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INFORMATION ACTIVITIES OF THE 'ISTANBUL PLATFORM' IN 1929–35

Abstract: *The article is focused on the information activities of the 'Istanbul Platform' - an illegal residence of the Ukrainian special services of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian People's Republic in exile during 1929–35. The basis of this institution's activities was the presentation of Ukrainians in the international arena as a nation seeking to regain its statehood; outlining and substantiating their spiritual, geopolitical and economic interests, as well as countering anti-Ukrainian propaganda and discrediting the Ukrainian political emigration, launched by Soviet Russia in the interwar period.*

In writing the research paper, the author used the principles of objectivity, specific historical approach, integrity, comprehensiveness, systematicity, as well as historical and typological, problematic and chronological, and historical and comparative methods, which helped to consider the topic comprehensively.

Without a proper technical base, funding and other necessary support, being all the time under the 'watchful eye' of the Soviet special services, members of the 'Istanbul Platform' faithfully carried out information activities not only in Turkey but also in the Middle East. Despite the loss of the Ukrainian nation's statehood, they sought to explain to European, Middle Eastern and even Far Eastern politicians the significance, role and benefits of restoring an independent and self-sufficient Ukraine on the world map and its importance for global geopolitics and economics. The untimely death of the official representative of the UPR government in exile in Istanbul, Ecumenical Patriarch Photius II, the superiority of Soviet Russia, the lethargy and indecision of world politicians to engage in open confrontation with Moscow, and preparations for World War II led to the collapse of the 'Istanbul Platform'.

Keywords: *Ukrainian political emigration, interwar Turkey, 'Istanbul Platform', Volodymyr Murskyi, Mykola Zabello, Maria Pchelinska, Ukrainian exile intelligence special services*

Problem statement. In the interwar period, during 1929–35, an illegal residence of the Ukrainian exile special services of the Central Committee of the Ukrainian People's Republic, the 'Istanbul Platform', operated in Istanbul, which, despite its unofficial status, represented the interests of the Ukrainian government in exile and Ukrainian political emigration, carried out not only educational, coordinating, and intelligence functions in the host country, but also actively engaged in information activities.

The aim of the article is to outline and summarise the information activities of the members of the 'Istanbul Platform', an illegal residence of the Ukrainian exile special services of the UPR Central Committee in Turkey and the Middle East.

Last researchers' analysis of the problem. Over the past 10 years, the diplomatic and foreign policy activities of the Ukrainian state in the interwar period have been an important

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topic of study for Ukrainian researchers. Currently, there are a number of scholarly works that cover the activities of Ukrainian diplomatic and consular institutions in Europe, Asia, Latin America, and others. There are also relevant works on the activities of Ukrainian exile institutions abroad. In 1939, the world saw the publication of a scientific work by a well-known historian of the church and church law, economist, writer, poet and publicist, prominent public and state figure O. Lototskyi. The fourth part of the book contains the author's memories of his stay in Turkey. During 1919–20, he headed the Ukrainian embassy.

At the same time, the issue of the 'Istanbul Platform' in Turkey in 1929–35 remains poorly understood. Among the available works, this topic is covered through the prism of the study of the activities of the representative of the Ukrainian exile government Volodymyr Murskyi (1929–35). Among these, the scientific works of Ya. Dashkevych¹, V. Okipniuk and D. Kozlova² deserve special attention.

A real find is the scientific work of L. Pidhirna³, who, based on the processing of declassified archival documents of the Sectoral State Archive of the Foreign Intelligence Service of Ukraine, covers both the opening and activities of the 'Istanbul Platform' in Turkey during this period and Ukrainian–Turkish relations in the context of the activities of the exile institution of the UPR in the 1930s. The researcher also examines the intelligence activities of representatives of the 'Istanbul Platform', including M. Pchelinska⁴, as well as ODPU agents, such as M. Zabello⁵.

Nevertheless, the information activities of the 'Istanbul Platform' of the late 1920s and early 1930s require a more in-depth study.

The results and discussions. Being an illegal residence of the Ukrainian exile special services and, at the same time, unofficially representing the interests of the State Centre of the UPR, the Ukrainian government in exile, the 'Istanbul Platform'⁶ and its representatives were unable to conduct official diplomatic, public, or educational activities in Istanbul in 1929–1935.

First of all, the statelessness of the Ukrainian nation due to the occupation of Ukrainian territory by the Soviet authorities prevented this, and thus the opening and further activity of

¹ *Дашкевич Я.Р.* Турецько-українські взаємовідносини в першій половині ХХ століття. Інформаційні стосунки: національний аспект // Україна. Наука і культура. 2009. Вип. 35. С. 63–72.

² *Окіпнюк В., Козлов Д.* Таємний фронт Володимира Мурського // Історична правда. 2020. 6 жовтня. URL: <https://www.istpravda.com.ua/articles/2020/10/6/158218/>; *Окіпнюк В., Козлов Д.* Володимир Мурський – представник екзильного уряду в Стамбулі // Історична правда. 2018. 17 вересня. URL: <https://www.istpravda.com.ua/articles/5b868bf60ab87/>; *Окіпнюк В., Козлов Д.* Томос–1930, або Як «український нунцій» у Стамбулі боровся за автокефалію УПЦ // Історична правда. 2018. 8 жовтня. URL: <https://www.istpravda.com.ua/articles/5bbb48e7dbf2d/>

³ *Підгірна Л.М.* «Стамбульська платформа» УНР у 20–30-ті рр. ХХ ст.: Просопографічний портрет // Наукові праці Кам'янець-Подільського національного університету імені Івана Огієнка. Історичні науки. 2022. Т. 36. С. 210–226;

⁴ *Підгірна Л.* Дипломатично-розвідувальна діяльність Марії Пчелінської у Стамбулі у 1930-х рр. // Наукові праці Кам'янець-Подільського національного університету імені Івана Огієнка. Збірник за підсумками звітної наукової конференції викладачів, докторантів і аспірантів. 2022. Вип. 21. С. 37–38.

⁵ *Підгірна Л.* Микола Забелло (1892–1967): персональна біографія агента ОДПУ «Надія» // Наукові праці Кам'янець-Подільського національного університету імені Івана Огієнка. Історичні науки. 2022. Т. 40. С. 205–220.

⁶ Галузевий державний архів Служби зовнішньої розвідки України (ГДА СЗРУ). Ф. 1. Оп. 1. Спр. 12617. Т. 8. Арк. 31–32.

the official diplomatic mission of an independent Ukraine in Turkey, despite the past, very successful and mutually beneficial diplomatic relations between the UPR and the Republic of Turkey was impossible⁷.

The existence of Turkish-Soviet political and economic relations, which until 1930 were very warm and friendly⁸, also hindered the official activities of the UPR's representative office in Istanbul. As a result, Soviet diplomacy/Soviet special services had ample opportunities and almost unlimited space for actions, public official statements, provocations, anti-Ukrainian propaganda, the formation of certain hybrid ideas about Soviet power and life in the USSR, as well as for official and unofficial persecution of Ukrainian public figures and representatives of political emigration, public denigration of the reputation of the Ukrainian government in exile, etc.

In Europe during the interwar period, the USSR launched entire special operations to discredit the Ukrainian national liberation movement and Ukrainian statesmen. For example, in Paris, France, on 25 May 1926, an agent of the All-Russian Emergency Commission, Samuel Schwartzbard, made an arrest warrant for the Chief Ataman of the Ukrainian People's Republic, Symon Petliura, who was later presented as a national-scale pogromist. The same disinformation was spread about other representatives of the Ukrainian political emigration, who were turned into faceless, rebellious 'beyazrus' ('white Russians')⁹ who did not want to live in peace and friendship with other nations in the format of the great Soviet Union.

Representatives of the Ukrainian political emigration and even ordinary Ukrainian emigrants in the Middle East, particularly in Istanbul, suffered the same fate¹⁰. They were perceived as 'unreliable'¹¹, and all the past achievements of the Ukrainian government and diplomacy of the Ukrainian People's Republic were devalued.

Therefore, with the arrival in Istanbul of V. Murskyi, a representative of the exiled Ukrainian government, who, with the help of the Ukrainian community in the city, formed an illegal residence of the UPR Central Committee in exile –the 'Istanbul Platform' in 1929¹². One of its most important tasks was to launch an information and educational campaign in Istanbul and the Middle East as a whole, to free the Ukrainian emigration from the grip of the cliché 'Beyazrus' imposed on them and to represent the Ukrainian community not only as representatives of a stateless Ukrainian nation with occupied territories, but also as carriers of a separate culture, history, and spirituality who continue to fight for Ukraine's independence and self-sufficiency. Remind the Turkish people of their common history and the continuity of Ukrainian-Turkish political, military and economic relations¹³.

⁷ ГДА СЗРУ. Ф. 1. Оп. 1. Спр. 12617, Т. 2. Арк. 270, 271.

⁸ ГДА СЗРУ. Ф. 1. Оп. 1. Спр. 12617, Т. 1. Арк. 174–176.

⁹ ГДА СЗРУ. Ф. 1. Оп. 1. Спр. 12617, Т. 6. Арк. 354.

¹⁰ ГДА СЗРУ. Ф. 1. Оп. 1. Спр. 12617, Т. 2. Арк. 270, 271.

¹¹ ГДА СЗРУ. Ф. 1. Оп. 1. Спр. 6945, Т. 5. Арк. 62.

¹² Підгірна Л.М. Українсько-турецькі відносини у контексті діяльності «Стамбульської платформи» державного центру УНР в екзилі у 30-ті рр. ХХ ст. // «Актуальні проблеми історії, філософії та права ц дослідженнях молодих учених». Збірник тез учасників конференції молодих учених (м. Київ, 13 грудня 2022). Київ, 2023. С. 158.

¹³ Окпнюк В., Козлов Д. Тасмний фронт Володимира Мурського...

The agenda included not only important intelligence and political tasks, but also public and educational ones. This was the so-called civil and cultural diplomacy and the search for allies¹⁴. He quickly established close relations with representatives of the intelligence services of England, France, Italy, Japan and Germany, who worked under diplomatic cover in Istanbul. Murskyi tried to use their capabilities in the joint struggle against Bolshevism, to convince the governments of these countries of the need to support the UPR in overthrowing the Soviet regime in Ukraine and restoring state independence. This cooperation was also beneficial to foreign partners, as they viewed the 'Istanbul Platform' as an additional source of intelligence on the political, social and economic situation in the USSR¹⁵.

Later, the Ukrainian political emigration established close cooperation with representatives of other peoples enslaved by Soviet Russia, including the Crimean Tatar and Azerbaijani Diasporas, and representatives of Turkestan.

In Istanbul, V. Murskyi was known as a writer and journalist, a representative of the League of Nations. These Diasporas had their own funding, press and, most importantly, the support of the Turkish government. This allowed V. Murskyi to manoeuvre and launch the 'Istanbul Platform's' outreach activities to prepare meaningful pro-Ukrainian publications for the 'Odlu Yurt', 'Bildirish', 'Almanac' (Azerbaijani publications, which was distributed to the neighboring countries of the East - Persia, Afghanistan, Egypt and Iraq), 'Junguriyet' (Crimean Tatar publication)¹⁶, Turkish and European publications with articles and materials about the Ukrainian community in Istanbul, the situation in post-Soviet Ukraine, the policy of Soviet Russia, etc. These activities allowed the conscious Turkish public and government officials to become aware of the real state of affairs and to reveal the truth about the occupation Soviet regime.

In addition, V. Murskyi cooperated with foreign journalists and representatives of foreign governments in Istanbul, which allowed him to disseminate truthful information outside Istanbul. Thus, upon arriving in Turkey, he met the royal courier from London, Wilton, and later, together with the leaders of the Azerbaijani and Crimean Tatar Diasporas gave an interview to a correspondent of the American publication 'The Times'¹⁷.

The Prometheus Club was founded under the auspices of the 'Istanbul Platform'. It was a joint organisation of the peoples enslaved by Russia, including Georgia, Azerbaijan, the Caucasus mountaineers, Crimean Tatars, the Idel-Ural, and the peoples of Turkestan, to fight together and create their own national states. At the meetings, the club members reviewed the political situation in the USSR, the Soviet press and propaganda materials; discussed the political situation in Turkey itself; considered the issue of further anti-Soviet publications in foreign, diaspora and Turkish publications, etc.

At one of these meetings, Polish diplomats W. Gajwronski and T. Holówko proposed the idea of giving a worthy response to the New Russia propaganda of the pro-Russian Turkish activist Falih Rivkah¹⁸ by writing an anti-Soviet brochure or book. Murskyi liked this idea. As a

¹⁴ ГДА СЗРУ. Ф. 1. Оп. 1. Спр. 12617, Т. 2. Арк. 270, 271.

¹⁵ Окіннюк В., Козлов Д. Таємний фронт Володимира Мурського...

¹⁶ ГДА СЗРУ. Ф. 1. Оп. 1. Спр. 12617, Т. 8. Арк. 51, 56.

¹⁷ ГДА СЗРУ. Ф. 1. Оп. 1. Спр. 12617, Т. 2. Арк. 136, 281.

¹⁸ ГДА СЗРУ. Ф. 1. Оп. 1. Спр. 12617, Т. 7. Арк. 188.

result, a work appeared in Turkish and Arabic, 'The True Face of the New Russia', with a foreword by the head of the Crimean Tatar diaspora, S. Kirimer, debunking Soviet propaganda¹⁹.

From the reports of the ODPU agent 'Nadiya' (M. Zabello), it becomes known that the book was a success in the diaspora and Turkish press. V. Murskyi freely and unhindered sends copies of the book to the most famous Turkish politicians, officials, and public figures, and presents it to Ataturk himself with a gift signature²⁰. Starting in 1930, relations between the Turkish Republic and the USSR began to cool significantly. The Central Committee of the UPR in exile decided to take advantage of this as soon as possible. V. Murskyi made an effort to conclude an agreement with the exiled government of the Crimean Tatar diaspora on the autonomy of Crimea as part of a future independent Ukraine.

This balance of power plays into the hands of the Turkish authorities, as it fits well with the policy of Pan-Turanism²¹. As a result, the further information and public activities of the 'Istanbul Platform' no longer irritate the Turkish special services²². Mutafa Kemal Ataturk used the activities of the Ukrainian illegal residency as a factor in his confrontation with the Soviet government. From intelligence reports, it becomes known that V. Murskyi established contacts with a representative of the Turkish special services, Gambdulag²³, which indicates a certain cooperation and exchange of information between them.

Besides, V. Murskyi wrote and published in Turkish such works as 'Ukraine in the Struggle for Statehood'²⁴, 'Turkey and Russia', 'Turkey and Ukraine'²⁵, which were distributed among well-known Turkish public figures and politicians.

An important component of the 'Istanbul Platform's' information activities was the receipt and further distribution of anti-Soviet propaganda literature, pro-Ukrainian publications, 'flyers' and 'vozvanias'²⁶. All of this propaganda literature was sent to Istanbul from Warsaw, where the propaganda department of the Ukrainian exile special services operated, and from Istanbul, representatives of the 'Istanbul Platform' delivered it to Greater Ukraine via Black Sea ports (especially Odesa).

The 'Istanbul Platform' facilitated the distribution of anti-Soviet propaganda literature by the Ukrainian Press Bureau and established links with Ukrainians who served in the Soviet army in Turkestan.

¹⁹ Підгірна Л. Рух Прометеїзму, його ідеї та співпраця у контексті діяльності «Стамбульської платформи» (20-30-ті рр. ХХ ст.) // Збірник наукових праць молодих учених Кам'янець-Подільського національного університету імені Івана Огієнка. 2023. Вип. 15. С. 78.

²⁰ Дашкевич Я.Р. Турецько-українські взаємовідносини в першій половині ХХ століття // Україна. Наука і культура. 2009. Вип. 35. С. 65.

²¹ ГДА СЗРУ. Ф. 1. Оп. 1. Спр. 12617, Т. 3. Арк. 112-114.

Пан-Туранизм (Пантуранизм) - ідеологія, яка була спрямована на створення тюркської супердержави, що простягається від Балкан у Європі, на схід через Туреччину, Іран (Персію), Кавказ, Центральну Азію до північно-західного Китаю включно.

²² ГДА СЗРУ. Ф. 1. Оп. 1. Спр. 12617, Т. 2. Арк. 282.

²³ ГДА СЗРУ. Ф. 1. Оп. 1. Спр. 12617, Т. 2. Арк. 282.

²⁴ ГДА СЗРУ. Ф. 1. Оп. 1. Спр. 12617, Т. 6. Арк. 1, 2.

²⁵ ГДА СЗРУ. Ф. 1. Оп. 1. Спр. 12617, Т. 2. Арк. 283.

²⁶ Підгірна Л. Микола Забелло (1892-1967). Персональна біографія агента ОДПУ «Надія»...

Having integrated into Turkish society by opening their own businesses (catering establishments, clothing stores, etc.) and holding engineering positions in European companies²⁷, representatives of the 'Istanbul Platform' not only regained their respectable status, but also gained access to the Soviet Embassy in Istanbul, which allowed them to collect intelligence. Among these representatives were Y. Smilhin and V. Samopalenko²⁸, who, while supplying dairy products to the USSR Embassy, collected information and sent it to the leadership of the Ukrainian exile special services.

A member of the 'Istanbul Platform', M. Pchelinska, played an important role in the implementation of information activities, maintaining contacts with the heads of French and Japanese foreign intelligence, and receiving information about the activities of the Soviet embassy, representatives of the Soviet special services who arrived in Istanbul, etc.²⁹.

Information activities of the 'Istanbul Platform' members were also carried out in the religious sphere. In particular, they tried to obtain the Tomos for the Orthodox Church of Ukraine and the Orthodox churches of the peoples enslaved by the Russian Empire. This activity consisted not only in uniting the Ukrainian, Armenian and Georgian diasporas in Istanbul, but also in establishing contacts with the secretary of the Ecumenical Patriarch of the time, Pope John, and through him with Photios II himself, informing His Holiness about the true state of affairs in post-Soviet Ukraine and the persecution of the Ukrainian clergy by the Soviet authorities³⁰.

Conclusions. One of the important functions of the 'Istanbul Platforms' members of in 1929–35 was informational, and they made incredible efforts to implement it. Without a proper technical base, funding, and other necessary support, and always under the watchful eye of Soviet intelligence, representatives of this unofficial institution in Istanbul managed not only to carry out intelligence, representation, public, and anti-Soviet educational work in Turkey and the Middle East, but also to make a certain informational and diplomatic breakthrough: to give the Ukrainian issue international importance. Despite the loss of the Ukrainian nation's statehood, to explain to European, Middle Eastern and even Far Eastern politicians the significance, role and benefits of restoring an independent and self-sufficient Ukraine on the world map and its importance for global geopolitics and economics.

In the end, the further implementation of the intentions of the Central Committee of the UPR in exile and the Ukrainian exile special services was prevented not only by the superiority of forces on the side of the enemy – Soviet Russia, but also by the lethargy and indecision of world politicians, their reluctance to engage in open confrontation with Moscow. By exporting grain and other resources that belonged to the peoples enslaved by the Bolshevik regime, including Ukrainians, the Soviet government was already meeting certain economic needs of many European countries. The untimely death of the 'Istanbul Platform's' head V. Murskyi led to the curtailment of its activities and its closure. The final point in this process

²⁷ Підгірна Л.М. «Стамбульська платформа» УНР у 20–30-ті рр. ХХ ст.: Просопографічний портрет...

²⁸ ГДА СЗРУ. Ф. 1. Оп. 1. Спр. 12617, Т. 8. Арк. 56; Т. 9. Арк. 313.

²⁹ Підгірна Л. Дипломатично-розвідувальна діяльність Марії Пчелінської у Стамбулі... С. 37–38.

³⁰ Підгірна Л. «Стамбульська платформа» у контексті боротьби за українську автокефалію у міжвоєнний період (30-ті рр. ХХ ст.) // Наукові праці Кам'янець-Подільського національного університету імені Івана Огієнка. Збірник за підсумками звітної наукової конференції викладачів, докторантів і аспірантів (м. Кам'янець-Подільський, 12–13 березня 2024 р.). 2024. Вип. 23. С. 97.

was the outbreak of the Second World War, which not only suspended most political processes in the international arena of that time, but also radically changed European and Middle Eastern politics itself.

Today, the importance of the 'Istanbul Platform's' information activities is a significant historical lesson and an example of creating historical continuity in the process of further development of Ukraine as an independent, European state.

Людмила Вовчук

Інформаційна діяльність «Стамбульської платформи» упродовж 1929–35 рр.

Анотація: Стаття присвячена висвітленню інформаційної діяльності «Стамбульської платформи» – нелегальної резидентури українських спецслужб ДЦ УНР в екзилі упродовж 1929–35 рр. В основі діяльності цієї інституції була презентація українців на міжнародній арені, як нації, що прагнула повернути свою державність; окреслення й обґрунтованість їх духовних, геополітичних та економічних інтересів, а також протистояння антиукраїнській пропаганді та дискредитації української політичної еміграції, розгорнутій у міжвоєнний період радянською Росією.

При написанні наукової праці авторка послуговувалася принципами об'єктивності, конкретно-історичного підходу, цілісності, всебічності, системності, а також історико-типологічний, проблемно-хронологічний та історико-порівняльний методи, які допомогли розглянути всебічно запропоновану тематику.

Без належної технічної бази, фінансування й іншого необхідного забезпечення, перебуваючи весь час під «пильним оком» радянських спецслужб, члени «Стамбульської платформи» сумлінно здійснювали інформаційну діяльність не лише у Туреччині, але й на Близькому Сході. Попри втрачену українською нацією державність, вони прагнули роз'яснити європейському, близькосхідному та навіть далекосхідному політикуму значення, роль і переваги відновлення незалежної та самостійної України на карті світу та її значення для світової геополітики та економіки. Передчасна смерть офіційного представника уряду УНР в екзилі у Стамбулі В. Мурського, Вселенського Патріарха Фотія II, перевага радянської Росії, млявість і нерішучість світових політиків вступити у відкрите протистояння з Москвою, підготовка до Другої світової війни, призвело до згорання «Стамбульської платформи».

Ключові слова: українська політична еміграція, міжвоєнна Туреччина, «Стамбульська платформа», Володимир Мурський, Микола Забелло, Марія Пчелінська, українські екзильні спецслужби