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## Mass Communications as a Vehicle to Lure Russian Émigrés Homeward

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### **Abstract**

After the millions of wartime displaced citizens had been forcibly returned to the Soviet Union after the Second World War, the Soviet Union inaugurated a new type of campaign in the mid-1950s to get all the remaining Soviet citizens and former émigrés from Soviet-occupied areas to migrate back. In this campaign, the Soviets used all the means of mass communication they were able to produce, especially radio combined with the press and direct contact with people. The campaign was not very successful, at least not among the people it was supposed to lure back: people residing in Europe. However, many people, especially from Latin America, migrated back to the Soviet Union, only to be disappointed, just as the people who had migrated to the Soviet Union in the early 1930s.

### Short history of Russian Emigration in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the migration of Russians to lands outside the borders of “Rodina,” as the Russian motherland is called, is discerned to have four distinct peaks. The first wave of emigration took place after the collapse of the Russian Empire and during the Revolutionary period of 1917-1922. In all, over two million people left during this period. The majority of those who left were at odds with the Bolsheviks (who were in charge from October 1917) and had been on the losing side in the Russian Civil War. Even if these individuals had wanted to migrate back to the Soviet Union, they were unwanted there. Instead of returning to motherland, they formed their own communities outside the Soviet Union, which are sometimes called Russia Abroad – “zarubezhnaia Rossiia” (e.g. Raeff 2005).

The second wave of emigration occurred as a consequence of World War II. For twenty years, only a few people had been able to move beyond the Soviet borders, but by 1945, there were five million Soviet citizens who found themselves displaced. These people posed a problem not only for the Soviet authorities but for the western allied powers, too. In the German area, there were forced workers, prisoners, and Soviet citizens who needed to be resettled (Salomon 1991). The Soviet Union managed to get the majority of these people, as well as those from areas occupied by the Western Allied Powers, back into the Soviet Union, due in part to the naiveté of US politicians about Soviet motivations, but also as a result of Joseph Stalin’s insistence. The West participated in these efforts to repatriate Soviet citizens, even when its people had to be returned by force to the Soviet zones of occupation.

Perhaps the most chronologically extensive was the third wave of emigration, consisting of dissidents, exiles, and non-returnees, all of whom managed to leave the Soviet Union during the Cold War and before the perestroika in the late 1980s. This wave also included a significant number of Jewish people, who were allowed to move outside the Soviet Union after some international wrestling over their rights (Roi 1991; Buwalda 1997). This migration turned from a trickle into a stream, forming the fourth wave of emigration, and ultimately contributing to the collapse of the Soviet Union before peaking in the early- and mid-1990s. (Zlotnik 1998).

Each of these waves of emigration has its own distinct historical features. The essence, however, is that the 20<sup>th</sup> Century saw a major outflow of people from the Russian, and later Soviet territory, forming a considerable body of people who were of interest to the Moscow governments, which were ever-concerned about propaganda and world image. During the Soviet era, when émigrés outside the Iron Curtain were believed to be a source of potential misinformation that could spread outward, luring these individuals back became important to the government.

The purpose of this article is not to provide a complete history of Russian emigration but rather to analyze the communication strategies and technologies that political operatives used to make contact with and lure émigrés back to their homeland. I will concentrate on the efforts of the post-Stalin Soviet government to reach the Russian-speaking world outside its borders, primarily through radio broadcasts. Although technologies may have changed since then, particularly with the advent of the Internet, politicians with hidden agendas may still use technology to communicate with Diasporas.

In the case of the Soviet Union, its aim was to persuade emigrants to move back to their homeland or, at the very least, to make such individuals feel and speak positively of their homeland and less inclined to act out against it. In short, the Soviet agenda was, wherever possible, to win over the hearts of its former citizens, and they spared no effort in doing so. Most

of the existing literature on the emigration of Russians is focused on the first wave, or the so-called white emigration. Another wave of major interest to historians has been the Russian Jewish emigration, particularly from the 1960s onwards. (This particular wave of emigration drew international interest, especially in Europe, with the demise of the Soviet Union, at which time there was pronounced fear of mass migration toward the West (see e.g. Shevtsova 1992). These fears, however, were never realized to the extent that had been feared initially, especially by the Western European governments.) When compared to these first and fourth waves of emigration, however, the second and third waves have been much less studied.

### **The second and third waves**

The second and third waves of Russian emigration in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and the repatriation of these individuals became a near obsession for the Soviet government. Even upon the return of many emigrants, the government appeared obsessed with containing the threat these individuals were perceived to pose to the well-being of the state. Of the almost five million Soviet citizens who were returned to Soviet-controlled areas in 1945, many faced camp sentences and persecution upon their return, as they were considered suspicious after being exposed to foreign influences. Although the Soviet government needed primarily to focus its energies on postwar reconstruction, it was unwilling to have masses of people spreading potentially harmful information about the Soviet Union during a delicate international situation. Thus, the Soviet government dedicated a significant percentage of its energies to returning its emigrants to their homeland and monitoring their whereabouts upon their return.

This explicit interest in Russian emigration was something new to Soviet authorities. However, not all emigrants were of equal interest. Of primary interest to the Soviets were those who comprised the second wave of emigration not those who had left in the first wave. (Indeed, before WWII, many first-wave emigrants were even deprived of their citizenship and became stateless, as they were unable or unwilling to accept any other citizenship.) Although some groups of first-wave émigrés returned to their homeland as a consequence of international agreements signed by the Soviet government, the Soviets did not generally seek or encourage the re-emigration of first-wave individuals, nor did first-wave émigrés ever return in droves. Even after WWII, the Soviet government remained generally unwilling to encourage return migration of these people (Ginsburgs 1957). (Rare exceptions to this involved non-Russian minorities, like Armenians. In 1946-47 there were some 80,000 Armenians returning to Soviet Armenia, and some 30,000 more in Turkey who were denied exit visas) (Ginsburgs 1957). The majority of the repatriation efforts in year immediately following the war, the Soviet government concentrated specifically on getting back those individuals who had been displaced during war-time and people who had somehow managed to avoid returning.

Most of the people who returned to the Soviet Union during the immediate postwar years did so because of the Soviet government's insistence that they do so. With few exceptions, Soviet authorities primarily exploited diplomatic channels and pressed foreign governments to assist in the returning of Soviet citizens, disregarding the wishes of the people themselves. So successful were these efforts that by the start of the Cold War, only a few hundred thousand of the original five million Soviet emigrants remained in the West. However, as the Cold War started to gain momentum Western governments would no longer cooperate in efforts to forcibly return individuals to the Soviet Union. This change in political climate forced Soviet authorities

to think of new ways to appeal directly to the emigrants themselves and encourage them to consider repatriation.

These remaining wartime exiles (a majority of whom lived in Western-occupied areas of Germany and Austria) were the focus of the early Soviet measures to repatriate individuals through direct appeal, as opposed to by force or with the assistance of other governments. The Soviets had little choice; the United Nations, in response to complaints from Western governments opposed to the involuntary return of peoples to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, ultimately resolved the issue in favor of the West in 1951 (Solomon 1991, 218-221; Loescher & Scanlan 1986, 15-16). After the UN's decision, the Soviet government accused western governments of "preventing" 247,000 Soviet and East European citizens from returning to their homeland. The Soviets also alleged that Western governments were disseminating fascist propaganda among the refugees in question, that the Western governments pressured refugees to remain in the West, or that Western governments intended to exploit these individuals as a source of cheap labor (Ginsburgs 1957, 352). Needless to say, these claims were mostly without basis. Certainly, Western governments hardly encouraged Eastern bloc emigrants to return to their homelands, but neither were there major efforts to intern or exploit them.

Without the cooperation of Western governments to aid in the return of their citizens, the Soviets found themselves needing to appeal directly to their citizens abroad, and they needed to be creative about it. This campaign started with inauguration of the Committee on Return to Homeland, "Komitet za vozvrashcheniu na Rodinu" in Russian, often also called the Soviet Repatriation Committee. This committee, set up in East Berlin, was first led by officers of the Soviet Army. Not only was the participation of the victorious Red Army likely intended to give prestige to the committee, but it also reflected the priority of this work in the eyes of the government. Not a civilian affair even in preceding years, the repatriation of Soviet-born emigrants became the charge of the Red Army, and even the KGB, the Soviet secret police, became deeply involved in persuading people from abroad to return to their homeland.

Thus, beginning in the spring of 1955, the Committee on Return to Homeland was headed by major general Nikolai F. Mikhailov, himself a German wartime prisoner. East Berlin was chosen as the location for the Committee not only because of its proximity to West German territory, which the Soviet government believed to pose the greatest threat to Soviet sovereignty, but also because it was the temporary home to thousands of Soviet citizens. Housing the committee in East Berlin would also permit quick reactions to any Western countermeasures, in addition to which, it was conveniently located along the channel through which many of the returnees would eventually make their way to their native land. Furthermore, in addition to its convenient location, East Berlin had the additional advantage of being technologically prepared for a mass communication campaign. As radio emerged during the war as one of the primary methods of communication, Soviet-occupied Germany had the necessary facilities in place, ready to be used by the Soviet Committee. While Berlin had come to be known as one of the post-Soviet hubs for Russian emigration, it now also assumed the role of being one of the centers from which Russian and Soviet emigration was addressed by the Soviet officials.

### **On sources and methodology concerning Soviet emigration**

Although we know that the Soviet Repatriation Committee occupied a crucial place with regard to research on Soviet and Russian re-emigration during the early Cold War era, the existence of the committee also poses a problem for anyone wishing to examine Soviet

emigration. While many Soviet archives are currently well organized and open, a collection that would hold documents produced by this organization is either missing or has been kept apart from the files of those organizations that later inherited the staff, materials, and functions of the initial committee.

Indeed, this initially ostensibly army-related committee quickly evolved in a more conciliatory direction, changing its name in 1959 to “The Committee on Return to Homeland and Development of Cultural Relations with Compatriots.” Then, in 1963, the original aim of the committee was dropped altogether from the title of the organization, and it became “The Soviet Committee on Cultural Relations with Compatriots Abroad,” the predecessor to the present-day organization, “Rodina,” which carries on the work of contacting Russians according to the needs of the government (and it seems that such work has notably increased in the first decade of the 21st century). With regard to sources, however, the early years of this organization, before it turned into more-or-less a civilian organization in 1963, are apparently lost. The Russian State Archives (GARF) holds the organization’s collections from 1963 onwards (fond 9651, entitled “Rodina”), but the important means for appealing to compatriots abroad were developed within the first eight years of the life of the organization, when it was more clearly associated with the military. It is possible that documents from these first eight years are stored within the Red Army files or, possibly, with the KGB. Unfortunately, access to such files remains beyond the reach of researchers. This, however, does not mean that the topic of re-emigration and Soviet efforts to encourage it cannot be examined; quite the opposite, in fact.

Sources for this article come from a number of places. Archives in Moscow provide some insight into the changes in policy. Although the Soviet Repatriation Committees’ files cannot be accessed directly, its work with émigrés was considered important by the Soviet authorities at the time, and thus, the Soviet Communist Party’s Central Committee files contain materials about this work. The party’s files also make up for some of the missing information caused by the lack of access to KGB files because the KGB reported to the party’s Central Committee when asked to do so. Furthermore, as this chapter aims at shedding some light on the then-new technologies and means of luring exiles, émigrés, emigrants, and other countrymen back to the Soviet Union, materials for researchers interested in examining this particular use of communication technologies can be found by exploring the archives of such organizations as Soviet Radio (held in GARF) and the Committee on Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (mainly in RGANI, the archives of the Communist Party from 1953 onwards). Outside Russia, there are also collections that house materials produced by notable Russian and Soviet émigrés, which can help to chart their responses to Soviet measures directed toward émigré communities. Such collections are located at Stanford University’s Hoover Institution Archives and Columbia University’s Bakhmeteff collection, as well as, to some extent, in the Open Society Archives in Budapest. Numerous personal collections, of course, can be found in archives all over the world.

### **Means of appealing to compatriots**

Development of mass communications became an important factor in the relationship between the Soviet government and the emigrants to which it wanted to reach out. Of the means that existed for appealing to compatriots (or just to Russian-speaking and oriented audiences, for that matter), the distribution of printed materials was perhaps the most common approach. For the Bolsheviks, printed propaganda materials had been part of their basic work since the party was first formed, long before the Revolutions of 1917. However, after the October Revolution,

the Soviet government actively sought the newest forms of mass communication available, be they motion pictures or radio broadcasting. The Soviet government was inclined to use all possible means for spreading propaganda, not only so as to better reach its own population, but also to spread socialist propaganda abroad. Indeed, the Soviet Union was one of the first to use radio widely for the purpose of spreading propaganda, starting in the 1920s (see especially Gorjaeva 2000 and Gorjajewa 2000). Although prime radio air-time was given to domestic broadcasts, foreign audiences were also targeted as early as the 1930s. The post-WWII years, however, brought changes related to the audiences of Soviet international broadcasting.

Radio Moscow's international service had, until that time, been primarily targeted at foreign audiences speaking languages like English, German, and French, as well as at foreign audiences on the North American continent. However, in the 1940s, when the Soviets took over some German radio installations, Radio Volga started targeting Russian language speakers, airing broadcasts targeted at the large numbers of Red Army soldiers stationed outside Soviet borders throughout the Cold War period. As such, when the repatriation committee began their Russian-language broadcasts from Germany, these broadcasts represented only one of many instances of international broadcasting activity being undertaken by the Soviet government. However, these broadcasts were remarkable in several particular ways. First, they were the first international broadcasts targeted at émigré audiences in their own native languages. Second, they marked a change in Soviet policy with respect to emigration. Prior to these post-war repatriation efforts, the Soviet government had historically kept silent about any Soviet émigrés and exiles, declining even to admit their existence. Only after the war and after Stalin's death did the Soviets consider contacting such individuals. Ultimately, of course, these efforts became quite aggressive in nature, and the Soviet government appeared quite possessed in its efforts to communicate with émigré and exile groups all over the world.

The primary targets for radio appeals being broadcast in the latter part of the 1950s were emigrants who had left the Soviet Union within the previous three to five years. This can be deduced from the fact that the programs had sections which introduced Soviet citizens appealing straight to their husbands, sons, nephews, or old friends to return. More recent émigrés would typically have had more intimate relationships with people still living in the Soviet Union. These appeals most typically took the form of letters that were read on air and that were later reprinted in the pages of magazines directed to émigrés, including a magazine published by the repatriation committee itself. Quite often the writers of such letters described how they were missing their loved ones or explained that a loved one was sick or otherwise desperately seeking contact with a certain individual abroad. This tactic was highly effective, and, even when it could not tempt Soviet emigrants or exiles to return, it surely affected their resolve and discouraged them from taking action against the Soviet Union, as such broadcasts and publications provided them with concrete evidence that Soviet authorities indeed had close dealings with their relatives back home (Critchlow 1995, 57-58). The interesting thing is that these sections in the committee's magazines and programs did become popular, no matter how painful an experience it must have been for exiles to read them. In these appeals to compatriots, perhaps the most interesting feature of these letters is their explicit attempt to exploit radio as a means of directly appealing to the feelings of individuals abroad.

The radio established by the repatriation committee was originally called "Radio on Return to Homeland," and a journal carried the same name, without the word radio in the title. The radio targeted centers of Soviet exiles and émigrés, like Munich, Paris, and bigger cities in North America. Broadcasts were not only in Russian, but in numerous other languages. In

addition to existing Soviet media directed abroad, the committees' weekly journal and radio, with the Kremlin's aid, circulated certain programs over different channels, including Radio Volga, Radio Kiev, Armenia, and others broadcasting to their target national audiences outside the Soviet Union. Even smaller Soviet minorities, like Estonians, had programming in their own language.

As the smallest of Soviet republics, Soviet Estonia illustrates the importance given this work by the Soviet authorities in the late 1950s. The Central Committee in Moscow was constantly in touch with the Estonian Party secretary about foreign radio broadcasts, asking how the work was proceeding. The Communist Party Secretary of Estonia, Johannes Käbin, wrote back explaining that Estonian's émigrés abroad were being consistently targeted for return by Soviet-Estonian propaganda measures. Émigrés in Sweden, the USA, and Canada (countries with the most important centers of Estonians abroad) received most of the Soviet-Estonian propaganda material (Käbin 1958).

However small these Estonian émigré populations were (circulated materials to Sweden numbered only 1706 and to the USA numbered only 1058), Soviet authorities wanted to extend the radio propaganda to these populations so that it would support and patch gaps left by printed materials (Käbin 1958). Only half a year later, Käbin went further, reasoning to party bosses in Moscow that Estonian audiences in North America were not hearing enough Estonian language programming from Soviet Estonia and asked for a 30 minute programming slot, two-three times a week (Käbin 1959). (Estonian language programs were already sent through the Repatriation Committee's system, but only to Europe) (Vishnevsky 1959). This also illustrates the problems of the bureaucratic Soviet system: instead of being able simply to extend the Estonian language programming to a new continent, the Repatriation Committee needed the Estonian Communist Party to request programming officially.

As the smallest of official Soviet nations, the example of Soviet efforts to repatriate Estonians reveals how important this work was in the eyes of Soviet authorities. However, it needs to be taken into account that while most of the Soviet displaced persons were returned to the Soviet Union, Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians were in a different position. The United States and Great Britain refused to acknowledge that these Baltic Republics had been lawfully incorporated into the Soviet Union and declined to return any Soviet citizens or earlier émigrés from these areas, despite Soviet insistence. From 1939 to 1944, some 70,000 Estonians had left Estonia, primarily for Germany and Sweden. After the war, those in Germany and in refugee camps elsewhere headed to the United States, Canada, Great Britain, and Australia; by the beginning of the 1950s, there were almost 90,000 Estonians living outside the Soviet Union (Kulu & Tammaru 2000). Although small in number and dispersed across the globe, this group was perceived to be important enough to be contacted repeatedly by the Soviet propagandists. Similarly, when the Lithuanian communist party submitted a request to the Central Committee in Moscow in 1955 for an increase in funding for the work with Lithuanians in the USA, Uruguay, and elsewhere, the request was fulfilled. The estimate then was that of 750,000 Lithuanians in capitalist countries, about a third harbored benevolent feelings toward the Soviet Union and worked in concert with Soviet aims, thus becoming an important asset to the Soviet propaganda campaign (Vinogradov 1955).

As for additional content of the radio the programs, radio largely provided a channel through which the Soviet government could propagandize its views. The content of such programs was assumed to appeal to émigrés and those related to them, for it contained (largely propagandized) information regarding policies of concern to émigrés (i.e. what would happen



upon their return to Soviet soil, etc). The content of these broadcasts followed the guidelines set for the radio broadcasts for audiences in capitalist countries in general (see e.g. Ideological Commission of the Soviet Communist Party, 1959). Whereas the Soviet authorities had previously pressured Western governments to force repatriation of Soviet exiles and émigrés, the Soviets were now engaged in a series of more sophisticated measures that were aimed at the exiles themselves, appearing to help them overcome anxiety and fear of the persecution they anticipated experiencing upon their return to the Soviet Union. The Soviet government went so far as to enact laws providing full amnesty for those who would return to the Soviet Union. Amnesty was promised even to those who had been involved in anti-Soviet activities after WWII, even if they had fought against the Soviet army in the ranks of the German army (which was mainly a reference to defected Soviet general Vlasov, who had lead and helped to organize Soviet POW's and other volunteers into an armed force under Nazi-tutelage). Such laws, of course, played heavily into the propagandized messages of the repatriation broadcasts. In fact, one of the first measures of the repatriation committee was to propagandize these laws (New York Times 1955).

Thus, the repatriation committee had to be creative in order to make these promises of amnesty credible. In order to achieve this, they utilized the testimony of persons who had actually returned and benefited from such amnesty. As many actual names as possible were mentioned in order to make the stories of their supposed amnesty convincing to listeners. Especially valuable were the testimonies of those who had actually been active in anti-Soviet work, so as to point out that even *they* were given amnesty. Those who had journalistic talents, like Galina Oleinik, who returned in mid-1950s, were believed by the committee to be top candidates for use in propagandized appeals specifically aimed at those who had known them abroad (e.g Oleinik 1958; Oleinik 1966; New York Times 1958a). Often, however, the Soviets had to settle for reading aloud letters that were allegedly written by such returnees. Fedor Borzykin-Podgornyi (who had most likely lived in Germany under a false name, which was the name his family used in the Soviet Union) was a good example of this. He had returned to Soviet soil in August 1956, but only after running into trouble with West German police. He was said to have been happily united with his family, but instead of appearing personally on radio broadcasts, his letters, in which he encouraged his fellows who remained in Germany to refrain from anti-Soviet activities and return to their motherland, were read aloud by someone else, making the authenticity of his words somewhat less clear (Borzykin-Podgornyi 1956). His motivation, however, might have been, at least in part, to avoid possible sentencing in West Germany.

Eventually, however, Soviet authorities realized that amnesty alone was not enough to persuade even homesick war-time collaborators to return to the Soviet Union. Therefore, the committee's programs began to feature promises that were closely linked to general socialist propaganda about good jobs, free education for the children of returnees, and social security, which all emigrants were currently lacking in Germany and possibly elsewhere. Soviet masters of propaganda were well aware that exiles in German refugee camps were uncertain about their futures, and new Soviet promises were believed to appeal to these individuals and lure a number of them to return. In order to solidify these promises, people from the ranks of those who had chosen re-emigration were picked to share their experiences about their return and their happy new lives in the Soviet Union. Handing a microphone to ordinary people unconnected with the government was a novelty in the Soviet Union, and, although it was initially used sparingly, it was believed to bring credibility to the broadcasts to émigrés abroad, who might possibly have

recognize the interviewees (Kalinin 1956; Bibikov 1956). In the meantime, the extensive propaganda machinery in use by the committee and the committee's connections abroad were aimed at illustrating the miseries and sad fates of Soviet citizens in the West. Quite interestingly, attacks on the West often included stories of alcoholism among Soviet emigrants residing in the West, as if the same problem did not exist in the Soviet Union (e.g. Taradankin 1961). The KGB even took the trouble of stealing a written document strictly prohibiting drinking during work time from a US organization that employed Soviet émigrés and used this as evidence to its audience that alcoholism was truly widespread among émigrés in the West (Bogdanov 1962).

By circulating materials in print and via radio broadcasts, the committee aimed to extend its reach to all émigrés in the West. Indeed, the development of radio technology provided the committee with a new way not only to popularize its legal measures and initiatives targeted at émigré populations, but also to dispute émigrés' views of the Soviet Union. Shortwave technology, which had been developed during the war, was now exploited in connection with émigré affairs. But shortwave technology was not without its own problems. While in the Soviet Union shortwave technology had quickly become one of the primary forms of reaching distant parts of the country, in the West, there were far fewer radios that were able to pick distant signals. Thus, the estimation presented to the Soviet Communist Party's Central Committee was that only 0.1% of US radios had the means to pick up Soviet radio signals. In contrast, the same percentage for US broadcasts picked up in the Soviet Union was well over 50% (Ilichev et al 1958). Thus, although the West might otherwise have had a sizable audience for Soviet radio broadcasts, the size of the potential target audience was drastically reduced by the lack of suitable equipment. It was thus important to supplement these broadcasts with printed materials that could be mailed directly to recipients.

### **The Émigré question becomes politicized**

These measures, however, merely created the framework for Soviet efforts and for subsequent propaganda. Obviously, there had been ample opportunity for émigrés to voluntarily return to Soviet soil at any time. When no great waves of repatriation took place, the Soviet authorities fabricated a story about how Western governments were preventing as many as 100,000 Soviet citizens in West Germany from returning home. This claim grew into a dispute between the West German and Soviet governments, and eventually drove Chancellor Konrad Adenauer to challenge the Soviet government to produce a list of those 100,000 Soviet citizens in West Germany who wanted to go home. He insisted that no-one was prevented from returning, and despite the counter propaganda efforts, centers for Soviet refugees had always had instructions on how to contact Soviet officials if anyone was actually interested in returning. Thus, when Soviet authorities finally brought a list of 31 people who had petitioned to get back to the Soviet Union, it turned out that all 31 of these individuals were at that time in German prisons for crimes they had recently committed (New York Times 1956a). These people, thus, had reasons to hope for Soviet amnesty and seek repatriation. Clearly, however, this situation was not exactly consistent with the picture the Soviets had attempted to portray.

Within a year, over 300 refugees left West Germany for the Soviet bloc. This was not a great share of the more than 200,000 East European exiles in West Germany, but it suggested that not everything was well with exiles. In its cover story, *The New York Times* tried to appeal to politicians to improve the conditions of exiles in Western nations through a story of an individual exile who had fought against the Soviet Union during the Second World War but who

was now heading back to the Soviet Union, despite the fact that he was personally convinced that he would be imprisoned upon his return. The *New York Times* considered this individual's story a sign that all was not right with Soviet exiles in West Germany and that something must be done to improve their conditions there (Olsen 1956). It also suggests that the Soviet campaign was believed to produce some results. It might also be the case that the repatriation committee's clandestine activities the West (in addition to their overt propaganda efforts) alarmed the US.

Propaganda and covert persuasion were not the only measures being taken to encourage repatriation, however. The most explicit repatriation tactics were reserved for Soviet exiles who had taken an active role in political émigré organizations and activities or in any anti-Soviet organizations. In the case of these individuals, direct contact was made, with agents of the KGB approaching them directly. To maximize shock value, agents might personally deliver messages from the relatives of politically-active émigrés, make nightly phone calls to such individuals, or, though in very few cases, resort to violence. This face-to-face contact with émigrés suggests that Soviet repatriation efforts were extensive in the late 1950s. It also suggests that a secondary objective of the repatriation campaign was to demoralize and marginalize those exiles working actively against the Soviet Union abroad. In short, the Soviets needed to ensure that its image and/or any diplomatic visits made by Soviet representatives to countries in the West would not be marred by anti-Soviet demonstrations or political activity, particularly not such activity conducted by former Soviet residents.

This need to squelch dissidence was in some cases expressed quite clearly, especially when high-profile Soviet delegations visited a capitalist country. Khrushchev's visits, for example, were an occasion on which Soviet authorities were especially sensitive to any disturbances. Thus, when, in 1964, Khrushchev was about to embark on a Scandinavian tour, the Soviet embassy in Stockholm requested that the more than 31,500 Estonian and Latvian émigrés in Sweden be accounted for and established measures to prevent them from harassing Khrushchev's delegation or from protesting the Soviet presence in the Baltic Republics. These measures included propaganda directed toward these émigrés as well as invitations to the leaders of politically active émigré groups to visit Soviet Estonia and Latvia so that they might themselves see the positive developments taking place in these countries, thus winning over such individuals and, potentially, reducing their inclination to act out against the Soviet Union upon their return to their Western homes (Belokhovostikov 1964). The Americans noted this change, particularly the Soviet invitations to visitors and the contacting of people abroad (for purposes of propaganda). The US stated that the resources the Soviet Union and its satellites used for propaganda aimed at non-communist entities substantially exceeded the US resources spent on similar efforts (New York Times 1958b).

The KGB had been involved in repatriation efforts from the start, and not only in for the purposes of scaring political activists or checking the identities of returning citizens. In the spring of 1956, when the repatriation efforts were still fresh, KGB involvement in the US was already apparent. Alexandra Tolstoy, the daughter of a famous writer, Lye (Leo) Tolstoy, then residing in US, expressed her worry over those refugees from Eastern Europe who had come to the US under false identities. According to Tolstoy's estimate, there were 15,000 in total, all of whom were targeted by Soviet agents. Soviet propaganda material was being mailed to their current addresses but with their original names, not the ones they had assumed. The KGB had thus been able to follow them, even with their new identities and knew where they lived in the US. Tolstoy brought forward that hundreds of refugees had approached her about their fears of Soviet agents turning them over to US authorities (New York Times 1956b).

The lives of émigrés in the West had not, in all cases, turned out to be either pleasant or easy. The poor living conditions and low social status of Soviet émigrés still living in West German refugee camps remained a problem. The Soviet authorities, thus, concluded that after spending 10 years in refugee camps without proper work or chances for integration into Western European population, these people might be receptive to a major propaganda effort. They, therefore, decided to add to their highly persuasive (if not ultimately effective) propagandistic efforts, use of force, and subversive methods the use of new technological advancements in order to effect maximum impact on Soviet exiles and émigré communities.

While the Soviets' efforts to repatriate their lost countrymen underwent various changes, Western nations also undertook a range of activities with respect to the Soviet exiles, émigrés, and emigrants living on Western soil. Forced repatriation was given up as a practice by Western powers by 1947, and the practice was legally prohibited by the United Nations in 1951; thus, repatriation of Soviet and East-European refugees against their will was no longer practiced. On April 24, 1951, the US followed the United Nations' recommendation not to return political refugees to the Soviet Union. Instead, the US would aim to find these people jobs with wages corresponding to those they had in the Soviet Union and would help them to settle in countries of their choice (Middleton 1951). For this purpose, the US State Department utilized funds like the Free Russia Fund by the Ford Foundation, which helped Soviet exiles to settle and assimilate (New York Times 1951a; New York Times 1951b)<sup>1</sup>. This money would also be directed to the anti-Soviet work of émigrés (Schwartz 1951). As a result of such efforts, by the mid-1950s, the most able-bodied of the emigrants had already been allowed to emigrate to the US (from Germany, for example) and other countries that would accept them. Thus, those who were left behind in Germany were often unemployed, living in poverty, in DP camps or refugee camps, without the possibility to build houses, schools, or churches, and thus lacking materials to build a stable community (American Committee for Liberation from Bolshevism, 1956).

### **Motivations to strive for increasing re-emigration**

To be sure, the Soviets did not grow an interest in émigré communities solely because they wanted people to repatriate and saw an opportunity to help them do so. As stated earlier in this work, Soviet authorities had become very concerned about the anti-Soviet work of some émigré communities and wanted to squelch anti-Soviet activities or sentiments, even those occurring on distant shores. This explains why émigrés became such an obsession for Soviet authorities; the Soviets not only saw in repatriation an opportunity to get their citizens back, but they also sought to defuse perceived threats to Soviet security, believing that anti-Soviet sentiment would be neutralized if only émigrés could only be reached by Soviet messages.

The anti-Soviet work that caused such an anxiety in Moscow was closely linked to American operations such as Rollback, which aimed to actively counter the expanding Soviet influence and to have a similar effect in the Soviet-occupied areas (and ultimately even within the Soviet Union itself) (e.g. Grose 2000). As part of this work, American officials had turned to Soviet émigré communities, knowing that these people knew Soviet conditions best and were, to the extent that they had decided to leave the Soviet Union, dissatisfied with conditions in their homeland. Thus, the US government urged émigrés to do the US' bidding and engage in anti-Soviet activities. The US' aim was to create a united and influential body of Soviet and Russian émigré organizations gathered under one umbrella organization that would both produce anti-Soviet propaganda and possibly affect popular opinion in the Soviet Union. The Soviets were,

for their part, worried about the possibility of such a body that would represent Soviet nationalities abroad, and were, therefore, willing even to repatriate the émigrés who would be involved in such organizations. At the very least, the Soviets were keen to sow discord among already discordant émigré groups.

Although most American operations with Soviet émigrés failed badly in the early 1950s, two important institutions were initiated and worked throughout the Cold War, namely, “Radio Free Europe” and “Radio Liberty.” The former broadcast to East European countries, and the latter to the Soviet Union in numerous local languages. It was precisely these radio broadcasts to Soviet audiences that raised much concern among Soviet authorities (see e.g. Mikkonen 2010). The majority of staff members of these radio programs were émigrés, people who knew the language and culture of the target areas. Radio Liberty, thus, was an émigré radio station, broadcasting to the Soviet Union. Speakers of Radio Liberty were people who had left the Soviet Union, and this raised considerable concern among Soviet authorities. Therefore, some of the repatriation committee’s efforts were targeted at émigrés linked with Radio Liberty and other similar operations. After intensive work by the Soviet Repatriation Committee, some workers of Radio Liberty actually chose to remigrate, and, in one case, a former Radio Liberty announcer became a worker for the repatriation committee’s own radio (Oleinik 1966).

Combined with other challenges posed by American operations, this caused Soviet authorities to feel compelled to respond. For example, in the report compiled for the Communist Party’s Central Committee on foreign propaganda directed toward Soviet Ukraine, numerous US-inspired institutions organized by and for Ukrainian émigrés were mentioned. Ukrainian language radio broadcasts to the Soviet Ukraine were noted, as were the Ukrainian Free University, Free Ukrainian Academy of Sciences, and several others in London, Munich, and in a number of places in North America. Apart from distributing printed material in Soviet Ukraine, they were said to have taken to distributing propaganda materials in neutral and developing countries, which endangered Soviet propaganda efforts there (Chervonenko, 1958). This made émigrés not only an opportunity but also a potential threat to be acted upon.

### **The Outcome of Soviet work with émigrés**

Despite these active measures, the number of returnees to the Soviet Union from West Germany did not become significant. Instead of their originally intended target audience, the main source of repatriates to the Soviet Union was South America, especially Argentina, where there was a major émigré community of Ukrainians and other Soviet minorities. A few thousand of them chose to heed the call of the motherland. Most were prewar émigrés, as opposed to wartime exiles. Some had left the Soviet Union earlier, while others had been living in areas that were not part of the Soviet Union when they left before 1940. A common feature among these returnees was that they did not possess firsthand experience of the Stalin-era Soviet Union.

The first major boatload of Argentine refugees, numbering 780 men, women, and children, left Buenos Aires in March of 1956 with brand new Soviet passports in their pockets. They consisted mostly of Ukrainians, Byelorussians, and Lithuanians (Morrow 1956). Western journalists closely followed their arrival at Odessa and their departure to destinations throughout the Soviet Union. One reporter remarked that the Soviets were ready to take everything possible out of this success by photographing, reporting, and even making a documentary film about the event. Indeed, The Soviet Repatriation Committee’s publications were filled with stories about happy reunions of families, of new jobs and apartments in the Soviet Union, and about the

general rejoicing over their return to the homeland (Mikhailov 1956). Western reporters' access to an interview with repatriates, not surprisingly, was denied (Raymond 1956).

Although the fates of these new repatriates are hard to follow, some individuals' experiences can be found in sources gathered by the US authorities. These people soon became disillusioned and found ways to leave the Soviet Union again in future years. Most repatriates did not get such a chance until the late 1980s, however. Naturally, the Soviet propaganda machine was focused much more intensely on repatriates before they actually returned to the Soviet Union and was much less interested in how the repatriated individuals fared upon their return. It appears that after their arrival, quite a few of at least these South American repatriates were unhappy with their new lives. US intelligence reports gathered through interviews with repatriates who managed to leave the Soviet Union in the 1960s indicate that quite a few of them had tried for several years to apply for an exit permit back to their countries of origin. Some of those who managed to return had first tried to get hold of communist party identification cards, in order to improve their status, but had been unable to find anyone to support their applications, which aptly illustrates the unique form of social and cultural isolation felt by repatriated Soviet citizens (Radio Liberty Audience Research Department 1964b). An interview with one Ukrainian-Argentinean also suggested that some 500 of those who had arrived from Argentina would have been working in the mines of Novo-Volynsk in 1965, hardly representing jobs they had been looking for (Radio Liberty Audience Research Department 1966).

Many of the stories US intelligence was able to gather were of personal tragedy. In one account, US agents interviewed a girl who had moved to Soviet Armenia with her family in 1948, as a part of early repatriation efforts. Central in her story was her father, who had fought with the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War. He had been French, of Armenian descent, believing in the Soviet Union, and thus, ready to take his whole family there in 1948. Immediately after arriving at a Soviet Black sea port, he realized his grave mistake and tried to get back to the ship but was denied access. Quite soon, he became a drunk, leaving his family to survive on its own. The only advice he gave to his daughter was to seek any possible exit from the Soviet Union, which she eventually did in late 1963 (Radio Liberty Audience Research Department 1964a). Such stories were numerous in the mid-1960s, at which time US intelligence was gathering reports of people who had managed to leave the Soviet Union for good.

As long as the Cold War was on, the question of Soviet exiles and émigrés was one of political importance, and, therefore, US officials were interested in measures that would keep the re-emigration to the Soviet Union to a minimum. They, thus, did not stand passively watching the exiles' morale crumble when the Soviet efforts to reach émigré communities started. US officials were quick to understand the threat posed by the Soviet Repatriation Committee and the repatriation campaign. Following the inauguration of the committee, major threats of the Soviet campaign were seen in the field of ideology. In order to (1) prevent the Soviet Union from gaining a major propaganda victory and (2) deny them the opportunity to allege that conditions in the West were inferior to those in the Soviet Union, US officials had to improve the lives of Soviet exiles. This, it was believed, would keep the movement of Soviet emigrants back to Soviet soil to a minimum. The return of such individuals in the thousands would have been a major political triumph for the Soviet authorities and would have given the Soviets a further political advantage in the international arena. Thus, the solution was not only to improve exiles' conditions in Germany but also to enable a number of them to enter the United States (New York Times 1955).

Americans, too, would also resort to clandestine activities: where there was KGB, there was CIA. The American Committee on Liberation from Bolshevism had been set up by the CIA in 1951 to create an anti-Soviet front from political émigré organizations, and it was this organization that was behind Radio Liberty. This organization started operations to counter the work of the Soviet Repatriation Committee by channeling necessary funds to anti-Soviet organizations for campaigns to lift exiles' obviously low morale (American Committee for Liberation from Bolshevism, 1956). Although talking primarily about East-Central European exiles, Frank Altschul, from the Free Europe Committee, addressed the problem with Soviet exiles when he stated that American authorities were in a position to make "the living conditions of the defectors somewhat more bearable. As far as I can learn, nothing approaching...adequate has been done in this respect." Instead of a coordinated struggle against Bolshevism, internal empire building had taken place, causing factional fighting and the crumbling of the credibility of American efforts with émigré communities. The Soviet campaign was considered a major threat in this respect (Frank Altschul's Memo, 1955). However, first by countering the Soviet propaganda and also by improving the status of the remaining émigrés in West Germany, American authorities prevented a major influx of Soviet repatriates into the Soviet Union. Instead, in fact, the flow of people went in the other direction.

### **In search of repatriates**

So, what is the outcome of it all? After Soviet authorities realized, toward the 1960s, that there was not going to be a massive influx of repatriates, they changed the objective of their work with émigrés somewhat and developed new techniques. They set up relations with some émigré communities, especially between Soviet national republics. Representatives of these nationalities abroad were also encouraged to visit their homeland. The purpose of this new policy was, most simply, to decrease émigrés' hostility toward the Soviet Union or, most optimistically, to win them over, psychologically and emotionally. The change in these objectives can be seen in the name change of the repatriation committee's radio program and magazine publication, which went from "On Return to Homeland" to "Voice of the Homeland" (Golos Rodiny). This change in nature of the committee and its approaches to repatriation, of course, is itself something that requires another study altogether.

The situation with work on émigrés would change drastically only when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991. During the Soviet era, nationalities had spread over republican boundaries within the Soviet Union, as republican borders mattered even less than State borders in the US, as long as the Soviet Union existed. After the Soviet republics became independent, however, boundaries became a crucial issue, and boundary disputes remain problematic today. It is understandable, then, that the primary interest of Russian authorities has, for the last two decades, been fixed on countries called "the near abroad," such as former Soviet republics like Estonia, Latvia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, or Ukraine, all of which have sizable minority Russian communities (Barrington et al. 2003).

The difference between these current efforts compared to those of the Soviet era is that post-Soviet Russian programming to compatriots underlines more clearly nationalist propaganda, emphasizing Russianness, Russian language, and Russia as a "special" place among former Soviet republics.. During the Soviet era, Soviet nationalities had to be addressed against the Soviet background, with only limited reference to national features. While there are not many studies about the more recent developments with Russian re-emigration, at least with the small

minorities, the end of the Soviet era did not start any major flow of people from the West back to newly independent countries, like Estonia. According to Kulu and Tiit (2000), the number of Estonians in the West has remained at the same level. In fact, there has not been any major influx of Estonians into former Soviet territories, not after the 1950s, nor after the independence of Estonia. While Russians have been moving in and out of their motherland, their migration has been less pronounced than the migration typical of countries that do not aim to keep their people in place by force, like the Soviet Union once did.

Soviet émigré studies deserve further research if we are to grasp the significant role played by the Soviet émigrés in the development of the Cold War and beyond, as Russians have been increasingly active toward their compatriots abroad

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Head of this Russian fund was no less than George Kennan, former chief of the policy-planning staff from the State Department.



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