

Coalition Council of Kyiv Students

Fond F-1757 Kyiv Students Coalition Council

The Fond contains only six items.

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Amid revolutionary upheavals and under pressure from the State Duma, Tsar Nicholas II abdicated in February 1917. The Romanov dynasty ceased to exist in Russia. On March 3, 1917, the Provisional Government was formed, led by Prince Lvov.

One active component of the sociopolitical struggle at the time was the student youth movement. Demanding democratic changes in the state at the turn of the 20th century, the student youth movement ratcheted up tension in society; it was the kind of social force that the government, political parties and the general public had to reckon with. Students represented a significant moral strength of society and formed the kind of environment where topical sociopolitical ideas were evolving and where a leading force of the future Ukrainian revolution was taking shape. One such newly created structure was the Kyiv Students Coalition Council, whose documents are stored in the State Archive of Kyiv Region.

Fond No. 1757, 'Kyiv Students Coalition Council,' contains only six items. Originally, the fond documents were kept at the Central State Archive of the October Revolution and Socialist Development of the Ukrainian SSR in the city of Kharkov. Under an order by the Archival Administration of the Ukrainian SSR Interior Ministry dated Feb. 15, 1955, the documents were transferred to the State Archive of Kyiv Region on June 19, 1955.

Prior to October 1988, all of the fond documents remained in classified stacks. The Oct. 11, 1988, declassification act established that all the items in storage contained no secret information and should be moved from classified to open stacks.

The Kyiv Students Coalition Council began its activity no later than March 15, 1917 (the first minutes of the meeting are dated March 15, 1917). The date of the Coalition Council's dissolution could not be established, but the fond documents record that the last meeting took place on April 21, 1917.

Comrade Batkis was elected the chairman of the Coalition Council and Comrade Granovsky was elected deputy chairman.

The main task of the Coalition Council was to promote the Provisional Government's policy among the soldiers, peasant, students and young people.

Although the fond does not contain very many items, they present a rather comprehensive view of the principal areas of the Coalition Council's activity.

The fond's most informative materials are the Coalition Council's meeting minutes.¹ Because the minutes of relevant items are not chronologically systematized, and some manuscripts are illegible, working with them involves certain challenges.

In all, there are 15 records of Coalition Council's meetings – between March 15 and March 21, 1917 – typewritten and partly handwritten: March 13 (F-1757, op. 1, d. 1, p. 37), March 18 (cit., p. 9), March 20 (cit., p. 8), March 22 (cit., p. 12), March 24, (cit., p. 1), March 26 (cit., p. 3), March 28 (cit., p. 16), April 3, (cit., p. 26), April 6 (cit., p. 23), April 8 (cit., p. 21), April 10 (cit., p. 30), April 12 (cit., p. 18), April 14 (cit., p. 65), and April 21 (cit., p. 74).

The very first meeting of the Coalition Council, on March 15, 1917 defined the council's new functions: "During the period of underground activity, the Coalition Council was a small organization responsible for the entire students' movement. Today, the broad student masses have asserted their right to participate in the Coalition Council's activities."² So under the new conditions, the Council of Students Deputies was created to coordinate the activity of individual educational centers and "steer them along the general course." The Coalition Council was to be a "leader providing the general principles of activity." The Kyiv Students Coalition Council was, in essence, an executive body of the Council of Students' Deputies. The Coalition Council also included representatives of the Council of Students' Deputies. After analyzing the activity of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies and the Soviet of Soldiers' Deputies at that meeting, the Coalition Council made the decision not to join them, because "their activity is not subject to any control."³

The array of issues considered at the Coalition Council's meetings is quite diverse and identifies the principal areas of its activity: propaganda work among the peasantry, soldiers, young people and students; the creation of student-faculty conciliation commissions; the organization of public rallies and assemblies of young people; the Coalition Council's stance on the war and the delegation of its representatives to the Southwestern Front; participation of Coalition Council representatives in public meetings at educational institutions; the Coalition Council's position with regard to the militia and students' active participation in its work; the training of propaganda workers and organizers of public rallies among the rural residents; the activity of the Coalition Council's commissions and its bureau; admission of new members to the Coalition Council, etc.

In the opinion of its members, the Coalition Council's activity was to proceed along two lines: work among students and work among the masses. The work among students was aimed at ensuring "differentiation between socialist and bourgeois students."⁴ The Coalition Council created the following commissions: publishing, information, students, investigations, finance and provinces.

The Coalition Council's most proactive body was its information bureau, which was designed to "popularize, explain the meaning of events, organize the regions, and promote the ideas of a democratic republic."⁵ The Propaganda Guidelines identified all propaganda areas: support of the Provisional Government, the reversal of the decision with regard to the war until the convocation of the Constituent Assembly, civil freedoms, the creation of the Council of Workers Deputies, the organization of militia [units] on the local level.⁶ The information bureau also provided free delivery of fliers and leaflets published by the editorial commission to the front and the provinces. The bureau had a literature and newspaper distribution warehouse and included four commissions: financial, technical, editorial and provincial. The editorial commission published and compiled various fliers and reissued old leaflets from the 1905 Revolution.

At its meeting on March 18, 1917, the Coalition Council formulated its position on the war: "The war is a war by the bourgeoisie against the proletariat, so in the interest of democracy the war must be ended. However, the cessation of the war can be ensured in an organized manner. So, on the one hand, the Russian proletariat should appeal to the international proletariat to wage a coordinated struggle for peace. On the

other hand, it should exert pressure on its own government, so that the latter renounces its aggressive goals, i.e., formulate specific conditions for peace.”⁷

A separate group in the fond contains propaganda-related materials: leaflets, fliers and appeals by the Coalition Council to peasants, government employees, soldiers and students. The main slogans of those documents were the convocation of the Constituent Assembly, the formation of Soviets of Peasants and Soldiers Deputies, and the creation of a democratic republic and a revolutionary army.⁸

There are some interesting fond documents relating to students' attitude toward their studies and relations with faculty members. As a result of such active participation in sociopolitical processes, students completely forgot about their primary duties. Studies – the basic conceptual activity that makes students students – were pushed to the sidelines. Besides, the Provisional Government “added fuel to the fire” by urging students to “Go back to the people!” It gave Russia's enlightened classes a difficult task – i.e., help the people understand the changes that have taken place in society, and bring elements of scientific knowledge home to them. In and of itself, that would have certainly struck a chord with students. Many young people left universities to go to the country to teach peasants to read and write and enlighten them politically.

The fond documents provide evidence about the first meeting between representatives of the Coalition Council and faculty members, where it turned out that “faculty representatives generally agree with all of the students' demands.”⁹ In addition, the issue of students' attendance was brought up at many of the Coalition Council's meetings. Thus, at a meeting on March 26, 1917, the Coalition Council decided that “medical students should finally stop attending classes***and medical students' decision to do community service should be welcomed.”¹⁰

So, in March 1917, students stopped going to school, and the student community as a social stratum gradually began to disintegrate. Finally, by October 1917, that active stratum ceased to exist. It represented nothing but a degenerated social structure with broken social connections. And after the Bolshevik victory, the student community as the guardian of societal traditions became history forever.

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- ¹ - Gosudarstvennyy arkhiv Kyivskoi oblasti, f. 1757, op. 1, d. 1, p. 1.
² - Op. cit., d. 1, p. 60.
³ - Op. cit., d. 1, p. 61.
⁴ - Op. cit., d. 1, p. 27.
⁵ - Op. cit., d. 1, p. 1.
⁶ - Op. cit., d. 1, p. 2, 2 ob.
⁷ - Op. cit., d. 1, p. 9 ob.
⁸ - Op. cit., d. 3.
⁹ - Op. cit., d. 1, p. 47.
¹⁰ - Op. cit., d. 1, p. 3 ob.

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Coalition Council of Kyiv students

Fond F-1757

Opis'1

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