

BELARUSIAN CORPS OF SELF-DEFENCE

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Bela'rusian Corps of 'Self-De'fence, (BCSD, BKS), Belarusian Self-Defence

Militarised command of Belarusian [collaborators](#) in the territory of Belarus invaded by German Nazi troops in 1942-1943 during the Great Patriotic War.

The [Belarusian People's Self-Assistance](#) (BPSA, BNS) started to be formed in the summer of 1942 with the authorisation of the German authorities. The official message of general commissioner of Belarus W. Kube to chairman of the BPSA I. A. Jermachenka, dated June 29, 1942, stated, 'You and your employees shall prepare an appeal addressed to the Belarusian population for the male to join the Belarusian Free Corps of Self-Defence'. The text of the address was discussed on June 30, 1942, at the session of the Central Council of the BPSA, signed by I. A. Jermachenka, V. Ja. Gadliewski, V. L. Ivanowski, U. Kazlowski, Ju. Sakovich, Archbishop Filafiej and printed in the *Bielaruskaja Gazeta* («Беларуская газета», lit. 'Belarusian newspaper') for July 4, 1942. On July 1, 1942, head of the SS, Security Police and SD of Belarus, SS Brigadefuhrer major general C. Zenner, held a meeting on the issue of organising self-defence. This meeting was attended by colonel Heisburg, Obersturmfuhrer Schlegel, and I. A. Jermachenka. After these events, C. Zenner issued the Order which emphasised, '1. According to the Order of the general commissioner of Belarus, self-defence of the Belarusian population shall be formed in full agreement with the BPSA. 2. Self-defence shall be a subsidiary organisation for the German police. Its task shall include helping the German and local police fight against the Bolsheviks and saboteurs and ensuring peace in Belarus... 6. The head of the BPSA shall act under my control as the chief commandant (obercommandant) of Belarusian self-defence. 7. Departments shall be sent to action at the direction of the German police authorities if it is necessary. 8. Arms and accountment shall be supplied by the German police...'. The duties of chief commandant I. A. Jermachenka included general self-defence management, uniforms provision, corps food and accommodation. In the akrugas (circuits), relevant duties were assigned to the heads of the BPSA as self-defence akrugas commandants.

For the BCSD (BKS) organisation, I. A. Jermachenka formed a military commission which included, except himself, Kalkievich, Kasiak, F. V. Kushal, M. Pugachow, Ju. Sakovich, Chabatarevich. The BCSD headquarters was formed under the chief commandant (Lt.Col. Ja. N. Gut'ska as a headquarters commander), and commissions for the organisation of self-defence were formed in the akrugas. According to the military commission offer, it was supposed to form the three divisions of the BCSD, i.e. the 1st one was assigned to the direction of Minsk and Sluck; the 2nd one, to Baranavichy, Navagrudak, and Slonim; the 3rd one, to Viliejka, Lida, and Glybokaje. According to C. Zenner's Order, each rajon was allowed to have a self-defence unit (from a company to a battalion).

The issue of the organisation of the BCSD was discussed at the congress of akrugas heads

of the BSDH convened by I. A. Jermachenka in the second half of July 1942. It was decided to start work on military personnel training. From the beginning of August 1942, 3-week BCSD officer courses (head F. V. Kushal) opened in Minsk, where about 260 people were retrained. Non-commissioned officers (junior commanders) attended courses in the akrugas. The BCSD formation was accompanied by an extensive propaganda campaign. The idea that the BCSD would have destroyed the partisans and become the seed of the Belarusian Army for the future was emphasised.

A total of 20 battalions and several smaller units of the BCSD were formed, which, however, did not fulfil the tasks assigned to them.

Since the autumn of 1942, the attitude towards self-defence began to change on the Germans' part who did not hurry to arm it, since they saw a danger for themselves in forming of a large national Belarusian military and police command, even if it were loyal to their government. I. A. Jermachenka was deprived of the title of chief commandant, and the BCSD headquarters was liquidated. I. A. Jermachenka was allowed to have with him a military assistant for self-defence matters as well as assistants to the chairmen of the BPSA in the akrugas who were subordinated to the German akruka police chiefs. In the BCSD, officer ranks were banned, instead of it, the names of official positions were introduced, i.e. platoon commander, company commander, etc. In April 1943, head of the Belarusian Order Police colonel Klepsch noted that 'the attempt to form self-defence from Belarusian volunteers failed for several reasons. First, despite numerous attempts, it was not possible to obtain the required quantity of arms from the Wehrmacht. Second, unarmed self-guards and their families were constantly terrorised by partisans as soon as it became known about forming of self-defence guards. Third, these people, with rare exceptions, were unreliable because they were easily influenced by the opponent propaganda and sympathised with partisans. There were cases when large self-defence patrols, armed with rifles and automatic arms, instead of resisting, went over to the adversary' side. In addition, the mobilisation of people for Belarusian self-defence, conducted in accordance with the task of the Belarusian self-assistance, was effected in appropriate conditions and was ultimately entrusted to the gendarmerie'.

The attempt to form the BCSD was failed, and in the spring of 1943, the Hitlerites had to disband it.

Literature

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