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The case of Jurij L. Vojcehovskij

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WIM COUDENYS

RUSSIAN COLLABORATION IN BELGIUM DURING WORLD WAR II

The case of Jurij L. Vojcehovskij

In 1983 Michel Heller published some documents on Jurij Žerebkov (1908-?), the ‘Russian *Führer*’ in Paris during World War II.¹ In doing so he wished to contribute to the historiography of the Russian emigration, which, according to Heller, had not yet been written. Now, nineteen years later, the history of the Russian Diaspora after the Russian Revolution has largely been covered, except, perhaps, for... World War II. Unlike the fate of such notorious military collaborators as Andrej Vlasov (who was not even an émigré *stricto sensu*) or Petr Krasnov, the behaviour of White Russians during the German occupation of Western Europe is generally passed over in silence.² In Belgium, as in France³, Russian collaboration during World War II is a touchy subject, but unlike the émigrés in France, those in Belgium cannot hide behind the vastness or heterogeneity of the Russian community and proclaim their ignorance. On the contrary: the Russian Diaspora in Belgium numbered between 3,823 (1922) and about 8,000 people (1937)⁴ and was largely concentrated in Brussels and the French-speaking part of the country. The post-war attitude of the Russians towards collaboration during the war is remarkably similar to that of their Belgian (French-speaking) neighbors, who generally ignore their own involvement and pretend that only the ‘others’ (i.e. the

1. Michel Heller, “Un ‘Führer russe’ à Paris: Ju. S. Žerebkov (1941),” *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique*, 24, 1-2 (1983): 179-199.

2. Cf. Ju. Curganov, *Neudavšijsja revanš. Belaja emigracija vo vtoroj mirovoj vojne* (M., 2001).

3. R. H. Johnston, *New Mecca, New Babylon. Paris and the Russian exiles, 1920-1945* (Kingston-Montreal, 1988): 164 ff.

4. J. H. Simpson, *The Refugee problem. Report of a survey* (London-New York-Toronto, 1939): 559; cf. W. Coudenys, “Een caleidoscoop des levens. De vele gezichten van de Russische emigratie in België,” *Koninklijke Zuid-Nederlandse Maatschappij voor Taal- en Letterkunde en Geschiedenis. Handelingen*, 54 (2000): 247-249.

Flemish-speaking community of Belgium) are to blame. Being part of 'French culture' allegedly had prevented them from being lured by 'German barbarism.' This excuse, however, cannot be applied to the Russians in Belgium, who had retained a remarkable cultural homogeneity during the 1920's and 1930's. The Russian community in Belgium largely consisted of Russian military personnel, who had initially been drawn to the country by the possibility of continuing their studies.⁵ They were in a sense bound to each other by both past and future and this would strengthen the sense of community, especially in the early 1930's, when the economic crisis struck. Additionally, the leaders of the White Russian Armies, Generals Anton Denikin (1872-1947) and Petr Vrangel' (1878-1928), had already been welcomed in the 1920's by the Belgian military and industrialists with whom they shared good memories of collaboration before and during World War I.⁶ This mutual sympathy, together with the alleged Belgian reluctance to recognize the Soviet Union, made Belgium the logical location for the headquarters of the 'Russian All-Military Union' (Russkoe Obščestvo-Voinskij Sojuz — ROVS) after the abduction of General Jevgenij Miller (1876-1939) by the NKVD in Paris on 22 September 1937. In the ensuing turmoil the leaders of ROVS were expelled from France and some of them were to resume their activities in Belgium. General Aleksej Arhangel'skij (1872-1959), who lived and worked in Brussels, was appointed Miller's successor. The Belgian authorities, fearing the reaction of the Soviets, were not too keen on this, but eventually permitted these tsarist officers to collaborate with Belgian anti-communist organizations with relations in high military, industrial and political circles.⁷ As a result, Belgium became the only country in Western Europe that saw the number of its Russian immigrants *increase* by the end of the 1930's.

However, although the conditions for Russian collaboration with Nazi Germany in Belgium seemed ideal and apparently corroborate the (Soviet) thesis that *all* White Russian émigrés, especially the military, had sympathized with Nazi Germany,⁸ the current contribution shows that circumstances merely create opportunities and do not necessarily incriminate all participants in the game. The case of Jurij L'vovič Vojcehovskij, who took advantage of the circumstances in Belgium to become *Leiter* of the Russian community during WW II, amply proves this thesis.

5. W. Coudenys, *art. cit.*: 253-255.

6. W. Coudenys, "Op post in België. De herinneringen van kolonel Andrej Prezjbano, Russisch militair attaché, 1914-1922," *Militaria Belgica*, 2001, p. 83-108; W. Peeters & J. Wilson, *L'industrie belge dans la Russie des tsars* ([Bruxelles], 1999): 127-150.

7. W. Coudenys, "Een caleidoscoop...", *art. cit.*: 242-246; *id.*, "Russkaja emigracija v Bel'gii: periferejnaja kul'tura ili samostojatel'nyj centr," *Slavica Gandensia*, 25, 1 (1998): 16-17.

8. Cf. L. K. Škarenkov, *Agonija beloju emigracii* (M., 1981): 174 ff.

Prologue

In the early hours of 1 September 1944 machine gun shots were heard in the rue Defacqz, a side street of the prestigious avenue Louise in the Brussels community of Saint Gilles. At that moment, the shooting should not have drawn too much attention, because the city was on the verge of being liberated by the Allies, and the German troops were frantically preparing their withdrawal. Soon afterwards two bodies were discovered in front of house number 71, the headquarters of the 'Comité d'Entr'aide russe en Belgique' (Russische Selbsthilfsausschuß in Belgien/Russische Vertrauensstelle für Belgien), an organization installed by the Germans to control the Russian colony in the Kingdom of Belgium. The bodies were identified as those of Jurij Vojcehovskij, the director of the Vertrauensstelle and of Aleksej Litvinov, his body guard. A short obituary in the Berlin fascist weekly *Novoe slovo* of 17 September 1944 stated that Vojcehovskij had fallen 'in the line of duty,' but refrained from commenting on the circumstances of the murder, which would continue to remain unclear. According to several witnesses, Vojcehovskij was shot with his own machine gun by an unknown individual, dressed in the uniform of the Vlasov Army.⁹ It was suggested that the assassin was either a member of the Russian Resistance in Belgium or someone sent by the Germans in order to get rid of their Russian collaborator. The (less informed) Paris weekly *Russkie novosti*, on the other hand, claimed that a "patriotic Cossack with a revolver" had shot him in his office.¹⁰ Whatever the circumstances of Vojcehovskij's death, it put an end to one of the most murky and unappetizing episodes in the history of the Russian emigration in Belgium.

The Lizarev Affaire¹¹

It had all started almost 20 years earlier. In Warsaw at that time, two brothers were gradually trying to impose themselves as the leaders of the local Russian community. They belonged to a well-to-do family, and their father, an officer in the Russian Imperial Army, had died at the hands of the Bolsheviks. This event had apparently not only inspired his sons with a fierce hatred of communism, but it had

9. Ju. Miroljubov, "Sud'ba russkogo 'Fjurera' v Bel'gii. Kak byl ubit nemeckij najmit Vojcehovskij," *Russkaja žizn'* [June 1947] (Museum of Russian Culture, San Francisco, Iu. P. Miroljubov Papers, Box 2, Folder 46); M. Čechova to E. De Bruyne d.d. 25-11-1985 (E. De Bruyne Archives, House).

10. "Varšavskij Komitet," *Russkie novosti*, 44 (1946): 4; "Aresty russkih v Bel'gii," *ibid.*, 68 (1946): 6.

11. In general on this affair, see: A. S. Kowalczyk, "Warschau: Die russische Emigration in Polen," in K. Schlögel, ed., *Der große Exodus. Die russische Emigration und ihre Zentren 1917 bis 1941* (München, 1994): 214 ff; *Russkie bez otečestva. Očerki antibol'sevistskoj emigracii 20-40-h godov* (M., 2000): 478 ff. For sympathetic reactions to Vojcehovskij's act, see: S. Melgunov, "Ne ruka-li Čeka?," *Bor'ba za Rossiju*, 78 (1928): 2-3; S. L. Vojcehovskij, *Epizody* (London (Canada), 1978): 12.

also provided them with the necessary financial means to engage themselves fully in Russian social life in the Polish capital. Sergej (1902-1984), the elder of the two, proved to be most successful. He was already director of the Warsaw-based news agency 'Russpress' in the 1920's and was slowly gaining some renown as an author of patriotic poetry. The career of the younger brother, Jurij, had been less promising. Born in Kalisz on 6 November 1905 and brought up in Kiev, in 1921 he fled to Warsaw, where he studied at the Polytechnic School, but without much success. By 1926 he had become the chairman of the 'Union of Russian Youth' (Ob'edinenie Russkoj Molodeži) in Warsaw¹², but two years later, on 29 April 1928, he was forced to resign, apparently because he had diverted some Union funds to his own pockets. Five days later, on 4 May 1928, Jurij Vojcehovskij made an attempt on the life of Aleksej Lizarev, the Soviet commercial representative in Warsaw. Lizarev was only slightly wounded and at the ensuing trial, which took place on 28 December 1928, it became clear that Vojcehovskij had not acted out of political motives, but out of mere frustration with his forced resignation from the Union of Russian Youth. Moreover, by his deed Vojcehovskij had seriously undermined the hitherto good relationship between Russian émigrés and the Polish authorities and therefore could not count on much sympathy from his fellow-countrymen. Unlike Boris Koverda (1907-1987), a Russian who had killed the Soviet representative to Poland in 1927 and who had virtually been treated as a political offender, Vojcehovskij's attempt was considered a purely criminal affair and the culprit was condemned to 10 years' imprisonment.

Escape to Belgium¹³

5 years, 4 months and 10 days after his imprisonment, on 14 September 1933, Jurij Vojcehovskij was released from the Warsaw Mokotów prison.¹⁴ He went to live in the ulica Belgijska and the name of this street may well have inspired his next step: in August 1934 he applied for a visa to Belgium and provided the Belgian Embassy in Warsaw with the necessary documents: a health certificate, proof of good conduct during the previous six months provided by the Polish police, and a letter of invitation from the Catholic University of Leuven. Both Robert Jourdain S.J. (1897-1952), the director of the 'Foyer Universitaire Slave' in Leuven, and Mihail Fedorov (1858-1949), the President of the 'Central Committee for the Patronage of Russian Students Abroad' (Central'nyj Komitet po obespečeniju vyššego obrazovanija russkomu junoshestvu za granicej), wrote letters of recommendation

12. Vojcehovskij to P. B. Struve d.d. 27-4-1926 (Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford (HIA), P.B. Struve Papers, Box 38, Folder 40).

13. Unless specified otherwise, the (administrative) information is derived from Vojcehovskij's personal file at the Belgian 'Office des Étrangers' (OE), A129754 G. De Woychiechowski.

14. "Osvoboždenie Ju. Vojcehovskogo," *Časovoj*, 108-109 (1933): 24.

which sufficiently assured the Belgian authorities of Vojcehovskij's eligibility. A visa was duly issued.

Vojcehovskij arrived in Leuven on 5 October 1934, just in time for the beginning of the new academic year, but he seems to have been in no hurry to start his studies in 'Sciences politiques et sociales' right away.¹⁵ He took up his old habits and committed himself to the 'Union of Russian Students in Belgium' (Sojuz russkikh studentov v Bel'gii). During a memorial service for the abducted General Aleksandr Kutepov (1882-1930), held on 26 January 1935 at the Leuven Orthodox chapel, Vojcehovskij made an ardent speech about Kutepov and other White Army leaders he claimed to have known.¹⁶ These and other activities, some of them in a more private (amorous) sphere, meant that he did not turn up for his examinations in the summer of 1935. His political activities, however, did not go unnoticed by the Soviet Embassy in Brussels. When Vojcehovskij joined his mistress in Brussels in December 1935, the Soviet ambassador to Belgium, Evgenij Rubinin, officially protested against his presence in the capital. The director of the Belgian 'Sûreté Publique' promptly served Vojcehovskij with an eviction order, which was only modified into an arrangement, compelling Vojcehovskij to remain in the town of Leuven, thanks to the intervention of Jourdain and Fedorov. He was to resume his studies and was formally prohibited to engage in any political activities. The editor of the Russian military journal *Časovoj*, who had always sympathised with Vojcehovskij, launched a fierce attack against Rubinin and the Belgian authorities, who were all too willing to oblige the Soviets,¹⁷ but to no avail. The ban was lifted in December 1936, but Vojcehovskij only moved to Brussels in November 1938, after graduating from the Catholic University of Leuven and marrying his former mistress.

New opportunities

During his studies in Leuven, Vojcehovskij had maintained a low profile, but he had never forgotten where his ambitions really lay: to become a leading figure of the Russian colony in Belgium, and, if possible, to impose upon it his personal political convictions. Opportunity struck when a leftist Popular Front government came to power in France (June 1936) and many Russian military leaders thought it wise to move their headquarters from Paris to Brussels. Among them was Captain Vasilij Orehov (1896-1990), the editor of *Časovoj*, who had supported the cause of the Spanish nationalists and their leader, General Franco, too openly. From October 1936, the unofficial organ of the ROVS was published in Belgium.

Vojcehovskij had already started to work as a journalist for *Časovoj* in 1937 and he fully identified himself with the interests of the journal, subscribing to the need

15. Registration Form Catholic University of Leuven.

16. P. Š[orin], "Luven," *Časovoj*, 143 (1935): 27-28.

17. "Delo Ju. L. Vojcehovskogo," *Časovoj*, 165-166 (1936): 30.

for a united (armed) front against communism,¹⁸ participating in military commemorations¹⁹ and, last but not least, expressing sympathy for strong leaders like Franco and Hitler, who eventually might overthrow Stalin.²⁰ Vojcehovskij felt remarkably at ease in this entourage of former tsarist generals and anti-communist activists, now gathered together in Brussels. In April-May 1938 he actively participated in founding a 'House of Russian Youth' (Dom russkoj molodeži), that would shelter the different (semi-military) White Russian youth organizations in Belgium.²¹ He was also among the orators at a commemoration service for the late Nicolas II and his family, held on 16 July 1938 in the House of Russian Youth, where he elaborated on the meaning of the Ekaterinburg tragedy for the younger generation of émigrés and called for a united and active battle against Bolshevism.²² Vojcehovskij's ambitions, however, went further than participating in youth gatherings and when on 25 December 1938 a 'House of Russian War Veterans' (Russkoe Voennoe Sobranie, Maison de l'Invalide de Guerre russe) was inaugurated, housing *all* Russian (military) anti-communist organizations, he eagerly traded places.²³ There is little doubt that personal frictions also contributed to the rupture with the Youth House. By that time, Vojcehovskij had already fascinated the Russian community with the speeches he regularly gave on different themes.²⁴ He set up office at the House of Russian War Veterans, being on the one hand the Belgian representative of the 'Russian Christian Labour Movement' (Russkoe hristianskoe trudovoe dvizenie, RHTD) and on the other hand the Secretary-General of the 'Union of Russian Journalists in Belgium' (Sojuz russkikh žurnalistov v Bel'gii).

18. Ju. Vojcehovskij, "Edinyj front," *Časovoj*, 195 (1937): 2-4; Ju.L.V., "Rôle et espoirs de l'émigration russe," *ibid.*, 204 (1938): 24.

19. "Pamjati Generala P. N. Vrangelja," *ibid.*, 212 (1938): 2; K., "Pamjati Generala P. N. Vrangelja," *ibid.*, 213 (1938): 21.

20. V. Orehov, "Ot Brjusselja do Varšavy. Putevye zametki. III. Berlin," *Časovoj*, 193 (1937): 17-18; *id.*, "Berlinskoe svidanie," *ibid.*, 197 (1937): 3-4; I.F. Patronov, "Gen. Franko i my," *ibid.*, 205 (1938): 16-18. On Orehov, *Časovoj* and Spain, see W. Coudenys, "Een caleidoscoop...", *art.cit.*: 243, and A. P. Jaremčuk, *Russkie dobrovol'cy v Ispanii 1936-1939* (San Francisco, 1983).

21. "Brjussel': Dom Russkoj Molodeži," *Časovoj*, 212 (1938): 21; "Dom Russkoj Molodeži," *Russkij eženedel'nik v Bel'gii* (29-4-1938): 3; (13-5-1938): 3; "Otkrytie Doma Russkoj Molodeži," *ibid.* (6-5-1938): 3-4; B. L., "Roždenie 'Doma Russkoj Molodeži'," *Golos Rossii* (10-5-1938): 7.

22. "Russkie v Bel'gii," *Novoe slovo*, 25 (1938): 5; Ju. Vojcehovskij, "Ekaterinburgskoe zločedanie. 4/17 ijuľja 1918 g.," *Bor'ba* (6-8-1944): 3.

23. "Russkie v Bel'gii," *Novoe slovo*, 49 (1938): 2; V. G., "Otkrytie Russkogo Voennoego Sobranija v Brjusselse," *Russkij eženedel'nik v Bel'gii* (30-12-1938): 3; Report of the Belgian Sûreté on the 'Maison des Anciens Combattants russes' d.d. 21-1-1939 (OE 1315075 N. Korniloff); *Moniteur Belge. Annexe*, 1939: 169.

24. "Russkie v Bel'gii," *Novoe slovo*, 30 (1938): 5; Report of the Belgian Sûreté on the 'Maison des Anciens Combattants russes' d.d. 21-1-1939 (OE 1315075 N. Korniloff).

The Russian Christian Labour Syndicate in Belgium

The Russian Christian Labour Movement was not so much a regular labour union, but the Russian branch of the 'Entente Internationale Anticommuniste' (EIA), a Geneva-based organization that wanted to coordinate the anti-communist efforts made in the different countries of Europe.²⁵ It had been founded in 1924 by Théodore Aubert (1878-1963) and Dr. Aleksandr Lodyženskij (?-1954) and was a front organization created by the French Intelligence Services.²⁶ In due course the EIA gained a lot of respectability and support, not least among Belgian anti-communists. If Jurij Lodyženskij, the brother of co-founder Aleksandr, is to be believed, "le 'Centre Belge' de l'EIA peut être cité parmi les mieux organisés et les plus actifs."²⁷

The idea to create a Belgian branch of the RHTD may have arisen during the Twelfth congress of the EIA, which was held in Brussels in May 1938. Two months later, Lodyženskij explained in *Časovoj* what the RHTD stood for,²⁸ and soon afterwards the first drafts for a Belgian branch were made.²⁹ On 27 November 1938 Vojcehovskij was appointed president of the Russian Christian Labour Syndicate (RHTS) in Belgium.³⁰ Although Vojcehovskij was already in close contact with Belgian anti-communist organizations — one (unreliable) source suggests that he worked for the 'Centre International de Lutte Active Contre le Communisme' (CILACC)³¹ — the Russian Christian Labour Syndicate in Belgium gave him the opportunity to act in his own name.

This turned out to be a clever step. On the one hand, he could now pretend to defend the interests of the largely unemployed Russian workers (especially in the Belgian mining regions) and actually succeeded in establishing a kind of labour union with branches in Brussels, Liège, Charleroi, La Louvière, Morlanwez, Ghent and Antwerp. On the other hand, the growing number of adherents of the RHTS steadily increased Vojcehovskij's importance and eventually gained him direct

25. G. Lodyginsky, *Face au communisme. Le mouvement anticommuniste international de 1923-1950*, [manuscript, 1965?], (HIA, Iurii Lodyzhenskii Papers, Box 1).

26. R. Terres, *Double jeu pour la France, 1939-1944* (Paris, 1977): 25.

27. G. Lodyginsky, *op. cit.*: II, 12bis.

28. A. Lodyženskij, "Čto takoe Russkoe Hristianskoe Nacional'noe Dviženie," *Časovoj*, 216 (1938): 19-20.

29. "Russkie v Bel'gii," *Novoe slovo*, 33 (1938): 7.

30. "Russkie v Bel'gii," *ibid.*: 2; P. Varnek, "Russkij Hristianskij Trudovoj Sindikat v Bel'gii," *Časovoj*, 226 (1938): 17; "Russkij sindikat v Bel'gii," *Russkij eženedel'nik v Bel'gii* (17-11-1938): 3; P. Š[orin]., "V Russkom Sindikate," *ibid.* (9-12-1938): 3; "Vybory v Russkom Sindikate," *ibid.* (16-12-1938): 3.

31. V. Orlov to V. Burcev d.d. 7-12-1938 (HIA, B. I. Nicolaevsky Papers, Box 151, Folder 35). Founded at the end of the 1920's by Joseph Douillet (1878-1954), CILACC and its founder were never to enjoy the full confidence of the EIA (G. Lodyginsky, *op. cit.*: II, 13). Douillet, the author of the famous *Moscou sans voiles* (1926), had lived in Russia and liked to engage Russians in his enterprise. Best known, perhaps, is P. A. Kusonskij (1880-1941), leader of the 'intelligence service' of ROVS and one of the Russian generals exiled from France in 1938.

access not only to Lodyženskij, but also to the influential Catholic Labour Movement in Belgium. Numerous were the speeches he gave in front of both Russian and Belgian audiences on, for instance, "Christianity under the yoke of the godless in the USSR."³²

The Union of Russian Journalists in Belgium

In the summer of 1938 Vojcehovskij laid the foundations of yet another organization meant to enhance his influence: the Union of Russian Journalists in Belgium. The initiators were Orehov, the editor of *Časovoj*, General Petr Šorin (1866-1940), the Belgian correspondent of the Paris daily *Vozroždenie* and Vojcehovskij, writing for the Berlin fascist weekly *Novoe slovo*. They held their first meeting on 30 July, when they announced that the Union would officially be established on 21 August.³³ Orehov, the most experienced of the three, became President, and Vojcehovskij, as Secretary-General, took up the daily management of the Union. The goals of the Union were clearly defined: it would defend the interests of Russian journalists in Belgium, make contact with similar organisations abroad and actively participate in public manifestations; apart from that, it would also scrutinize the information on Russia, circulated in Belgium, and, last but not least, would observe a strict and uncompromising anti-communist position.³⁴ What this in fact meant became clear in October 1938, when the Union of Russian Journalists in Belgium launched a campaign against the Paris 'left' Russian daily, *Poslednie novosti*.³⁵ The official declaration of war, formally emanating from all the Russian patriotic organizations in Belgium, but in reality a product of Vojcehovskij's and Orehov's pens, left no doubt as to the reproaches being levelled against the leading journal of the Russian emigration:

"During these last days the whole world has been alarmed. A real danger of war threatened every country. This war would be a terrible catastrophe to contemporary culture and civilization. The world's best people have been working hard to avert this terrible danger and their efforts met with success: the

32. E. V. Tarusskij, "Vera, Rodina, Sem'ja," *Časovoj*, 242 (1939): 22; "Conférence régionale du Mouvement Chrétien National Russe," *Renovation russe*, 5 (1939): 4-7; "Hronika Russkogo Hristianskogo Trudovogo Dviženija," *Novyj Put'*, 93 (1940): 15; G., "L'ja Luv'er'," *Russkij eženedel'nik v Bel'gii* (14-7-1939): 2; P.Š[orin]., "Doklad Ju. L. Vojcehovskogo," *ibid.* (10-2-1939): 3; "Informacija Russkogo Hristianskogo Trudovogo Sindikata v Bel'gii," *ibid.* (22-9-1939): 3; (6-10-1939): 3-4; (20-10-1939): 3-4; (3-11-1939): 3-4; (15-12-1939): 3; (29-12-1939): 3; (26-1-1940): 2; (9-2-1940): 3; (22-3-1940): 3; "Žizn' v provincii. RTHS v Bel'gii," *ibid.* (8-3-1940): 3.

33. "Russkie v Bel'gii," *Novoe slovo*, 32 (1938): 5; "Sojuz žurnalistov v Bel'gii," *Časovoj*, 219 (1938): 20; P. Š[orin]., "Organizacija Sojuza žurnalistov," *Russkij eženedel'nik v Bel'gii* (5-8-1938): 3; Učastnik, "Sojuz Russkih žurnalistov v Bel'gii," *ibid.* (26-8-1938): 3.

34. "Russkie v Bel'gii," *Novoe slovo*, 35 (1938): 6.

35. *Ibid.*, 41 (1938): 6.

Munich Agreements brought peace and joy to a disturbed Europe and put an end to the strivings of Bolshevik agents. [...]

We are obliged to mention the disturbing role played by the Russian daily *Poslednie novosti*. Out of feelings of zoological hatred against Germany it has tried to establish the opinion that the Russian emigration was keen on war and was calling upon the Western nations to engage in military action.

We, the representatives of the Russian national organizations in Belgium, consider it our duty to declare that the position of *Poslednie novosti* in no way reflects the opinion of the Russian emigration and that it has nothing in common with it.”³⁶

Contrary to their claims, the signers of the declaration did not represent the whole of the Russian emigration in Belgium. Apart from Vojcehovskij, Orehov and Šorin, General Boris Gartman (1878-1950), the leader of the Belgian branch of ROVS and some lesser figures — largely youngsters with radical opinions, close to the House of Russian Youth — put their names to the document, but major figures like General Arhangel'skij did not sign. Although there was undoubtedly much sympathy among Russian émigrés for Hitler's anti-communism, many wondered whether in the long run this would turn into an anti-Russian crusade.³⁷

Germanophilia

The declaration against *Poslednie novosti* may already have hinted at a latent germanophilia among Russian émigrés, but it was not until April 1939 that the bomb burst. On 9 April 1939, the socialist daily *Le Peuple* published an article claiming that the parishioners of the Russian Orthodox Church in the rue de Livourne openly sympathised with the Nazis and that they would welcome a German invasion of Belgium.³⁸ One of the leading members of the colony, Emmanuel Fričero (1880-1959), himself a Catholic, obtained a correction in the paper's issue of 13 April³⁹ and even the right-wing *Le Pays réel* doubted whether these “orthodoxes pro-Nazis” were really representative of the whole Russian colony in Belgium,⁴⁰ but harm had already been done. On 28 April, another right-wing journal, *Rex*, which had never hidden its sympathies for Germany, insisted that the Belgian government should not tolerate any political activities of foreigners, even if they were anti-communist Russians.⁴¹

36. Ju. Vojcehovskij, “Ot Russkikh Nacional'nyh Organizacij v Bel'gii,” *Časovoj*, 221 (1938): 18; “Rol' ‘Poslednih Novostej’ (Ot Russkikh Nacional'nyh Organizacij v Bel'gii),” *Novoe slovo*, 42 (1938): 3.

37. See e.g. V. Orehov, “Ot Brjusselja do Varšavy...,” *art. cit.*; S. Vojcehovskij, “Novaja Germanija i ‘russkij vopros’,” *Časovoj*, 194 (1937): 2-4.

38. L. Piérard, “Pâques orthodoxes,” *Le Peuple* (9-4-1939): 2.

39. L. P[iérard], “À propos des orthodoxes de Bruxelles,” *Le Peuple* (13-4-1939): 2.

40. “Les émigrés russes. Soupçons injustes,” *Le Pays réel* (23/24-4-1939): 2.

41. “Les étrangers sac au dos!,” *Rex* (28-4-1939): 1-2.

Although not all the stories may have been true and may have largely been inspired by religious and political rivalries within the Russian community itself, the parish of the rue de Livourne was notorious for its right-wing convictions. To start with, the parish of Saint Job, founded in 1928, was considered 'dissident,' for it did not acknowledge the jurisdiction of Metropolitan Evlogij (Paris) and Archbishop Aleksandr (Brussels), both subordinate to the Patriarch of Constantinople. Instead, it followed the Bishop's Synod of Sremski Karlovcy (Serbia), which wanted to preserve the national integrity of the pre-revolutionary Russian Orthodox Church and mainly focussed on political (monarchist, anti-communist) issues. The members of the parish council, who had once belonged to the immediate entourage of General Petr Vrangel', openly professed their monarchist and right-wing convictions.⁴² Material proof of these beliefs was provided by a new church, built in the avenue Defré, which was dedicated to the "Martyr Tsar Nicolas II and all those Russians, killed by the godless during the time of troubles."⁴³ Reverend Aleksandr Šabašev (1881-1956), for instance, sympathized with General Franco and had served with him at the Galician front;⁴⁴ members of his parish, among them the widow of General Vrangel', founded a 'Help Committee for Russians fighting with General Franco and their Families' (Komitet pomošči russkim voïnam sražajuščimsja v armii generala Franko i ih sem'jam);⁴⁵ Nikolaj Kotljarevskij (1890-1966), the former secretary of General Vrangel' and President of the parish council, welcomed the closing of the Evlogian parishes in Germany and their subordination to the Synodical Metropolitan of Berlin;⁴⁶ several of the council members sent their children to the... German School of Brussels.⁴⁷

Nevertheless, these facts and rumours about the sentiments of eminent Russians in Belgium alarmed the Belgian authorities, bound by the country's status of neutrality, and from that moment on, the Sûreté Publique took a great interest in the sympathies of the Russian colony. On the one hand, the Sûreté found it hard to assess the sympathies of the Russian military precisely. In a report dated 8 May 1939 it definitely qualified General Arhangel'skij as pro-German, whereas General Gartman seemed to waver: in September 1938, during the Munich crisis, he was thought to have said that in case of war, the Russians should join the Belgian army,

42. "Brjussel'," *Časovoj*, 230 (1939): 20.

43. Cf. *Vestnik Komiteta po sooruzeniju v Brjussele Russkogo Pravoslavnogo Hrama v pamjat' Carja Mučenika Nikolaja II i vseh Russkih ljudej, bogoborčeskoj vlast'ju v smute ubiennyh*, 1931-1935; *Zakladka Hrama-Pamjatnika v Brjussele* (Brjussel', 16-29-go Fevralja 1936 goda).

44. Cf. A. P. Jaremčuk, *op. cit.*: 317.

45. "Russkie v Bel'gii," *Novoe slovo*, 32 (1938): 5; "Pomošč' russkim voïnam v Ispanii i ih sem'jam," *Časovoj*, 216 (1938): 9.

46. Report on the activities of the Russian Orthodox Church during WWII (OE, 1555000 C. Doumbadze).

47. Report of the Sûreté Publique d.d. 26-4-1939 (OE 1469982 A. Vinogradoff); Deutsche Schulverein to Ortsgruppe NSDAP (Brussels) d.d. 21-1-1941 in relation to the children of Kotljarevskij (Musée Royal de l'Armée, Brussels (MRA), Auslandsorganisation der NSDAP, Box 15, Folder 1, m.22 (Film 4) (originals in Bundesarchiv Berlin)).

but seven months later, in April 1939, he claimed, together with Arhangel'skij, that the Russians should remain neutral, whatever happened. On the other hand, the Belgian authorities had not the least doubt about the pro-German sympathies of the parishioners of the rue de Livourne.⁴⁸ As for Vojcehovskij, the Sûreté had considerable trouble defining his precise role. Of one thing, however, they were certain: this Germanophile upstart had a definite hold over the leading circles of the Russian colony, both military and civilian. Thus he was going to assist General Arhangel'skij in welcoming Prince Sergej Georgievič Romanovskij, Duke of Leuchtenberg (1890-1974), when he visited the Russian community in Belgium.⁴⁹ Romanovskij, a member of the Imperial family, was one of the most eminent anti-communist leaders among Russian émigrés and was known to receive financial support from Italy.⁵⁰

Vojcehovskij's engagement to Hitler and Nazi Germany, however, went further than that of most of his fellow-émigrés, for he had never made a secret of his admiration for Hitler. He had attended the Nazi Party Congress in Nürnberg in September 1937 and the following year he went again, this time as a reporter for *Novoe slovo*.⁵¹ Back in Belgium, on 1 October 1938, he gave an enthusiastic lecture on his 'Journey through Europe' in the House of Russian Youth. For two hours, he entertained his audience with an eulogy of Nazi Germany. He claimed that in Germany National-Socialist principles were being put into practice and that precisely this direct link between theory and practice constituted the strength of the *Reich*.⁵² Two weeks later *Časovoj* published Vojcehovskij's article "The Leader and the People," which previously had appeared in *Novoe slovo*.⁵³ The article bore witness to Vojcehovskij's almost mystical fascination with the Nazis in general and Hitler in particular:

"When I read the reports on Nürnberg, even those delivered by the most famous of my colleagues from the English or French press, I am not satisfied. In their accounts there is everything: talent, a photographic representation of facts, a mass of interesting information, but there is something fundamental and important missing, and without this, no reader who has not attended will ever understand this annual mystery play in the old capital of Saxony.

Some see the outward, decorative, spectacular side.

48. Report of the Sûreté Publique d.d. 8-5-1939 (OE, 1438208 N. Kotliarevsky).

49. "Prebyvanie E. V. Knjazja S. Ju. Romanovskogo Gercoga Lejhtenbergskogo v Brjussel", *Russkij eženedel'nik v Bel'gii* (2-6-1939): 2.

50. Report of the Sûreté Publique d.d. 22-6-1939 (OE 1449930 P. Scherbatoff).

51. Ju. Vojcehovskij, "Trudovaja povinnost'," *Novoe slovo*, 37, 1938: 3; *id.*, "Vožd' i narod," *ibid.*, 38 (1938): 5.

52. "Iz Brjusselja," *Novoe slovo*, 41 (1938): 6; P.Š[orin], "Na doklade Ju. L. Vojcehovskogo," *Russkij eženedel'nik v Bel'gii* (7-10-1938): 3; *id.*, "Moja poezdka po Evrope," *ibid.* (21-10-1938): 3.

53. Ju. Vojcehovskij, "Vožd' i narod," *Časovoj*, 221 (1938): 18.

Others try to see in Nürnberg only the political side of it all, the latest discoveries of propaganda technique by the geniuses of psychology, the organized concentration of force of an awakened, young Germany. [...]

But this does not by any means cover entirely what is going on in Nürnberg every day.

With such unusual strength, with such obvious evidence and such deep confidence, in Nürnberg, the fundamental principle of the National-Socialist doctrine about the spiritual unity of the Leader and his people (*das Führerprinzip*) is brought to life, is incarnated, so that being there and not seeing this, means understanding nothing. [...]

The man who turned the wheel of history is Adolf Hitler. [...]

In the strong enthusiasm which engulfed the Germans that night, in the special atmosphere that hung that night over the 300,000 Germans present, we foreigners understood how important and strong for the life of this nation is this principle of national-socialism, on which the whole movement is based."

Yet, there was no proof of Vojcehovskij working on behalf of the Germans, except perhaps for an (unreliable) statement by Vladimir Orlov (1882-1941), a former tsarist prosecutor and head of General Denikin's intelligence service, who fed the Belgian Sûreté Publique with any information he wanted them to believe.⁵⁴ No doubt it was largely Orlov who inspired the above-mentioned Sûreté report of 8 May 1939 on Germanophile sympathies among Russian émigrés. Things, however, were to take a rapid turn in September 1939.

The phoney war

The signing of the Molotov-von Ribbentrop pact on 23 August 1939, promptly followed by the outbreak of war on 1 September 1939, shattered the fragile balance of alliances and enmities taken for granted until that moment. The Russian military leaders in Belgium were definitely at a loss. On 2 September 1939 Gartman offered his services to the Belgian Government,⁵⁵ whereas less than a month later Arhangel'skij maintained that Russians should remain neutral and await their chance to fight the Bolsheviks. In the meantime they should convince the Belgians of the necessity to restore the old order in Russia.⁵⁶ An even greater shock was to follow on 29 November 1939, when the Soviet Union attacked Finland. This attack

54. V. Orlov to V. Burcev d.d. 7-12-1938 (HIA, B. I. Nicolaevsky Papers, Box 151, Folder 35); Report of the French Intelligence Service relating to Orlov's activities d.d. 6-11-1939 (Centre d'Etudes et de Documentation Guerre et Sociétés contemporaines, Brussels (CEGES), AA 1423: French Intelligence Service on Belgium, 7/1/615 (Originals in Archives nationales, Paris)). On Orlov, the author of *The secret dossier: My memoirs of Russia's political underworld* (1932), see also Ch. Mick, "Grauzonen der russischen Emigration: Von Rußlandexperten und Dokumentenfälschern," in K. Schlögel, ed., *Russische Emigration in Deutschland 1918 bis 1941. Leben im europäischen Bürgerkrieg* (Berlin, 1995): 169-174.

55. "Russkie v Bel'gii," *Russkij eženedel'nik v Bel'gii* (15-9-1939): 3; "Russkie v Bel'gii," *Časovoj*; 243 (1939): 6.

56. Report on the meeting of ROVS on 28-9-1939 in Brussels d.d. 29-9-1939 (HIA, Aleksei P. Arkhangel'skii Papers, Box 2).

not only confirmed the treacherous character of the Bolshevik leaders, but also prompted the émigrés to act, especially as Finland was led by Marshall Karl Mannerheim (1867-1951), a former tsarist general. On 10 December 1939, during a ROVS party in Brussels, both Arhangel'skij and Gartman declared that it would be "a crime" to enlist in the Finnish army, for that country was defending its territory and not fighting communism. Therefore any comparison with the Spanish Civil War, when Russian exiles joined the ranks of General Franco's army, was unjustified.⁵⁷ Six days later, however, Arhangel'skij telegraphed Mannerheim and formally proposed to send a Russian volunteer unit. His offer was politely rejected.⁵⁸ A similar proposal by Orehov was also declined.⁵⁹ In the early days of January 1940 a Russian emissary was sent to the German embassy to ask its opinion on the matter. The emissary, who explained to his German interlocutor that the Russians were actually only interested in fighting communism, was told that the Germans would consider sending troops to Finland as an "unfriendly act."⁶⁰ As Arhangel'skij made it clear on 30 March 1940 in a secret memorandum to ROVS, the appropriate moment had not yet come.⁶¹

The outbreak of war in September 1939 also alarmed Vojcehovskij, who was well aware that the Sûreté Publique would increase its efforts to keep German sympathies at bay. Therefore, on 8 September 1939, he asked the 'Deutscher Fichte-Bund,' a Nazi propaganda organization, to stop sending him material. Apparently he had been receiving such material for quite some time, though not at his Brussels base, but at his old address in Leuven. The Fichte-Bund acknowledged Vojcehovskij's worries, thanked him for previous successful cooperation and expressed its hope of resuming their collaboration soon.⁶² While Vojcehovskij took good care to cease all direct contacts with Germany — in the same period his contributions disappeared from the pages of *Novoe slovo*, — he was apparently less careful when it came to his contacts in Belgium. One of his acquaintances was Nikolaj Dubenskij (1893-1955),⁶³ a former captain in the White Army, founder of the 'Union of Russian (Taxi) Drivers in Belgium' (Sojuz Russkikh Šoferov v Bel'gii) and a man notorious for his violent behaviour. In the mid-1930's he had

57. Report of the Sûreté Publique d.d. 12-12-1939 (OE, 1422971 A. Levacheff).

58. Mannerheim to Arhangel'skij d.d. 30-12-1939 (HIA, Aleksei P. Arkhangel'skii Papers, Box 1).

59. Orehov to Mannerheim d.d. 27-12-1939; LtGen Enkel to Orehov d.d. 24-1-1940 (HIA, Chasovoi Papers, Box 3).

60. Report von Neurath d.d. 16-1-1940 (CEGES, Documents de la Wilhelmstraße. Archives du ministère allemand des Affaires étrangères. Belgium post-1936, film 168).

61. Arhangel'skij to ROVS d.d. 30-3-1940 (HIA, Aleksei P. Arkhangel'skii Papers, Box 2); see also "Geheim. Auszug aus dem Bericht des Generalleutnants Arhangelsky an den russischen allgemeinen Militärverband," s.d. (Bundesarchiv — Militärarchiv, Freiburg im Breisgau, (BA-MA), RW 36/48).

62. Th. Kessemeier to Vojcehovskij d.d. 13-9-1939 (CEGES, Documents de la Wilhelmstraße, film 167).

63. Unless otherwise indicated, all details on Dubenskij are derived from his personal file with the 'Police des Étrangers' (OE, 1536152 N. Doubensky).

founded the Belgian branch of the 'Russian Fascist Union' (Rossijskij Fašistskij Sojuz), subordinated to K. Rodzaevskij in Harbin.⁶⁴ Early in 1939 Dubenskij had come under suspicion of espionage 'for a foreign country,' i.e. Germany, and had received a deportation order from the Belgian government in April 1939. Dubenskij, however, did not comply and was due to appear in court. In the meantime he stayed out of prison, but was not to leave his home. When war broke out in September and the French and Belgian armies started their mobilization, Dubenskij was reported to be fiercely typing reports, which were subsequently taken away by Vojcehovskij.⁶⁵ Vojcehovskij also regularly attended the trial of his 'friend' in June, September and October.⁶⁶ Even the French Intelligence Service took a close interest in Dubenskij and his associate and had not the least doubt about their German connections, especially after they had intercepted a letter written by Dubenskij to the Sicherheitspolizei (Sipo) in Cologne and had identified one of Vojcehovskij's contacts as Richard Walter (1885-?), a recruiter for the SS at the German embassy in Brussels.⁶⁷

Strangely enough, when the Belgian authorities drew up their lists of 'suspects' liable for arrest in case of war in December 1939, Vojcehovskij was not listed among Dubenskij's collaborators, but figured in his own right as leader of the Russian Christian Labour Syndicate in Belgium. It must have dawned upon the Sûreté Publique that the increased activities of the Syndicate from September 1939 onwards might serve as a cover for Vojcehovskij's less civil interests. Apart from Vojcehovskij and Dubenskij (and their associates) the list contained the names of leading Russians (e.g. Arhangel'skij and Gartman) and the members of the parish council of the rue de Livourne. Judging from his sympathies and activities, Vojcehovskij was perhaps the most likely to be arrested first.⁶⁸

War in Belgium

However, when Nazi Germany attacked Belgium on 10 May 1940 and the Sûreté Publique started making arrests, Vojcehovskij was not among them. Unlike his friend Dubenskij and many other suspects, who were put on a transport to France, Vojcehovskij stayed in Belgium, but kept a low profile. After the Belgian Army surrendered to the Germans on 28 May 1940 and the government fled to France and later to London, both Belgians and Russians had somehow to adapt to the new situation.

64. Report of the Sûreté Publique d.d. 21-5-1938 (OE, A191823 B. Solonevitch)

65. Report of the Sûreté Publique d.d. 20-9-1939 (OE, 1536152 V. Nottbeck).

66. *Ibid.*

67. Reports French Intelligence Service d.d. 26-10-1939 & 11-1939 (CEGES, AA 1423, 7/1/2009).

68. Report of the Sûreté Publique d.d. 15-12-1939 (OE, 1536152, V. Nottbeck).

One of the first to adapt was Vasilij Orehov. As early as June 1940 he travelled to Berlin, apparently to keep in touch with the local representatives of ROVS (postal services were to resume only at the end of June). It is unclear whether he was acting on his own behalf, or was sent by Arhangel'skij. In Berlin he received an invitation by the 'Propaganda-Abteilung' to visit Paris, which he eagerly accepted. His impressions appeared on 25 June 1940 in the Brussels daily *Le Soir* and were eulogistic about the 'impeccable behaviour' of the Germans, which so contrasted with the cowardice of the Western governments.⁶⁹ When the Russian translation of this article was published in *Časovoj* in December 1940, it was enhanced by a letter from Orehov's 'personal archive,' dated 1 June 1940, in which the German invasion of Belgium was justified as a reaction to the (rumoured) deployment of British and French troops on Belgian soil. The 'weak democracies' had finally been replaced by a 'strong regime'.⁷⁰ If Orehov was trying to soothe the Germans, he definitely succeeded, for he was allowed to travel freely throughout Europe and *Časovoj* was to continue publication until May 1941.

Orehov's superiors in ROVS had other problems on their minds.⁷¹ One was connected with the situation of Russian POWs who had served in the French army. Arhangel'skij tried to establish their whereabouts and secure their release with the help of General Aleksej von Lampe (1885-1967), the leader of the German branch of ROVS, and General Vasilij Biskupskij (1879-1945), the director of the 'Russische Vertrauensstelle in Deutschland.' Employment was another problem. By contrast with France, émigrés in Belgium had not been called up for military service. Some Russians had been allowed to help clean the battlefields, but once this was over, they were facing unemployment, because the Belgian 'Office du Placement' would not deal with foreigners.⁷² Therefore Arhangel'skij was hoping to find employment for his 'troops' in Germany, especially as the German authorities were very friendly to the White Russians. Moreover, conversations with German officers had convinced him that Germany would sooner or later be confronting the Soviet Union and might call upon their help.⁷³ This turned out to be too optimistic. Notwithstanding the interventions by von Lampe and Biskupskij, the Germans were not really obliging.⁷⁴ Gartman finally succeeded in sending some chauffeurs (Zivilkraftfahrer) to Germany, thanks to a recruitment office

69. B. Orekhoff, "Dans Paris occupé... Récit d'un témoin neutre," *Le Soir* (25-6-1940): 2.

70. V. Orehov, "Brjussel' — Berlin — Pariž," *Časovoj*, 253 (1940): 12-13; V.V.O[rehov], "Iz ličnogo arhiva," *ibid.*: 14-15. See also V. Orehov, "Pariž segodnjašnego dnja (Putevye zametki)," *ibid.*, 254 (1940): 15-16; 255 (1941): 10.

71. Cf. "Pamjatnaja zapiska A. P. Arhangel'skogo pravitel'stvu Germanii" d.d. 28-6-1940 (A.P. Kiselev, ed., *Političeskaja istorija russoj emigracii 1920-1940 gg. Dokumenty i materialy* (M., 1999): 65-66).

72. "Neskol'ko slov ot russoj emigracii k bel'gijskomu obščestvu" [1946] (HIA, Chasovoi Papers, Box 1).

73. Arhangel'skij to Biskupskij d.d. 28-6-1940 (HIA, Aleksei P. Arkhangel'skii Papers, Box 4).

74. Biskupskij to Arhangel'skij d.d. 2-12-1940 (HIA, Aleksei P. Arkhangel'skii Papers, Box 4).

(Werbestelle) organized by Mrs Richard Walter, who was herself of Russian origin.⁷⁵

The German reluctance to collaborate with the desperate Arhangel'skij was related to the question of who would control and represent the Russian colony in Belgium. For Arhangel'skij and his fellow-officers there was no doubt that this task should fall to the military, as was the case in Germany itself (Biskupskij). For the German authorities, however, this solution was less obvious. Although he was formally a Russian general, Biskupskij was actually employed by Himmler's Reichssicherheitshauptamt (RSHA),⁷⁶ the political security services that were permanently at war with the military. As Belgium was directed by a Militärverwaltung that tried to keep the influence of the RSHA at bay, the RSHA did not want to miss an opportunity to thwart the military.⁷⁷ Therefore, the RSHA wanted to impose upon the Russian community a representative liable to collaborate with them, rather than someone psychologically too close to the Militärverwaltung.

The establishment of the 'Russischer Selbsthilfeausschuß für Belgien'

On 14 November 1940 the RSHA launched a plan to establish a Russian Committee both in Paris and Brussels. The idea derived from the Gestapo (branch IV of the RSHA) and was formally meant to organize the employment of Russians. In reality, however, it would serve as a means for the Sicherheitspolizei-Sicherheitsdienst (Sipo-SD) in Brussels and Paris to control the émigré colony. Once the Selbsthilfeausschuß, led by a "politically reliable *Leiter*, representing the German interests," was fully in place, all other émigré organizations would have to cease their activities.⁷⁸

Even before the plan was launched and had started its journey through the German administration, rumours began to circulate in the Russian colony that Jurij Vojcehovskij would be eligible for the post of Russian *Leiter*. He had already been invited to Berlin in June 1940,⁷⁹ whereas Arhangel'skij's visit to the German

75. Scoriels (Military Prosecutor) to the Minister of Justice d.d. 30-1-1947 (OE, A129754 G. De Woichiechowsky) & Report of the Sûreté Publique d.d. 8-5-1939 (OE, 1438208 N. Kotliarevsky).

76. Cf. B. Dodenhoef, "Vasilij Biskupskij — eine Emigrantenkarriere in Deutschland," in K. Schlögel, ed., *Russische Emigration in Deutschland 1918 bis 1941*, op. cit.: 219-228.

77. A. De Jonge, "De strijd Himmler-Reeder om de benoeming van een HSSPF te Brussel, deel 1: De Sicherheitspolizei in België," *Cahiers d'Histoire de la Deuxième Guerre Mondiale*, 1 (1970): 9-81.

78. Report of RSHA IV C Brussels on the 'Russischer Selbsthilfeausschuß für Belgien' d.d. 7-7-1941 (BA-MA, RW36/48).

79. Arhangel'skij to Biskupskij d.d. 28-6-1940 (HIA, Aleksei P. Arkhangel'skii Papers, Box 4).

capital had been repeatedly postponed or considered untimely.⁸⁰ On 30 September 1940 Arhangel'skij gave vent to his frustrations in a letter to Biskupskij. He understood that his colleagues in Germany could do little to help, but pleaded with him that he, and only he, could vouch for the quality of the Russians labourers that would go to Germany:

“Anyway, if my proposal cannot be put into effect because the time is not right, it would be extremely important that the employment of Russians, and especially of my subordinates, should be organized with our DIRECT participation, and NOT by some outsiders who do not understand us or our needs and who are often hostile to us. I heard, for instance, that Ju. L. Vojcehovskij is likely to become this intermediary, or rather the central figure in Belgium [...] For us, for our organizations, yes, even for the local Russian colony this would be very bad and extremely undesirable.”⁸¹

In reply to repeated appeals for help from Arhangel'skij, von Lampe assured his colleague in Brussels on 30 March 1941 that, as far as he knew, the Germans would never allow the installation of a Selbsthilfeausschuß in Belgium, let alone appoint Vojcehovskij as its leader. “Therefore we should consider this information about such a leadership and a new organization of the Russian emigration in Belgium (and France) to be the result of the usual concoctions of our own emigration. It could be correct, of course, and there may be a lot we do not know, but what we know confirms that we do not have to worry at all.”⁸²

How wrong von Lampe proved to be! Already on 25 March 1941 the chief of the Militärverwaltung in Belgium had approved of the Gestapo plan,⁸³ thereby giving Vojcehovskij free rein. The latter immediately informed his countrymen that from now on his Selbsthilfeausschuß would represent the Russian emigration to the German authorities. He convoked a meeting of representatives of Russian organizations for 6 April.⁸⁴ During this meeting it became clear that Vojcehovskij was not going to allow anyone to act without his prior consent. On 10 April, anticipating the effect these restrictions would have on his leadership of ROVS, Arhangel'skij issued an order (*prikaz*) giving the regional branches of ROVS full autonomy.⁸⁵ The next day, he requested von Lampe in Berlin to take over the

80. Von Lampe to Arhangel'skij d.d. 28-8-1940; 13-9-1940 & 1-12-1940; Arhangel'skij to Biskupskij d.d. 30-9-1940; Biskupskij to Arhangel'skij d.d. 2-12-1940 (HIA, Aleksei P. Arkhangel'skii Papers, Box 4).

81. Arhangel'skij to Biskupskij d.d. 30-9-1940 (HIA, Aleksei P. Arkhangel'skii Papers, Box 4).

82. Von Lampe to Arhangel'skij d.d. 30-3-1941 (HIA, Aleksei P. Arkhangel'skii Papers, Box 4).

83. Report of RSHA IV C Brussels on the ‘Russischer Selbsthilfeausschuß für Belgien’ d.d. 7-7-1941 (BA-MA, RW36/48).

84. Vojcehovskij to Orehov d.d. 3-4-1941 (HIA, Chasovoi Papers, Box 1).

85. Cf. Arhangel'skij to Denikin d.d. 28-7-1946 (HIA, Chasovoi Papers, Box 1).

Belgian branch from Gartman, who was already in conflict with Vojcehovskij,⁸⁶ presumably over the recruitment of Russians. Arhangel'skij's request was imbedded in a long series of bitter complaints:

"I received your letter of 30 March yesterday. Thank you for the information, but life has presented us with another outcome. The appointment I wrote you about has been made and I have every reason to fear that all my worst misgivings about the destruction of the military organizations, the replacement of people etc. will come true. And I personally can also expect problems and constraints on my work, be it in liaison between the Branches [of ROVS] or in the coordination of the perceptions of what has happened or is to be expected. In the given circumstances it will be so easy to shut my mouth and silence my voice, although I have always pleaded for collaboration with Germany and expressed hope in Germany's victory and the creation of a new world."⁸⁷

Arhangel'skij had made a correct assessment of the situation. The very next day, on 12 April 1941, he and Gartman were summoned to the Sipo-SD, who told them to refrain from further political, social and military activities and to seek an agreement with Vojcehovskij on how to behave. Later that day, they were received by Vojcehovskij, who confirmed their worst fears. Arhangel'skij and Gartman were utterly shocked to receive orders from a man who not only had no authority over ROVS, but who was not even a serviceman, let alone an officer! Once again, Arhangel'skij pleaded with von Lampe:

"You know my attitude to Germany. You also know [...] my views, and there is nothing hostile to or dangerous for Germany in them. On the contrary, I have linked the fulfilment of our hopes for the liberation of Russia with the victory of Germany. My voice could be heard everywhere, and in those places where Russian organizations were under the influence of opinions and attitudes hostile to Germany, my voice served as a kind of counterweight to these influences and therefore cannot be considered hostile to or dangerous for Germany.

Finally, I have spoken of the necessity to temper our attitude, in word and deed, towards the Bolsheviks, so as not to cause trouble to Germany, which is on friendly terms with the Soviets. In this case, also, my voice could not be considered dangerous to Germany.

And nevertheless, my mouth is shut and my voice silenced. Who is profiting from this? I say that my voice is silenced, because, as you will understand yourself, an 'agreement' about my activities with Vojcehovskij equals their interdiction. [...]

The person responsible for this insult in the first place is Vojcehovskij, who is considered the author of these measures (I do not know, whether this is true), or at least their inspirer (the police officer who spoke to us did not know my

86. Cf. Arhangel'skij to Biskupskij d.d. 30-9-1940 (HIA, Aleksei P. Arkhangel'skii Papers, Box 4).

87. Arhangel'skij to von Lampe d.d. 11-4-1941 (HIA, Aleksei P. Arkhangel'skii Papers, Box 4).

name or what I stood for). But there is no doubt that responsibility for this insult will be extended to the Germans... Why would they turn friends into opponents?

It could well be that the Sicherheitspolizei considered the local emigration as Anglophile and therefore took these 'strong measures.' I do not know who depicted the local emigration in that way... As I have no evidence, I do not want to accuse anyone. But if even a small part of the emigration, or rather some individuals, were Anglophiles, this would not include the military organizations."⁸⁸

Von Lampe was appalled by the developments in Belgium, but there was very little he could do apart from praising Arhangel'skij for his courage.⁸⁹ Although the German authorities acknowledged that Vojcehovskij had exceeded his responsibilities⁹⁰ and were well informed that the "Russian colony in general did not take him seriously" or that "his behaviour was stern and until now without any results,"⁹¹ they had no inclination whatsoever to stop him.

Why then did the Germans chose Vojcehovskij as their Russian man in Brussels and allow him to become so powerful in such a short space of time? A (critical) note by the Militärverwaltung, dated 13 May 1941, suggested that Vojcehovskij only owed his appointment to the fact that Biskupskij was a close friend of his brother Sergej, who had become the leader of the Russian colony in occupied Poland.⁹² This would also suggest that Biskupskij was actually misleading his military colleagues in Brussels. Just before his appointment, Vojcehovskij had indeed visited his brother in Warsaw and had held consultations in Berlin, though not with Biskupskij, who was in Munich at the time.⁹³ The truth, however, was more complicated and lay hidden in Vojcehovskij's pre-war activities. We have already indicated that the beginning of the war in September 1939 coincided with increased activity by the Russian Christian Labour Syndicate in Belgium, of which Vojcehovskij was the director. Circumstantial evidence suggests that this Syndicate was in fact a cover for espionage activities. A post-war report of the Sûreté Publique says that at a certain point the headquarters of the RHTD in Geneva had ceased all financial support to the Belgian branch because it had come under suspicion of espionage for Germany.⁹⁴ Taking into account the fact that the RHTD

88. Arhangel'skij to von Lampe d.d. 30-4-1941 (HIA, Aleksei P. Arkhangel'skii Papers, Box 4).

89. Von Lampe to P. A. Kusonskij (Arhangel'skij's secretary) d.d. 2-6-1941 (HIA, Aleksei P. Arkhangel'skii Papers, Box 4).

90. Von Lampe to Kusonskij d.d. 1-6-1941 (HIA, Aleskei P. Arkhangel'skii Papers, Box 4).

91. "Aktennotiz. Erkundigungen über Woicchowski" d.d. 13-5-1941 (BA-MA, RW 36/48).

92. *Ibid.*

93. Von Lampe to Arhangel'skij d.d. 23-4-1941 & 4-5-1941 (HIA, Aleksei P. Arkhangel'skij Papers, Box 4).

94. "Rapport sur l'activité du 'Comité russe d'Entr'aide,'" s.d. (CEGES AA 1417, Auditorat Général, General Documentation); see also: Sûreté Publique to the Military Prosecutor d.d. 27-8-1945 (CEGES, AA 1418, Documents and reports of the Central Documentation Service of the Auditorat Général).

was the Russian branch of the Entente Internationale Anticomuniste, which was in turn controlled by the French Intelligence Services, Vojcehovskij may well have been engaged by the RHSA, i.e. the Gestapo, to infiltrate the French services. Moreover, this would also explain why the Sûreté Publique listed his RHTS along with other Germanophile organizations.⁹⁵ Events during the war only corroborate this thesis: Vojcehovskij was invited to Berlin in June 1940; on 26 June 1940 Kriminal-Obersekretär Eduard Tuttas (1896-?) of the Gestapo arrived in Brussels, where he assumed responsibility for section IV C, 'Emigrants and Foreigners.' Tuttas, who was to be promoted Kriminal-Kommissar and also bore the rank of SS-Hauptsturmführer, became Vojcehovskij's direct chief;⁹⁶ already in the first draft of the Selbsthilfeausschuß-project, dated 14 November 1940, the Gestapo had filled in Vojcehovskij's name and as soon as the office was formally established (initially at the address of the RHTS!⁹⁷), its ranks were filled with Vojcehovskij's former collaborators;⁹⁸ finally, a report by Captain Baumann of the Kommandostab Z, responsible for the recruitment of foreigners, stated that Vojcehovskij's name had been advanced by the head of the Sipo-SD in Brussels himself, Constantin Canaris (1906-1983).⁹⁹ Even if someone had been able or willing to undo Vojcehovskij's appointment, he would risk the wrath of the all-powerful RHSA. The events of June 1941 only confirm this hypothesis...

Operation 'Sonnewende'

On 22 June 1941 the Germans launched their Operation Barbarossa against the Soviet Union, putting an end to the unlikely alliance between the two rivals. The effects of the attack, however, were not limited to the territory of the Soviet Union, but coincided with a cleansing operation against potential opponents to the invasion. Operation 'Sonnewende,' carried out by the Sipo-SD, resulted in the arrest of some 317 suspects in Belgium, mainly communists (238), but also a handful of Soviet citizens (34) and a number of Russian émigrés (65).¹⁰⁰ Although it has now been established that the Sicherheitsdienst drew up its lists on the basis

95. See above.

96. "Rapport sur l'activité du 'Comité russe d'Entr'aide'," s.d. (CEGES, AA 1417); "Tuttas, Eduard" (CEGES 535, Documents on the Sipo-SD, deriving from the (former) Berlin Document Center); "Enquête sur la Gestapo" (Archives Générales du Royaume, Brussels (AGR), Public Prosecutor Brussels, Political File 1156).

97. Vojcehovskij to Orehov d.d. 3-4-1941 (HIA, Aleksei P. Arkhangel'skii Papers, Box 4).

98. Especially its secretary, Aleksej Cejs (Zeuss, 1912-?) would play a major role during the war. Cf. "Russkij Hristianskij Trudovoj Sindikat v Bel'gii," *Russkij eženedel'nik v Bel'gii* (5-5-1939): 3.

99. Report by Baumann d.d. 7-7-1941 (BA-MA, RW 36/48).

100. Note s.d. (BA-MA, RW36/48); cf. also J. Gotovitch, *Du rouge au tricolore: les communistes de 1939 à 1944. Un aspect de l'histoire de la résistance en Belgique* (Bruxelles, 1992): 138. Gotovitch speaks of some 212 arrests.

of its own files and partly on information received from the Belgian Police des Étrangers,¹⁰¹ many Russian émigrés were convinced that Vojcehovskij had provided Tuttas with these names in order to settle his own personal accounts.¹⁰² Especially the arrest of Arhangel'skij's secretary, General Pavel Kusonskij (1880-1941), and his subsequent incarceration in the concentration camp of Breendonck, caused a major upheaval. On 29 July 1941, Arhangel'skij addressed General Alexander von Falkenhausen (1888-1951), the Militärbefehlshaber for Belgium and the North of France, with the request to release Kusonskij and some of his fellow-officers.¹⁰³ Unfortunately, Breendonck was the only prison in Belgium that did not fall under the control of the Militärverwaltung, but was under that of the Sipo-SD. By the time the military could intervene, Kusonskij had already died on 26 August 1941.¹⁰⁴

The situation was particularly embarrassing for General von Falkenhausen, who had sanctioned Vojcehovskij's appointment and who had not been able to prevent the death of a fellow-officer. Moreover, he had no reason to doubt the attachment of the Russian military in Belgium to the German cause. As early as 29 June 1941, Arhangel'skij had written a "Memorandum on the possibility for the Russian emigration, in particular the Russian Military Organizations, to participate in the battle against Soviet power and Bolshevism," in which he had made various concrete proposals. According to Arhangel'skij, Russian émigrés should not join the ranks of the German Army, but form their own units with specific aims, such as anti-communist propaganda in general and among Soviet POWs in particular, and the execution of civilian tasks in the occupied territories in the East. This would help reconcile the local population with the Russian emigration.¹⁰⁵

As a result, the Militärbefehlshaber had the leader of the Selbsthilfeausschuß cautiously interviewed about his role in the whole affair by Captain Baumann. Vojcehovskij fully denied his involvement in the arrests, but slyly added that they had nevertheless been justified.¹⁰⁶ The Sipo-SD promptly corroborated Vojcehovskij's statement and pointed out that he was not to blame. On the contrary, he had even tried to intervene on behalf of Kusonskij! The Sipo-SD was irritated by

101. Cf. R. Van Doorslaer & E. Verhoeven, "L'Allemagne nazie, la police belge et l'anticommunisme en Belgique (1936-1944)," *Revue belge d'Histoire contemporaine*, 17 (1986): 123; cf. report Baumann d.d. 12-9-1941 (BA-MA, RW36/48).

102. Solonevič to Arhangel'skij d.d. 21-9-1941, report on the fate of the Russian prisoners in Breendonck (archives of the author); B. Solonevitch, *Breendonck. Camp de tortures et de mort* (Bruxelles, 1944): 43; V. S. Varšavskij, *Nezamečennoe pokolenie* (New York, 1956): 363-364.

103. Arhangel'skij to von Falkenhausen d.d. 29-7-1941 (BA-MA, RW 36/48).

104. Death Certificate of P. Kusonskij d.d. 4-8-1942 (OE, A295543 P. Kousonsky); B. Solonevitch, *op. cit.*: 58-63; B. Prjanišnikov, *Nezrimaja pautina* ([New York], 1979): 380-382.

105. "Vermerk über die Möglichkeit einer Teilnahme der russischen Emigration, und ins Besondere der Russischen Militär-Organisationen, am Kampfe gegen die Sowjetmacht und den Bolschewismus." d.d. 29-6-1941 (BA-MA, W36/48); cf. "'Pamjatnaja zapiska' gen. Arhangel'skogo," *Russkie novosti*, 166 (1948): 6.

106. Report of Captain Baumann d.d. 12-9-1941 (BA-MA, RW 36/48).

the fuss the Russian émigrés were making and claimed that large-scale operations such as ‘Sonnewende’ inevitably caused inconvenience.¹⁰⁷

The ‘Comité d’Entr’aide russe’ takes control

Vojcehovskij’s actions, however, were not confined to inflicting damage on the Russian military or, for that matter, harassing personal enemies. As the juridical and social position of Russians in Belgium had changed after the German invasion of the Soviet Union, the Selbsthilfeausschuß became the official representative of the ‘Russian refugees’ (i.e. émigrés) to the Belgian and German authorities. To that effect, on 23 June 1941, General von Falkenhausen had addressed G. Romsée, the Secretary-General of the Interior, who in turn had sent a circular letter to the Belgian communities.¹⁰⁸ Although the Selbsthilfeausschuß — now officially the ‘Comité d’Entr’aide russe,’ located at rue Defacqz 71 — was only formally allowed to deliver ‘Volkstumbescheinigungen’ (certificates of nationality) to Russian refugees,¹⁰⁹ Vojcehovskij was determined to add some conditions of his own for receiving those certificates. He informed the Secretary-General of the Interior that he would not deliver any Volkstumbescheinigung to Russians with Soviet sympathies and to Jews.¹¹⁰ Vojcehovskij put it even more bluntly to the local authorities: all refugees from Russia, whatever their ethnic or political background, were to register with the Comité d’Entr’aide; the Comité would then decide who was to receive a Volkstumbescheinigung.¹¹¹ For the next years, Vojcehovskij’s assumed responsibilities would cause serious trouble...

In July 1941, following a critical note by the Police des Étrangers, Romsée had informed the Militärverwaltung about Vojcehovskij’s behaviour, but to no avail.¹¹² In September and November both the ‘Ukrainian National Committee in Belgium’ and the ‘Committee of Georgians in Belgium’ complained to Romsée that they had to undergo the whimsies of a patriotic Russian committee to receive documents, whereas they could easily deliver them themselves.¹¹³ As a result the leader of the

107. Canaris (Sipo-SD Brussels) to Reeder (Militärverwaltung) d.d. 30-9-1941 (BA-MA, RW 36/48).

108. Von Falkenhausen to Romsée (Secretary-General of the Interior) d.d. 23-6-1941; circular letter Romsée to the Belgian communities d.d. 30-6-1941 (OE, General Documentation, 37C4 (Réfugiés russes); Ministère des Affaires étrangères, Brussels (MAE), 12178 (Réfugiés Russes 1936-1952)).

109. *Moniteur Belge* (24-8-1941).

110. Note about Vojcehovskij’s visit to Romsée d.d. 9-7-1941 & 14-8-1941 (OE, General Documentation 37C4).

111. Community of Saint Gilles to Romsée d.d. 3-10-1941 (OE, General Documentation 37C4; MAE, 12178).

112. Police des Étrangers to Romsée in relation to Romsée’s complaint d.d. 25-7-1941 (MAE, 12178).

113. Ukrainian National Committee to Romsée d.d. 30-9-1941 (OE, General Documentation 37C4); Comité des Géorgiens en Belgique to Romsée d.d. 19-11-1941 (MAE, 12178).

Comité d'Entr'aide was summoned to the offices of the Police des Étrangers, where he was told to restrict himself to the task formally assigned to him, e.g. the delivery of Volkstumbescheinigungen to Russian refugees. All other non-Russian refugees from the Soviet Union or the former Russian Empire fell beyond his competence. The Police des Étrangers actually suspected that Vojcehovskij only wanted to register as many refugees from Russia as possible in order to cash their monthly contributions.¹¹⁴ Two circular letters by Romsée removed Vojcehovskij's competence over the Ukrainians and Georgians,¹¹⁵ but the ambiguous attitude of the Militärverwaltung, who randomly extended and restricted Vojcehovskij's authority over non-Russians, drove the Belgian authorities to desperation. Eventually, on 12 October 1942, the Militärverwaltung made registration with the Comité d'Entr'aide obligatory and a year later had its name changed into 'Russische Vertrauensstelle für Belgien' (Upravlenie delami russkoj emigracii v Bel'gii).¹¹⁶ To make things even worse, Vojcehovskij adopted the irritating habit of 'denouncing' local administrations who did not scrupulously comply with the circular letters. He especially focussed on 'hidden' Jews.¹¹⁷

By the end of 1941 Vojcehovskij had become a huge source of irritation and embarrassment. On 23 January 1942 the 'Dienststelle des Auswärtigen Amts' in Brussels wrote to Berlin:

"Woyciechowski strikes us as a man with a sincere attitude towards Germany. His behaviour often corroborates this impression. It is apparently his personal political conviction that the fate of Russia is indissolubly related to the victory of Germany. As to the question how he conceives the future political structure of Russia, he replies evasively that this fundamentally depends on Germany. There is no doubt, however, about his Russian patriotism. Within the Russian emigration different opinions about Vojcehovskij circulate. The military authorities have repeatedly received complaints about him, which cannot always be reduced to personal grudges, for W. is supported by the SD."¹¹⁸

Notwithstanding his numerous faults and the dubious part he played in the struggle between the military and the RSHA, Vojcehovskij's remaining in post had some definite advantages for the occupying forces. First of all, the Germans considered him a source of intelligence, for he provided them with inside information about the Russian colony in Belgium. By September 1941 Vojcehovskij estimated the

114. Police des Étrangers to Romsée d.d. 20-11-1941 (OE, General Documentation 37C4; MAE, 12178).

115. Circular letters d.d. 24-12-1941 & 6-3-1942 (OE, General Documentation 37C4; MAE, 12178).

116. Von Falkenhausen to Romsée d.d. 12-10-1942 & 4-3-1943; Just (Police des Étrangers) to Romsée d.d. 3-11-1942; circular letter Romsée d.d. 20-4-1943 (MAE, 12178).

117. Vojcehovskij to Schneider (Interior) d.d. 27-10-1942 (MAE, 12178); Vojcehovskij to Police des Étrangers d.d. 21-9-1943 (OE, General Documentation 37C4).

118. Dienststelle des Auswärtigen Amtes Brussels to Auswärtiges Amt Berlin d.d. 23-1-1942 (BA-MA, RW 36/48).

number of Russians in Belgium to be 7,000, of which 2,000 had already been registered with the Comité d'Entr'aide. Of those 7,000, some 2,000 had left for Germany as voluntary workers and another 1,000 were considered to be of Jewish origin. Vojcehovskij, however, did not confine himself to objective information, but also pursued his own petty interests. He doubted the necessity to form separate committees for the few Ukrainians or Caucasians residing in Belgium and seriously questioned the alleged sympathy of ROVS for Germany. According to him, ROVS was too close to Jewry and Freemasonry; it had allowed communists to infiltrate its ranks in the past, for which Kusonskij, the former head of ROVS's counter-intelligence, was to blame; during the Russian-Finnish war, ROVS had been on the verge of joining a French and British expeditionary force and, finally, the leaders of ROVS had allegedly prevented its members from entering German service.¹¹⁹

More important, however, was Vojcehovskij's control over the Russian community. Unlike the leader of the Comité d'Entr'aide, the Sipo-SD was quite convinced that "the Russian colony in Brussels was in general harmless, but that it was nevertheless necessary to close down the many existing small groups."¹²⁰ This task Vojcehovskij would perform ruthlessly. As we have mentioned above, the *Leiter* of the Comité d'Entr'aide took a particular interest (and pleasure) in silencing the Russian military. No doubt, his resentment of the military had much to do with his personal frustration at not being a serviceman himself.¹²¹ One after another the Russian military organizations were either formally dissolved (e.g. the 'Ligue des militaires grands mutilés et invalides de guerre russes résidant en Belgique' and the 'Association des officiers et soldats russes mutilés et invalides de la Grande Guerre résidant en Belgique')¹²² or had to cease their activities. From May 1941 Časovoj stopped appearing, officially for lack of paper.¹²³ Apart from that, civilian organizations with an affiliation to the military were also affected. Thus the 'Russian Club of Brussels' (Russkij klub, Club russe de Bruxelles) was closed and the board of the 'Russian Red Cross' (Russkij krasnyj krest, Comité de la Croix-Rouge russe (ancienne organisation) en Belgique) had its 'critical elements' removed.¹²⁴

There are indications, however, that Vojcehovskij only took advantage of the existing antagonisms within the Russian community, rather than executing a premeditated plan. All the organizations that suffered from the above-mentioned restrictions were not only affiliated to the military, but were also somehow related to the Orthodox Parish of the rue des Chevaliers, led by the Evlogian Archbishop

119. Report Baumann d.d. 11-9-1941 (BA-MA, RW 36/48).

120. Report Baumann d.d. 7-7-1941 (BA-MA, RW 36/48).

121. "Wenn die Revolution in Rußland nicht gekommen wäre, wäre er seiner Angabe nach Offizier geworden." Report Baumann d.d. 12-9-1941 (BA-MA, RW 36/48).

122. *Moniteur belge. Annexe* (1941): 617 & 637.

123. "Ot redakcii," Časovoj, 262 (1941): 3; Dienststelle des Auswärtigen Amtes Brussels to Auswärtiges Amt Berlin d.d. 23-1-1942 (BA-MA, RW 36/48).

124. Report Baumann d.d. 7-7-1941 (BA-MA, RW 36/48); Gartman to J.J. Kulmann (High Commissary for the Refugees of the League of Nations) d.d. 17-7-1945 (MAE, 12178); *Moniteur Belge. Annexe*, (1941): 619; (1942): 457.

Aleksandr Nemolovskij (1880-1960). The Archbishop had never spared his criticism of Russians sympathizing with Nazi Germany, in particular the parishioners of the Synodical church in the rue de Livourne,¹²⁵ and in November 1940 he had been arrested and deported to Berlin.¹²⁶ In his place, Reverend Aleksandr Šabašev of the Synodical parish had been appointed head of the Russian Orthodox Church in Belgium.¹²⁷ The remaining Evlogian parishes (Brussels, Charleroi) were placed under the jurisdiction of Šabašev.¹²⁸ As Šabašev's flock was largely Germanophile, the Synodical Orthodox Church in Belgium might be said to have constituted the backbone of Russian collaborationism during the war. All Vojcehovskij had to do now was to take advantage of a situation created by the Germans and take control of this invaluable network.

On 1 December 1941, Metropolitan Serafim of Berlin had ordered Šabašev to inform on the Russian colony, to force them by all available means to comply with his commands and, above all, to collaborate with Vojcehovskij.¹²⁹ This did not imply, however, that the leader of the Comité d'Entr'aide gained full control over Synodical circles. On the contrary, this was only a further step in a long campaign to tighten his grip on the Russian collaboration scene, either by wooing, threatening or compromising Synodical circles. At an earlier stage of this campaign Vojcehovskij had sabotaged Gartman's (and Arhangel'skij's) efforts to send Russians to Germany, by suggesting a direct link between the General, Nemolovskij, Jewry and Freemasonry.¹³⁰ Similarly, Vojcehovskij would vouch for Kotljarevskij with the Germans when his name came up in connection with Freemasonry.¹³¹ Šabašev himself was 'hooked' when Vojcehovskij managed to have his British nationality (he had served in Australia) changed into 'Russian émigré,' thereby forcing him to register with his committee.¹³² All in all Vojcehovskij had little difficulty in 'convincing' Šabašev and his entourage to

125. K. Ivanov to RSHA d.d. [8-1938] (CEGES, AA 1423, 500/4/149); Cf. Report Baumann d.d. 11-9-1941 (BA-MA, RW 36/48).

126. A. Gedrojc, "Russkaja emigracija v Bel'gii v mežvoennyj period," *Strana Sinej pticy* (M.:1995): 300; V. Ronin, "Cerkovnaja žizn' v russkom Antverpene (1920-1960)," *Slavica Gandensia*, 26 (1999): 152; "Russkie posobniki nemcev v Bel'gii," *Russkie novosti*, 107 (1947): 7-8; Alexandre, "A propos de l'Eglise orthodoxe russe en Belgique," *Vrai* (29-2-1948); Interview by the Sûreté de l'État with R. Bracke, interpreter for the Gestapo Brussels, d.d. 11-10-1946 (Military Tribunal Brussels (MT), File 24234/1944 G. Woyciechowski).

127. Gauk (Ministry of Cults, Berlin) to von Falkenhausen, via Himmler (RSHA), 18-11-1940 (OE, A80001 A. Shabasheff).

128. Report on the Orthodox Church in Belgium during the War, s.d. (OE, 1555000 C. Doumbadze); Note on Reverend K. Šumskij and the Orthodox Parish in Charleroi, s.d. (OE, A80001 A. Shabasheff).

129. Metropolitan Serafim to Šabašev d.d. 1-12-1941 (BA-MA, RW 36/48).

130. Report Tuttas on V. Anan'ev d.d. 14-1-1941 (CEGES, AA 1314, Conviction Pieces of the Military Tribunal, 527/3, 'Russische Emigrantenlogen in Belgien').

131. Note of the Sipo-SD IV C d.d. 1-10-1941 (CEGES, AA 1314, 527/3).

132. Correspondence between Vojcehovskij and the Sûreté Publique 11-1941 — 12-3-1942 (OE, A80001 A. Shabasheff).

collaborate. Someone like E. Fričero, a building contractor who had built the church in the Avenue Defré and who had Kotljarevskij among his employees, apparently needed little persuasion to undertake civilian construction work in Kiev, where he would stay for a year.¹³³ However, the Russian *Leiter* had more difficulty in imposing his authority outside Brussels. In July 1941 he had been outwitted by members of the Synodical Parish in Liège, who, behind his back, had proposed to the leaders of Rex to join the newly-founded 'Légion Wallonie' and participate in the Russian campaign. The German authorities had approved the initiative and on 8 August 1941 the first contingent would leave for the Eastern Front.¹³⁴ A further blow to Vojcehovskij's ego was the fact that Andrej Ivančenko (1892-?), the priest of the Synodical parish in Liège, visited the Soviet POWs who had been arriving in the Belgian mines from July 1942 onwards.¹³⁵ Vojcehovskij was furious, because Ivančenko was acting without his or Šabašev's prior consent and therefore had him summoned by the Sipo-SD.¹³⁶

Vojcehovskij did not always have to apply brute force to smother the loathing he generally provoked. Occasionally, German decisions and the development of war events played into his hands. In June 1941 the Sipo-SD had made registration with the Comité d'Entr'aide obligatory for all Russians in German service.¹³⁷ Moreover, in June 1942, the German Supreme Command had to comply with an order from Hitler, who considered the Russians *Untermenschen*, and formally forbade the enlistment of Russian émigrés for military service on the Eastern front.¹³⁸ Russian émigrés could now only engage either as chauffeurs (Zivilkraftfahrer) or interpreters in one of the camps for Soviet POWs, and then only with Vojcehovskij's consent.¹³⁹

133. Military Prosecutor to the Sûreté Publique s.d. [end June 1946] (AGR, Personal files of the 'Police des Étrangers,' 822757 E. Fricero).

134. Note in relation to the participation of Russians in the Walloon Corps d.d. 4-7-1941 (BA MA-RW 36/49); contrary to Eddy De Bruyne's claims, there is no proof that Vojcehovskij sent these emissaries to Rex (the political party of L. Degrelle, the commander of the Corps) in order to negotiate the participation of Russians (E. De Bruyne, *Un aspect de la collaboration militaire dans la Belgique francophone 41-45* (HIA/CEGES). Cf. Interviews by the Sûreté de l'État with Russian members of the Walloon Corps d.d. 31-12-1946 (MT, File 24234/1944 G. Woyciechowski).

135. J. Kohlbacher, *Het Russisch Kamp. De kampen bij de Limburgse mijnen 1942-1965* (Eisden, 1995): 10.

136. Testimony of N. Andrault de Langeron before the War Tribunal d.d. 6 & 12-12-1944; Interrogation of A. Ivančenko before the War Tribunal d.d. 22-12-1944 (E. De Bruyne Archives, House).

137. Militärbefehlshaber Gruppe Polizei to Baumann d.d. 30-7-1941 (BA-MA, RW 36/48).

138. Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, "Einsatz von Russischen Emigranten in der Wehrmacht" d.d. 27-6-1942 (BA-MA, RW4/507); see also B. Dodenhoeft, 'Laßt mich nach Rußland heim.' *Russische Emigranten in Deutschland von 1918 bis 1945* (Frankfurt am Main, 1993): 282 ff.

139. Interrogation of P.-J. Sachnovsky d.d. 20-3-1946 (E. De Bruyne Archives, House); Police des Étrangers Ixelles to Sûreté de l'État d.d. 7-12-1944 regarding N. Dubenskij (OE, 1358140 N. Doubensky). The case of Dubenskij was rather particular: he became an interpreter in Russian camps in Northern France after his relations with Vojcehovskij had cooled down. Until that moment, he was considered a Gestapo collaborator (Interrogation by the Sûreté de l'État of R. Bracke d.d. 11-10-1946 (MT, 24234/1944 G. Woyciechowski)).

As for the Russian military in Belgium, they had to accept their fate, as Arhangel'skij wrote to von Lampe on 6 November 1942: "I have nothing to report about myself. Everything remains the same. [...] Life has become more complicated and expensive, and my earnings bear no relation to the cost of life. We have all got thinner and lost weight in all its meanings... I hardly weigh 58 kilos..."¹⁴⁰

The propaganda-war

Vojcehovskij, however, was more than an obedient executor of German commands or, for that matter, a vulgar opportunist obsessed with control over his fellow-countrymen. Above all, he was a Russian patriot, determined to free his native country from the Bolsheviks and convinced that this could only be achieved with the help of the Nazis. He therefore considered it his duty to propagate this idea among the Russian émigrés and, in the long run, among the Belgians.

From February 1942 onwards, the Comité d'Entr'aide started a cycle of lectures on Russian and anti-communist affairs, very similar to those that had been organized by the Russian émigrés before the war. On 2 February 1942, Nikolaj De-Zobri (1901-1972), an engineer with a law degree from Prague, spoke about 'National-Socialism and Bolshevism;' two weeks later, Serge Doring (1906-?), a (Russian) journalist from Rex, gave a lecture on 'British Politics,' highlighting its Judeo-Masonic hypocrisy. A second cycle was organized in November and brought together Colonel Valerij Poljakov (1882-?) ('The goldmines of Siberia'), Nikolaj Kotljarevskij ('My journeys to St. Briac'¹⁴¹), a 'Colonel' Kartašev from New York ('The reign of the Judaeo-Masonic plutocracy in America') and General Vladimir Illovajskij (1875-1956) ('The Cossacks and their historical destiny').¹⁴² In addition to that, Vojcehovskij and his committee usurped the Russian contingent of the 'Légion Wallonie,' either by organizing commemorations for fallen émigrés,¹⁴³ or inviting the leader of the Legion, Léon Degrelle (1906-1994), to a service in the church on the Avenue Defré.¹⁴⁴ However, there would never be much love lost between Vojcehovskij and the Russian volunteers of the Légion Wallonie.¹⁴⁵

140. Arhangel'skij to von Lampe d.d. 6-11-1942 (HIA, Aleksej P. Arkhangel'skii Papers, Box 2).

141. In Saint-Briac lived Grand Duke Kirill Vladimirovič (1876-1938), the nominal head of the Romanov dynasty.

142. Report from the Sector UZH of Portemine/Zéro (Intelligence Service in occupied Belgium) d.d. 15-2-1943 (CEGES, AA 1417, 79 'Colonie russe en Belgique').

143. Vojcehovskij to von Falkenhausen d.d. 22-4-1942 with invitation for the commemoration of S. Smolenskij (BA-MA, RW 36/48).

144. Report on the Orthodox Church in Belgium during the War, s.d. (OE, 1555000 C. Doumbadze); Sûreté Publique to Military Prosecutor d.d. [9-2-1945] (OE A80001 A. Shabasheff).

145. Cf. Interviews by the Sûreté de l'État with Russian members of the Walloon Corps d.d. 31-12-1946 (MT, 24234/1944 G. Woyciechowski).

Religious services in the Synodical church, by the way, would become a successful part of Vojcehovskij's propaganda strategy. Moreover, in an interview with the Flemish collaborationist daily *Volk en Staat*, Vojcehovskij would boast of his loyalty to the spirit of the Army of General Vrangél'.¹⁴⁶ As a result of all these tactical manoeuvres, by early 1943, Vojcehovskij had succeeded in gathering around his committee a select group of some 200 trusted followers, who shared his anti-bolshevik and pro-Nazi sympathies.¹⁴⁷

Propaganda activities, however, could not be carried out without the consent of the Propaganda-Abteilung in Brussels. The Militärverwaltung had already allowed Vojcehovskij to publicize his activities and opinions by way of an information bulletin in 1941, but the Propaganda-Abteilung had strongly opposed this plan.¹⁴⁸ It showed more interest in Vojcehovskij's idea of organizing an anti-communist exhibition in Brussels. The leader of the Comité d'Entr'aide had already been collecting materials for some time about communist atrocities committed during the Russian Revolution¹⁴⁹ and together with documents and exhibits provided by the Propaganda-Abteilung, there was enough material to fill one of the huge exhibition halls of the Brussels 'Cinquantenaire.' On 10 February 1943, a press conference was called to announce an 'Anti-Bolshevist Exhibition.' It was to be opened on 5 March and would enlighten the general public until 26 April about the dangers coming from the East. While the press release unceremoniously pointed at Russia as the source of all evil, Vojcehovskij in his speech clearly distinguished between Russia and its Bolshevik leaders. According to Vojcehovskij, the West in general and Belgium in particular had been poisoned by communist propaganda. The exhibition was intended to demonstrate its pernicious influence and to prove that Soviet Russia was led by anti-Arian Jews who were striving for world hegemony. Nazi-Germany was the only nation in the world that wanted to put an end to this danger, and therefore, according to Vojcehovskij, the Russian émigrés were objective allies of the Nazis:

"We, White Russians, are irreconcilable. We know that by acting thus, we are not acting against the national conscience of the Russian people, but in its interests. Moreover, we are united with the former Red soldiers and White Russian officers who are fighting on the Eastern Front along with Western soldiers. These Russians wear German uniforms, but swore fidelity to their country."¹⁵⁰

146. "Aan den vooravond der anti-bolsjewistische tentoonstelling. Georges Woyciechowski, leider der Witrußen in België, over de Sowjets," *Volk en Staat* (4-3-1943).

147. Report from the Sector UZH of Portemine/Zéro (Intelligence Service in occupied Belgium) d.d. 15-2-1943 (CEGES, AA 1417, 79).

148. Dienststelle des Auswärtigen Amtes Brussels to Auswärtiges Amt Berlin d.d. 23-1-1942 (BA-MA, RW 36/48).

149. Report from the Sector UZH of Portemine/Zéro (Intelligence Service in occupied Belgium) d.d. 15-2-1943 (CEGES, AA 1417, 79).

150. Report on the press conference of 10 February 1943, by Zéro X39/4 (CEGES, AA 1417, 79).

The Propaganda-Abteilung apparently trusted Vojcehovskij enough to give him the full control over the organization of the exhibition, but it made sure that Vojcehovskij's Russian associates in the organizing committee were outnumbered by journalists from the collaborationist Belgian press.¹⁵¹ Moreover, Vojcehovskij needed both these journalists and the Propaganda-Abteilung. Posters, advertisements in journals and dailies, newsreels and even cars with loudspeakers would make publicity for his exhibition and draw as many visitors as possible from all over the country.¹⁵² Although the exhibition derived its materials largely from similar exhibitions which had taken place in Berlin, Paris, Lille, Oslo, Strasburg, etc.¹⁵³, and primarily focussed on the gruesome reality of Soviet life, Vojcehovskij succeeded in turning the opening into a White Russian triumph. The Flemish dailies were especially impressed by the Russian guard of honour that met the numerous German military and civilian representatives, as well as the cream of collaborationist Belgium.¹⁵⁴ The Germans themselves considered the opening a success.¹⁵⁵

In the wake of the anti-Bolshevik exhibition, the Russian *Leiter* in Brussels was to have his greatest triumph. On 27 June 1943, the Comité d'Entr'aide held a meeting in the Brussels 'Palais des Sports' to commemorate the second anniversary of the German invasion of Soviet Russia. Ten thousand people were gathered in front of

"an immense stage of white columns and drapes, with in the centre a Russian coat of arms, flanked by the Cross of Burgundy and the Lion of Flanders. In front of it stood a large bust of the Führer. The rostrum was decorated with the German Eagle and on the roof of the stadium flew the flags of the different nations that had sent volunteers to the Eastern Front. In front of the stage hung a huge emblem of the Waffen-SS, while the glorious names of the battlefields of the Eastern Front were written on the stage. The austere decoration with green plants around the field and the lane of white columns across it, leading to the stage, with on the left a military band and on the right a choir of Russian labourers in national costumes, gave the scene an impressive appearance."¹⁵⁶

151. "Comité Belgo-Russe de l'Exposition Antibolcheviste à Bruxelles," in *Voici les Soviets* (Bruxelles, 1943): 2.

152. Vojcehovskij to the 'Comité Belgo-Russe de l'Exposition Antibolcheviste,' s.d. (CEGES, AA 1417, 79).

153. "Groote anti-bolsjewistische tentoonstelling te Brussel," *Volk en Staat* (23-10-1942); E.V.D.B., "Een anti-bolsjewistische tentoonstelling te Brussel," *Het Algemeen Nieuws* (4-3-1943); A., "Een anti-bolsjevistische Tentoonstelling te Brussel," *Het Laatste Nieuws* (4-3-1943).

154. "'Dit zijn de Sovjets.' Openingsplechtigheid der anti-bolsjevistische tentoonstelling in het Jubelpark te Brussel," *De Dag* (6-3-1943); "De anti-bolsjevistische Tentoonstelling te Brussel," *Het Laatste Nieuws* (6-3-1943); "Indrukwekkende opening der anti-bolsjewistische tentoonstelling te Brussel," *Volk en Staat* (6-3-1943); "Voici les Soviets. Debout, les damnés de la terre!," *Le Pays Réel* (6-3-1943); V.D., "'Voici les Soviets.' Une exposition au Cinquantenaire," *Nouveau Journal* (6/7-3-1943).

155. Sipo-SD Belgien/Nordfrankreich, *Meldungen aus Belgien und Nordfrankreich*, 5/43 (15-3-1943) (CEGES, AA 553).

156. "Europa tegen het bolsjewisme. De volksvergadering in het Sportpaleis te Brussel," *Vooruit* (28-6-1943).

Apart from Vojcehovskij, who repeated his plea for the Russian cause, the leader of the Flemish collaboration movement DeVlag, Jef Van de Wiele (1903-1979), a professor Grotov of the university of Rostov-on-Don and the *Chef* of the 'Légion Wallonie,' Léon Degrelle, also addressed the audience. The first dwelled on the need to defend Western culture against both capitalism and communism, the second painted a gruesome picture of the Russian cultural heritage destroyed by the Judaeo-Bolsheviks, the last praised the heroism of those who fought on the Eastern front against the Soviets.¹⁵⁷ A lot of interest was aroused by two officers of the Vlasov Army, a Lieutenant Davidenkov and a Captain Belov, who testified about their struggle against their fatherland.¹⁵⁸ An orchestra and songs by Russian labourers from Northern France added to the general atmosphere of sympathy with the oppressed in Russia and optimism about the final victory of Nazi Germany.

Although the meeting in Brussels was generally considered a great success, Reichsführer SS Himmler was not at all pleased by this apparent collaboration between the Russian émigrés in Belgium and the German military authorities and warned Degrelle not to engage in similar meetings in the future without his prior consent.¹⁵⁹ Moreover, the propaganda activities of Vojcehovskij's Comité seem to have waned after 27 June 1943. There is every reason to suggest that Vojcehovskij, who until that moment had energetically profited from the struggle between the RHSA and the military, was now facing the true nature of Nazi ideology. Hitler, and for that matter also Himmler, considered Russians *Untermenschen* and therefore categorically refused to consider their engagement in the struggle with Soviet Russia, even if this meant reducing the chances of military success in the East. For that same reason, the 'Russian Liberation Army' (Russkaja osvoboditel'naja Armija — ROA) or Vlasov Army, composed of Soviet POWs and to a lesser degree Russian émigrés, would only emerge from the propaganda stage in November 1944, when the war was nearly over. Vojcehovskij and his supporters, however, had never considered themselves as *Untermenschen* along the lines adopted by Hitler or Himmler, and they strongly believed it was their duty to enlist in, or rather, propagate the ROA as a means for Russians to liberate their country from the Bolshevik yoke. In a sense, Vojcehovskij's beliefs lay far closer to those of the Russian military he so deeply despised, than to the ideas of those he considered his spiritual leaders, i.e. Hitler and Himmler. In a letter to von Lampe, of 5 July 1943, General Arhangel'skij expressed the belief that ROVS could

157. *Ibid.*; "Pour l'Europe, pour le peuple russe, contre le bolchevisme. Une foule enthousiaste à la réunion du Palais des Sports," *Nouveau Journal* (28-6-1943); "Immer stärker wird die Einheit Europas. Ueberwältigende Grosskundgebung gegen den Bolschewismus in Brüssel," *Brüsseler Zeitung* (28-6-1943).

158. "Een Russisch officier van het Vlassowleger over zijn ervaringen in Sowjet-Rusland," *Het Vlaamsche Land* (26-6-1943); "Deux officiers russes parlent. L'Armée de Vlassov possède le moral qui mène à la victoire," *Le Pays Réel* (26-6-1943); "Entretiens avec des officiers de l'armée Wlassov. La Russie se libère du bolchevisme," *Le Soir* (26/27-6-1943).

159. Himmler to Berger (Berlin) d.d. 17-7-1943; Berger to Himmler 20-7-1943 (HIA, A. Dallin Papers, Box 8, Folder 23).

contribute significantly to the anti-Bolshevik and nationalistic character of the Vlasov Army:

“We had here a large anti-Bolshevik meeting, where officers of the Vlasov Army were present and addressed the crowd. You have, of course, heard and read about this meeting, at which, as you will know, I could not be present. There is little I can say. S[ergej] L. Vojcehovskij [Jurij’s brother, WC] was also present, but did not come to visit me. I am very sorry about that. I think that our meeting would have been very useful, especially because our relations hitherto have been excellent and I have great respect for him.”¹⁶⁰

The final battle

Reconciliation between Vojcehovskij and the Russian military was not to take place. According to a report of the Military Prosecutor after the war, Vojcehovskij kept antagonizing the military as much as he could. The report claimed that Vojcehovskij had wanted to use the Russian naval flag (Andreevskij flag) of the ‘Union of Officers of the Russian Imperial Fleet’ (Union des Officiers de la Flotte Impériale Russe) for the meeting of 27 June 1943, but had met with a refusal and therefore had unleashed the Gestapo on the president of the Union, Captain Aleksandr Kovan’ko (1878-1949). According to the same source, early in 1944, Vojcehovskij caused great indignation among Russian émigrés (and thereby confirmed their judgement of this collaborator) by doubting their readiness to fight communism. During a meeting he was reported to have said:

“We live in a hostile country. You do not want to understand. I am ashamed to say that there are even Russians who belong to ‘terrorist’ groups. I perceive that the Russian emigration in Belgium does not want to take an active part in the fight alongside the Germans. I, however, will organize a network of active people who really want to fight for our ideals.”¹⁶¹

What this plan consisted of, Vojcehovskij explained at a meeting with German officers on 5 August 1944, less than a month before the liberation of Brussels. According to a German report of the meeting, Vojcehovskij claimed that all his efforts to engage Russian émigrés for the ROA had collapsed because of the reluctance of the German authorities. In the light of the (dramatic) situation in the East, now, more than ever, collaboration between Germany and the Russian emigration was necessary:

“There are many Russians abroad; they should be considered as one people and should have representation. This representation should be the only leading authority and should be elected, so as to enjoy the confidence of the Russians and

160. Arhangel’skij to von Lampe d.d. 5-7-1943 (HIA, Aleksei P. Arkhangel’skii Papers, Box 2).

161. “Besprechungen in der Sache Kriegseinsatzkommando Belgien am 5/8/1944 12.30 im Restaurant Elite” d.d. 8-8-1944 (CEGES, AA 1417, 79).

all those willing to collaborate with it. Clear arrangements should be made, so as to avoid this representation being considered a German body, rather than an equal partner, which enjoys the requisite confidence and authority. Asked about his political goals, Vojcehovskij elaborated on the fact that a new liberation movement should be founded for the Russian people. The emigration should make contact with freedom fighters within [Soviet] Russia. Stalin understood how to turn the politics of world revolution into a patriotic war and promised to defeat the German people before the end of this year. He recognised Britain and the USA as equals. This movement should be led by Russians, who should make a political program that should appeal to Russian feelings, rather than to the Russian mind. Only when one can conquer the Russian Soul, can success be expected.”¹⁶²

Concluding, Vojcehovskij claimed that the Russian Revolution had failed and should be replaced by a ‘Volkssozialistische Bewegung.’¹⁶³ To reach this goal, he wanted to resume the propaganda efforts which had seemed so successful in 1943. On the one hand, he wanted to increase the pressure on the (young) ‘Ostarbeiter’ working at the coal mines of Waterschei. Unlike the Soviet POWs in other mines, who had secretly maintained their military discipline and were frequently fleeing to join the Resistance, these were civilians from the occupied zones in the East who would easily succumb to anti-Bolshevik propaganda.¹⁶⁴ A number of Vojcehovskij’s disciples, active in the ‘Hitlerjugend’ and engaged as camp guards, would conduct this propaganda.¹⁶⁵ On the other hand, Vojcehovskij relaunched his idea of a propaganda bulletin for the Russian community in Belgium. Contrary to 1941, when the Propaganda-Abteilung had refused even to consider such a plan, the project now met with little resistance. The first issue of *Bor’ba* (*La Lutte — Der Kampf*) appeared on Sunday 6 August 1944 and was supposed to replace the circular letters, which the Comité d’Entr’aide had hitherto distributed.¹⁶⁶ In his editorial Vojcehovskij presented his journal as an “organ of independent Russian political thought,”¹⁶⁷ based on four ‘conditions’:

“1) The Russian should remain faithful to his origins. 2) He should fight communism without compromise. 3) The only force capable of defeating bolshevism is Germany, and therefore collaboration with Germany should exceed the superficial level and become interiorized. 4) Russians should refute all political reaction, whether from the right or from the left.”¹⁶⁸

162. *Ibid.*

163. *Ibid.*

164. Cf. A. Wollants, J. Bouveroux, *Russische partizanen WOII — Limburg* (Leuven, 1994).

165. “Besprechungen in der Sache Kriegseinsatzkommando Belgien am 5/8/1944 12.30 im Restaurant Elite” d.d. 8-8-1944 (CEGES 1417, 79); Report of the Sûreté de l’État on the ‘Comité d’entraide russe’ d.d. 27-8-1945 (CEGES, AA 1418, 254 ‘Comité d’Entr’aide Russe’).

166. Ju. L. Vojcehovskij, “Upravlenie Delami Russkoj emigracii v Bel’gii,” *Bor’ba* (6-8-1944): 4. As far as we know, no copies of these circular letters have been preserved.

167. Ju. L. Vojcehovskij, “Bor’ba,” *Bor’ba* (6-8-1944): 1.

168. “Besprechungen in der Sache Kriegseinsatzkommando Belgien am 5/8/1944 12.30 im Restaurant Elite” d.d. 8-8-1944 (CEGES, AA 1417, 79).

Apart from practical information necessary for the Russian colony, the journal extensively covered the (hopeless) situation in the East, showing a close affinity to the ROA. Some of the articles were signed by Nikolaj Anin, an "officer of the ROA, known to the whole Russian colony in Belgium because of the speeches he gave both in Russian and French in Brussels."¹⁶⁹ *Bor'ba* also bore witness to the paradoxes that governed Vojcehovskij's mind. Although he acknowledged that the failed liberation of Russia was largely due to Hitler's aversion for anything Slavic, he continued to proclaim his belief in the Führer. In a letter to the German authorities he expressed his indignation about the attempt on Hitler's life on 20 July 1944¹⁷⁰ and at the same time seized the opportunity to repeat his personal commitment to the Führer:

"In 1930 or 1931, sitting in a stone cage in the Polish prison of Mokotów, I picked up a book, *Mein Kampf*, by an author unknown to me at that moment, Adolf Hitler. With the help of a dictionary, I struggled through it, page after page, during those hours of total isolation as a prisoner. And so I became acquainted with the content of one of those rare books that will always occupy a prominent place in a person's mind, even if he has read it only once. In those days of endless pondering over the fate of my fatherland I became acquainted with a work, written in prison by a man who only thought about the well-being and good fortune of his people. And I acknowledged, in all his might, this great patriot, sagacious philosopher and brilliant leader.

Years went by. In the beautiful city of Nürnberg, wrapped in medieval legends, young National-Socialist Germany celebrated its yearly festival.

[...] One evening, in the huge stadium, a mystery took place. [...] He appeared and headed for his place, through rows of collaborators, friends and assistants standing stock-still. On reaching the platform, the Leader of Germany addressed a short speech to them, containing everything a man needs and lives on. At that very instant, I, as a foreigner, felt that the hearts of all those present were unified with that of the man who was addressing them as a comrade, a shepherd, a leader. At that moment I understood what the Führer meant for the German people [...].

Then came the war. A war that would decide the fate of our people, of the German people, of the whole of Europe and the world. Fate laid the leadership of our common fight on the shoulders of the Führer of the German people. All these years, more than once, we all have shared his thoughts, have thought about him, have felt compassion for him, have enthused over him. And all friends and foes knew, that only Hitler was up to this gigantic and superhuman task of being the only military and political leader of the terrible battle that would decide between being and not being.

Whoever reads what I have just written will immediately understand what we experienced on that terrible 20 July 1944, when a handful of criminal madmen placed a bomb in the HQ of the German Army and not only tried to blow up and destroy the Führer and his closest collaborators, but also were prepared to destroy the whole world and blow up the dam which held back the bolshevik flood.

169. N. Anin, "Naša čest'," *Bor'ba* (6-8-1944): 2; *id.*, "Uslovie pobedy," *ibid.* (20-8-1944): 2-3.

170. Ju. L. Vojcehovskij, "Pis'mo Načal'nika Upravljenija Delami Russkoj emigracii v Bel'gii Ju. L. Vojcehovskogo Germanskomu Pravitel'stvennomu Komissaru v Bel'gii Gauleiteru Groz," *Bor'ba* (6-8-1944): 4.

A miracle happened, there is no other way to describe it. The Führer remained alive. Providence not only saved him, but all of us, too, our families, our peoples. The joyous certainty that God is with us, gives strength to all who know that he who has the strongest faith and mind, will win this cruel fight.”¹⁷¹

Epilogue

Vojcehovskij's profession of faith could not change the course of history. Less than a month after he wrote it, the leader of the 'Russische Vertrauensstelle für Belgien' was dead and his adoptive country was gradually being liberated from German occupation. What his fate would have been, if he had survived, is easy to imagine. For one, his murder proves that he was high on the list of wanted collaborators. Moreover, some 200 émigrés who were considered Vojcehovskij's accomplices sooner or later faced prosecution. Šabašev, for instance, was apprehended on 23 October 1944 by local partisans,¹⁷² while others, like Kotljarevskij, who had fled to Germany, were the subjects of wanted notices.¹⁷³ The Russian émigrés themselves, although strongly divided over what had happened during the German occupation, tended to back each other up,¹⁷⁴ laying all the blame on Vojcehovskij. The Belgian authorities, for their part, did not take notice of the rivalries within the Russian community and put all Russians who had dealings with the Germans into one box. Therefore, the report of the Military Prosecutor on Russian collaboration during the war, dated 30 January 1947, named not only Vojcehovskij and his collaborators, but also the leaders of ROVS, including Gartman and Arhangel'skij.¹⁷⁵ However, the number of convictions was actually very low and the sentences were generally far less severe than those given to Belgians, convicted for similar offences. This was partly due to the fact that the main culprits were either dead or had fled abroad (e.g. Šabašev). Moreover, the Russians could profit from a void in the Penal Code, which largely exempted foreigners from formal criminal prosecution.¹⁷⁶ Finally, the Russian émigrés took advantage of the emerging Cold War, especially after the Soviet Union demanded the extradition of the leaders of ROVS for war crimes in the summer of 1946. The so-called 'Case of the Russian Generals,' caused such an upheaval in the Belgian press, that the authorities had to release them and reject the

171. Ju. L. Vojcehovskij, "20 ijlja 1944 g. K pokušeniju na Fjurera," *Bor'ba* (6-8-1944): 2.

172. J. Mallinger (Lawyer of Šabašev) to Sûreté de l'État d.d. 24-10-1944 (OE, A80001 A. Shabasheff).

173. See for instance Auditoriat Général, Registre des PV et dossier A-Z (Bruxelles) (CEGES, AA 1304).

174. H. Wittouck (Russian Resistance) to Sûreté de l'État d.d. 26-10-1944 (OE, A80001 A. Shabasheff).

175. Scoriels (Military Prosecutor) to Minister of Justice d.d. 30-1-1947 (OE, A129754 G. De Woychiechowski).

176. I.e. the article 113 of the Penal Code clearly spoke of 'Belgians' who had taken up arms against their country or its allies. In practice, foreigners suspected of collaborations were handed over to the Police des Étrangers, who at random pronounced administrative measures, i.e. expulsion from the country.

Soviet demand.¹⁷⁷ Although the Sûreté de l'État claimed that the arrests had been made solely on the ground of the behaviour of the Russians émigrés during the war and had nothing whatsoever to do with Soviet pressure (quite the contrary),¹⁷⁸ this affair resulted in protection for the Russian community. The individuals and parties involved resumed their pre-war anti-communist activities, and the things that had happened during the war were passed over in silence.

Conclusion

The case of Jurij L'vovič Vojcehovskij proves that, contrary to Soviet claims, the Russian émigré community as a whole did not collaborate with Nazi Germany, and that German sympathies did not necessarily lead to political or military collaboration. There is no doubt, however, that the Russian fascination with Germany constituted a major condition for collaboration. Notwithstanding this favorable condition, only a small part of the Russian community in Belgium actually engaged in collaboration with Germany and then mainly because the opportunity arose. There were not more collaborators proportionally among Russian émigrés than among Belgian citizens, although the former may have had more reason to collaborate. As it turned out after the war the excuse of 'fighting against communism' was more acceptable for Russians, than it was for Belgians. No doubt, this may have helped Russians to reestablish themselves after the war and to resume their anti-communist activities.

As for Vojcehovskij himself, he was clearly a figure — be it an enigmatic one — who took full advantage of the opportunities provided by the war to achieve his personal goals. These were, on the one hand 'revenge' on the émigré establishment, i.e. the military, for not supporting him during the Lizarev affair and not fully accepting him as one of their own afterwards, in Belgium. On the other hand, Vojcehovskij's 1944 confession of faith in Hitler suggests that he had been

177. "L'arrestation des généraux russes," *La Libre Belgique* (8-8-1946); "A Liège et à Bruxelles, des officiers russes-blancs ont été arrêtés. Une sombre et ténébreuse machination," *Le Drapeau Rouge* (8-8-1946); L.A.T., "Manoeuvres de Moscou? Une erreur lamentable de la Sûreté de l'État," *L'Occident* (24-8-1946); "Épuration à retardement? Après le coup de filet dans les milieux russes blancs. Le mystère demeure entier," *La Nation Belge* (24-8-1946); "Les arrestations de Russes blancs. Aucune explication n'a encore été donnée à leur sujet," *Le Quotidien* (24-8-1946); "Arrestation à Bruxelles d'anciens officiers tsaristes," *Le Soir* (24-8-1946); "Après l'arrestation des dirigeants russes blancs," *Le Peuple* (24-8-1946); "L'affaire des Russes blancs rebondit. Une douzaine de nouvelles arrestations à Liège," *Le Quotidien* (27-8-1946); "Witte Russen ook te Luik aangehouden," *De Roode Vaan* (28-8-1946); "De nouvelles arrestations de Russes blancs à Liège et à Bruxelles," *La Cité Nouvelle* (28-8-1946); "Une affaire à sensation. Des arrestations dans les milieux russes blancs de Belgique," *La Nation Belge* (28-8-1946); "De aanhoudingen van Wit-Russen. Opnieuw te Brussel en te Luik verricht," *Het Laatste Nieuws* (29-8-1946); "L'arrestation des Russes blancs. Quel rôle joua Doumbadzé?," *Le Quotidien* (29-8-1946); "L'arrestation des Russes blancs en Belgique," *La Lanterne* (31-8-1946); J. Wolf, "En marge des arrestations de généraux russes blancs. Notre Sûreté d'État va-t-elle se muer en Gestapo ou en N.K.V.D.? De Koutiepoïf à Arkhanguelsky," *Septembre* (1-9-1946).

178. Report of the Sûreté de l'État d.d. 24-8-1946 (MT, 24134/1944 G. Woyciechowski).

under the *Führer*'s spell at least since the early 1930's. Personal frustrations and a strong identification with the author of *Mein Kampf* made him blind to Hitler's hatred of the Russians as *Untermenschen*. He simply ignored this fact, perhaps considered it a temporary, but necessary aberration of the system. In his veneration for Hitler he never thought that he was merely a pawn of the RSHA, expendable when he became a nuisance. Finally, one may wonder whether the RSHA did not turn to Vojcehovskij because it could not find another candidate who would be as ruthless and naïve at the same time. The subsequent fate of the other Russian collaborators in Belgium suggests that they at least put their eggs in different baskets. The same goes for Vojcehovskij's brother, Sergej, who had played a similar role to his brother in Poland, but who succeeded in reestablishing himself in the United States after the war. Judging from Sergej's writings, there was no great love lost between the two brothers, and one may wonder whether he had anything at all to do with the appointment of his brother in Brussels. From the German point of view, of course, these family ties may have been an asset.

Did the situation in Belgium significantly differ from that in France, Germany or Poland? Probably not: in all the occupied countries the Germans established 'Vertrauensstelle' headed by 'reliable' people.¹⁷⁹ The different *Leiter* occasionally met, but even jointly they had no authority (or willingness) to 'correct' German decisions. The similarities between the situation in Brussels, Paris, Warsaw or Berlin actually suggest that the autonomy of the local *Leiter* was very restricted. Taking into account the relatively small number of Russians in Belgium, however, the personal impact of a 'devoted madman' like Jurij L'vovič Vojcehovskij may have been greater than in other occupied countries. Therefore, his personal history deserves a reconsideration that may initiate new research into the history of Russian collaboration in Western Europe during World War II.

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179. B. Dodenhoeft, 'Laßt mich nach Rußland heim.' ..., *op. cit.*: 272-275.