

Nestor Ivanovich Makhno (1889-1934): Died as Exile in Paris

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Nestor Makhno was born Tuesday, October 17, 1889 (October 29 Gregorian) in Gulaipole about ninety kilometres east of Alexandrovsk (now Zaporozhye). His father died when he was one year old leaving his mother to care for five small boys. At the age of seven Makhno was put to work tending cows and sheep for local land owners. Later he was employed as a farm laborer and as a worker in a foundry.

During the Revolution of 1905-07 he joined an anarchist group and took part in terrorist activities. In 1909 he was sentenced to death for participating in a crime during which a police officer was killed, but the sentence was reduced to ten years hard labor, because he was still a minor. He served his sentence in Butyrki Prison in Moscow, where he became a convinced anarchist.

Makhno was released from prison by the general amnesty of March 1917, and returned to Gulaipole where he organized an armed anarchist detachment. When the armistice of November, 1918, resulted in the withdrawal of the German forces from Russian territory, Makhno managed to seize substantial quantities of abandoned arms and equipment. He won great popularity among the peasantry and soon his followers numbered many thousands (one source says 20,000). They alternately fought against or sided with the Red Army. Makhno's men were noted for their unusual cruelty. Wherever his army went they left a trail of plunder, rape and murder. The Mennonites, because they happened to live in the vicinity of Gulaipole, had better supplies of horses, feed, wagons and food, and were comparatively defenceless, suffered terribly at the hands of the Makhno bandits. It is estimated that Makhno and his bands were directly or indirectly responsible for the death of between two and three thousand Mennonites.

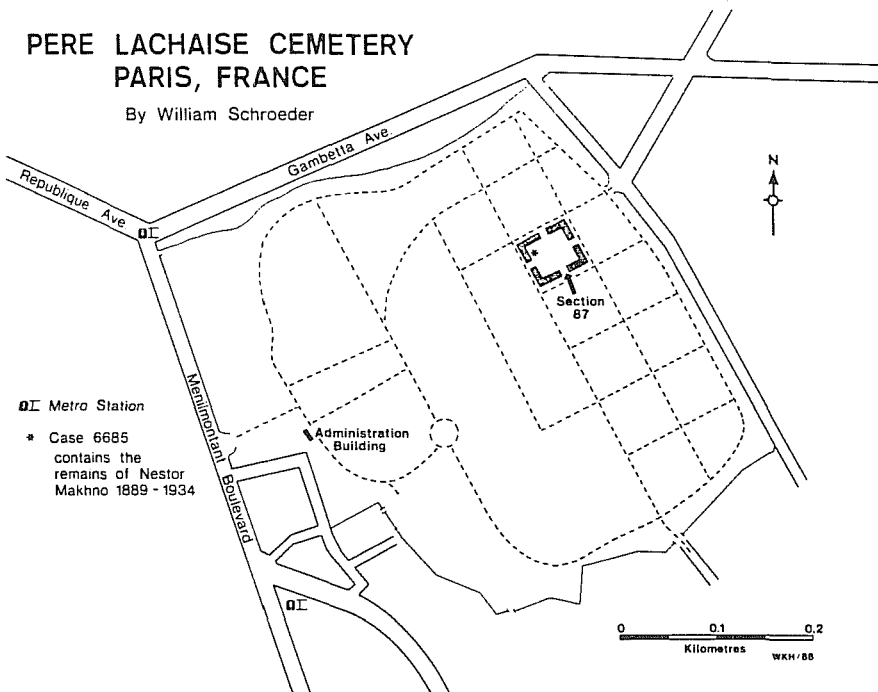
After Wrangel's army had been defeated in November, 1920, Trotsky ordered his troops to attack Makhno's headquarters in Gulaipole. However,

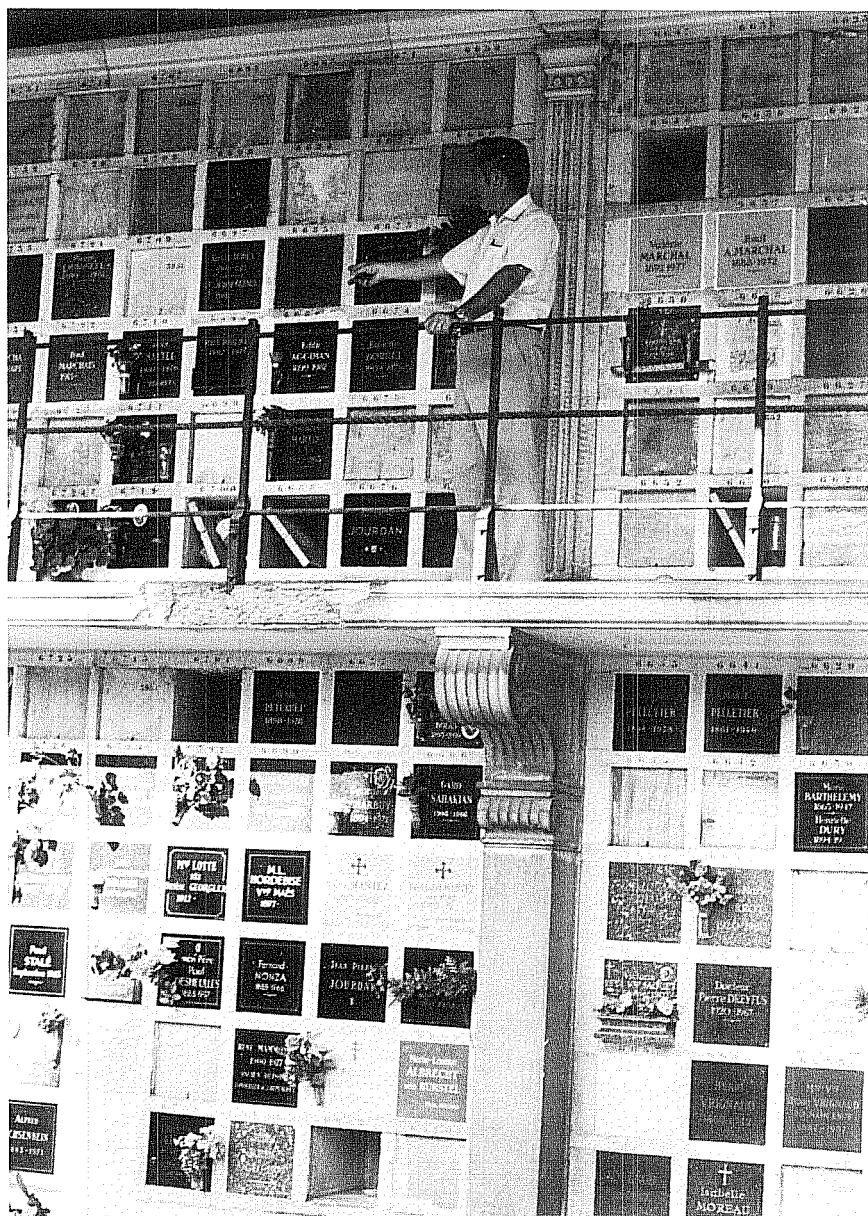
Makhno and a small battered remnant of his army managed to elude their pursuers and fled to the western border of the country. Suffering from unhealed wounds, Makhno crossed the Dnester River into Rumania on August 26, 1921; a year later he went to Poland and to Paris in 1923. While in Paris he worked as a cobbler, a printer and in an automobile factory. During this time he also wrote his memoirs of 1917–18 in three volumes.

Nestor Makhno died of tuberculosis in the Lenon Hospital on Wednesday, July 25, 1934, at six o'clock in the morning. Besides his wife Galina Kusmenko, about five hundred mourners, anarchists and revolutionaries from all parts of Europe who, like Makhno, had drifted to Paris, followed the plain coffin to the Pere-Lachaise Cemetery, where his body was cremated and his ashes interred in section 87, case 6685. A portrait of Makhno done in bronze relief has been fastened to the cubicle that holds his remains.

Sources

1. Peters, Victor, *Nestor Makhno*. Winnipeg. Echo Books. 1967.
2. *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* (Translated Edition) New York. Macmillan Publishing Co. 1977–83.
3. Wiczynski, Joseph L. (Editor). *The Modern Encyclopedia of Russian and Soviet History*. Gulf Breeze, Florida Academic International Press. 1976.





Case number 6685 in this columbarium in the Pere Lachaise Cemetery in Paris, contains the ashes of the cremated body of the notorious Nestor Makhno 1889–1934. A bronze plaque with the bust of Makhno done in raised relief is secured to the granite slab that seals the cubicle.

