russian rule. This, he argued, would assist Japan by tying down large numbers of Russian soldiers. Japan's government turned down Piłsudski's plan for a legion but agreed to intelligence cooperation. During the war, Japan paid the PPS approximately €20,000 for intelligence reporting, which the party used to buy arms and ammunition for its underground military wing.

Piłsudski's proposal was undermined by another Pole, Roman Dmowski (1864–1939). Dmowski, who represented a rival Polish political force, the National Democratics, traveled to Tokyo to thwart Piłsudski's plans. Dmowski believed the "Germanization" of Poland's western lands by a modern Prussia was a greater threat to the Polish nation than the occupation of its eastern lands, containing numerous Belarusian and Ukrainian minorities, by a backward Russia. He urged the Japanese to reject Piłsudski's plan, claiming that most Poles did not support an insurrection. Instead of tying up the Russian army, Russian units in Poland would be free to travel east once they easily crushed Piłsudski's uprising. This was not the last time different views of Poland's security and foreign policy priorities held by these two men would clash.²



Monument to Zeki Velidi Togan in the yard of Saint Petersburg State University. (Amikeco/Wikimedia Commons).

A Statue Becomes Persona Non Grata

Over a century later, in January 2021, a small statue of Bashkir politician, military leader, and historian Akhmet-Zaki Validi Togan (1890-1970) was removed from the courtyard of St. Petersburg State University after complaints that it represented "extremism." The statue had been donated in 2008 by Bashkortostan, a Russian Federation republic located near the Ural Mountains, in recognition of the university's center for Turkic studies, a field pioneered by Validi. His bust was removed after a Federal Security Service (FSB) investigation concluded that "the prosecutor's office confirmed information about Validi's cooperation with Polish intelligence, fascist troops, and his activities in creating a secret nationalist society, for whose purposes included recruiting personnel for the Turkestan government, which was to arise after the collapse of the USSR as a result of the defeat by fascist troops in the Great Patriotic War."

While the statue was removed in St.

Petersburg, others continue to stand in his native Bashkortostan, where numerous streets also bear Validi's name.³

The Linkage: Prometheism

These two events, separated in time and distance by a century and a continent, are related. The factor uniting them is hinted at in the FSB charge of Validi's cooperation

with Polish intelligence. Piłsudski's trip to Tokyo and the removal of a statue from a university in St. Petersburg are the antecedent of, and the continuing consequences from, an interwar Polish covert action program to weaken the Soviet Union by exploiting internal ethnic unrest.

The idea of weakening Russia from within by promoting irredentism, known as Prometheism or the Promethean movement, was covertly supported by the Polish government in various degrees between the world wars. Its activities reached from the salons of Paris to the plains of Manchuria. Promethean activities included support to émigré groups via clubs, lectures, books, periodicals, and scholarships. It also included sabotage, propaganda, espionage, and two secret armies in exile waiting to be directed against Moscow. The Soviet response was terror at home and assassinations abroad.

To understand this story, we must first understand the aftermath of the Russian Civil War, Bolshevik efforts to restore the Russian empire under the rubric of Communism, and efforts by national groups to leave that empire. At the end of this story, we will see how the Promethean movement still resonates today beyond the banishment of a bust from a lonely courtyard.

PROMETHEISM: KEY FIGURES



Józef Piłsudski

Founder of modern
Poland in 1918 and the
driving force behind the
Promethean concept from
his youth as a revolutionary
against the Tsarist regime
till his death in 1935.



Joseph Stalin

Supreme ruler of the Soviet Union from 1928 to 1953. He countered Prometheism as he did with most challenges to his rule with the principle, "No Man, No Problem."



Roman Dmowski

Piłsudski's political rival who opposed Prometheism fearing it would encourage ethnic minorities in Poland to pursue independence instead of assimilation.



Tadeusz Hołowko

Primary coordinator of Promethean activities worldwide. He was assassinated by Ukrainian nationalists who saw his accommodating policies towards Poland's Ukrainian minority as a threat to their irredentist goals.



Henryk Józewski

Piłsudski's right hand man for implementing a policy of moderation towards Poland's Ukrainian minority in the province of Volhynia to attract their support for Prometheism at home and abroad.



Noe Zhordania

Led the Georgian government-in-exile from 1921 till his death in 1953. His emigre organization in Paris was a focal point of Promethean activities.





Symon Petlura

Leader of the Ukrainian
People's Republic (U{R)
and a key Piłsudski ally in
attempting to wrest control of
Ukraine from the Bolsheviks.
Assassinated in Paris in 1926
before he could respond to
Piłsudski's overture to support
Promethean activities in
Soviet Ukraine.



Vsevolod Zmijenko

Head of intelligence for the UPR army-in-exile in Poland. His sources uncovered the Holodomor in Ukraine despite strict Soviet counterintelligence measures.



Roman Knoll

Poland's ambassador to
Turkey who warned the
Georgian underground
against a premature uprising.
His Promethean activities in
the 1920s reached across
the Caucasus and Central
Asia.



Karol Dubicz-Penther

Polish diplomat and intelligence officer who followed in Knoll's footsteps a decade later conducting Promethean activities in the Caucasus and Central Asia.



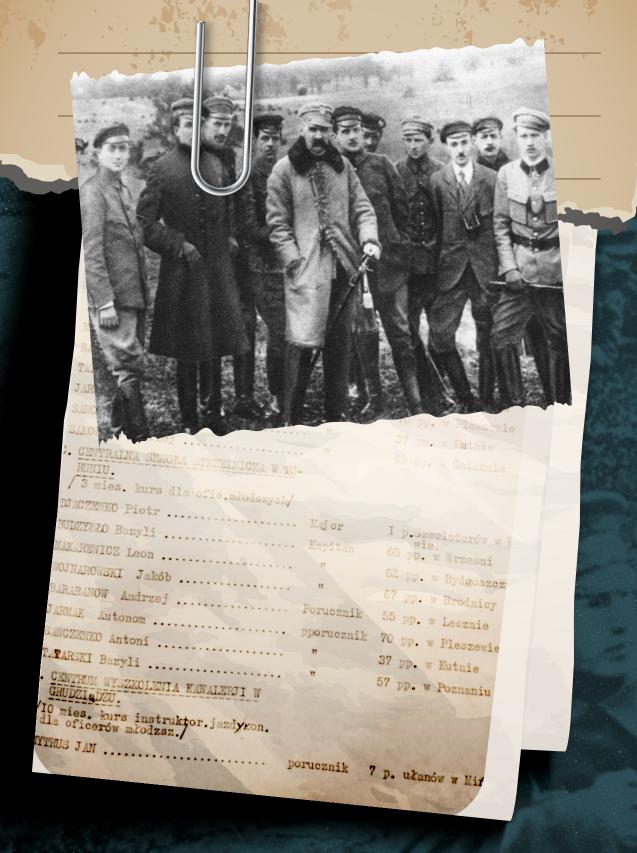
Leon Bobicki

Polish defense attache in Turkey who recruited exiled Georgian military officers into the Polish army and ran espionage operations into the Caucasus.



Dmitri Shalikashvil

Georgian military officer who fled Georgia after the Bolshevik takeover in 1921 and later served as a cavalry officer in the Polish army. Father of the American Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General John Shalikashvili.



PROLOGUE TO PROMETHESIM

Since the time of Ivan IV, Russia has been an empire consisting of a Great Russian ethnic core and a vast expanse of conquered territories stretching from the Baltic and Black Seas to the Bering Straits. The one and only census of the Russian empire in 1897 listed 110 different languages spoken by its approximately 125 million citizens. Only 44 percent of those surveyed claimed Russian as their native language.

The idea of using restive ethnic groups within Russia to undermine the empire did not start with Piłsudski. Napolean Bonaparte recruited Polish soldiers to fight for him, promising a restored Poland if he defeated Tsar Alexander I. Great Britain considered supporting rebellious Caucasian tribesmen with weapons and ammunition during the Crimean War to tie down Russian troops.⁵ However, these were limited wartime expedients. It took World War I to set the conditions for a sustained peacetime effort to undermine Russia's empire, now known as the Soviet Union.

On the Western Front, World War I ended on November 11, 1918; but in the east, the demise of the Romanov, Ottoman, Hohenzollern, and Hapsburg empires spawned revolutions and new wars. On that same date, Joseph Piłsudski declared a reborn Polish state after the defeat of its three occupying powers. Other nations in the collapsed Russian empire also attempted to regain their independence. As for Russia itself, after two revolutions in 1917, it fell into civil war, with the Bolsheviks attempting to establish a Communist state and the Whites trying to restore tsarist or provisional government rule. Both were committed to reviving the empire and extinguishing national independence movements. A quick review of these struggles will illuminate the background from which the Promethean movement emerged.

Poland

The reborn Polish state had border conflicts with all its neighbors. These conflicts were settled by a resort to arms. To provide Poland with an army, Piłsudski as commander-in-chief recruited veterans who had served in the armies of the three occupying powers and/or the PPS clandestine military wing. Some had also received military training before the war in a covert Polish paramilitary organization specifically designed to create a cadre for a future Polish army.

In 1909, Piłsudski and Austro-Hungarian military intelligence agreed that in exchange for intelligence on Russia, the PPS would create a paramilitary unit to fight alongside Austria-Hungary in the event of war with the tsar. Named the Riflemen's Association, its covert mission was hidden behind the quise of a marksmanship and sportsman's club. Riflemen's Association units were formed amongst Poles in Austria-Hungary and Polish émigrés in Belgium, France, and Switzerland. Besides training in military tactics, the Riflemen's Association ran an officer's candidate school to provide leaders for a future independent Polish army. At the outbreak of World War I, the Riflemen's Association had twelve thousand Poles, who then became known as the Polish Legion. Some of its members would play prominent roles in the Promethean movement and use their paramilitary experience to form other covert armies.6

By early 1920, fighting on Poland's northern, southern, and western borders had mostly ended. However, in the east, two ideologies were about to clash. Per Communist theory, Soviet power had to advance westward

to link up with advanced proletariat states like Germany so world revolution and the triumph of Communism could ensue. Piłsudski believed that Polish power had to extend eastward into the traditional lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (1385–1795) to create a federation of states to prevent the revival of Russian imperialism. Between these two beliefs lay Ukraine, with its own desire to regain independence.

Ukraine and the Geopolitics of the Promethean Movement

When World War I began, most of Ukraine was Russian-controlled but its western region, Galicia, was part of the Austro-Hungarian empire. After August 1914, war rolled over all of Ukraine like the tide. In the aftermath of the February Revolution of 1917, the issue of Ukrainian autonomy split the Provisional Government that had replaced the tsar. The Bolshevik October Revolution of 1917 caused Ukraine's ruling body, the Central Rada, to declare independence, which precipitated a Bolshevik invasion. Bolshevik victories in Ukraine were negated by the advance of the German army, and the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk (March 1918) placed Ukraine under German control. However, when Germany withdrew after November 1918, civil war replaced world war as Bolsheviks and White Russians fought to control Ukraine's vital industrial and agricultural resources and Ukrainians tried to defend against both.



Officer Candidates School for the Polish Riflemen's Association, 1913.

In Kyiv, a German-imposed dictatorship, which usurped the Central Rada, collapsed, and a new government, the Directory, declared a Ukrainian People's Republic (UPR). In Galicia, Ukrainian nationalists proclaimed a West Ukrainian People's Republic and raised a local army. This army was overcome by Polish troops enforcing their claim on the territory and its units retreated south into Czechoslovakia or east to join the UPR army. After defeats by both the White and Bolshevik armies, the UPR army disintegrated in November 1919 with Galician units joining the Whites to fight the Poles, while Cossacks and units loyal to the UPR Directory under Symon Petliura (1879-1926) moved to Poland to continue fighting the Bolsheviks. The Whites in Ukraine soon retreated to Crimea, which the Bolsheviks conquered in November 1920.8

On April 21, 1920, the UPR government-inexile signed the Treaty of Warsaw with Poland.

The UPR recognized Polish control of Galicia and the territory north of it, Volhynia, with the Zbruch river as the boundary between the two states, as it had been the boundary between the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires. The treaty's military annex gave Piłsudski tactical control of the UPR army. This was the quid for the pro quo of Polish recognition of the UPR, economic assistance, and, most importantly, Piłsudski's April 25 march on Kyiv to expel the Bolsheviks.⁹

Piłsudski's offensive was the culmination of his vision for Poland's national identity and security. While National Democrats wanted to minimize the number of Ukrainian and Belorussian minorities in Poland, Piłsudski wanted the same eastern border as the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth before its first partition in 1772. This meant controlling much of western Ukraine, Belarus up to Minsk, and Vilnius in Lithuania. Piłsudski's vision was





Józef Piłsudski with leadership of the Polish Military Organization, 1917. Right: Józef Piłudski and Symon Petlura during the Kyiv Offensive (1920) during the Polish-Soviet War. (Wikimedia Commons)

not of an ethnically pure Poland, as Roman Dmowski desired, but of a multinational federation. To protect Poland against the threat of Russian imperialism, he believed its eastern frontier needed to be protected by a buffer of friendly states. The goal of his April 1920 offensive was to create a Ukrainian state between the Zbruch and Dnepr rivers or beyond to be part of that buffer. Piłsudski had UPR forces take the lead in the advance and ordered that beyond the Zbruch River, Ukrainian, not Polish, flags were to fly over public places.¹⁰

Polish and Ukrainian forces reached Kyiv in early May, but the Bolsheviks counterattacked and soon reached Warsaw. In August 1920, the Polish military (supported by UPR and Cossack units, and even a Tatar cavalry regiment) defeated the Red Army and by October retook Galicia and Volhynia.¹¹ The Treaty of Riga in March 1921 established the border between Poland and the Soviet Union, and both sides agreed not to interfere in the other's internal affairs via agitation or propaganda or to create or shelter any

organization that wanted to engage in armed conflict with either party.¹²

The Bolsheviks did not get their "Red Bridge" to Germany to initiate world revolution, and Piłsudski did not get a new Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth with its 1772 borders or any buffer states.¹³ This was due to Polish politics as much as the military situation. The National Democrats dominated the negotiating team at Riga and feared an independent Ukraine would become a German puppet. They sacrificed former Polish Commonwealth lands gained during the war, including beyond the Zbruch River and Minsk, at the negotiating table to appease Moscow and limit the number of minorities (Ukrainians, Belarussians, and Jews) within Poland's borders. As the historian Timothy Snyder observed, Piłsudski won the war against the Bolsheviks and lost the peace to the National Democrats.14

Since Piłsudski did not get his security buffer of friendly states on Poland's eastern frontier, his security policy would use Prometheism



The Red Army enters Tbilisi, 1921. (Wikimedia Commons)

as an alternative to keep Moscow on the defensive. If we look quickly at the situation in the Soviet Union, this was not an unfeasible strategy.

The Caucasus

The Caucasus played a role in Polish security even before Poland regained its independence. When Imperial Russia dissolved in 1917, Polish émigrés in the Caucasus and Polish soldiers deserting the tsar's army gathered into military units that fought to support local independence movements and then, with their help, moved to Poland. A Polish military unit was formed in Baku near the end of 1917 and moved to Dagestan. Styled as the "Polish Battalion" of the Dagestani army, it fought against the Bolsheviks for a year before making its way to Poland in February 1919. Other émigrés formed a separate infantry brigade in Tbilisi, which the Georgian government paid to equip before it left for Poland.15

Independence movements in the Caucasus Mountains arose as soon as Russian authority weakened. In response to the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, a Transcaucasian government was formed in April 1918, but it was shortlived as each nationality had its own, often conflicting, priorities. On May 11, 1918, tribal leaders in Chechnya and Dagestan led by Haidar Bammat (1890–1965) declared an independent North Caucasian Mountaineers' Republic. Georgia, led by the Social-Democrat Menshevik party of Noe Zhordania (1868-1953), declared independence on May 26, followed by Armenia and Azerbaijan on May 28. The North Caucasian Mountaineers' Republic fell in April 1919 to White Russian forces before they were defeated by the Bolsheviks.¹⁶ In February 1920, Poland sent a mission to the three Caucasian republics to increase military cooperation, including a plan to provide arms and ammunition to tribes in the north Caucasus via Georgia. However, the mission was arrested by the Bolsheviks in

The Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth in 1772

These were the eastern borders that Piłsudski hoped to replicate in a reborn Poland.





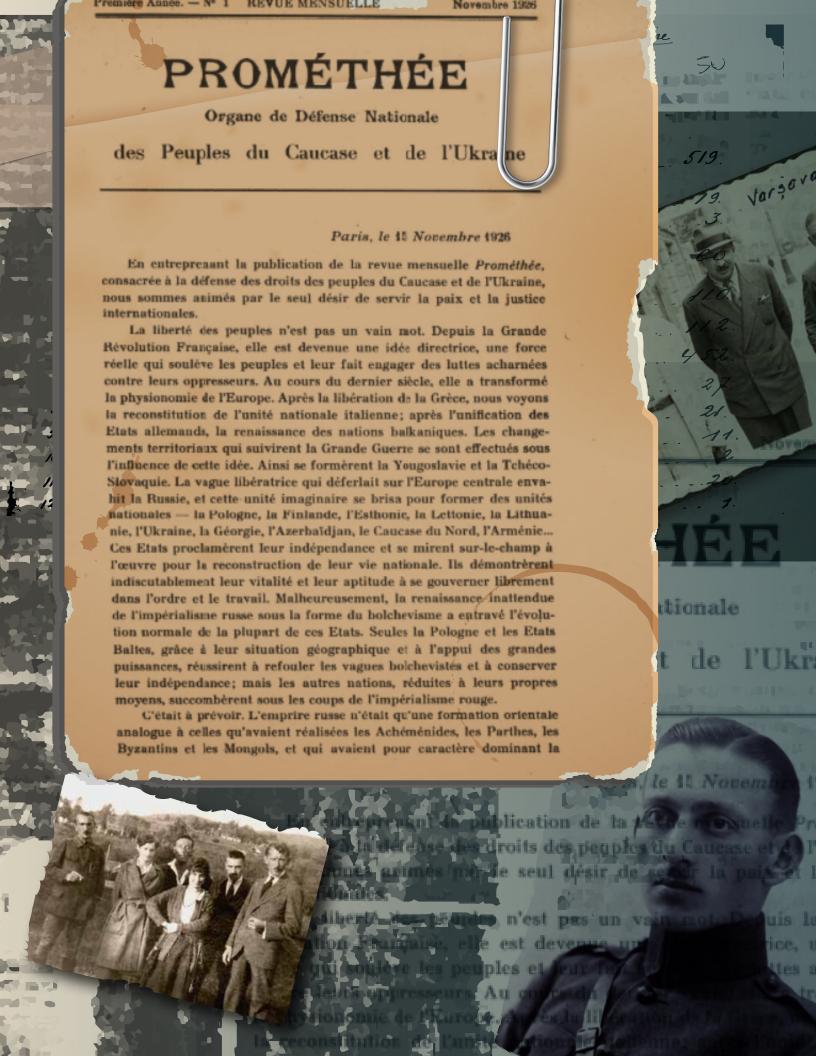
Józef Piłusdski, Symon Petlura, and Polish and Ukrainian officers. (WIkimedia Commons)

April when they invaded Azerbaijan. Armenia fell to the Red Army in November 1920, and Georgia was conquered in March 1921.¹⁷ Despite this, the Caucasus remained in a state of simmering revolt to Bolshevik rule.

Central Asia and the Far East

Revolt against Bolshevik rule was not limited to Eastern Europe or the Caucasus. Various rebellious tribes—the Uzbek, Kirgiz, and Tajik, known as the Basmachi—waged guerrilla war in Central Asia from 1918 to 1923. A key Basmachi leader was Akhmed-Zadi Validi Togan, who originally sided with the Whites,

then the Soviets, and finally defected to the Basmachi cause. When the revolt failed, he moved to Turkey. Farther east, the Bolsheviks did not gain control of the vast expanses of Siberia and the Maritime Province until October 1922, when White armies and guerrilla bands were finally defeated and Japanese interventionist forces departed. Even then, a sizeable number of White Russian refugees remained just across the border in Manchuria.





PROMETHEISM IN ACTION

Incoming Tide, 1921-26

In Greek mythology, Prometheus defied Zeus by giving man fire and was punished for eternity, appropriately for this story, in the Caucasus Mountains. It is unknown who first used the myth of Prometheus defying authority to advance mankind to describe the activities of various irredentist groups in the Soviet Union. Etymological origins aside, the Promethean movement fit the goals of all parties. Various nations inside the Soviet Union wanted to regain the fleeting independence they had between 1917 and 1921, and Poland needed to secure its eastern border. However, the Treaty of Riga meant Poland could not support them overtly and hence operated covertly.

The basic strategic concept for Prometheism was sound. At the time of the Treaty of Riga, the Soviet Union (as it was named in 1922) had many weaknesses. Its economy was in shambles, famine stalked the land, and there was considerable opposition to Communism. On March 18, the day the treaty was signed, Soviet authorities crushed the three-week rebellion at Kronstadt by Soviet sailors, who had been considered the most ideologically reliable forces in their military. The Basmachi revolt was at its height in Central Asia, the Caucasus were restive, a peasant army of approximately fifteen thousand men under Nestor Makhno (1888–1934) and other bands roamed the Ukrainian steppes, and in Tambov, over sixty thousand armed peasants were rebelling just three hundred miles from Moscow.²¹

However, Poland's first steps to exploit these opportunities were fitful and uncoordinated. Like most policies, Prometheism was not immediately a fully formed concept. Moreover, when Piłsudski left power in 1923, Dmowski became foreign minister and did not support Piłsudski's plans. However, Warsaw still had to deal with the Soviet threat and honor obligations to those Ukrainians, Georgians, Azeris, Cossacks, Tatars, and others who had supported Poland in its time of need. As we will see, the first five years after the Treaty of Riga set the stage for the Promethean movement but was also a period of lost opportunities when the Soviet Union was at its weakest.

Ukraine

After the Treaty of Riga, 11,000 UPR soldiers and 29,000 Ukrainian refugees, including Symon Petliura, were interned in Poland. However, the leader of the UPR's Partisan staff, lurko Tiutiunnyk (1891–1930), and a Polish intelligence officer, Jerzy Kowalewski, refused to accept defeat. Kowalewski had conducted operations in Ukraine with the Polish Military Organization (PMO), which Piłsudski created in 1914 as an intelligence and sabotage section of the Polish Legion.²² Beginning in January 1921, Tiutiunnyk established an underground organization in Ukraine to overthrow Bolshevik rule. He claimed it had 41 units with 3.350 armed men. Together with Kowalewski, who was assigned to Polish intelligence headquarters in Lwów, Tiutiunnyk planned to use this organization to liberate Ukraine.23

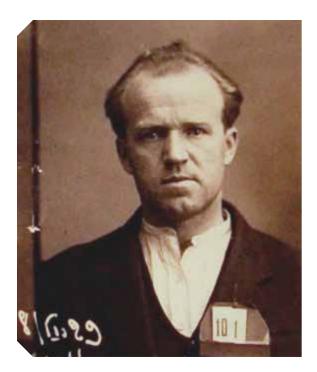
Their plan was to send three columns of UPR soldiers into Ukraine—one from Podolska,

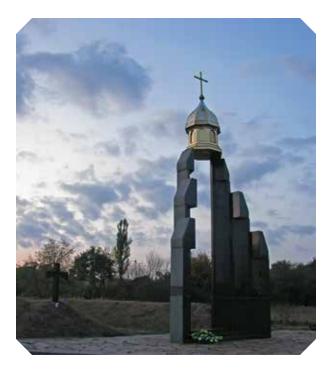


Nationalities in Second Polish Republic, 1931. (Wikimedia Commons).

Poland; one from Volhynia, Poland; and one from Bessarabia, Romania. According to a Polish after-action report, their strategy was to infiltrate into Ukraine until they reached the left bank (eastern side) of the Dnepr. Tiutiunnyk's underground would then rise in revolt, and both forces would move westward, destroying the Red Army units concentrated on the right bank of the Dnepr, blocking their retreat to Russia.²⁴ As fanciful as this sounds, they may have believed that if Makhno's fifteen-thousand-man army could still operate in Ukraine, they could too.

Kowalewski appealed to the Polish general staff to approve this plan, stating that the uprising just needed the help of a small expeditionary force. There is no record of a response. He and Tiutiunnyk also traveled to Warsaw and met with Henryk Józewski (1892–1981), another PMO veteran with operational experience in Ukraine. Józewski





Left: lurko Tiutiunnyk's mugshot in Soviet captivity, just before his execution. Right: Monument to Ukrainian soldiers who participated in Tiutiunnyk's unsuccessful march into Ukraine in 1921. (Kiyanka/Wikimedia Commons)

had served as vice minister of internal affairs in the UPR government and was Piłsudski's representative for Ukrainian affairs. The two briefed him on their plans but again received no formal approval.²⁵ Nevertheless, Tiutiunnyk's three columns of former UPR soldiers marched into Ukraine in late October and early November 1921 accompanied by Kowalewski.

Marching in winter meant the hardship of cold weather and no concealment for the columns entering Ukraine. Western Ukrainian farmers had no food to share with the soldiers. The expedition was armed only with rifles and a few machines guns. Worse, its plans had been betrayed to the Bolsheviks. Not only were there Bolshevik agents on Tiutiunnyk's staff but when the invasion began, Oleksandr Shumskyi (1890–1946), a Ukrainian Bolshevik operating in Warsaw, learned of it from his sources and immediately informed Moscow.

Tiutiunnyk's underground organization had also been penetrated. The column from Bessarabia was destroyed almost immediately upon crossing the border. The Podolska column entered Ukraine on October 25 and had some initial success, but it returned to Poland on November 29 when it did not link up with the Volhynia column. The Volhynia column suffered heavy losses; 359 of its men were executed after surrendering to the Bolsheviks. Kowalewski died during the operation. Tiutiunnyk made it back to Poland on November 20 but would be lured back to Ukraine by the Soviets in 1923 and later executed. The Polish general staff closed the intelligence center in Lwów, which seemed to confirm that it had exceeded its authority with an unauthorized operation.²⁶ However, in a secret 1939 report for the Polish head of state reviewing Promethean activities, the short section on Tiutiunnyk's foray indicates that it was conducted in response to armed

Bolshevik raids into Poland with the aim to stop them.²⁷ Authorized or unauthorized, the first test of the Promethean concept was a diplomatic and military disaster that influenced Poland's response to the next émigré group asking for armed support against the Soviets.

The Caucasus

The French government did not accept the Bolshevik incorporation of Georgia into the Soviet Union and recognized Noe Zhordania's government-in-exile in Paris as the country's de jure government. This gave the Georgians diplomatic status and protection for their Promethean efforts. It also provided a base for other Caucasian émigré groups to latch onto for their own independence movements as Paris became a major hub of the Promethean movement. On June 21, 1921, delegates representing Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and the North Caucasus Mountaineer's Republic created the Union of Caucasian Republics (better known as the Council of Four) declaring their intentions to form a joint military union and to put aside all differences to regain independence.²⁸

In the spring of 1921, the Polish military attaché in Constantinople, Colonel Leon Bobicki (1887–1943), established contact with Zhordania's representatives in Turkey and sources within the Soviet Caucasus.²⁹ His work was complicated by the Greco-Turkish War (1919–21), during which Turkey received covert weapons shipments from the Soviet Union and inclined its foreign policy toward Moscow.³⁰

One of Bobicki's first missions was to transfer to Poland Georgian military officers who had escaped the Soviet invasion and were currently in Turkey. To maintain a cadre of officers for anticipated military operations to regain Georgian independence, Zhordania asked France and Greece for military training for these officers. Both countries refused, so he turned to Poland. The Polish military accepted an initial group of twenty-four Georgian officers in December 1921, and an additional group of fifty-one was accepted in March 1922. One of them, Prince Dmitri Shalikashvili, was the father of the future Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (1993-97), General John Shalikashvili, who was born in Warsaw in 1936. Dmitri Shalikashvili attended the Polish cavalry academy and then served in Poland's 11th Cavalry Regiment. These Georgians were the first but not the only foreign officers to serve in the Polish army. Bobicki also facilitated the travel of former Azerbaijani and North Caucasus Mountaineer's Republic officers to Poland for similar training and service. By 1927, seventy-two Georgians ranging in rank from major general to second lieutenant were serving in the Polish army under contract, plus four from Azerbaijan and four from the North Caucasus.31 Their importance to the Promethean movement would expand later with the inclusion of Ukrainian officers.

Bobicki learned of a planned uprising in March 1922, when former Georgian army chief of staff Alexander Zachariadze (1884–1957) asked him if Poland would provide arms for a revolt against the Soviets. In his telegram to the Polish general staff, Bobicki recommended supporting the uprising because it would provide Poland with considerable future influence in Georgia. He provided no evaluation of the uprising's



Anti-Soviet Georgian Guerrillas, early 1920s. (Wikimedia Commons)

chances of success.³² No answer from Poland was forthcoming regarding his recommendation, but events continued to move forward.

In April 1922, all political parties remaining in Georgia, minus the Bolsheviks, united to create the Committee for Independence and a subordinate Military Committee, which maintained contact with government-in-exile in Paris. In the second half of 1922, uprisings broke out in Georgia's mountainous regions of Svaneti and Dusheti, which the Red Army contained but could not suppress as locals waged guerrilla warfare against Red Army and secret police (gosudarstvennoye politicheskoye upravleniye, or GPU) units.³³

Zachariadze regularly reported to Bobicki on the internal situation in the Caucasus as well as the status of Red Army units there. In July 1922, he provided Bobicki a description of the armed resistance groups in the Caucasus. Zachariadze claimed that the underground armies in Georgia, Armenia, and the North Caucasus numbered fifteen thousand to sixteen thousand armed men each, and in Azerbaijan, twelve thousand. The strength of the Red Army in the Caucasus was reported as 3,331 officers and 36,630 men armed with 534 machine guns and 104 artillery pieces. He told Bobicki that once these groups revolted, they would need weapons to arm 300,000 additional men to defeat the Soviets.³⁴

Political aspects of the planned revolt were also considered. The Georgians wanted their revolt to be conducted simultaneously with one in Azerbaijan but were wary of including the Armenian émigré government in their plans due to Armenia's historic Russophilia. The Georgian government-in-exile representative in Constantinople, Konstantine Gvarjaladze (1883–1969), promised Bobicki that they would notify the Polish government before the revolt began





Roman Knoll Leon Bobicki

and that it would only be initiated on order from the governments-in-exile in Paris.35 The delicate question of planning the revolt from Turkey was eased when Gvarjaladze reported to Bobicki about his November 1922 meeting with Turkey's defense minister, Refet Bele Pasha (1881–1963). Refet informed Gvarjaladze that while the 1921 Turkish-Soviet Treaty of Friendship precluded official recognition of the Georgian government in Paris, Turkey knew that the Caucasian émigré governments had the loyalty of their peoples. Furthermore, Turkey's agreements with the Soviets were signed under the duress of the Greco-Turkish War, and the Turks wanted a buffer between themselves and the Soviet Union. Whatever the truth of this, Refet may have been setting the stage for Turkey to reclaim the port city of Batumi if the revolt was successful; this provided the émigré governments with essential, if covert, diplomatic support to proceed with their plans.36

While the stage was being set, Poland's government listened but made no promises of assistance.

Bobicki strongly urged support for the revolt and criticized Poland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), claiming it was willing to sell out Georgia and Azerbaijan for Bolshevik concessions. He argued that Polish support would create eternal and loyal allies *not only against Soviet Russia but also any Russia of the future* (emphasis added).³⁷

If the Turks had learned of these plans, as surmised from Refet's conversation with Gvarjaladze, so had the Soviets. Their secret police (now called the OGPU) infiltrated Georgia's underground military committee and in May 1923 arrested its leadership.³⁸ Despite this setback (and warning), Bobicki learned in June 1924 that Georgia's émigré government planned to initiate the revolt that autumn.³⁹ Both he and the new Polish ambassador, Roman Knoll (1888–1946),

cautioned the Georgians about conducting an uprising because neither the local population nor the international community were prepared to support it.40 Knoll's and Bobicki's warnings proved prescient once the uprising began in late August. Despite years of preparation, the revolt was uncoordinated both internally and externally. The revolt in Gurian province started twenty-four hours ahead of schedule, alerting the Soviets.41 There is some speculation that the OGPU knew of the uprising and encouraged it to destroy all opposition to Soviet rule.⁴² The fighting lasted a week, but without the element of surprise or heavy weapons from abroad, the Georgians were no match for the Red Army. Over twelve thousand captured fighters were later murdered in Soviet prisons.43

In Turkey, Knoll conducted a post-mortem by interviewing escaped members of the anti-Soviet resistance groups. He reported that Gvarjaladze admitted learning after the fact that his information from inside Georgia was second-hand and insufficiently analyzed. Survivors of the uprising blamed the Menshevik émigré government in Paris for ordering the revolt despite warnings from the underground leadership inside Georgia. Some accused the Mensheviks of ordering it because they hoped to use the revolt to gain financial support from foreign patrons. Emissaries from Azerbaijan and the North Caucasus were furious at the uncoordinated uprising and believed future anti-Soviet operations in the Caucasus should be without Menshevik participation. Knoll seconded these sentiments, suggesting that the Polish MFA initiate contact with other Georgian émigré groups beyond the Mensheviks.44

Despite this failure, Knoll continued to search for ways to undermine the Soviet Union from within. He reported that the North Caucasus was still in a state of unrest along with Soviet Turkestan (as Central Asia was then known). He reminded Poland's MFA that the Soviet Muslim population was the world's third largest next to British India and the Dutch East Indies and suggested exploiting their anti-Soviet feelings. Knoll informed Warsaw that he had recently met with the influential Muslim religious leader Ahmed Sharrif as-Senussi (1873–1933), who offered his services to spread pro-Polish propaganda amongst Soviet Muslims, a proposal Knoll opined could serve Polish interests.⁴⁵

Knoll's support for further Promethean action reflected in part changes in Polish government personnel just before he became ambassador to Turkey in 1924.46 Piłsudski had retired from public life in October 1923. However, while he and Dmowski had disagreed on the concept of a federation and Ukrainian policy, both agreed that Soviet influence in the Near and Middle East should be mitigated.⁴⁷ Therefore, the new Polish minister of foreign affairs, Maurycy Zamoyski (1871–1939), dispatched Knoll to Turkey and Tadeusz Hołówko (1899–1931) to Paris. Hołówko, a PPS member and journalist, was a co-founder in January 1921 of the pioneering Promethean organization, the Union of Rapprochement of Reborn Nations, whose goal was to unite anti-Soviet movements. His mission in France was to establish contact with all anti-Russian émigré groups and help coordinate their activities. 48 Zamoyski instructed Knoll that part of his mission in Turkey was to extend the front of resistance to Russia.⁴⁹ Knoll energetically enacted this guidance and soon leveraged the failed uprising to bring greater coordination between the main anti-Soviet groups in Turkey.



Tadeusz Schaetel on the front steps of the Polish embassy in Ankara, 1926. (Wikimedia Commons)

Hołówko's mission in Paris was either complicated or eased when the Council of Four became the Council of Three. In the fall of 1924, Armenia left the group over a disagreement about future state boundaries. With Hołówko's help, the remaining émigré groups established the Caucasian Liberation Committee in November. In July 1925, the committee signed a joint declaration on the coordination of efforts to regain independence with the Ukrainian People's Republic in exile. Knoll in Ankara achieved similar success in October 1924 when he helped form the Caucasian Confederation Committee that brought together a spectrum of Caucasian émigré political groups beyond those of the ruling parties at the time of Soviet occupation.50

Colonel Tadeusz Schaetzel (1891–1971), the new Polish military attaché in Ankara as of 1924 and another PMO alumnus, suggested the two organizations merge. They did in

July 1926, calling their hybrid organization the Caucasian Independence Committee. It operated in secret to prepare to fight for and regain independence.⁵¹ In Ankara, Schaetzel had a political mission as well as an intelligence collection assignment. His political instructions were to establish and maintain contact with leaders of national liberation movements aligned against the Soviet Union in the Caucasus, Crimea, Volga-Urals, and Turkestan. However, these orders came not from the Polish MFA or general staff, but from the now-retired Joseph Piłsudski in a private meeting.⁵² Piłsudski, in his "retirement," kept a hand in Polish foreign policy via trusted colleagues such as Schaetzel and Hołówko. As a private citizen, Piłsudski also met with various Georgian and Ukrainian émigré leaders as well as the Crimean Tatar leader Cafer Seydamet (1889– 1960) and the Bashkir leader Validi Togan, whom he encouraged to join forces with other non-Russian nations.53

Schaetzel, Knoll, Hołówko, and others were caught between two fires since during this period Polish governments came and went at a quick pace. Between May 1921 and June 1926, Poland had ten different minsters of foreign affairs. What was official guidance in the spring may have become forbidden by the fall; and there was also Piłsudski's unofficial guidance to deal with. Evidence of this dilemma was a curt telegram the Polish general staff sent Schaetzel in July 1925 prohibiting any political work and ordering him to concentrate only on military intelligence matters, specifically those that could produce concrete results in the near term.⁵⁴

This multipolar conduct of foreign affairs ended when a military coup in May 1926 restored Piłsudski to power. The Promethean movement became one of his priorities. Ad hoc approaches to undermine the Soviet Union from within, often initiated from the field rather than from Warsaw, ended. A more organized and vibrant plan emerged as Prometheism changed from a concept to an official policy.

High Tide 1926-1932

From the May 1926 coup until his death in 1935, Piłsudski led Poland indirectly as both the civilian and uniformed head of its military. He, not the president or foreign minister, set Poland's security and foreign policy. Piłsudski still considered Moscow as Poland's primary threat but had to deal with the 1925 Treaties of Locarno that settled Germany's western border with France and Belgium

but left her eastern borders with Poland and Czechoslovakia a matter of contention. As opposed to 1920, Piłsudski wanted peace, eschewed any further territorial expansion of Poland, and pursued a policy of balancing between Poland's western and eastern nemeses.⁵⁵

Conversely, Soviet foreign policy of this period consisted of open diplomacy and covert revolutionary activity.⁵⁶ In Poland, these activities were carried out by not one but three separate Communist parties reporting to Moscow: the Polish Communist Party, the Communist Party of West Belarus, and the Communist Party of West Ukraine (Galicia and Volhynia). The latter's message was that unification with the Soviet Union meant national liberation for Ukrainians. The Communists contrasted restrictions on Ukrainian language and education in eastern Poland with the renaissance of Ukrainian culture across the border under Oleksandr Shumskyi, who had returned from Poland and was the people's commissar for education in Soviet Ukraine. Soviet partisans regularly crossed the border and conducted hundreds of attacks against Polish government officials, police, and landowners to subvert government order in Galicia and Volhynia.⁵⁷

Behind this backdrop of subversive activity, Joseph Stalin (1878–1953) used the June 1927 assassination of the Soviet ambassador to Poland by a White Russian émigré as an excuse to create a war scare with Poland. He then exploited this to justify forced industrialization, the collectivization of agriculture, and the beginning of domestic terror to destroy his enemies. ⁵⁸ Communist ideology and the need for a foreign enemy to rationalize domestic sacrifices and purges meant that Polish-Soviet relations remained antagonistic.

Poland's response was defensive, but not toothless. Piłsudski worked to build support against Moscow with the Great Powers, Poland's neighbors, and the restive nationalities inside of the Soviet Union-not for war, but in case of war. The Promethean movement became a key statecraft tool against the Soviet threat. It had four dimensions: political, military, intelligence, and cultural/educational. Each was run by a different part or parts of Poland's government. The Polish MFA Eastern Department, run by Hołówko from 1927 until his assassination in 1931, shared responsibility for political engagement with Promethean émigré groups with the intelligence section (G-2) of the Polish general staff, which was led by Colonel Schaetzel from 1926 to 1929. Schaetzel would transfer to Paris from 1929 to 1930 to supervise general Promethean affairs and, after Hołówko's murder, become head of the MFA Eastern Department until 1935.59 The Polish general staff operations section under General Julian Stachiewicz (1890–1934), a veteran of the Riflemen's Association and PMO, supervised the military aspects of supporting two covert armies—Ukrainian and Georgian—while the G-2 ran intelligence and sabotage operations related to Promethean groups. Promethean educational activities were supported from the ministry of education budget and social activities from the ministry of social welfare budget. The budget for Promethean activities in 1927 was 900,000 złoty (approximately US \$100,000 or, adjusted for purchasing power in 2024, \$1.82 million), which increased to 1.45 million złoty by 1932.60 In comparison to Poland's yearly defense budget of the era of approximately 700 million złoty, this was an inexpensive program.61

Promethean activities took place across all of Eurasia, but one of its main arenas of

conflict with the Soviet Union would not be geographic but ideological. The Promethean movement attempted to counter the enticement of international Communism with the allure of ethnic nationalism via culture and education as much as through weapons, sabotage, and espionage.

Spreading the Promethean Idea

Nationalism, the principle that the political and national unit should be congruent, is a theory of political legitimacy. It requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones.⁶² Therefore, nationalism was a double threat to the Soviet Union. Ideologically, it contradicted Marxist theory that with time the state will "wither away." Instead, nationalism was the state reborn and strengthened. Nationalism rivaled Communism by promoting the creation of distinct national communities with their own political and economic interests, as opposed to the Marxist ideology of a solidarity of workers along supranational lines. 63 Secondly, it challenged the Communist revival of the Russian empire as a collection of soviet socialist republics. which had temporarily gained independence after 1917. If a nation and state were to be one, it reasoned that they should also not be part of an empire. At first, nationalist sentiment was eased when Vladimir Lenin followed a policy of korenizatsiya, the use of indigenous Communist cadres, such as Shumskyi, to manage ethnic soviet republics. However, under Stalin, korenizatsiya was reversed, indigenous cadres were purged, and Russification returned. Soviet policies to erase the language, culture, and religion

JAN KAWTARADZE

GRUZJA

W ZARYSIE HISTORYCZNYM

Z PRZEDMOWĄ

PROF. MARCELEGO HANDELSMANA

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1638

PROMÉTHÉE

Organe de Défense Nationale

des Peuples du Caucase et de l'Ukraine

Paris, le 15 Novembre 1926

En entrepresant la publication de la revue mensuelle *Promèthée,* onsacrée à la défense des droits des peuples du <u>Caucase et de l'Ukraine,</u>

ous sommes animés par le seul désir de ser nternationales.

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ГЕТЬМАН УКРАТНИ



Stefan Ostranitza Hetmanus totius Ukrainae fluminis Dnipr a dextris et a sinistris et kosakorum Dux 1638.

1938

- 1. A history of Georgia written in Polish as part of the Promethean effort to preserve the history of captive nations
- 2. The first edition of Le Promethee
- 3. Book printed by a Ukrainian language press supported by the Promethean covert action program.
- 4. French language history of Simon Petlura published by a Promethean publishing house.

of ethnic groups created resistance and a ready audience for nationalist ideas. The main Promethean weapons in the battle of ideas between nationalism and Communism were publications, social organizations, and research centers to sustain and propagate individual national identities.

The newly united Caucasian Independence Committee attempted to publish a Russian-language periodical, Nezavisamyi Kavkaz (The Independent Caucasus), in Constantinople to promote its cause but moved the effort to Paris because Turkey feared the endeavor would complicate relations with Moscow. On November 1, 1926, the first edition of the committee's periodical, Le Prométhée, appeared in French. Its editor was the Georgian National Democrat, Georges Gvazava (1863–1941), and the first edition was put together in the apartment of Haidar Bammat.⁶⁴ At Hołówko's urging, the editorial team was expanded to include a UPR representative and, later, per a suggestion from Caucasian émigrés, a representative of the Turkestan emigration. 65 This made Le Prométhée the first Promethean activity to unite anti-Soviet émigré groups from different geographic regions in a common cause. Le Prométhée became the flagship journal of the Promethean movement, with ninety-nine issues published over thirteen years.66 Others would follow as Poland subsidized numerous. Promethean publications for émigré communities as well as for smuggling into the Soviet Union.

The year 1926 also saw the creation of the first Promethean "think tank," the Eastern Institute in Warsaw, to provide scholarly support to the Promethean movement with programs in Near and Far Eastern studies. The Eastern Institute served as an outpost for Orientalist scholars and a training center for

Polish officials engaged in eastern affairs. In 1928, it added an affiliate, the Orientalist Youth Circle, dedicated to promoting Promethean activities amongst the younger generation of émigrés. The Orientalist Youth Circle established branches in Kraków, Poznań, Vilnius, Berlin, Paris, and Harbin, Manchuria, and forged contacts with student groups from other Promethean nations. In 1930, the group began publishing the magazine, East-Orient, which featured the works of prominent Promethean figures. Soon, other statesupported think tanks were created, including the Institute for Eastern European Studies in Vilnius, the Scientific Institute for the Study of Eastern Lands, and the Institute for the Study of Nationalities. These think tanks studied the regions and nationalities of the Soviet Union so Polish foreign affairs and military specialists could be better informed and prepared to support Promethean activities.67

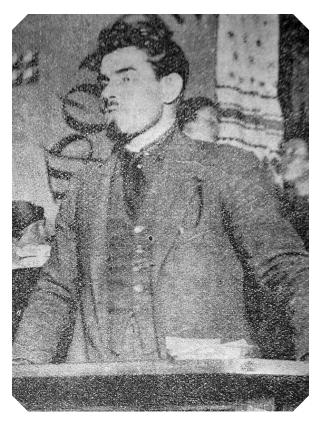
Another avenue to promote Promethean activities was via Promethean clubs. The first was created in Warsaw in 1928. Other Promethean clubs were soon founded in Helsinki and Harbin, and later in Paris. Only citizens from oppressed nations in the Soviet Union could be members: Poles and others participated as honorary members. Promethean clubs served as cultural centers for various national groups, promoted independence efforts, worked to attract international support, and served as a bulwark against Russification to combat the loss of national languages and identities. Their declared purpose was "the common struggle of all subjugated peoples against Moscow's occupation."68

Further support was provided via covert Polish financial subsidies to Promethean émigré organizations and institutions, governments-in-exile, student groups, libraries, publishing houses, and media.⁶⁹ Scholarships were paid to youths who promised to be active in Promethean organizations sponsoring them. Funds came from the Polish MFA or G-2 budgets and were filtered to recipients via either the Eastern Institute, its Orientalist Youth Circle, or local Promethean organizations. Ten scholarships were allotted in 1930. By 1932, twenty-nine students (ten Ukrainians, eight Tatars, five Azeris, three Georgians, and three from the North Caucasus) received covert financial aid to study in Poland, Germany, or Czechoslovakia at a total cost to the Polish government of 5,020 złoty.⁷⁰

Promethean activities after 1926 encompassed most of Eurasia to support nationalist opposition to Soviet rule. However, the most important Promethean nation from the Polish perspective was Ukraine. Of all the socialist republics that made up the Soviet Union, excepting Russia, Ukraine was the richest agriculturally, largest demographically, and the most advanced industrially. Without its territory and resources, the Soviet Union could not threaten Poland. Therefore, Poland put great emphasis on Ukrainian Promethean activities. The Soviets put an equal emphasis on countering them.

Ukraine

Ukraine was both the keystone of Poland's Promethean efforts and its weakest link due to the contradictions of its domestic policy toward Ukrainians in Poland versus its foreign policy toward Ukrainians outside of Poland. Poland's National Democrat Party, which came to power in 1923, believed in a policy of assimilation for Poland's national minorities.



Oleksander Shumskyi

This catalyzed resistance by Ukrainians and other minorities, which reinforced Soviet subversion amongst them. Shortly after his coup in August 1926, Piłsudski changed Poland's national minorities policy to "draw them into the Polish state system." Piłsudski believed tolerance would make national minorities good citizens. It was also an essential part of his Promethean strategy. The goal (and hope) was that gaining the loyalty of the Ukrainian minority in Poland would aid Promethean efforts to weaken Moscow's hold on Soviet Ukraine. Piłsudski intended to turn the nationalities question right back against the Soviets. Part of this strategy was the "Volhynia experiment," a program to showcase Polish government support to Ukrainian culture, language, and religion in Volhynia to gain supporters on both sides of Poland's eastern border. To implement

this pro-Ukrainian policy, Piłsudski selected Henryk Józewski as governor.⁷¹

Some Ukrainian centrist political groups in Poland supported Piłsudski's policy, but the left and right of the Ukrainian political spectrum strongly opposed it. Moscow continued its subversion and propaganda efforts amongst Ukrainian minorities in Poland but soon lost much support due to its own actions. While Piłsudski was changing Poland's national minorities policy, the Shumskyi affair of 1926–27 marked a change in Moscow's national minorities policy with the end of korenizatsiya in Soviet Ukraine. Shumskyi had been dissatisfied with the slow progress of the Ukrainization of the Communist Party and complained to Stalin that Ukraine's party leader, Lazar Kaganovich, was not an ethnic Ukrainian. Stalin, who prized Kaganovich's loyalty and was disturbed by what he considered anti-Russian elements of Ukrainian culture, removed Shumskyi as minister of education in Ukraine. However, at the party meeting held to purge Shumskyi, visiting delegates from the Communist Party of Western Ukraine refused to support the vote condemning Shumskyi for "nationalist deviation." Stalin ordered the Communist Party of Western Ukraine dissolved. It reconstituted itself within Poland but was considerably weakened. Stalin divided his own Communist Party house and ended up inheriting the wind. Whereas before, Soviet Ukraine could be pointed to as a burning beacon for Ukrainian nationalism, Shumskyi's purge, the end of korenizatsiya, and the upcoming collectivization campaign and resulting famine made it more akin to a funeral pyre.⁷²

However, not all Ukrainian resistance to Polish rule was Communist inspired. Ironically, as a reflection of Prometheism, there was

a distinct nationalist form to internal unrest in Galicia and Volhynia beyond Communist agitation. After the defeat of the West Ukrainian People's Republic army in 1919, approximately fifteen thousand Ukrainians went into exile in Czechoslovakia. There they found support for their irredentism in Galicia because of Czechoslovakia's foreign policy goal to establish a physical border with the Soviet Union to improve its own security situation (the lack of such a border doomed Prague during the Munich crisis of 1938).73 In July 1920 in Prague, veterans of the former Galician army and students formed the Ukrainian Military Organization (UMO), patterned after the PMO, as a secret army fighting for Ukrainian rights and independence. Its political violence included attacks against Polish government authorities and institutions, the property of Polish landlords, and Ukrainians whom the UMO considered "collaborators." The UMO established intelligence liaison links with Germany, Lithuania, and the Soviet Union in another imitation of Piłsudski's past intelligence cooperation with Austria-Hungary and Japan.74

In 1921, the UMO conducted an unsuccessful assassination attempt against Piłsudski and in 1922 initiated over two thousand separate attacks in Galicia and Volhynia. In 1929, the UMO morphed into the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN). The new organization inherited from its predecessor the goal of Ukrainian independence and irredentism, as well as the conspiratorial structure and terrorist tactics employed to achieve its goals.⁷⁵ For the entire period of the Second Polish Republic, the UMO/OUN engaged in a constant battle with the Polish police, army, and intelligence services. However, beginning in 1927, a different group

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Handwritten report in Polish providing a tally of the Ukrainian People's Army personnel and the countries they were located in of Ukrainians formed another covert army, but this one was to fight with Poland for the future liberation of Soviet Ukraine.

A Secret Army

Immediately after Piłsudski returned to power in mid-May 1926, he sent Hołówko to Paris to contact Symon Petliura and reinitiate political and military cooperation with the UPR. However, Petliura was assassinated in Paris on May 25 before he could reply to Piłsudski's overture. Nevertheless, political cooperation was reestablished with Petliura's successor, Andriy Livytskyi (1879–1954), along with an agreement to build a covert UPR army-in-exile.⁷⁶ According to an assessment by the UPR army general staff conducted in early 1927, the purpose of this force was to be prepared to enter Soviet Ukraine in case of internal revolution or external intervention. It evaluated the former as unlikely due to the strength of the Soviet government, but the latter possible in the event of another Polish-Soviet or Romanian-Soviet war. The UPR army general staff believed its mission was to prepare a force like Piłsudski's Polish Legion in World War I, and to prepare the population in Soviet Ukraine to support intervention in case of war.77

The chief of staff of this secret army was Ukrainian General Viktor Kushch (1887–1942), who was assisted by Polish General Julian Stachiewicz. The UPR army general staff consisted of three sections. The first was responsible for operations, personnel, training, and mobilization plans. The second section was responsible for intelligence, counterintelligence, and sabotage operations. The third section was responsible for

propaganda inside Soviet Ukraine and amongst the Ukrainian diaspora. It would be an army in waiting with a full-time staff plus additional Ukrainian officers on contract with the Polish army. They, like the contract officers from the Caucasus, trained at Polish military schools and served in the ranks of Polish regiments. Finally, there was a list of former soldiers and likely volunteers who could be called upon to fill the army's ranks in time of war.⁷⁸

The first section patterned its army-in-exile after the Polish Riflemen's Association by forming military societies amongst Ukrainian émigré communities worldwide. The UPR army general staff registered future cadres of officers, noncommissioned officers (NCOs), and soldiers in Argentina, Bulgaria, Canada, Czechoslovakia, France, Italy, Morocco, Romania, Turkey, Yugoslavia, and even Harbin, Manchuria.⁷⁹ By June 1, 1928, it had a cadre of 1,406 officers with specialties in the general staff (24), infantry (661), cavalry (286), artillery (186), technical services (68), and administration (148), plus another 38 officers serving in the Polish army. It had a cadre of 587 NCOs, six of whom were serving in the Polish army.80 By October 1, 1929, this leadership cadre had increased to 1,516 officers and 600 NCOs.81 In case of war, these cadres would report to one of ten mobilization sites in Poland or a site in Czechoslovakia, France, or Romania. Military education programs (known as "school groups") were established to maintain the professional qualifications of cadre officers and NCOs. In 1929, 536 officers and 271 NCOs participated in these programs in Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, France, and Serbia.82 These supplemented the training provided to Ukrainian officers and NCOs at Polish military schools. The wartime plan





Left: Mykola Chebotariv. Right: Vsevolod Zmijenko. (Wikimedia Commons)

was to fill the ranks of the UPR army with ethnic Ukrainian draftees and reservists from Volhynia. By the spring of 1930, the UPR army could be mobilized in two weeks.⁸³

If the first section of the UPR army general staff was modeled on the Riflemen's Association, the second section was modeled after the PMO. Its missions included collecting military, political, and economic intelligence in Soviet Ukraine, performing intelligence liaison with opposition groups and persons in Ukraine, and conducting counterintelligence operations within Ukrainian émigré communities.84 It worked closely with the Polish G-2, which was rebuilding its own intelligence networks inside Soviet Ukraine. At the same time that Piłsudski decided to revitalize the UPR army, Polish intelligence discovered that it had been the victim of a successful Soviet counterintelligence operation known as the "Trust." As one Polish intelligence officer at the time put it, "Our intelligence networks in the east are completely controlled by enemy

counterintelligence."85

The Polish G-2 subsidized the second section monthly with 2,000-2,500 złoty. The first head of UPR army intelligence, Colonel Mykola Chebotariv (1884–1972), had contact prior to 1926 with a shadowy resistance group, the Union of Struggle for Ukrainian Independence, which gathered intelligence and spread UPR propaganda encouraging a general uprising. However, the Polish G-2 was not impressed with Chebotariv's intelligence work, which it code-named "Hetman," calling his reports in late 1927 "worthless." UPR officials had other worries. Livytskyi as commander-inchief of the UPR army was concerned that Chebotariv was providing overly optimistic reports of the readiness of Ukrainians in the Soviet Union to revolt. He was also concerned about Chebotariv's political ambitions and willingness to use compromising materials from Petliura's archives, which Chebotariv had in his possession, against UPR officials. In early 1928, Livytskyi replaced Chebotariv



Soldiers of the West Ukrainian (Galician) People's Republic Army circa 1919. (Wikimedia Commons)

with General Vsevolod Zmijenko (1886–1938), who proved to be able and apolitical. He reorganized the second section into three separate bureaus for intelligence, counterintelligence, and analysis. ⁸⁶ Zmijenko became best known for his section's reporting on the Holodomor in Ukraine (1932–33), which, despite Soviet counterintelligence efforts, provided the Polish general staff with a true assessment of the famine in Soviet Ukraine. ⁸⁷

If Polish intelligence did not find Chebotariv's intelligence reporting valuable, it did find his smuggling network useful for passing Promethean propaganda, most of which was developed by the UPR army general staff third section, into Soviet Ukraine. The third section's mission was to spread propaganda promoting UPR political and social programs and increasing hostility against Moscow in Soviet Ukraine. A secondary mission was

propaganda work amongst Ukrainian émigré communities to maintain their anti-Soviet orientation and promoting the UPR in Europe and the United States.88 The third section was also responsible for the study of social and ethnic conditions inside Soviet Ukraine and the study of nationalist and revolutionary propaganda of the 19th and 20th centuries with an emphasis on military propaganda during the recent world war. The UPR government-in-exile had the third section publish its research in the foreign press and via its own publishing houses, particularly articles criticizing Soviet social, political, and nationalities policies. The third section also collected literature on the Czechoslovak, Irish, and Polish national independence movements and on revolutionary propaganda in Russia, especially Bolshevik, to build a database for its own use.89



The leader of the Ukrainian Military Organization Yevhen Konovalets in 1921 (first on the right). (cdvr.org.ua/Wikimedia Commons)

From a War of Ideas to a Clash of Arms?

Promethean propaganda was soon moving into Soviet Ukraine. In the fall of 1927, Chebotariv's smuggling networks distributed the polemic, *To Arms! The Organ of the Alliance of Struggle for an Independent Ukraine*, which condemned the Soviet system and called for independence from Moscow's rule, without mentioning Poland's Ukrainian territories. In keeping with the covert nature of Prometheism, it was disguised as a publication of the Union of Struggle for Ukrainian Independence.⁹⁰ Other publications and pamphlets soon followed as Poland returned in kind the type of ideological warfare the Soviet Union had been waging

against it. In one instance in the summer of 1928, propaganda posters with titles such as "Moscow's Prison of Nations" or "Father Taras Shevchenko summons you, peasants and laborers, to battle for an independent Ukraine" were put into bottles and then sent adrift in various streams and rivers flowing from Poland into the Soviet Union.⁹¹

The use of bottles instead of smugglers was just as well, since by the late 1920s, the traffic of clandestine border crossings between southeastern Poland and western Ukraine and from Czechoslovakia into southeastern Poland must have been enormous. Like ships passing in the night, different groups of Ukrainians, Communists, UPR nationalists, or OUN nationalists regularly snuck across these borders to conduct intelligence collection, sabotage, or propaganda missions against their respective foes, while being supported by either Moscow, Warsaw, or Prague. While

the missions were covert, meant to hide the hand of the supporting government, their effects were overt. Assassinations, sabotaged properties, and train robberies attracted attention, but the most impactful missions were related to the battle of ideas between Warsaw and Moscow.

While Józewski was the main force behind the Volhynia experiment to gain the allegiance of Ukrainian minorities in Poland, Hołówko was a main implementer to change Ukrainian perceptions of Poland in the Soviet Union. He intended to challenge Soviet intellectual hegemony on the Ukrainian question by presenting alternative sources of information and analysis on events in the Soviet Union.92 Ukrainian Promethean activities included conducting academic studies to ensure its propaganda had a firm basis in Ukrainian culture, history, and tradition and creating outlets to spread it not just within Soviet Ukraine but worldwide. To support this, the Polish Express news service in 1926 hired Ukrainians to edit its coverage of the Soviet Union. The Ukrainian Scientific Institute was established in Warsaw and covertly financed. To stock the libraries of Promethean think tanks, Polish diplomats in Moscow bought Soviet editions of Ukrainian literature.93 The Polish MFA and G-2 funded numerous Ukrainian-language publications including the *Ukrainian Bulletin* in French designed for Western audiences. Poland funded student clubs, a veteran's organization, the Petliura library and museum in Paris, the Ukrainian government archives, religious activities amongst the Ukrainian diaspora, and the "Ofinor" news agency with affiliates in Brussels, Geneva, Madrid, Paris, and Rome to provide an alternative view of events in Ukraine beyond Soviet propaganda.94 In January 1930, Polish and Ukrainian authorities

agreed that each week, two hours of Radio Poland's content would be in Ukrainian. It would include political, cultural, and economic news regarding Soviet Ukraine, Ukrainian concerts, and lectures on Ukrainian issues supporting the platform of the UPR.⁹⁵

In 1929–30, tens of thousands of pamphlets and broadsides were distributed in Ukraine attacking collectivization and Moscow. In 1930, the OGPU reported that Ukraine was the most rebellious Soviet republic. Resistance to collectivization was greatest in Ukraine, and more than half the disturbances in the Soviet Union took place near the Polish border.96 This could not all be attributed to Promethean propaganda, as domestic Soviet policies and repression were the cause of this; but Promethean activities by the Poles and its UPR allies helped fan the flames of resistance. If there was ever an opportunity to realize the Promethean idea, have a nationalist uprising weaken the Soviet Union, and create a buffer state that would be federated with Poland as Piłsudski always dreamed, it was during this period with Ukraine.

On March 17, 1930, western units of the Red Army were placed at full battle readiness, and the next day orders were issued in case of a Polish attack. The Soviet minister of foreign affairs, Maxim Litvinov (1876–1951), warned Stalin that collectivization could provoke a Polish invasion, and his ministry began efforts to bring Poland to the negotiating table.97 While governments and governments-in-exile waited to see what would happen next along Poland's eastern border, other events were unfolding around the borders of the Soviet Union, some inspired by Promethean activities and others exploited by it, which added further to Stalin's calculations as to what to do next.

The Caucasus

If Polish Promethean activities with the Ukrainians were akin to a trainer getting a boxer ready for a potential match, those with the Caucasian émigré communities were more akin to an umpire trying to referee between perpetually squabbling teammates. The creation of the Caucasian Independence Committee was a step forward but did not remove the two basic geopolitical tensions for the Promethean movement in the Caucasus. The first was that Armenia saw Turkey and not the Soviet Union as its main enemy. This prevented any type of real confederation between the four Promethean parties (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, and the North Caucasus). Second, internal political divisions existed within all parties that increased with time. The Menshevik leadership of Georgia had de jure diplomatic status, but Georgia's National Democrats contested who spoke for its émigré community. Infighting between the Georgian Mensheviks and National Democrats increased in 1927 when Moscow published letters captured from a courier entering Soviet Georgia. The letters from Zhordania and the de facto Georgian foreign minister-in-exile Noa Ramishvili (1881–1930) to Menshevik underground groups accused the National Democrats of treason. This caused the leader of the National Democrats. Aleksander Asatiani, to withdraw from the Caucasian Independence Committee.98

Internal dissension was also found amongst Azeri émigrés where the Musavat party was challenged by other political groups. A major reason for dissension among the Caucasus groups was that the leaders, who



Prince Dmitri Shalikashvili pictured in his Polish army uniform. He was the father of future Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General John Shalikashvili. (Wikimedia Commons)

had represented their briefly independent countries at the Paris Peace Conference or were in office when the Soviet army arrived, wanted to maintain control of their émigré communities, while competing political voices did not believe that time should remain frozen in 1921. In the North Caucasus émigré community, experienced politicians like Haidar Bammat and Tapa Tchermoev (1882–1937) were challenged by younger politicians such as Shamil Said Bey (1901-81), the grandson of Imam Shamil who led a thirty-year resistance movement against the Russians in the 19th century. There were also cleavages between the Muslim Chechen and Dagestani communities who had recently emigrated and the Christian Circassian and Ossetian exiles who had been expelled from the Russian empire in the 1870s.99

In February 1930, Poland sponsored a conference in Warsaw intended to heal these divisions. The conference probably hurt more than it helped. The headquarters of the Caucasian Independence Committee moved to Warsaw, and its members decided not to cooperate with other groups opposing the committee's goals. However, this did not heal the rift between Bammat and Tchermoev with Said Shamil, as the former two ended their cooperation with the Caucasian Independence Committee and started rival irredentist work in Paris. 100 Bammat later fully broke ties with Polish Prometheism to seek support elsewhere. A year after the conference, the Poles tried to reintegrate the Armenian diaspora into their Promethean efforts in the Caucasus but decided against it after counterintelligence information indicated close ties between Armenia's émigré leadership and Moscow. However, in 1932, the Poles did mend the rift between the Georgian Mensheviks and National Democrats when Asatiani rejoined the Caucasian Independence Committee and supported its efforts.¹⁰¹

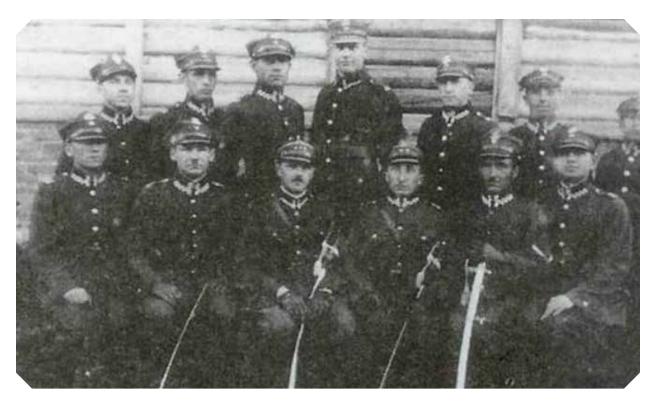
Poland's goal was to maintain a united Promethean front in the Caucasus to be ready to exploit favorable conditions, such as an internal revolution or another world war, in the Soviet Union. They would not instigate a rebellion, and authorities in Warsaw took heed to Knoll's injunction after the failed 1924 rebellion to avoid supporting groups prone to costly, hopeless gestures of revolt rather than sober political considerations.¹⁰² Polish strategy therefore was to wait, prepare, and try to prime the pump so favorable conditions would arrive. As with Ukrainian Promethean operations, this included intelligence collection activities, limited sabotage missions, and creating another secret army.

A Second Secret Army

In the late 1920s and early 1930s, conditions for the introduction of an armed émigré force into the Caucasus in case of war were still possible. Besides the military tensions along the border with Ukraine, Britain had broken diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union in 1927 over a spy scandal, and there were regular armed uprisings against Soviet power by North Caucasus tribes.

The Georgian military component of its government-in-exile was not the large enterprise that the UPR army was. It too had officers in the Polish military to gain command and staff experience to serve as leaders for any future Georgian army. However, there was no large list of registered officers, NCOs, and soldiers as in the UPR example ready to fall in and create regular battalions, regiments, or divisions. Instead, the Georgian government-in-exile's military capacity was based on two organizations: the Society of Georgian Veterans and the Georgian Military Organization (GMO). The Society of Georgian Veterans operated as a branch of the French Federation of Veterans and was not created until 1933. It consisted of former officers, NCOs, soldiers, doctors, nurses, and clerks of the former Georgian army. In 1936, it had 146 members. These members conducted selfdirected training for themselves, as well as cultural-educational work and other events to attract young Georgians.¹⁰³

The GMO was patterned after the Riflemen's Association and the PMO and, like the PMO, specialized in intelligence collection and sabotage. The GMO was created in 1928 in



Georgian soldiers in the Polish Army. (Wikimedia Commons)

Paris by Valerian Tevzadze (1894–1985), who was also a contract officer in the Polish army. Its purpose was to recruit reliable Georgian émigrés to conduct special missions in Soviet Georgia for the eventual liberation of the country. In the late 1920s, it consisted of veterans/survivors of the 1924 uprising and persons who had taken part in revolutionary activities (likely Menshevik) against tsarist Russia. Most of its personnel resided in France or Poland. General Zachariadze, who was now a contract officer in the Polish army but also served as the head of all Georgian officers in Poland, directed the GMO to reestablish clandestine lines of communication into Soviet Russia that were severed after 1924. In July 1929, he organized its first mission, requesting support from the Polish G-2 regarding tradecraft training and cover documentation for the pilot teams to cross into Georgia from Turkey. Intelligence

gained during such missions was shared with the Polish G-2 to supplement their own collection activities in the Caucasus.¹⁰⁴ By 1930, intelligence collection missions were followed by sabotage missions trained and equipped by the Polish G-2 to operate in Soviet Georgia.¹⁰⁵ In 1936, the GMO had fifty-three members and received a subsidy for its work and to also protect President Zhordania.¹⁰⁶

Polish-Georgian military cooperation experienced the same conflicts as its political cooperation. By the late 1920s, factionalism had developed within the Georgian officer corps in Poland. It reflected political differences in the Georgian émigré community writ large and jealousies between officers who served in the regular Georgian army from 1918 to 1921 and those who served in the national guard, which had been politically

aligned with the Mensheviks. This factionalism came to a head after the assassination of Ramishvili on December 7, 1930, by a Soviet agent. A group of Georgian officers refused to attend a memorial service for him in Warsaw, causing General Zachariadze to call for their expulsion from the Polish army. Some of these officers had earlier criticized Zachariadze's leadership in Poland and back in Georgia. Cooler heads prevailed after extensive communications between the Polish government and the Georgian government-in-exile in Paris, but in the end some Georgian officers left active service.¹⁰⁷

Finland, Crimea, and the Cossacks

Finland had been part of the Russian empire from 1809 to 1917 and had been occupied by Russia twice prior to those dates. It played an important role in the Promethean movement due to the presence of two émigré populations, Karelian and Ingrian, located along the Finnish-Soviet border near Leningrad. 108 Finland also hosted a Volga Tatar émigré community. In October 1930, the Polish ambassador in Helsinki informed the Polish G-2 that two Karelians serving in the Finnish army, who were also members of a Karelian nationalist organization, wished to participate in Promethean activities and that a Finn was willing to sponsor a Promethean club and produce a publication similar to Le *Prométhée.* The ambassador stressed that all parties wanted cooperation with Poland kept secret. He also asked that copies of Le Prométhée be sent to the embassy regularly for distribution.¹⁰⁹ Separate from the ambassador's initiative, Ayaz Ishaki

(1878–1954), leader of the Volga Tatar émigré group Idel-Ural, visited Finland in the summer and fall of 1930 at the initiative of the Polish G-2 to meet with the Volga Tatar community and members of Karelian and Ingrian nationalist societies. As the result of his visit, all agreed to participate in the Promethean movement. Helsinki became home to another Promethean club, which published the journal Prometheus. Both activities were covertly financed by Poland. Ishaki was a wily player of the Promethean game; when asked by Karelian and Ingrian leaders where the money came from to finance these initiatives, he replied that it was collected in America from wealthy patrons.¹¹⁰

Polish Promethean officials also maintained contact with the Tatar community in Crimea. In May 1920, when Crimea was under White Russian occupation, its Tatar leadership in Switzerland under Cafer Seydamet appealed to the League of Nations for mandate status under Polish control. In 1922, their representatives appealed again to Poland for assistance against the Bolsheviks.¹¹¹ Poland took no action, as none was possible at the time. In January 1930, Seydamet informed Warsaw of talks between the Crimean Tatar government-in-exile and the UPR. The two sides agreed in principle on the independence of Crimea, mutual assistance against the Russians, and the government of future relations between the two sides based on international treaties. 112 Seydamet had met Piłsudski personally in 1920 and was a strong supporter of the Promethean movement. Now that the future status of Crimea had been clarified with Poland's main Promethean partner, Ukraine, support for Crimean Tatar efforts increased. Poland helped subsidize their political representatives in Istanbul (as Constantinople was known after 1930),

Warsaw, and Constanza, Romania. Poland also supported Crimean Tatar student organizations in Istanbul and Bucharest, publication of a Promethean journal, *Emel Medimwasi*, and approximately ten separate publishing houses.¹¹³

Cossack émigré communities representing their various groups or "hosts" in the Soviet Union also became active players in the Promethean movement. The largest groups were in Bulgaria, France, Poland, and Yugoslavia, with smaller communities in Czechoslovakia and Germany. The center of Cossack émigré political life was Paris.¹¹⁴ Cossacks also served in the UPR army-inexile. In 1929, 471 Cossacks were registered on the army's roster (making up approximately one-fifth of the force).¹¹⁵ Polish funds supported Cossack political representatives in Belgrade, Berlin, Bucharest, Paris, Prague, Sofia, and Warsaw, the bimonthly Free Cossack magazine, and approximately fifteen Cossack publishing houses that produced political propaganda.¹¹⁶

The Middle East, Central Asia, and the Far East

The Promethean movement included several Muslim national groups: Azeri, Bashkir, Crimean Tatar, Idel-Ural or Volga-Ural Tatar, and so forth. This aspect of the movement received considerable attention during the World Muslim Congress in Jerusalem in December 1931. Promethean participants included Azay Ishaki and Shamil Said Bey, who was the congress' executive secretary.

Their efforts during the congress to bring attention to the persecution of Muslims in the Soviet Union were echoed by the Muslim press, especially in Egypt and Saudi Arabia.¹¹⁷

Promethean efforts with émigré groups from Turkestan began in 1926 when Mustafa Chokai (1890–1941) established contact with Hołówko, who agreed to support Chokai's irredentist efforts amongst Turkestan's diaspora. Chokai, an ethnic Kazakh, supported Turkestan's independence from Moscow and was forced to flee the region in 1919 when the Red Army arrived. He settled in Tbilisi, but then fled to Turkey in 1921 and later to France. By 1923, the Soviets had gained the upper hand over the Basmachi movement, and many Central Asian national groups emigrated to Afghanistan, Iran, and Turkey to avoid Soviet rule. Chokai organized these émigré groups along with Bashkir leader Validi Togan and the Uzbek leader Osman Khoja Pulatkhojev (1878–1968) to create a common Turkic-Tatar front against the Soviets. After meeting with Hołówko, Chokai started publishing the periodical Jash Turkestan (Young Turkestan) in Istanbul (and later in Berlin) and in 1928 founded the Turkestan National Union (Turkestan Milii Birligi, or TMB) dedicated to uniting all national groups in Turkestan to regain their independence. The TMB had considerable reach into Afghanistan, India, Iran, Turkey and even Kashgar, China. Copies of Jash Turkestan reached the Soviet Union via the caravan trade from Persia and Afghanistan. Poland subsidized TMB's political representatives in Paris, Berlin, and Kabul, student organizations in Istanbul and Kabul, and ten different publishing houses. Polish Promethean representatives, as with other organizations, also became engaged in sorting out internal rifts between Chokai, Osman Khoja, Validi Togan, and Ayaz Ishaki.



Ayaz Ishaki, Said Shamil, and Osman Khoja Pulatkhojev in Warsaw, 1938. (Wikimedia Commons)

The main source of conflict was the difference between Chokai's vision that TMB should be a pan-Turkic organization and the vision of the others, who wished to concentrate more on their individual Uzbek, Bashkir, and Volga-Tatar interests.¹¹⁸

Further east in China, the Promethean movement was slow to mature due to the distance and difficulty in travel, but in the early 1930s, it established a presence in Harbin, Manchuria. Harbin had long hosted a Russian community since it was the center for the Russian-built and -owned Chinese Eastern Railroad. The Bolsheviks took over management of the railroad when they came to power. In 1929, China and the Soviet Union fought a short war over continued control of the railroad by Moscow.¹¹⁹ Besides being home to both Red and White Russians,

Harbin hosted many other refugees including ethnic Bashkirs, Buryats, Georgians, Poles, Ukrainians, Volga Tatars, and others. It was a natural center for intelligence collection and Promethean activities against the Soviet Union. In Harbin, Poland maintained an official consulate and an undeclared intelligence station whose officers worked undercover as members of the Polish Telegraph Agency or as merchants.¹²⁰ Between these two outposts, Poland financed a Promethean club, an affiliate of the Orientalist Youth Circle, and a chapter of the Georgian Committee in Harbin.¹²¹

In 1932, a Polish G-2 study of Promethean opportunities in the Far East noted several positive factors. The main attraction was the presence of approximately one million ethnic Ukrainians in the Soviet Far East. These Ukrainians were mostly located between



Russian Orthodox Church in Harbin, Manchuria, circa 1930. (Wikimedia Commons)

the Amur River and the Pacific Ocean in a region known as the "green wedge" and had been resettled there during tsarist times. According to the study, Ukrainians made up approximately 70 percent of the population of this region near Vladivostok, and it suggested concentrating Promethean efforts to detach this region from the Soviet Union. However, because Ukrainian émigrés in Harbin were closely connected to the Russians and often dependent on them financially, the study suggested the local Polish émigré community should be given the resources to attract the Ukrainian minority to the Promethean movement. It further advised that the Georgians were the most reliable of the Caucasian minorities in the Far East for this project and that contact with them could be made via the Orientalist Youth Circle. Other émigré groups in Manchuria suggested for targeting by the Promethean movement included Azeris, Bashkirs, Cossacks, Crimean and Volga Tatars, Turkmen, and Uzbeks.¹²²

However, just as Promethean activities in Manchuria were gathering steam, Far Eastern events in the early 1930s changed the geopolitical correlation of forces worldwide, which would have considerable impact on the direction of the Promethean movement. In September 1931, Japan seized Manchuria. This created an almost three-thousand-mile border between Japan and the Soviet Union. Moscow's response to this new geopolitical reality as well its response to Prometheism, while not directly connected to each other, were to have massive implications for the Promethean movement, as we will now explore.

Soviet Responses

While Polish support for Promethean activities was covert, it was no secret to Moscow. From the very beginning of the Promethean movement, the Soviets had penetrated Tiutiunnyk's partisan network and the Georgian Committee for Independence, destroying their early resistance efforts. The Soviets made diplomatic demarches to the Poles and criticisms in their press about Polish support to anti-Soviet émigré groups. In 1927, a show trial in Kharkiv exposed Hołówko's participation in Promethean activities in Georgia by name. In 1928, the Soviet paper Izvestia criticized Józewski's Volhynia experiment, claiming that Ukrainian political immigrants would be used in Volhynia as shock troops for interventions in the Soviet Union and as ministers in a Ukrainian shadow state,123 which showed a good understanding

of Prometheism and indicated an awareness of the UPR army-in-exile. In 1930, a show trial of Soviet citizens accused of working for the UPR took place in Ukraine, and at the Communist Party Congress in Tbilisi, it was announced that anti-Soviet resistance in the Georgian Soviet republic was instigated by the clandestine Caucasian Independence Committee, further exposing the Promethean movement.¹²⁴

The Poles were not blind to this and realized that almost all Promethean groups had been penetrated by Soviet intelligence. A Polish G-2 report estimated that the Ukrainian Promethean movement was the most penetrated and that there was an ongoing counterintelligence investigation to determine if former UPR intelligence chief Chebotariv was reporting to both Soviet and German intelligence. The second most penetrated group was estimated to be the Cossacks, who had the distinction of being penetrated by both Red and White Russian intelligence organizations. Next came the Caucasus and Central Asian groups. The report added that there were also instances of contract soldiers in the Polish army being recruited. 125

This should not have been surprising considering the extent of the police state that developed in the Soviet Union, which used constant surveillance and terror to stifle resistance. One example of Soviet repression relevant to the study of Prometheism is its policy in Ukraine in the 1930s. As noted above, by 1930 Ukraine was seething with unrest due the collectivization of private farms. In response to unrest along Ukraine's border with Poland and fearing a Polish invasion, Soviet authorities deported ninety thousand persons in the border region between February 20 and March 20, 1930. The border guard contingent in the region

was doubled and the army put on alert.¹²⁶ This was just the beginning of Ukraine's agony that would culminate between 1932 and 1937 with the twin blows of the Holodomor famine and the Great Terror. These actions effectively sealed off Ukraine from Poland and stopped cross-border intelligence and Promethean missions.

Soviet repression at home was reflected in political assassinations abroad. In the 1920s and 1930s, the Soviet secret police murdered a number of Soviet citizens in foreign countries in an eerie prologue to a similar wave of murders Moscow conducted in the first two decades of the 21st century. Many of these were intelligence defectors or members of ethnic Russian monarchist and White Russian societies. However, these murders included Promethean figures as well. While Petliura's 1926 murder was blamed on a former Bolshevik seeking revenge for UPR anti-Jewish pogroms in 1918-19, and the 1931 assassination of Hołówko was blamed on the OUN, other assassinations such as the 1926 murder of former UPR army chief Volodymir Oskilko (1892–1926) and Ramishvili's murder in 1931 were likely by Soviet agents.¹²⁷

However, the Soviet Union could not solve its security dilemmas by force and terror alone. It faced hostile states in the West and now had an extensive border with Japan, which had occupied much of the Soviet Far East only a decade earlier. In 1930, the Soviet Union was just beginning to industrialize, and while the Red Army had 562,000 soldiers, it had to cover a territory that stretched from the Baltic Sea to the Pacific Ocean. Moscow considered itself threatened by not just the Great Powers of Great Britain and France but also by many of its smaller neighbors. As early as 1928, Stalin feared the Soviet Union would lose a war with Poland if it was abetted by peasant

resistance inside the Soviet Union. Therefore, he argued for a preventative war against the peasants. As Timothy Snyder noted in his study of this issue, the peasant question and the Polish question intersected.¹²⁸ However, in 1930, the war against the peasantry, especially the Ukrainian peasantry, had just begun, and the Soviet Union was not yet a military colossus. Poland had an active-duty army of 255,000 soldiers, Romania 152,000 soldiers, and Japan 198,000 soldiers.¹²⁹ If they ever acted in concert with Great Britain and France, the Soviet Union might not survive.

Stalin chose to ease tensions in the west to better face the threat from the east. The Soviet Union signed nonaggression treaties with Finland (January 1932), Latvia (February 1932), Estonia (May 1932), Poland (July 1932), France (November 1932), and Italy (September 1933). The Soviet Union had had a nonaggression treaty with Lithuania since 1926, diplomatic relations with Great Britain had been restored in 1929, and the United States recognized the Soviet Union in 1933. While the negotiations for some of these pacts had begun before Japan's seizure of Manchuria, that action served as a catalyst for the Soviets to speed up negotiations. Promethean activities were most impacted by the French and Polish treaties. As part of its treaty obligations, France recognized the incorporation of Georgia into the Soviet Union and ended the diplomatic status of the Georgian embassy in Paris. As for Poland, Prometheism had to become even more covert, with contacts and subsidies previously handled by the MFA taken over by the general staff G-2. The Polish and Soviet secret wars of subversion would continue, a bit more muted and covert, but just as serious and deadly. However, after 1932, Polish support to the Promethean movement would never be at

the same levels as it had been for the six-year period after Piłsudski returned to power in 1926. This was less due to the 1932 treaty and more to the effects of the Great Depression on Poland's state budget and Piłsudski's declining health.

Ebb Tide, 1932-39

The key motivating factors for the Promethean movement remained the same during this period: national independence for its participants and national security for its Polish patrons. The horrors of Stalin's Soviet Union reinforced these motivations, but the Soviet police state also limited the possibility that Promethean actions themselves would overthrow that state. The Promethean strategy continued to be watch, wait, and hope. Therefore, as a leading Polish expert on Prometheism, Paweł Libera, analyzed, Poland during this period maintained the same direction for its Promethean activities by consolidating competing political organizations within national groups while continuing efforts to create a broad front of those nations conquered by Russia. 130

This period coincided with the last years of Joseph Piłsudski's life. His natural Russian-centric approach toward Poland's national security threats was changing, even before Adolf Hitler came to power in January 1933. As early as 1931, Piłsudski feared growing sympathy in the West to revise Germany's borders with Poland, especially the corridor giving it access to the sea but cutting East Prussia off from the rest of Germany. He wanted to balance between Germany and the Soviet Union, which was his impetus for signing the nonaggression pact with the

Soviets in 1932 and with Nazi Germany in 1934. However, he did not expect either to last and told his closest advisors after signing the German pact that he did not expect good relations between Poland and the Soviet Union and Germany to last more than four years. Piłsudski's purpose for these pacts was to buy time to build up Polish defenses.¹³¹

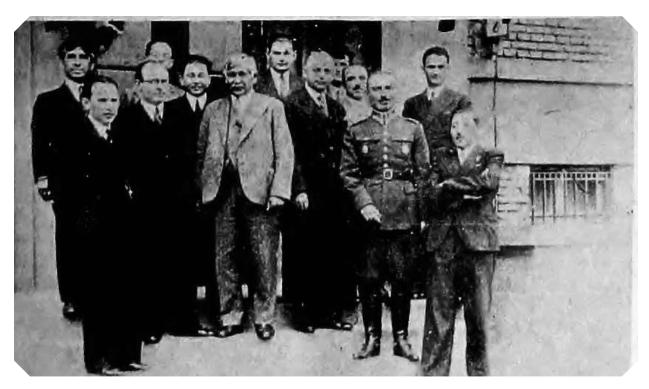
Another difficulty for the Promethean movement in this period was that most of the Soviet Union's neighbors wanted good relations with Moscow and were less willing to turn a blind eye to Promethean activities on their soil. Only with Japan and Finland did Prometheism have active local government support in the 1930s. Even if the international political situation had not changed, the Great Depression and its impact on government budgets would have meant a decline in Promethean resources. Poland went from spending 1.45 million złoty in 1932 to 1 million in 1933, 985,000 in 1935, and 920,000 by 1938.¹³² This was not a great decline, but it had an impact. Another impact on the Promethean movement in this period was the rise of fascism in Germany, Italy, and Japan and their anti-communist foreign policies, as were expressed in the 1936 Anti-Communist International (Comintern) Pact. They too saw Prometheism as a way to undermine a common enemy and began competing with Poland for influence amongst various émigré groups from the Soviet Union. These groups also faced their own problems, not just from internal frictions. As time went on, émigré communities decreased due to deaths and assimilation, and memories of independence were fading, especially among their youth. The Poles recognized these problems. They also recognized that changes had to be made in the Promethean movement starting with how its message was propagated inside

the Soviet Union, amongst national groups outside of it, and to Western audiences.

The Propaganda Problem

As lethal options decreased, the battle of ideas took on greater importance. During this period, there was a recognition that current Promethean propaganda was not up to the task either inside or outside the Soviet Union to mobilize émigré and world opinion. Polish Promethean officials had been concerned about this for several years. In March 1936, Major Edmund Charaszkiewicz (1895–1975) of the second section of the Polish general staff G-2, the section responsible for Promethean affairs, visited Paris to meet with Promethean leaders from Azerbaijan, Georgia, the North Caucasus, and Central Asia as well as the director of the Ofinor press agency subsidized by Poland. At the end of his consultations, he wrote an analysis of the current problems and possible solutions to the poor level of Promethean propaganda work.

The crux of his analysis was that most Promethean leaders did not understand that the world had changed in the past fifteen years. Therefore, their slogans no longer resonated with the desired audiences. The analysis stated that the slogan of "justice and freedom" to explain the goals of the Promethean movement had lost its value amongst Western European audiences, and therefore the émigré groups were losing their political influence. To counteract this, the report suggested several solutions: appealing not to European hearts and minds but to pocketbooks by explaining the economic



Ayaz Ishaki, center in light-colored suit, and Cafer Seydamet to his left in a dark suit, at the Promethean Language Congress in Warsaw, 1936.

opportunities if Russia fell apart; holding regular international conferences in Geneva (the seat of the League of Nations) to call for the dissolution of the Soviet Union; having prominent Promethean figures visit major European cities to report on conditions in Ukraine, the North Caucasus, Turkestan, and with the Cossacks; and conducting better press work highlighting the weaknesses of the Soviet system in countries vacillating about the Soviet Union like England, Italy, and Belgium. It also suggested that information from Promethean agents in the Soviet Union that went to émigré leaders such as Livytskyi or Chokai should also be shared with the international press. It recommended cuts in subsidies to Promethean publishing houses that were not producing suitable products, noting that they needed to print publications scrutinizing current events and not those of two hundred years ago. 133

This report seemed to spark some changes and new initiatives. In October 1936, the Promethean League of Oppressed Russian Nations, led by UPR official and chairman of the Warsaw Promethean club, Professor Roman Smal-Stocki (1893–1969), held an academic congress in Warsaw, which appealed to the League of Nations to require the Soviets give all non-Russian languages their full rights and freedoms. The group agreed to conduct bimonthly meetings at Promethean clubs with lectures for young members on the military traditions of various national groups, basics of state administration, and international law.¹³⁴ Similar to Polish activities before World War I, this was an attempt by Promethean émigrés to prepare both military and civilian cadres for service while waiting to regain independence.

Another change occurred in January 1937 with the creation of the UPR ministry for

press and propaganda. Its main mission was "the advancement by all means of modern propaganda of the spirit of the Ukrainian political emigration and its psychological preparation for active struggle." Additionally, it was to unite all Ukrainians outside the Soviet Union and propagate UPR ideas in international fora. The ministry took over the duties of the third section of the UPR army-in-exile that had been run by Professor Smal-Stocki. Its assets included the publishing house Varjah, which printed the literary-cultural journal My (We). The order creating the ministry directed My to print articles aggressively promoting the UPR's ideology and combating the work of the Comintern. Varjah was also tasked to produce a novel about Symon Petliura, poetry about the liberation struggle in the 1920s, a separate collection of patriotic and anti-Soviet poems, and another novel dedicated to past Ukrainian uprisings and Ukraine's struggle for statehood. Another publishing house, Mecz (Sword), in Paris printed books, brochures, pamphlets, and songs for the UPR and was tasked to print biographies and portraits of leading UPR figures, military memoirs, and anti-Soviet propaganda. The new ministry also oversaw other UPR publishing houses including Tryzub for young audiences and Modest Kunicki for Greek-Uniate Catholic audiences. Besides print media, the ministry was to organize a secret radio station and use Polish, German, and Hungarian radio stations to spread UPR propaganda.¹³⁵

The greatest change in Promethean propaganda efforts occurred with the *Le Prométhée*. While it had representatives from Ukraine and Turkestan, it was owned and operated by the Caucasian Confederation. By the mid-1930s, complaints had arisen about its effectiveness and the need to reform and

broaden its message and readership. Earlier in 1929, one of its founders, Bammat, left the publication to start a Russian-language magazine, *Nezavisamyi Kavkaz*, but it only lasted for three editions without Polish subsidies. After years of indecision, a decision was made in 1938 to rename the magazine *La Revue de Prométhée* to reflect that it was now the flagship publication for the entire Promethean movement. 137

In addition to the above-mentioned media, Polish Promethean agents also subsidized the Telegraph Agency "Express" to report on eastern affairs and maintained contact and cooperation with the French journal *France-Orient* for the placement of articles.

To further its security policy between the wars, Poland created a large media empire to break through what would later be called the Iron Curtain and provide a true view of reality inside the Soviet Union. While this did not spark a revolution, it did help keep alive the native languages, literature, and culture of many subjugated nationalities when they faced literal existential threats. Other Promethean activities at this time followed this pattern of keeping the flame of nationalism alive amidst the hurricane of Stalinism, and nowhere did those winds blow harder from 1933 to 1939 than in Ukraine.

Ukraine

The war scare Stalin created in 1927 ended with the 1932 Nonaggression Pact. Stalin had to worry about his eastern border with Japan, and Piłsudski had to worry about his western border with Germany. By 1932, the correlation of forces between Poland and



Daily Express coverage of famine in Ukraine, 1934. (Wikimedia Commons)

the Soviet Union had also changed. While Poland still possessed a sizeable army that could mobilize swiftly to score quick tactical victories over the Red Army, it knew that the Red Army had greatly increased in size and capacity.¹³⁸ While Ukraine suffered famine and repression during this period and Ukrainians in exile and in Ukraine would gladly have supported a Polish invasion, Piłsudski did not move. Soon, Polish intelligence officers believed that the famine had removed all trace of resistance in the Ukrainian countryside. By 1936, border controls were so tight that the second section of the UPR army was disbanded due to the difficulties of penetrating the Soviet border. Furthermore, anyone of Polish descent or sympathies was removed from the border region or simply removed. In 1937–38, 111,091 people were executed for supposed association with Polish intelligence, some living nowhere near the Soviet-Polish border. These deaths accounted

for 16 percent of the Soviet citizens murdered during the Great Terror.¹³⁹

While terror destroyed any chance for the Promethean idea to achieve success in Soviet Ukraine, Piłsudski's death spelled the end of the Volhynia experiment within Poland. Piłsudski was replaced as Poland's commander-in-chief and de facto leader by Marshal Edward Rydz-Śmigły (1886–1941). Rydz-Śmigły was a veteran of the Polish Legion, former commander of the PMO, and a close follower of Piłsudski. However, his politics differed from Piłsudski's, and the Polish government again began to reflect National Democratic ideas regarding minorities. Prometheism could not reconcile the contrast between efforts to create a free Ukraine on Soviet soil but not on Polish soil. The Volhynia experiment ended in 1938 when Józewski was removed as governor.¹⁴⁰ Propaganda and political work continued

as noted above, Ukrainians remained as key figures in Warsaw's Promethean club, and publications and activities were still subsidized as before; but Piłsudski's ideas of toleration and federation that had been the heart of the program were gone as far as Ukraine was concerned.

The Caucasus and Central Asia

During the 1930s, many Polish Promethean figures believed that their efforts needed to be consolidated rather than spread out amongst individual national groups. This view toward "federation" reflected both Piłsudski's political philosophy as well as Polish history. This conflicted with Caucasian desires for independence, possibly confederation, but not federation. Still, the Poles persevered. Polish agents in Paris spent considerable time trying to form a future union for the Caucasian states should they ever regain their sovereignty. Two approaches were put forward: one Polish and one Georgian. The Poles wanted to create a strong executive body to conduct Caucasian émigré activities to attract their youth and inspire the fight for independence. This would be the first step toward a federated state. The Georgian plan, which was put forward in several articles in Le Prométhée, emphasized preserving sovereignty. It was willing to foresee a future customs union, military cooperation, and joint diplomatic missions, but none of the Caucasian groups favored a federation.¹⁴¹

To square this circle, another conference was convened in Warsaw in the summer of 1934. The result was a compromise. There would

be no federated Caucasian state should the Soviet Union collapse, but the parties agreed in principle that each state would remain sovereign, but with a customs union, common foreign policy, joint military command, and a judicial system to arbitrate disputes. Called the Caucasian Confederation, the Georgians, Azeris, and North Caucasus representatives also agreed there was a future place for Armenia in their organization. In keeping with the covert nature of Polish Promethean activities, the official communique of the confederation declared that it was signed in Brussels and not in Warsaw. This conference did succeed in bringing the three parties closer, and in 1935, the nascent Caucasian Confederation met in Paris to consolidate their diplomatic, intelligence, and propaganda activities, create a press bureau, and make plans to create a secret center in the Caucasus.¹⁴²

The high level of counterintelligence scrutiny and repression inside the Soviet Union made creating a secret center a risky maneuver. Georgians were still able to reach their compatriots by networks running from Tehran, Tabriz, and Julfa in Iran. Promethean leaders from Central Asia were able to penetrate the Soviet Union from Iran and Afghanistan. However, in Turkey, the Promethean base of support was eroding. In February 1934, Karol Dubicz-Penther (1892–1945), a Polish diplomat with previous service in Tehran and a reserve army intelligence officer, described how any political work was "delicate" due to Poland's and Turkey's nonaggression pacts with the Soviet Union. Turkey believed it was unlikely that the Soviet Union would fall apart, although the Turkish minister of interior promised that Poland could keep its Promethean operations going in Turkey, if they did not disrupt Turkish-Soviet relations.¹⁴³



Caucasian Promethean figures laying a wreath at the tomb of Marshal Pilsudski. Georgian general Alexander Zachariadze is sixth from left. Prince Dmitri Shalikashvili is sixth from right. (Wikimedia Commons)

Turkey would get the upper hand in the end. It recognized the Caucasus Confederation years later when it agreed that the confederation's only enemy was Russia and renounced all claims on Turkish territory. This agreement was signed in Paris on May 28, 1940.¹⁴⁴ The Germans arrived in Paris two weeks later, making the entire exercise a rather moot point—until fifty years later.

Besides the problem of Turkey as an unreliable Promethean sanctuary was the fact that creating the Caucasian Confederation did not solve internal national differences. In his same 1934 report, Dubicz-Penther noted that operations with North Caucasus representatives had stopped due to the departure of two key leaders, and Azeri Promethean activities were weak due to constant internal fighting and rivalries. He did not have much faith in the old Promethean

leaders from Azerbaijan and the North
Caucasus and hoped to find new blood. 145
This reflected a recurring problem with émigré
leaders: If they do not soon return to power
at home, they become more interested in
old squabbles than in irredentism. DubiczPenther's comments reflected similar
observations made a few months later by
a Georgian contract officer in the Polish
army. The officer observed that old conflicts
brought over from Georgia and generational
differences divided Georgians and their
approaches to Promethean activities. 146

Dubicz-Penther's evaluations of Promethean activities with Central Asian leaders were more positive and noted that Promethean activities with Tatar groups were going well due to their energetic leadership. There was a similar positive report by Charaszkiewicz in 1936 when he met Mustafa Chokai in Paris. By



Karol Dubicz Penther

1936, Chokai's TMB had an extensive network that now included representing the Kalmyk diaspora, which naturally included their own publishing house that Chokai convinced the Poles to subsidize. He had also reached out to an American publicist in Philadelphia who had proposed publishing materials about the region in English and offered the Poles regular access to Soviet publications from Central Asia. Besides Promethean activities, Chokai provided Charaszkiewicz with intelligence on internal Turkish politics and the current situations in Afghanistan and Sinkiang, China, where he reported on unusual Japanese activity as well as anti-Soviet and anti-Chinese sentiments amongst the locals.147 This was just one example of many where covert Promethean influence activities also yielded foreign intelligence Poland never would have had under normal circumstances.

Polish Promethean activities in the Caucasus and Central Asia in this period had one other

discordant note. This was the complaints of the "have nots" of the Promethean movement: those émigré leaders whose organizations were not, or were no longer being, supported by Poland. In May 1937, they directed a letter to Marshal Rydz-Śmigły from the Union of Black Sea States, which was led by members of the Armenian Dashnak party, the Georgian National Democrat party, the League of Ukrainian Nationalists, and the League of Reborn Cossacks. While thanking the Poles for their Promethean efforts, they complained about a lack of results inside the Soviet Union. The letter admitted that the émigré groups were badly divided, that many national groups in the Soviet Union had been coopted by Bolsheviks and were not inclined to guerrilla warfare, and that those actively fighting were also divided and ineffective. However, they criticized Polish Promethean emissaries for only working with certain diaspora groups (not theirs) and blamed them for failures to date. The letter concluded with an appeal for Polish support including military training and funding.¹⁴⁸ Not surprisingly, Rydz-Śmigły ignored the letter after the general staff G-2 informed him that these groups were inconsequential. However, their descriptions of both the state of the anti-Soviet diasporas and the internal situation in the Soviet Union were accurate evaluations of the current correlation of forces. The letter also reflected many of the same observations Haidar Bammat made two years earlier in a similar complaint to Polish Promethean agents.¹⁴⁹ As we will see, Promethean émigré groups disgruntled by Polish inattention or budget cuts would soon have alternate patrons to turn to.

The Far East

Promethean activities in the Far East from 1933 to 1939 were influenced by one central reality: The Japanese now controlled Harbin and the rest of Manchuria. Ostensibly, this should have been a positive factor as the Japanese were anti-Soviet. However, as Piłsudski could recall from 1904, despite having the same enemy, Polish and Japanese national interests were not always compatible.

Promethean activities in the Far East from 1933 to 1939 continued as before. One major event was a tour conducted by Ayaz Ishaki from 1933 to 1935 to organize Turkic émigré populations in China and Japan and bring them into the Promethean movement as he did in Finland in 1930. Ishaki soon found this trip to be different. After arriving in Japan, the Turkish charge d'affairs warned him to avoid Tokyo's chief mullah, who was likely a Soviet agent. The mullah was also in league with violent ultra-nationalist groups working to expand Japanese influence into Sinkiang Province (Chinese Turkestan) in western China via the Uighur and other Turkic communities. Ishak's meetings with local Turkic groups were often interrupted by Soviet agents. Once the Tokyo mullah accused Ishaki of being a British intelligence agent, which led to his interrogation by the Japanese police. Despite repeated attempts to interrupt his work, Ishaki established a Turkic-Tatar cultural society in Japan with branches in Tokyo, Nagoya, Kobe, and Kumamoto. The society had separate departments for political, educational, propaganda, informational, and religious activities. Once formed, a delegation met with members of Japan's ministries of internal affairs and education, the police, and general staff to present a series of requests from

the Turkic-Tatar community. These included separating their affairs from Russian émigré affairs, treating the Turkic-Tatar community as a separate nationality, maintaining Tatar last names as spelled and omitting the Russian "ov" or "ev" endings on their documents, and conducting correspondence with the community only in Japanese or English (not Russian). Ishaki reported that these recommendations were favorably considered, if not immediately put into practice, and gained great press coverage.¹⁵⁰

Ishaki then traveled amongst the Idel-Ural diaspora in Korea and Manchuria to establish similar societies. He found Harbin to be the home of a large Turkic-Tatar community complete with a mosque, school, social club, library, theater, and Tatarlanguage newspaper, which Ishaki reported had benefitted from its contact with the Ukrainian, Polish, and Georgian communities working under the wing of the Promethean movement. He noted that Promethean activities were regularly hampered by Soviet agents spreading false reports to the Japanese authorities who often believed the disinformation and became suspicious of the various Promethean minority groups in Manchuria. In Mukden, he established a Tatar newspaper, Milli Bayrak (The National Flag), although other attempts to create media outlets were hampered by the paucity of printing presses with Arabic script in the Far East.¹⁵¹ This trip reinforced Poland's connection with a distant Promethean community just as Japan and others were making inroads into the movement for their own purposes.

Anti-Comintern Pact Competition

The governments of Germany, Italy, and Japan were united by a fascist political philosophy that included anti-Communism. In 1936 and 1937, they codified this by signing the Anti-Comintern Pact. Ostensibly designed to fight the subversive activity of the Communist International, it was aimed directly at Moscow, for whom the Comintern was simply a covert foreign policy tool.

Germany, Italy, and Japan, soon formed Promethean-like structures including educational institutes specializing in Oriental affairs. This was followed by outreach to anti-Soviet émigré groups. As early as 1933, Polish observers warned about Nazi intentions to take over the Promethean movement. Germany's efforts were aided by Polish budget cuts, but many Promethean youth were also were attracted to fascism. Germany actively recruited Georgians and Armenian émigrés disgruntled with Poland. The Armenian Dashnak party leader even proposed to Benito Mussolini the creation of an Armenian-Georgian foreign legion to fight for Italy in Ethiopia.¹⁵²

However, the greatest competition came from Japan. In October 1932, the Japanese general staff gave orders to its military attaches worldwide to prepare subversive activities against the Soviet Union, including assistance to independence movements in Ukraine, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. If the Soviets did not notice this immediately, the Poles did. Marshal Rydz-Śmigły was unwilling to cooperate with the Japanese since "they wanted to use Promethean Centers only for espionage and sabotage



Haidar Bammat

against the Soviet Union, while for Poland the Promethean movement was a component of a grand strategy—a matter of dealing with the threatened independence of the state."¹⁵⁴

Japan approached right-wing Promethean groups (as a legacy of Piłsudski's PPS affiliation, most Polish Promethean contacts were with left-of-center groups) such as the OUN or Georgia's National Democrats. They also recruited disaffected Prometheans such as Haidar Bammat. 155 However, sometimes their approach could be both blind and tone deaf. A UPR report on Japanese interaction with Ukrainian émigrés in Manchuria presciently observed that Japanese efforts were not Promethean because their goal was not to break up the Soviet Union into its constituent ethnic parts. Instead, Japan wanted to create an anti-Communist front with national minorities subordinate to Russian leadership. The report believed

the Japanese overestimated White Russian military organizations and considered that it was impossible to subordinate various national groups in Manchuria to Russian émigré organizations. This is exactly what happened with Ukrainian diaspora groups in Harbin, Shanghai, Tientsin, and Tsingtao, which refused Japanese attempts to unite and subordinate them to White Russian émigré groups.¹⁵⁶

In 1938, to distract the Soviets from fighting along the Manchurian border, the Japanese used Bammat's contacts to infiltrate agents into Georgia to establish a clandestine resistance effort. In a repeat of events fifteen years before, Soviet intelligence penetrated Bammat's circle and protested his actions to Ankara, which quickly expelled him from Turkey.¹⁵⁷ For the Japanese, it was a rough introduction to Promethean-type operations; for Soviet intelligence, it was déjà vu all over again.

The Final Report

On March 16, 1939, Hitler violated the Munich agreement and conquered all of Czechoslovakia. Warsaw then turned down Hitler's offer to join the Anti-Comintern Pact, realizing that would make it a Nazi vassal but also realizing that Poland was Hitler's next target. On March 31, Great Britain and France guaranteed Polish sovereignty against any threat, but this was understood as directed against Germany, since London and Paris were courting the Soviet Union to join an alliance. Under these circumstances, clarity was needed for Poland's strategy in both the east and west, including what to do with the Promethean movement.

A review of Promethean operations was ordered even before Munich in the first half of 1938 by Chief of the General Staff General Wacław Stachiewicz (1894–1973). He wanted a report to gain Marshal Rydz-Śmigły's support for continued Promethean activities. Besides the G-2 represented by Colonel Schaetzel and now Lieutenant Colonel Charaszkiewicz, members of Poland's MFA and ministry of internal affairs also worked on the review.lt highlighted the wide range of Polish contacts with national groups in the Soviet Union and émigré organizations worldwide, the politico-military advantages of Prometheism, and the status of the program. When it was presented in December 1938, the report called Prometheism a military necessity and affirmed that breaking up Russia was Poland's basic policy in the east. It stressed that Poland could only be safe when it had a series of neighbors in the east but warned of fascist countries taking the Promethean movement away from Poland. The report gave positive reviews to most initiatives but recommended cutting some Ukrainian activities. This review went through several more drafts and was finalized on March 1, 1939. The general staff never got a final reply. This may have been because of other issues facing the marshal or because he may have disagreed with the positive tone of the report. Although Rydz-Śmigły had previously expressed support for Prometheism as a strategic tool, the final version of the report reportedly (the only copy is in Russian Federation archives, having been captured by the Soviets in World War II) had remarks like "fiction" written across the section about the UPR and "illusions" across the section of sabotage along the Soviet border. Promethean supporters in Poland were still waiting on an answer from Rydz-Śmigły on September 1, 1939.¹⁵⁸

Organe de Défense Nationale

des Peuples du Caucase et de l'Ukraine



CONCLUSIONS, OBSERVATIONS, AND RELEVANCY TO TODAY

Prometheism did not end with the start of World War II. It played a part on the Eastern Front, but in ways that Piłsudski would not have recognized. Many national groups in the Soviet Union had elements that collaborated with Nazi Germany during the war, and some created armed formations such as the Georgian Legion or Turkestan Legion. The Germans even recruited ethnic Russian prisoners of war, Vlasov's Army, to fight Moscow. However, none of these peoples were ever seen as equals due to Nazi ideology; there was no political plan for them after the war. For the Third Reich, they were cannon fodder for the present and slaves in the future.

After 1945, the Polish government-in-exile in London dabbled with Prometheism until the early 1950s. Many Promethean activists were still around, such as Tadeusz Schaetzel who on March 19, 1951, wrote to Dmitri Shalikashvili in Munich regarding a revival of the Promethean movement. He wanted Shalikashvili to review a proposed declaration by the Polish Prométhée Group and rejoin the movement. Schaetzel believed in using Prometheism to liberate not only the captive nations but also the Russians themselves. "There cannot be any doubt," he wrote to Shalikashvili, "that the goals of the Promethean movement would be much easier to achieve if the Russian nation underwent a deeper change and if the spirit of Prometheism could cleanse the Russian nation from centuries of tradition—the result of which is slavery, which has conquered the Russian nation." Then he added that "the real liberation of the Russian nation can only be achieved by means of the victory of the Promethean idea." Shalikashvili responded by saying that he would share Schaetzel's letter with the Georgian Political Union in Munich.¹⁵⁹ It is unknown what transpired next, but the Polish effort soon fizzled out. The Poles would never have the resources in exile to achieve what they could not when they had their own state.

The United States indirectly took up the standard of Prometheism during the Cold War. It sponsored Soviet émigré groups, their cultural centers, publications, student organizations, and the like. With time these efforts also declined, since it seemed by the 1960s that the Soviet Union was a permanent feature in international life. Still, Prometheism echoed again in US foreign policy when Zbigniew Brzezinski, the son of a former Polish foreign service officer, became the national security advisor to President Jimmy Carter. It resounded even more during the administration of President Ronald Reagan. 160 In retrospect, the ending of the Cold War, the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, and the breakup of the Soviet Union along the lines of its constituent national republics was the ultimate vindication of the concept Piłsudski once etched out on paper on a ship steaming toward Japan.

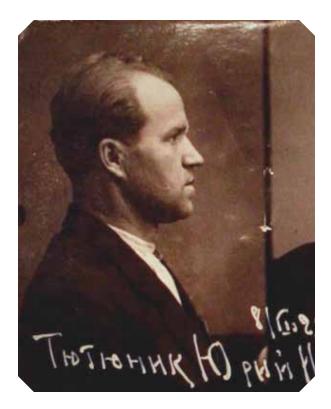
Prometheism: A Covert Action Program Review

The Promethean movement was a costeffective means for Poland to address a
security problem that was likely unsolvable.
Poland's location between two superpowers
hostile to her existence and without
geographic barriers to invasion made her
security situation untenable. Once the Soviet
Union and Germany recovered from World
War I, their combined demographic and
economic strength made Poland's future
a precarious one. Roman Dmowski was
right to fear German intentions as Piłsudski
feared Russian imperialism, even if cloaked

in Communist rhetoric. But Poland never had the resources to fight both superpowers. Prometheism provided the best chance to weaken the Soviet Union without having to resort to a war Poland could never win. Its concept was based on Imperial Russia's downfall from 1917 to 1921. Every Promethean witnessed those events and hoped to make them happen again. The way Poland regained its independence, partly through the incredible luck of all three occupying powers losing a war and partly by having prepared an army, intelligence service, and civil service in waiting, served as a template and a hope for other Promethean nations.

The Soviet Union in the early 1920s was beset by economic devastation, famine, mutinies, and rebellions. It was not unreasonable to believe that with a strong enough push, the entire edifice could fall as it had a few years previously. However, when the Soviet Union was at its weakest, so was the Promethean movement. Initially, it was a concept that motivated former PMO intelligence officers in the field and not an official government policy. Therefore, early operations did not receive the full backing and resources of the state when they could have mattered the most.

Tiutiunnyk's operation was the first example. It was likely sanctioned, but in an (unsuccessful) attempt to keep it covert, the operation was done on a shoestring. It was also not reviewed by a senior-level interagency process to expose flaws and test assumptions. In essence, a few thousand poorly equipped UPR soldiers were supposed to do in winter what ninety thousand regular Polish and Ukrainian troops were unable to do a year earlier in the spring. The mission was impossible to achieve with its limited resources and the enemy forces opposing it.



lurko Tiutiunnyk's mugshot in Soviet captivity, just before his execution. (Wikimedia Commons)

The disaster in Ukraine cooled Warsaw's inclination to aid the next attempt to implement the Promethean idea even though it might have had a greater chance of success if Poland had been willing to guide and equip the Georgian resistance. Instead, Warsaw sat and watched and did not even offer the use of Georgian officers on contract service in Poland. Had Poland done so, it may have helped the resistance prepare a better plan, take greater counterintelligence precautions, and have nonattributable stores of weapons and ammunition ready to send into the country by ship once the revolt began. Georgia, with its heavily wooded mountainous terrain, could have supported a long-term guerrilla fight like Afghanistan's half a century later. Without external support and guidance, the Soviet secret police were able to infiltrate, identify, and destroy the anti-Bolshevik resistance in Georgia, leaving little that could

be rejuvenated.

When Piłsudski made Prometheism an official policy, the two best opportunities to implement it were already gone. The Soviets had gained what they needed the most, time, by putting down resistance in two of its most geopolitically critical areas: Ukraine and the Caucasus. The Trust counterintelligence operation also worked as an effective covert influence operation pretending that the Soviet Union was stronger than it was. By the time it was unmasked in 1927, Moscow's greatest period of vulnerability had passed.

Therefore, when the Promethean movement began in earnest, the chance of the Soviet Union dissolving from internal pressures was unlikely based on covert action measures alone. However, with collectivization, the Soviets created a situation that encouraged internal revolt, giving Prometheism a second chance. By 1930, Piłsudski had an excellent tool in the UPR army-in-exile and was waging an effective propaganda campaign to exploit the situation in Ukraine and elsewhere. If another Polish-Soviet war had broken out, Poland would have been in a good position due to the Promethean movement. The UPR army could have contributed several divisions upon mobilization, provided intelligence support, and possibly fomented a rebellion amongst the population as Stalin feared. Contract officers in the Polish army from Georgia, Azerbaijan, and the North Caucasus could be infiltrated back to their homelands to provide military advice and motivation to other resistance groups diverting Soviet resources.

This never happened because although war was in the interest of all Promethean groups, it was not in the interest of their patron. Piłsudski never seriously considered intervening in the Soviet Union when the

correlation of forces and events most favored Poland (1927–31) because Prometheism for Poland was not a crusade but an insurance policy. It was a capability to exploit if circumstances required. Unlike Prometheus, Poland never acted to directly bring fire to the oppressed nationalities of the Soviet Union; it instead waited to see if its stoking of various irredentist movements would bring a spontaneous combustion. Due to Stalin's repression, this spontaneous combustion never happened.

For the rest of the interwar period, Poland and its Promethean partners watched, waited, and hoped. The Promethean movement created an impressive international media network to support its covert influence efforts. While this did not bring revolution, it did help with efforts to preserve the languages, literatures, and cultures of non-Russian nationalities. This was of little benefit to those inside the Soviet Union in the 1930s, but may have benefited those alive in the constituent Soviet republics in the 1990s when they began to build states based on their national cultures and identities.

How covert was this covert action program? It was covert enough. Poland always had plausible deniability and despite the war scares between 1927 and 1931, Prometheism never provided the Soviets with a casus belli. Furthermore, with regard to covert actions during this period, the gate swung both ways. While Poland tried to use nationalism to subvert the Soviet Union, the Soviets tried to do the same in Poland and elsewhere. In March 1919, Moscow founded the Comintern to overthrow capitalist governments. In September 1920 in Baku, the Soviets sponsored a Congress of the Peoples of the East that encouraged nationalist groups to undermine the British and French empires.¹⁶¹ In violation of the Versailles Treaty, in 1922

Moscow and Berlin signed a secret military pact. Their mutual goal was to rebuild their militaries to overturn the eastern provisions of the Versailles Treaty as happened in September 1939 when both Germany and the Soviet Union invaded Poland. Everyone knew what each other was doing and no one pretended to be shocked when they found gambling going on in the casino.

In the final analysis, Prometheism was a low-cost, low-risk attempt to capitalize on a situation that might never come, but would have been very beneficial to Poland if it had. The fact that it never came was not the fault of the program or those who ran it. Early opportunities were lost, but the program was likely the most effective way to limit Soviet international ambitions by increasing domestic concerns. Against tsarist Russia, it might have worked. but against the Soviet Union, it had no chance once Stalin created an unprecedented police state and unleashed unlimited terror against his own people. When the willingness to use that police state and terror dissipated in the 1980s, what followed vindicated Piłsudski's vision. The empire broke up into its basic ethno-national constituent parts, and Poland and other countries around its periphery regained their sovereignty.

What can we learn from this?

There are many things to learn from a covert action program of a century ago. This is not because history repeats itself but, because as the historian John Toland once observed, human nature does. The Promethean movement has lessons that can be applied today with regard to similar types of issues related to independence movements and covert action programs.

Lessons Learned

1. THE POWER OF NATIONALISM:

In the struggle between Communism and nationalism, nationalism won in the end.

Despite massive Communist propaganda, peoples as diverse as Ukrainians and Cossacks from the steppes of Eastern Europe; Chechens, Dagestanis, and Georgians from the Caucasus Mountains; Bashkirs, Volga Tatars, Kazakhs, and Uzbeks from Central Asia; Ingrians and Karelians from the northern forests, and many others rejected being part of a supranational utopian movement and preferred that their political and national unit be congruent.

Conversely, while nationalism was the driving force of Prometheism, in the case of Ukraine it was a two-edged sword. Ukrainian nationalism undermined Polish control in its east while being a potent threat against the Soviet Union. For Moscow, Ukrainian nationalism was progressive outside the borders of the Soviet Union but a threat inside its borders.163 Piłsudski's vision of a multi-national federation based on old Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was a mirage from an era that no longer existed. It did not account for the growth of modern nationalism beginning in the mid-19th century of which Piłsudski's Polish irredentism was just one of dozens of examples. The Soviets won only temporary compliance despite, or because of, the millions of murders during their rule. It was Ukraine's decision in 1991 to leave the Soviet Union that doomed it. We shall see what President Vladimir Putin's decision to wage war against Ukraine means for the future of the Russian Federation.

2. THE PROMISE AND PAIN OF DEALING WITH ÉMIGRÉ GROUPS:

The rebirth of the Polish state demonstrated how quickly government institutions could be formed if there were already "shadow" formations and trained cadres (political, civil service, military) ready in the wings. Some Promethean activities were designed with this in mind and can provide a template for future émigré groups.

However, the longer émigré groups are away from home, the more other problems grow. The first is that diaspora leaderships can become frozen in time. Their reality is the exact date they left their homeland, even if it was thirty years ago. This leads to inaccurate assessments of events in their countries and conflict when younger activists eventually want to lead. Second, communities become acclimated to their new surroundings and, especially with the younger generation, slowly lose their emotional attachment to the "old country."

Regarding conflicts within émigré groups, this study of Prometheism is replete with examples of how intramural arguments decreased the effectiveness of the program. However, the problem is not political disagreements; these are natural and the sign of a free society. In comparison to Soviet rule with no choices or competing political parties, diaspora communities were free to express themselves. The problem was that no one created a mechanism to harness natural political differences into a democratic system of governance. This would have meant creating true governments-in-exile whose members had a franchise and an electoral system to elect leaders and consultative bodies (parliaments) to debate ideas and strategies. As mentioned earlier, many

governments-in-exile remained frozen in 1919, 1920, or 1921, with no way or desire to grow, adapt, and use the freedoms they enjoyed to move forward instead of bickering about the past. They failed to set up representative governments, which they professed as a goal when they finally returned home. This is a lesson and challenge for other diaspora communities of the future. If they want a democratic government upon returning home, they need to develop one while they are in exile.

3. THE SHORT SHELF LIFE OF SECRET ARMIES:

The UPR army-in-exile and the Society of Georgian Veterans were excellent tools in case of war. However, these were tools with limited shelf lives. All soldiers, even soldiers in exile, will eventually be defeated by actuarial tables. The Polish Riflemen's Association was fortunate enough to have been created just five years before World War I. It saw action while its membership was still youthful and enthusiastic. This was not the case with the Promethean secret armies. Even though they tried to emulate the Riflemen's Association and worked to attract émigré youths, the fact is that with time, these secret armies would eventually have burnt themselves out. One lesson learned is that if not used within the first few years of their existence, they become liabilities, losing any combat capability they may have first had. Furthermore, for those expecting to go into combat to liberate their countries, they will be disappointed when this does not happen. While this was not the case with the UPR or Georgian forces because they never concentrated for an operation, it has been the case with other secret armies. It was one of the reasons why the John F. Kennedy

administration decided to go forward with the Bay of Pigs plan inherited from the Dwight D. Eisenhower administration because it feared the political backlash if émigré Cuban soldiers were demobilized and talked to the press.

4. THE NECESSITY FOR EFFECTIVE INTELLIGENCE AND COUNTERINTELLIGENCE IN COVERT ACTION PROGRAMS:

Émigré organizations and armies will be penetrated by hostile intelligence services. Internal bickering provided fertile ground for intelligence penetrations of Promethean groups by Moscow. So did normal motivations of money, ideology, coercion, and ego. Intelligence compromises led to the failures of Tiutiunnyk's invasion in 1921 and the Georgian uprising in 1924. Furthermore, poor intelligence collection and analysis prevented Georgians, Ukrainians, and Poles from learning the true situation across the Soviet border. Without effective intelligence and counterintelligence support, a covert action program is likely to fail.

However, covert action programs can also produce intelligence as a byproduct of their efforts. The Poles gained intelligence on the Soviet Union from Promethean networks as far away as Manchuria. Poland also gained political intelligence on other countries such as Japan and Turkey from their Promethean agents. This is one reason why covert action programs are usually run by intelligence organizations versus military ones.

5 THE NECESSITY OF MEASURES OF EFFECTIVENESS FOR COVERT INFLUENCE PROGRAMS:

Poland created an international network of newspapers, press agencies, and publishing houses to spread the Promethean message into the Soviet Union and throughout the world. The effectiveness of these efforts was a perpetual question for Warsaw. The limited access foreign diplomats had to average Soviet citizens and Soviet censorship made attempts to quantify the effects of Promethean propaganda next to impossible. The Poles were dependent on reports from their smugglers and distributors, who had reasons to exaggerate success and not report failure. After a decade, Warsaw sensed that its message was not getting through, mainly because times had changed but its Promethean partners had not. This led to reforms and new initiatives, most cut short by the outbreak of World War II. Measuring the effectiveness of covert influence operations in countries considered denied areas remains a difficult task but a necessary one. For long-term covert influence programs, regular changes to content and distribution are necessary to keep up with the changes in world events, domestic events (of the target population), and generational and technological change.

6. AUTHORITARIAN REGIMES ARE BEST ATTACKED SOONER RATHER THAN LATER:

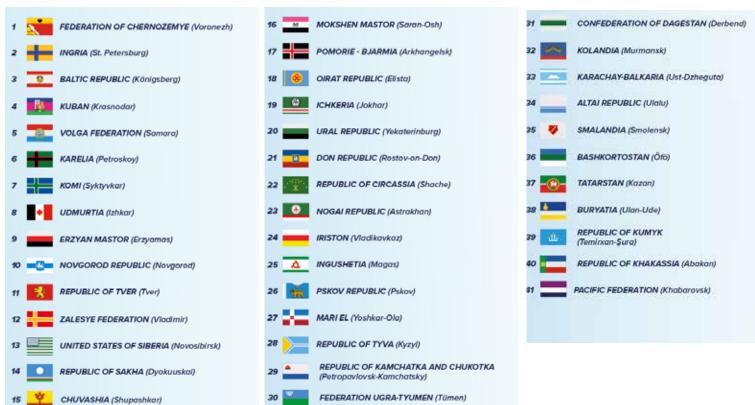
The history of 20th and 21st century authoritarian and totalitarian states indicates that the longer a dictatorship survives, the stronger its mechanisms of coercion and

propaganda become. These mechanisms will include a ubiquitous security and border control service. If irredentist operations do not begin before these mechanisms mature. they will face the same challenges that the Promethean movement did. Frank Lindsay, an Office of Strategic Services veteran who fought with Josip Broz Tito's partisans and led the Central Intelligence Agency's Soviet operations at the beginning of the Cold War, wrote about this in a January 1962 Foreign Affairs article. Lindsay warned that "a Communist dictatorship probably can be overthrown from within only in an area in which the Communists have not yet consolidated their control, or in which their control has been seriously weakened by other events. It is therefore of the utmost importance to move quickly to prevent the total consolidation of a nation into a completely controlled police state."164 Therefore, for émigré groups and their patrons trying to overthrow a recently created dictatorship, time is not on your side.

Prometheism:
Modern
Aspirations and
Moscow's Fears

The high-water mark of the Promethean movement was from 1926 to 1932, but some of its organizations lasted long past World War II. The UPR existed until 1992, when it recognized the newly independent Ukraine as its legal successor. Today, a Promethean





Center for Security Research exists in Lviv, Ukraine (formerly Lwów, Poland, from where Tiutiunnyk and Kowalewski planned their 1921 operation). It follows in the tradition of the think tanks established in the 1920s and 1930s to support the Promethean movement.

While Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and other national republics of the Soviet Union regained their independence after 1991, ethnic national republics within the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic did not and are now part of the Russian Federation. In another echo of the Promethean movement, elements within them continue to seek independence and have created a congress that works to bring international attention to their irredentist goals. The Free Nations of Post-Russia Forum was founded in 2022 with the goal to decolonize Russia into free, independent states. Its first forum was held in Warsaw in May 2022; its most recent was in Washington, DC, in April 2024. The organization consists of numerous organizations such as Free Ingria, Free Idel-Ural, the Karelian National Movement, the Bashkir National Political Center, the Free Buryatia Foundation, the Chechen government-in-exile, and others.¹⁶⁵ Promethean figures such as Hołówko, Schaetzel, Zhordania, Chokai, Ishaki, and others would have probably found their efforts very familiar.

The Free Nations of Post-Russia Forum and other signs of irredentism within the Russian Federation have again raised Kremlin fears of Prometheism. In July 2022, a Russian newspaper article accused the United States of inciting ethnic separatism to bring down Russia as it did with the Soviet Union. More recently on February 29, 2024, a recurring theme during President Vladimir Putin's state of the nation speech was the need to consolidate Russian society. If this did not

happen, he warned, defeat in Ukraine would bring the loss of Russian sovereignty and the collapse of the state.¹⁶⁷ Reading between the lines of his address, it seems that fear of the Promethean concept still resonates within the Kremlin. This fear predates its war with Ukraine, as the controversy over the statue of Validi Togan in January 2021 in St. Petersburg indicates. In 1904, Piłsudski wrote that Russia's Achilles' heel was its imperial construct; in 1951, Schaetzel wrote that ending Russian imperialism would free the Russian people themselves. These were two prescient observations in the 20th century. We shall see if they have any prescience in the 21st century. 🎏

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86 Jan Bruski, *Mykoła Czebotariw i placówka "Hetman." Z dziejów ukraińskich służb specjalnych na emigracji* [Mykola Chebotariv and the intelligence post "Hetman." From the history of the Ukrainian special services in exile], Dzieje Najnowsze [Modern History], Warsaw XLV, no. 2 (2013): 53–65, https://www.academia.edu/14080087/Myko%C5%82a_Czebotariw_i_plac%C3%B3wka_Hetman_Z_dziej%C3%B3w_ukrai%C5%84skich_s%C5%82u%C5%BCb_specjalnych_na_emigracji_Dzieje_Najnowsze_Warszawa_R_XLV_2013_nr_2_s_53_65. In their writings about Hetman, both Pepłoński and Snyder refer to it as an

intelligence post inside Soviet Ukraine in Kyiv that Chebotariv personally ran from 1927 to 1928. However, Bruski's research indicates that this is an incorrect reading of the reports and that Hetman was not an intelligence base in Kyiv but the codename for the UPR army intelligence section. The author agrees with this assessment based on the evidence presented by Bruski in his article as well as the fact that it would have been impossible for Chebotariv to head both the UPR intelligence section in Warsaw and its base in Kyiv. Furthermore, considering the counterintelligence situation, it would have been unlikely for the UPR and Polish G-2 to allow their chief intelligence officer with knowledge of all UPR activities to travel into the Soviet Union, especially as the agreement to create the UPR army-in-exile was top secret as were its intelligence activities.

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97 Snyder, Covert Missions.

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