Saving White Russia

Ivan Ilin and Russia Abroad:1922-1938

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Content:

Introduction

> In the search, in the unrest, the yearning of the spirit is its power, its life. Outside of them - dissolution and death.[1]
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> <Question:> What is your vision on the future prospects of Russian emigration abroad?
> <Answer:> Russian emigration, in the current form, is probably not able to reach a spiritual rebirth; its state is hardly non-tragic; I'm not very informed about it.[2]

The first months of 2020 were marked by what many regarded as an unexpected development in Russian politics: 67-year-old Vladimir Putin announced large changes to the Russian constitution, thereby drastically reshaping the power structure of the country.[3] Among other measures, Putin suggested broadening the power of both houses of parliament by weakening the role of the president. While reducing the power of the president might at first glance seem a shift in a democratic direction with Putin asking for "the broadest possible public discussion on the topic", the Russian opposition and many foreign political analysts assert that nothing could be farther from the truth.[4] Many have pointed to the fact that Putin's last term as president will end in 2024, which means that he has to invent a new way to maintain his political influence. The proposed changes to the constitution would make it easier for him to keep his successors weak, while the *de facto* geopolitical power would still remain in his hands, in some kind of 'father-of-the-state' role. Therefore, Putin's ideas of statehood, leadership and Russia's future might soon take a new turn.[5]

In recent years, the background of Putin's ideas on Russia's future and his own role in it have often been traced back to the legacy of one man: Ivan Ilin. Forgotten for a few decades after

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[1] Y. Lisitsa ed., Ilin I.A., *Sobranije sochinenij: Dnevnik, Pisma, Documenti (1903-1938)*, (Moscow 1999) 9. Part of a poem written by Ivan Ilin in 1906.

[2] Ibidem, 433. A part of the questioning of Ivan Ilin on 04.09.1922.

[3] E. Scherwin, "Russian Parliament Fast-Tracks Putin's Constitutional Changes" (Deutsche Welle, January 2020) https://www.dw.com/en/russian-parliament-fast-tracks-putins-constitutional-changes/a-52106277 seen on 10-02-2020.

[4] Al Jazeera,"Russia's Duma unanimously approves Putin's constitution shake-up"(Al Jazeera, 23 January 2020) https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/01/russia-duma-unanimously-approves-putin-constitution-shake-200123120220504.html seen on 10-02-2020.

[5] A. Kokobobo, "Vladimir Putin follows a long Russian tradition of enlightened autocrats" (Washington Post, 3 February 2020) https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2020/02/03/vladimir-putin-follows-long-russian-tradition-enlightened-autocrats seen on 10-02-2020.

his death in 1954, Ilin is now portrayed by the media and researchers as 'Putin's guide'.[6] It has even been claimed that Putin has relied on the ideas of Ivan Ilin during every turning point in Russian politics of the last decade: "from his return to power in 2012 to the decision to intervene in Ukraine in 2013 and the annexation of Ukrainian territory in 2014".[7]

Ivan Ilin (1883-1954) was a Russian religious and political philosopher who, as described in more detail in what follows, was exiled from the Soviet Union to Berlin in 1922 together with approximately 160 other intellectuals and thinkers. Ilin played an important role in the early stages of the Russian emigrant community in Berlin, which was one of the main hotspots of Russian emigrant culture abroad. After his death, his writings lost their influence for various reasons until they were rediscovered during the early 90s in Russia and acquired mass popularity.

This popularity was caused by a growing interest of the general public in the legacy of the White Movement, which was often, but not always, comprised of supporters of the overthrown Tsar who opposed the Communist Revolution and had to flee the country during or shortly after the Revolution. There were many reasons for this new public interest, the main one being *perestroika* followed by the dissolution of the Soviet Union. This dissolution resulted in reconnection with emigrated family members and led to the opening of the state archives to the public, which shed new light on the historical events of the Russian Revolution.[8] The second cause was a shift in the historical narrative used by the government. During the Soviet era, the White Movement, or 'the Whites', were portrayed as the main enemies of the state: often as immoral, rich people who abused the farmers and workers to gain profit. The White emigrants who left Russia were, among other things, accused of stealing the gold reserves of the country, the most famous case being that of the White admiral Kolchak, who was accused for stealing more than 180 tons of gold and plotting with foreign countries to overthrow Soviet rule. This image changed, as the new Russian government, which in a way was itself guilty of overthrowing the Soviet Union and thus could not use its history to construct a national narrative, embraced the White leaders and their stories as its new 'icons'.

This trend rapidly continued under the rule of Vladimir Putin who turned to the work of White thinkers and authors to establish linguistic and cultural influence in the post-Soviet space. Of

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[6] T. Snyder, *The Road to Unfreedom: Russia, Europe, America* (London 2018) 16.

[7] T. Snyder, "How a Russian Fascist Is Meddling in America's Election" (The New York Times, 20 September 2020) https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/21/opinion/how-a-russian-fascist-is-meddling-in-americas-election.html seen on 12-02-2020.

[8] M. Raeff, Recent Perspectives on the History of the Russian Emigration (1920-1940) in *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 6, No. 2, (2005) 319–334, there 320.

the many whom he restored in their former glory in order to establish this development, Ivan Ilin came to be his favourite.[9] In October 2005, Ilin was re-buried in Moscow, with Putin himself paying for the tombstone. A year later, with Putin's personal help, Ilin's archive, which was kept at Michigan State University, was transferred back to Russia. In the same year, Putin for the first time quoted Ilin during his annual address to the Russian Parliament.[10] He continued to do so on other occasions and even distributed Ilin's work to all senior government officials in 2014.[11]

Writings on Ilin

The American author and Eastern-Europe historian Timothy Snyder, professor at Yale University and winner of many international awards for his historical research, was the one who brought the attention of the Western media to the person of Ivan Ilin by tracing Putin's ideas back to his legacy. While Snyder wrote about Ilin on multiple occasions between 2014 and 2016, it was his work *The Road to Unfreedom: Russia, Europe, America*, published in 2018, which set in stone the title of Ilin as 'the new state philosopher of Russia'. According to Snyder, Ilin's legacy, though it perfectly fits Putin's goals, is a very dark one. Snyder describes Ivan Ilin as a 'far-right-wing' thinker who was a strong supporter of Hitler's Germany and Mussolini's Italy.[12] An antisemite who, completely disappointed by the outcome of the Russian Revolution, constructed a new doctrine based on strong leadership which would take its legitimacy from the Orthodox church. To save Russia from communism, Ilin dreamt of a leader who, by becoming a living representation of the Russian tradition and Orthodox Christianity, would unite the country and dissolve every notion of individuality, freedom and democracy.[13]

Nevertheless, there are some problems with the approach used in the research on Ilin in *The Road to Unfreedom*. Snyder uses quotes of the philosopher's work in order to show how Ilin's ideas fit into, or more accurately, provide a frame for Putin's regime. To accomplish this, he mixes Ilin's earliest works with very late ones. This is a very problematic choice, for Ilin, as Snyder has himself stated, drastically shifted his political opinions during his life.[14] At the same time, serving the task of his book, Snyder in most cases gives no historical context to the quotes he provides and gives no explanation of where Ilin stands compared to other Russian-emigre thinkers of his time. This

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[9] S. Plokhy, *Lost Kingdom: A History of Russian Nationalism from Ivan the Great to Vladimir Putin* (n.p. 2018) 327-328.

[10] Ibidem, 327.

[11] J. Ingram, "Putin's Patron Saint" (iPolitics, 3 Augustus 2018) https://ipolitics.ca/article/putins-patron-saint seen on 12-02-2020.

[12] Snyder, *The Road to Unfreedom*, 17.

[13] Ibidem, 25.

[14] Ibidem, 17.

approach, I believe, causes misinterpretation in the worst case, or incomplete understanding of the legacy of Ivan Ilin in the best case.

An exception from Snyder's established vision of Ivan Ilin is the work by Paul Robinson, Professor of Modern and Russian History at the University of Ottawa in. In 2002, long before Snyder's work, Robinson briefly introduced Ilin in his book, *The White Russian Army in Exile, 1920-1941*. While Ilin is mentioned only a few times, Robinson's view seems to be very different from Snyder's. In the glossary of the book, Ilin is simply called a "political and religious philosopher", without any notions about him being far-right or fascist.[15] Elsewhere, Robinson describes Ilin more fully as a monarchist with a strong belief in non-predetermination[16] and the state of law.[17] According to Robinson, Ilin did indeed support a dictatorial government, but not in a totalitarian way, and he supported it only until the moral, religious and legal consciousness of the people would be high enough to establish the state-of-law he dreamt of.[18]

Robinson's approach is very different from Snyder's. Except for the obvious difference in opinion regarding Ilin's place in the political spectrum, there is one major difference: Robinson did provide the context of the developments which were taking place in the White Army as he explained Ilin's ideas and role. This gives us a more in-depth historical understanding of why and in which environment Ilin's ideas were created and thus how they should be seen. At the same time, Robinson compared Ilin's ideas to those of other emigre thinkers, which allows us to place him on the political spectrum more correctly. Unfortunately, as said above, Ilin is only treated briefly in the book, and Robinson's work is therefore not enough to provide a solid turn in the debate and a deep and clear understanding of Ivan Ilin's ideas.

In 2019, Paul Robinson published a second work called *Russian Conservatism.* In the chapter on Russian conservatism in emigration, Robinson reacts to Snyder's vision on Ilin as "a very lopsided view on Ilin's work".[19] According to Robinson, nothing is less true than Snyder's claims that Ilin was supportive of "lawlessness as a patriotic virtue" and of "freedom [being] reinterpreted in terms of subjugation to a leader".[20] Robinson presents a very different view of Ivan Ilin as a "fervent advocate of the rule of law, personal dignity and freedom" and a "liberal conservative".[21] Though this time Robinson's analysis of Ilin's political school of thought is

[15] P. Robinson, *The White Russian Army in Exile: 1920-1941* (Oxford 2002) 236.
[16] Ibidem, 118.
[17] Ibidem, 179.
[18] Ibidem, 179.
[19] P. Robinson, *Russian Conservatism* (n.p. 2019) 135.
[20] Ibidem, 135.
[21] Ibidem, 136.

interesting and deep enough to start a debate about the way we should interpret Ivan Ilin's ideas, there is one main problem: in this recent work, Robinson departs from the approach he used in his work on the White Army, wherein he provided detailed historical context regarding Ilin's environment and compared Ilin to other thinkers. Robinson is focusing, just like Snyder, on *wha*t Ilin ideas were, instead of explaining *why* he thought the way he did, and, as noted above, this lack of context can cause misinterpretation.

With claims like those made by Snyder - for example about Ilin being the most important fascist thinker revived in our century[22] and his role in Russian politics - it is surprising not to find more visible research or academic debate on Ilin's ideas, legacy or his role in Russian politics in the West except that of Snyder and Robinson. Snyder's vision of Ilin is one which is currently most accepted in the popular opinion. Most Western newspaper articles about Ilin completely copy Snyder's ideas on him and even use his language, without conducting a critical investigation of his works. Because of this, at this moment in time, popular opinion in the West regarding Ilin is that he was a "philosopher of Russian Fascism"[23] or of "the Russian far right movement".[24]

Even in Russia, the literature and debate on Ivan Ilin is very limited. There, most of the research on Ilin has been done by researchers in theology or philosophy, and it is focused on various aspects of his legacy on ideas regarding statehood and leadership or the interpretation of his religious beliefs. While his complete works have been published in an edition of thirteen books, each one of them more than four hundred pages long, no biography has been published yet. No detailed and deep historical analysis is available which would allow us to understand how Ivan Ilin reacted to the historical events he faced and, even more importantly, how he can be seen in the context of his time and environment. Therefore, while in the West the debate is focused on placing Ilin on a certain place in a political spectrum, and while an in-depth analysis of his legacy is created in Russia, all of this happens in an a-historical vacuum, without having an understanding of his life. This is a problem to which this research aims to contribute.

This research

The debate about the political light in which we should see the ideas of Ivan Ilin - the ultra-right authoritarian, or liberal-conservative - is without doubt a very important one, and it should be addressed in detail by many more researchers. Nevertheless, I believe that this question is very

[22] Snyder, *The Road to Unfreedom*, 16.

[23] T. Snyder, "Ivan Ilyin, Putin's Philosopher of Russian Fascism" (The New York Review of Books, March 16 2018) https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2018/03/16/ivan-ilyin-putins-philosopher-of-russian-fascism/ seen on 15.02.2020.

[24] J. Jones, "An Introduction to Ivan Ilyin, the Philosopher Behind the Authoritarianism of Putin's Russia & Western Far Right Movements" (Open Culture, 19 june 2018) http://www.openculture.com/2018/06/an-introduction-to-ivan-ilyin.html seen on 14-02-2020.

difficult, if not impossible to answer without some important information, which at this point is missing from the discussion. The missing information is the basic understanding of Ivan Ilin's life and of his experiences during the Revolution, in Berlin, and during his time in Switzerland.

The purpose of this study is to fill this gap in our knowledge regarding the person and ideas of Ivan Ilin by gaining a better understanding of his life and thoughts and reconnecting him with his historical context. This will be done by showing how Ivan Ilin reacted to the developments in his environment. This will provide a deeper understanding of Ivan Ilin's political ideas, not by placing him under a certain political label, but by comparing his vision and reaction to those of the people around him and by showing how those reactions interconnected, developed, conflicted, were influenced by other people and influenced others in return. This research, therefore, suggests a new way to approach the research on Ivan Ilin by studying him as a part of a larger community. The main question of this study is: How did the historical context of Ivan Ilin's life influence his ideas? In order to answer this question-Ilin's personal documents, mostly letters, will be used and set in the background of the events which took place.

Methodology:

While it is important to establish a deeper understanding of the whole life of Ivan Ilin, the limited format of this research would provide no space to do so in enough depth. Therefore, certain choices had to be made.

There are many ways to divide the life of Ilin into periods. Because this work focuses on Ilin's interaction with the community and the people in his environment, it would be most clear to divide his life according to his place of living: in Russia until 1922, in Berlin from 1922 to 1938 and in Switzerland from 1938 until his death in 1954. One must be critical in seeing these as complete breaks or shifts: in each case, political ideas, networks and connections did not shift overnight. Nevertheless, when cautious, this division provides a good chronological frame for research.

For this thesis, the decision was made to focus on the period starting from 1922 until 1938: the time when Ivan Ilin was living in Berlin and was a large part of the so-called 'Russia Abroad'. *Russia Abroad* names a large community of Russian migrants who, after fleeing the country, settled all over the world but kept very close connections, hoping to return to Russia after the Soviet government would fall. Russia Abroad as a community existed from 1919 to 1939.[25] For this research, the time frame is slightly shifted to fit Ilin's arrival at and departure from the German

[25]M. Raeff, *Rossija za Rubezgom: Isstorija Kulturi Russkoi Emigratsii* (Moscow 1994) 17.

capital.

While it is important to form a better understanding of all periods of Ilin's life, mentioned above, this period was selected because it is the one during which Ilin's political legacy was shaped the most. Though Ilin wrote his most important work, *Our Tasks*, in Switzerland, analysing it without understanding the background of his years in Berlin, when most of Ilin's ideas took their shape, could lead to incorrect conclusions. The choice not to focus the main analysis on his period in Russia was mainly influenced by the fact that, during most of that period, Ilin was not as active in politics as he was in Berlin. Therefore, it is his Berlin period which, at this stage of research, will contribute the most to a better understanding of Ivan Ilin. Nevertheless, in order not to fall into incorrect conclusions due to a lack of knowledge regarding the earlier events, the main events of his time in Russia and his reaction to these events will be briefly analysed in the first chapter.

To avoid the loss of historical context, as is argued is the case in previous analyses of Ivan Ilin's work, I have chosen to use a chronological approach. This approach allows us to treat Ilin's ideas as a reaction to his environment and the challenges faced by him and the community around him. At the same time, the chronological approach allows to show how various themes and issues all came together in the minds of the migrant community and in Ilin, thereby developing the base for a shift in political ideas.

The sources used in this research, as mentioned briefly above, are personal documents, diaries and letters written by Ivan Ilin that are kept in his personal archive. Unfortunately, this research did not allow the possibility to visit the physical archives in Russia and perform research there. The possibility to do so was both limited in resources, time and finances. Furthermore, the chance to gain access to the archives, which are now being digitised by the Russian Ministry of Culture, was very slim. Therefore, from the early stages of this study on, the choice was made to use information which is accessible to the broader public virtue of being published in editions of Ivan Ilin's collected works. Four volumes consisting of letters to and from Ivan Ilin, his diary written in 1905 and his short memoirs written between 1930 and 1950 were used.

While the use of sources published as an edition does require being extra critical about the provided information, as it is impossible to physically check the authenticity of the document, it does not make the research impossible. The editions used were published in 1999 by an independent publisher and provide detailed archival information on every document. This makes it unlikely that the publication has been somehow influenced, and it creates a possibility to check the sources when- and if- they become available. Still, one must be aware of the possibility that the sources were intentionally or unintentionally omitted or altered. The only exception from those personal documents is Ivan Ilin's pamphlet on National Socialism, which will be introduced in chapter three.

The choice to use it was made due to the role the statements which Ivan Ilin made in this pamphlet play in the current debate on his political ideas. Not commenting on those statements would make a contribution to the discussion incomplete. Finally, the translations of Ivan Ilin's letters, diaries and documents were made by myself.

This thesis starts with a short chapter on Ivan Ilin's background in Russia before and during the Russian Revolution. This is important to include, as some of the ideas that were constructed during this period played an important role in how both he and the community kept functioning and developed their ideas. To provide context and to understand the community in which Ilin arrived in 1922 and the trends which were already taking place there, the second chapter begins with a short description of how Berlin became the capital of Russia Abroad. The chapter continues with an analysis of how the different groups in the community, and Ilin in relation to them, constructed a new frame of ideas regarding their tasks and roles. The second chapter ends with a description of the disintegration of the community as the capital of Russia Abroad shifted to Paris and the new challenges Ilin had to face because of this shift. The third and final chapter begins with an analysis of Berlin during the rise of the extreme-right wing movement among Russian migrants and Russian antisemitism. The third chapter continues by considering Ivan Ilin's life under Nazi rule, the challenges he faced and the way he perceived those challenges. It is especially the information provided in this last chapter that challenges the current popular understanding of Ivan Ilin.

Snyder described Ivan Ilin as "a guide on the darkening road to unfreedom, which leads from inevitability to eternity."[26] I hope that this work will shine some light on the dark road Ivan Ilin himself had to take.

[26] Snyder, *The Road to Unfreedom*, 16.

Chapter 1: The Early Life of Ivan Ilin

This chapter introduces the early years of the life of Ivan Ilin. This background information will help us to better understand Ilin's ideas during the later periods, as many of them originated from those early years, and will form a first step in understanding what caused the shifts in his political ideas. This chapter, therefore, has two main goals: The first goal is to provide a basic timeline of the main events in the early years of Ivan Ilin's life until his exile to Berlin; the second goal is to give a short analysis of Ivan Ilin's reaction to the main historical events which took place during this time and to show if and how those events influenced his political orientation. Therefore, this chapter offers a combination of biographical facts and an analysis of Ilin's reaction to the Revolution of 1905, the outbreak of the First World War, the Russian Revolution of February 1917 and the Bolshevik seizure of power in October of the same year.

Ivan Ilin was born in 1883 into the aristocratic family of governmental secretary Alexander Ivanovich Ilin and the Russian-German Caroline Louise Schweikert von Stadion, who was from a very old German family. In order to marry Ivan Ilin's father in 1880, Caroline left her Lutheran faith and became Russian Orthodox, changing her name to Yekaterina Yulyevna Ilina. This background of his mother influenced Ilin his entire life. He was fluent in German, and from an early age was very interested in and well informed about the German philosophical tradition. It was his original analysis of the German thinkers which would later make Ilin known in the Russian Intellectual environment, and which made Ilin in his early years, as described by professor in philosophy at the St. Petersburg State University Igor Evlampiev, "a miniature reconstruction of the situation characteristic to the Russian culture of the 18th -19th centuries, […] which by embracing all main [philosophical] forms of Western Europe (and mostly Germany) was able to fill those with original content [...] and became [...] a self-consistent tradition."[27] During the 19th century, the Russian Philosophical school of thinking developed two main traditions. The first one was called *zapadniki*, the Western-oriented. This school of thought was constructed using the European and mostly German philosophical traditions. It urged Russian philosophers to embrace Western political ideals and the Western way of schooling and thinking.[28] The second school was called *slavyanoofili*, Slavophilia. It believed in the uniqueness of Russian culture and Russian ways, which were influenced by Orthodox Christianity and were therefore drastically different from Western ways and

[27] I. Evlampiev, *I.A. Ilin: Pro et Contra* (St. Petersburg 2004) 7-8.
[28] V. Rozhkov, *Alternativi mirovozrencheskogo vibora* (Saratov 2012) 95.

culture.[29] Evlampiev places Ilin in his early years in the Western-orientated school of thought. This is important, as in his later years Ilin would shift to become one of the greatest names in the tradition of Slavophiles of his time.

Historically, Ilin's family had a close connection to the Romanov family and the Russian government. His grandfather was commandant of the Kremlin Palace, and the Tsar Alexander III of Russia was even the godfather of Alexander Ilin, the father of the philosopher.

Revolutionary moods

In 1901, Ilin started at Moscow State University at the faculty of Law. There are various sources which suggest that during his student years, Ilin used to be a vigorous supporter of calls for revolution, and, more specifically, of the so called SD Party, the Russian Social-Democratic Workers Party (or RSDPR). The SD was a Marxist political organisation which believed that the Russian system was corrupt at its core.[30] In its early years, SD members dreamt of making Russia more like the West by offering scientific Marxist solutions to the problems of poverty and backwardness.[31] It was the party of Lenin, Zinoviev, Lunacharsky and Gorky: the later leaders of the Bolshevik's seizure of power, which Ilin came to hate so much.

Three people who were close to Ilin mentioned his membership in the SD. The most famous account is presented in the letters to his niece, the writer Lubov Yakovlenna Gurevich. Ilin's letters to her are published in the edition of Ivan Ilin's personal documents. Ilin and Gurevich were very close during his earlier years, and his letters to her are some of the most personal and emotional ones we know. According to additional information regarding the letters, the title page of the bundle, which is kept in the personal archive of the Gurevich has a handwritten note which mentions that "during his student times, Ivan Ilin had revolutionary moods, including keeping bombs [for terrorist attacks] for the SD."[32]

The second mention of Ilin's activity in the Revolutionary movement is made by co-emigrate philosopher Nikolaj Nikolaevich Alexeev. Alexeev knew Ilin closely during his student years and during the time Ilin was a professor at Moscow University. In his memoirs, Alexeev remembers that, "during his youth, Ilin was interested in anarchism and was a far-wing revolutionary." After this, he recalls once visiting Ilin in 1905, when he bumped into an unknown

[29] Rozhkov, *Alternativi mirovozrencheskogo vibora*, 95.
[30] O. Figes, *Revolutionary Russia, 1891-1991*, (London 2014) 6.
[31] Ibidem, 20.
[32] Lisitsa, *Dnevnik, Pisma, Documenti,* 475.

man who was handing Ilin a basket full of bombs.[33]

The last source of this information is consists of memoirs written by the Russian poet and translator Euvgenia Gertsik, whose niece was Natalia Nikolaevna Vokach, Ilin's wife, whom he married in 1906. In the memoirs, she mentions that Natalia married student Ilin, who used to be a revolutionist and *esdek,* or a member of the SD.[34] The second part of Gertsik's account is interesting, as she mentions that Ilin joined "the well-remembered congress in Finland in 1905."[35] It is unclear which congress is intended by Gertsik. According to Evlampiev, it is most likely that the writer talks about the third Congress of the RSDPR, which was organised in London and resulted in a split between the Bolshevik and the Menshevik wings of the party.[36] There are two facts which make this second part of Gertsik's remark unlikely to be true. To begin with, she most likely made a mistake in the location of the congress, as the location of the congress in 1905 was not Finland, but London. The second is that the congress was joined by only 38 people, most of whom were at the very top of the party, including Lenin himself. Furthermore, the congress was very well documented. These facts make the chance that the student Ilin joined the event very unlikely. The last fact that links Ivan Ilin to the SD is that Ilin's brother Alexei joined the SD in 1905. He became a highly active member, and he even had a high function in the civil militia during the Revolution of 1905. Therefore, a connection between Ilin and the SD does not seem unlikely.

1905 was one of the breaking points in the history of Russia because of the events which historian Orlando Figes called "the dress rehearsal" of the Revolution in 1917.[37] On Sunday, January the 9th of that year, columns of protestors peacefully marched the streets of St. Petersburg, begging the Tsar to improve working conditions and reform the government. The soldiers who faced the crowds panicked and opened fire, killing 200 people in a massacre which came to be known as Bloody Sunday.[38] This event caused mass strikes and protests which, as they spread to rural areas, became more and more militant as peasants turned to violence against the landowners.

During this time, Ilin was living in Moscow, one of the centres of the civil actions. Unfortunately, no sources are available which could shine light on his reaction to the events of Bloody Sunday and the earlier protests. However, one of the main events of this Revolution, the so called General Strike, is well represented in his diary. The strike began on the 20th of September

[33] Evlampiev, *Pro et Contra*, 76.
[34]Ibidem, 67.
[35]Ibidem, 67.
[36]Ibidem, 762.
[37]Figes, *Revolutionary Russia*, 29.
[38]G. Hoskings, *Russia and the Russians: A History* (Massachusetts 2011) 366.

with an action by Moscow printers and grew larger, with millions of workers joining the protests by the 10th of October. The streets of Moscow were filled with protesters setting up blockades and clashing with police.[39] People demanded change. One day later, on the 11th of October, Ilin wrote about the mood in the city:

> Oh how life is boiling, how everything is fighting, organising itself. Though I am at this moment keeping back from everything, I feel hot and on fire. [...] There are political parties, programmes, bonds, organisations, platforms, killings, gunshots, deaths...[40]

Surprisingly, while history was happening outside, young Ilin himself was not eager to participate in the political actions: he was too focused on his studies in philosophy of Law. Ilin supported the political demands which were presented by various groups of workers. Despite this, describing all the clashes between the workers and the police, he wrote as follows: "And me? I am busy with my theory of knowledge, with philosophy of life, with my heart chained to Berlin and metaphysical questions."[41]

Also, in the following days, opposing his image as a radical supporter of the Revolution, Ilin was not willing to join the protests on the front lines. For example, he mentioned avoiding the clashes between the demonstrators and police forces on the 15th and 19th of October.[42]
The only exception occurred when Ilin joined his fellow students for a protest at the university, but then,

> [as I saw that] self-defence spontaneously shifted to an attempt to organise an armed rebellion, [...] that the mass [...] lost the ground under its feet and the reasonability of its actions […] leading to a show play of Revolution and Temporarily Government, I left.[43]

Though he supported the political vision of the students, Ilin could not stand it when the masses turned to violence. This may have been the first foreshadowing of Ilin's aversion to the public violence of the Bolshevik Revolution.

Ilin's diary of 1905 is the only source we have that was written by Ilin himself which links him with the SD, though it does so in a different way than is presented by Gurevich, Alexeev and Gertsik. On the 20th of October, he wrote:

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[39] Figes, *Revolutionary Russia*, 39.
[40] Lisitsa, *Dnevnik, Pisma, Documenti,* 17.
[41] Ibidem, 17.
[42] Ibidem, 19, 20.
[43] Ibidem, 19.

> For seven days I have not been writing. I was not able to. In those seven days, the Revolution has made colossal steps. On Friday the 14th, I was a chairman at the political meeting with social-democrats. I do not care much for whom I am a chairman; all of them bring both light and darkness into the minds of the public, and by their clashes, the shimmering of truth lights up. The workers were speaking: and that was the best part. The party members of SD talked - that was not so good: [too] general, [too] immature... [too] demagogic.[44]

Ilin's reaction to the Manifesto issued by Tsar Nicolas on the 17th of October is surprising. The manifesto granted civic liberties and a legislative *duma*. According to historians, the proclamation was met with jubilation and a euphoric sense of national unity in the streets.[45] Opposed to the masses, the soon-to-graduate-in-Law Ilin saw no bright future in the document: "The manifesto is worthless. There are many loopholes and nothing really is given, only words, words, words."[46] Ilin, in a way, was right: while the liberal elites were satisfied that Russia was finally about to join democratic Europe, no real concessions were made for the workers and peasants whose working and living environment remained terrific. Their Revolution was yet to come.[47]

Concluding this period in Ilin's life, we can say that it is not impossible, though it is unlikely, that Ilin was a radical revolutionary. At least by 1905, he seemed to be against violent actions in support of the Revolution. The accounts of his extremism and of him keeping bombs for the SD might still be true if the shift in his political ideas to a more liberal side had occurred before the October strikes. Nevertheless, his support of the Revolution of 1905 and his opposition to the rule of Nicolas during those years cannot be doubted. Overall, Ilin was more focussed on his studies than on living history. He finishes his diary on the October protests with the following words: "I madly wish just to be able to study in peace."[48]

1906 brought two important events to Ivan Ilin's private life. The first is that on the 27th of August, Ivan Ilin married the love of his life: Natalia Nikolaevna Vokach. It is interesting that Ilin, who later would become known for his fanatic support for the Russian Orthodox Church, was not looking forward to the church wedding which he had to have to make his marriage official in the eyes of the public. In a letter to his niece, Lubov Gurevich, he sighed about "needing to perform that tiresome

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[44] Lisitsa, *Dnevnik, Pisma, Documenti*, 18.
[45] Figes, *Revolutionary Russia,* 41.
[46] Lisitsa, *Dnevnik, Pisma, Documenti,* 20.
[47] Hosking, *Russia and Russians,* 369.
[48] Lisitsa, *Dnevnik, Pisma, Documenti,* 20.

church-ism."[49]

The second event was that Ilin finished his degree in law. Ilin, who became very interested in philosophy, decided to focus on the philosophical aspects of law instead of on more practical specialisations and stayed at the university, where he continued his research while teaching to earn a living. In 1910, Ilin received permission to perform his research abroad, which was not uncommon for members of the intelligentsia before the Bolshevik Revolution. Together with his wife, he travelled to Germany and Italy, conducting research which later would form the base of his dissertation on Hegel, his most important and respected non-political work.

The problems of the Great War

The outbreak of the First World War found Ilin in Sofia in Bulgaria. In a great hurry, he returned to Moscow, eager to help the great cause. The beginning of the war led to a nation-wide rise in patriotism and a sense of national unity.[50] Ivan Ilin was no exception. On the 19th of September he wrote to his niece: "Starting from the 14th [of September], I feel like I am reborn, because I can give the best that I have, of what I have lived and worked for, for this cause."[51] The way in which Ilin wanted to contribute is a foreshadowing of his future in emigration, as he focused his energy on political writings and public lectures on topics like 'the war as an act of spirituality' and 'the true patriotism'.[52] While he was very enthusiastic about the war, a side note must be made: like in the Revolution of 1905, Ilin was not very eager to physically join the fighting himself. Because of his position as a lecturer at the university, he was excused from military duty, though this was not certain for a period of a few days. Looking back at this uncertainty, he observed that "the possibility that I would have to serve in the war with the lowest and most elementary parts of my body and soul was tormenting."[53] This is an important side note, as it was written during the same period that Ivan Ilin became spiritually connected to the Russian Army, which in Ilin's eyes became the way to Russia's spiritual renewal.[54] The military, according to Ilin, literally became the unifying factor for the Russian people, beyond the social classes. Every group of the society was taking care of the wounded and was helping them.

Ilin joined the popular war enthusiasm as he described the high spirits of the people in the streets and even suggested to his niece to start caring for the wounded soldiers, an activity which

[49] Lisitsa, *Dnevnik, Pisma, Documenti,* 31.
[50] Figes, *Revolutionary Russia* 73.
[51] Lisitsa, *Dnevnik, Pisma, Documenti* 81.
[52] Ibidem, 81.
[53] Ibidem, 81.
[54] Ibidem, 83.

was common for the female aristocrats during this period. During the Revolution of 1905, Ilin was in a sense alone, as he kept distance from the political issues of the public and intellectual debate; however, during the First World War, it seemed that he actively participated in the public discussion and even searched for the debate, challenging the ideas of other intellectuals. This optimism was soon about to change.

As the war continued, it showed the main issues within the Russian Army and the Tsarist government. On the 14th of September, the day that Ivan Ilin so enthusiastically wrote about feeling reborn because he was able to contribute to the war, Russia suffered one of its first major losses at the Battle of the Masurian Lakes. As the country failed to adapt to modern industrial warfare, more and more issues came to the surface. Lack of proper training was crucial. From the common soldiers who, to save money, were barely trained, to a divided military command filled with salon soldiers, the Russian army continued to make wrong decisions, and morale and discipline started to fall apart.

By February of 1915, Ilin's positivity about the war, just like that of most people, had shifted. Full of rage, he wrote to his niece about philosophers who spread the vision that "the war is not so bad at all" and who tried to convince people "that the blood which is spilled at war is a blessing, as it purifies us."[55] In his own very emotional way, Ilin suggested "to immediately send those scumbags into the trenches […] under German gunfire."[56]

It is interesting to note that in his memoirs, written during the 1950s, Ilin also commented very negatively on the opposing camp: those who strongly opposed the war and wanted to bring it to an end as soon as possible. Describing a meeting between himself and his fellow to-be emigre Fyodr Stepun in late 1915, Ilin wrote that Stepun, who had just left a hospital after suffering from shell-shock at the front, started to speak very negatively about the war and began spreading so-called 'War Pessimism'.[57] Ilin reacted strongly, saying that Russia had to win the war to protect itself from its enemies, to establish its spiritual dignity and to save itself from falling once again into German slavery.

Ilin was not the only one for whom the last argument was important. The country was filled with anti-German sentiment, with protesters attacking the German embassy and people changing their German surnames to sound more Russian. This sentiment rose to a new level when the German influence became linked with Tsar Nicolas and the royal household. The empress was from a German background, and the Russian court had always housed many German aristocrats. This had never been a problem for the people, until this moment. As the failures at the front came to be

[55] Lisitsa, *Dnevnik, Pisma, Documenti,* 88.
[56] Ibidem,88.
[57] Y. T. Lisitsa ed., I. A. Ilin, *Sobranije Sochinenij: Pis'ma, Memuari (1939-1954),* (Moscow, 1999) 345.

linked with the ideas of a German conspiracy, rumours spread that the empress and Rasputin were planning to conclude a separate peace agreements with Germany.[58] The idea that a German conspiracy was one of the reasons why Russia had to end the First World War (and therefore ultimately resulted in the Bolshevik Revolution) would return during later periods of Ilin's life. The way in which those feelings, which never went away completely, came to define the Russian emigration and Ilin's later writings is discussed in later chapters. For now, it is important to say that it was the war which planted this seed in the mind of the philosopher. Ilin, who had always been interested in German philosophy, had lived in Germany during his research, and was from a German background himself wrote:

> Perplexed is my soul, watching the Germans. What will the rest of us, normal people, do with those heroes of their own greed and pride [who are] capable of anything? When and by what means will that violent madman come to rest?[59]

He continued by describing rumours that the Germans were planning to use bombs filled with plague bacteria. And though very critical of rumours and misinformation and doubting that the enemy would go so far, he seemed not to disqualify this information completely.

By the end of June 1915, Ilin, who would later accuse others of war pessimism, was very pessimistic himself: "[t]he war depresses [me], sometimes so much that I start to gasp for breath. Powerless, I clench my fists, suffering more from the inner Germans than the external ones."[60] In a different letter, supporting the public loss of optimism for the war and hating the mass casualties it brought along, he wrote as follows: "The war is depressing. Oh how many lives it has cost." [61]

Besides the first rise of nationalism and mistrust in Germany and the first connection with the White army, one more development in Ilin's ideas was brought along by the war: his first doubts about whether the state of law he dreamed of could be achieved by the Russian peasantry in their current state. On multiple occasions, he described a great amount of frustration towards the peasants who were spreading rumours about the war. Ilin wrote on their backwardness: "[t]he peasants go around telling unimaginable nonsense."[62] He was especially enraged with the peasants who came to believe that the bad situation at the front was due to the mass betrayal of the army's officers, the one power which Ilin hoped would unite and reform Russia. Describing how the peasants were walking

[58]Hosking, *Russia and Russians*, 390.
[59] Lisitsa, *Dnevnik, Pisma, Documenti* 102.
[60] Ibidem, 90.
[61] Ibidem, 101.
[62] Ibidem, 90.

the streets with multiple enchained generals and officers with a sign 'for treason' he cried out: "No, it's still a long way to go to a sense of law and order."[63]

The developments which took place in Ivan Ilin's ideas during the First World War are complicated and multi-layered. The war brought a rise in Ilin's patriotism, but the question of whether and how this patriotism was related to the government of Tsar Nicolas cannot fully be answered using the sources in this study. It seems that, instead of associating the future of Russia's rebirth with the Tsar, Ilin came to associate it with the army, an ally which would soon come to play an even more important role in his vision. At the same time, during those events, Ilin still opposed aggressive militarism and violence, as he spoke against the idealisation of the war and the unnecessary violence of peasants against the officers.

Ivan Ilin was not very active in the politics during the Revolution of 1905, as he was busy with his academic studies. The war did cause him to participate more actively in the political debate, as he found it his moral and patriotic task to contribute to the war by writing and lecturing: the same mission he would choose for himself in emigration. The events which were about to hit Russia would take Ivan Ilin even further into active political participation and would forever connect his name with Russia's history.

1917: Burning bridges of the past

The period that followed, marked by the February Revolution, which brought along the downfall of the Tsar family, and the October Revolution, during which the Bolsheviks seized power, is probably the one which caused the main shift in Ilin's ideas. At the same time, these events are very difficult to study using the sources selected for this research. The main reason for this is that almost no letters or other personal documents from this period have survived. The reason why this is the only period for which we lack personal documents speaks for itself: Ilin opposed the Soviet Government, and, as will be shown, he participated in anti-Bolshevik conspiracies. Even without letters supporting those actions, he was arrested on multiple occasions, and these arrests culminated in his exile. Therefore, it would be highly unwise and dangerous of Ilin to express his political ideas in letters or in public. In future research, it could be possible to shine more light on these events using Ivan Ilin's pamphlets, speeches and other political writings, but the scope of those sources, would be too large to fit in this work. Nevertheless, there are limited personal sources which could provide us with the

[63] Lisitsa, *Dnevnik, Pisma, Documenti,*102.

very first insights in this important period. The main source which will be used is comprised of the short memoirs which Ilin wrote between 1930 and 1950. When using sources which were not written during the events themselves, one must be aware that the memories and recollections of the events, especially events which were so traumatising and which so drastically shifted the political opinion as did the Revolutions of 1917, may often not be totally accurate. Still, as this study focuses on the subjective reaction of Ivan Ilin to those historical events, his memoirs, when used carefully, can be used to gain an understanding of his reactions.

The events which would forever change Russian history started on the 23rd of February, 1917. For weeks, people had been demanding bread, as the shortages caused by the breakdown of the transportation system had hit the capital. As the food shortages gradually worsened and the rumours spread, those demands developed into calls for a revolution and for overthrowing the Tsarist Regime. The events of the 23rd started with a demonstration by female textile workers. The next day, the protesters were joined by 150.000 people. By the 26th of February, the centre of St. Petersburg had turned into a militarised camp. As the bloodshed continued and soldier regiments joined the protestors, the strike turned into revolution. In the following days, the Provisional Government was formed, and by the 1st of March, it had become clear that Tsar Nicholas had to resign. Unfortunately, from the pool of sources used in this study, only a few tell us about Ilin's reaction to those events. Overall, Ilin seemed to support this first Revolution. This is interesting, as this Revolution became known as an act directed against the Russian monarchy: the regime Ilin would soon come to support. He dove deep into his work, speaking publicly and participating in public gatherings. By June of 1917, he had worked so hard that, on doctor's advice he had to take a rest. To get his rest, Ilin and his wife travelled to a rural area, but even there he continued to write on politics. It is interesting to note that there seems to be a shift in his writings. In his earlier periods, Ilin was mostly focused on academic and theoretical works for the university and other members of the intelligentsia. Now, he concentrated on writing for the common people, as he published and redacted numerous pamphlets. This task was of the utmost importance to him:

> It is only by believing in this [that Russia will be restored] that I hold on. And I am therefore working without rest, thinking of the future generations of our precious, temporarily fallen Russia. But for the rest, […] I am furthermore a patriot.[64]

While the sources used in this research do not provide enough information to trace back the exact events which caused a drastic shift in Ilin's political ideas and his exact thoughts and reactions to

[64] Lisitsa, *Dnevnik, Pisma, Documenti*, 92-93.

them, it is possible to establish a timeline. By various accounts, it is clear that, by November of 1917, Ilin had actively joined the anti-Bolshevik conspiracy groups.

It is very likely that this was a direct result of the Bolshevik coup in 1917. On October 25th, the Bolsheviks occupied governmental buildings and seized power. Given the way in which those events were staged, as a *coup d'état* led by Lenin himself, and given a lack of support and understanding of what was going on even among the Bolsheviks themselves, many came to believe that this new government would not last for a long time. In the press, it became known as "Caliphs for an hour".[65] Ironically, both the belief that the Bolshevik government was meant to fall and the Bolshevik government itself survived longer than anyone could have imagined in October of 1917.

It was not surprising that this seizure of power by a very small group of people resulted in opposition. Protecting his rule, Lenin banned the critical press, arrested the leaders of the 'counter-revolutionary' parties and established a police state. Those who wanted to fight against the Bolsheviks needed to go under the radar.

Most likely, it was Igor Alexandrovich Kistiakivski, a professor of law at the Moscow University, whom Ilin had known since he was a student, who introduced Ivan Ilin to the secret network of the anti-Bolshevik conspiracy.[66] Later, during his years in emigration, Ilin wrote that it was November of 1917 during which he also became associated with the movement called the Volunteer Army, a group of about 4.000 White officers and soldiers who fought against the Soviets.[67] The Volunteer Army was established in this same month, so if Ilin's memories are correct, he was one of the very first to support it. In 1918, Ilin was arrested for the first time. He was accused of borrowing large sums of money for the support of the White movement. As Ilin was questioned, he explained that he borrowed the money to print his work on Hegel, and after a trial, he was freed, as the court could not find enough proof of his guilt.[68]

It was during this time that Ilin's deep emotional connection with the White Army, one of the main characteristics of his later legacy that started during the First World War, reached its peak. This becomes very clear given his emotional recollection to hearing the news of the death of general Kornilov, a heroic figure for the Russian right movement and the first leader of the Volunteer Army: "[w]e were sitting for a while - shocked, crushed, discussing the consequences, the new leader Denkin and the state of the White Army."[69]

Two more memories are interesting to show a shift in Ilin's ideas on war and violence. During

[65]Figes, *Revolutionary Russia*, 132.
[66] Lisitsa, *Pis'ma, Memuari*, 330.
[67]Lisitsa, *Dnevnik, Pisma, Documenti*, 211.
[68] Ibidem, 415.
[69]Lisitsa, *Pis'ma, Memuari, 348.*

the First World War, Ivan Ilin struggled to believe that Germans were mad enough to use bombs filled with *pestis* bacteria. The civil war put him in a position in which he had to choose how far he would go to destroy Bolshevism. Ilin remembers that he was once visited by two people who had access to pots filled with the Asiatic plague. They were ready to sacrifice their lives to destroy Bolshevism by starting an epidemic. Ilin had to make the choice. After thinking for two days he answered:

> Bolshevism can and must only be overcome by spirituality, religion and the government, but not by people massively dying of pestilence. […] It was clear that, in the chaos of that period, it would be impossible to control the plague: it would have spread through the whole of Russia and would have brought along many millions of victims. But those victims would be physical, meaningless, not purifying. It would be a chaos of death, but not the death of Bolshevism. That would kill Russia ethnically [...] without cleansing her spirit from the evil dream.[70]

While Ilin was not mad enough to unleash the plague, it is interesting that he now considered that death could be purifying: an idea which he strongly opposed during the First World War. It is also not clear whether it was the danger of the civil victims which stopped him from supporting the plan. A different memory strongly suggests that Ilin, who in previous periods seems to have been against violence, now supported it, so long as it was used against the Bolsheviks.

> In 1918, soon after the installation of the Bolsheviks, I was visited by a group of young officers bearing a very good recommendation […] who were producing poisonous gasses. They asked me to connect them with commanders who were preparing an uprising against the Bolsheviks and provide them with portable gas dispensers in order to shut down all the units of the Red Army loyal to the Bolsheviks. I connected them with General Miheev and Colonel Yarmenko who were working in that direction.[71]

The following years of Ilin's life continued to be marked by the struggle between him and the regime. His house was searched in August of 1919 due to accusations of contra-revolutionary activities, and in February of 1920 he was arrested once again. This time, Ilin received help from an unexpected companion: Vladimir Lenin himself. Ilin remembered that, after hearing of his arrest, Lenin, who loved Ilin's work on German philosophy, became angry, called the Cheka (the state secret-police organisation), and told the person who was leading the case: "Have you once again

[70]Lisitsa, *Pis'ma, Memuari, 372.*
[71] Ibidem,381.

arrested professor Ilin? It is a public scandal! Immediately question him, let him go and let him be, starting from now on!"[72] Ilin himself was not so impressed with Lenin's appreciation of his work. If Lenin liked his work, he joked, then he had to completely revise it to search for banalities and vileness.[73]

In September of 1922, Ilin was arrested for the last time. He was accused of anti-Soviet conspiracies and, on the 26th of September was sent away, together with more than 160 other intellectuals, on a steamboat to Berlin. This ship went into history as 'the philosophers' ship'.

Summarising this last period of his time in Russia, from the March Revolution of 1917 until his exile to Berlin, we see three main developments. The first is that Ilin gradually started to participate in political actions. During the First World War, Ivan Ilin started to participate in intellectual debate on questions which were associated with politics and nationalism. The February Revolution of 1917 inspired him to step back from the world of academia and focus on the broader public and popular politics. Finally, the Bolshevik seizure of power in October resulted in him joining a military organisation, contributing to conspiracies and even being arrested. The second development is linked with Ivan Ilin's connection to the White Army. At first he was merely inspired by the role the Army could play in Russia's rebirth; later he became very active in trying to change Russia's political situation by supporting the White Movement. The third development is Ilin's perception of violence, as he shifted, from being a strong opponent of militarism and of people not living contrary to the ideals of state of law, to supporting the military and being ready to use violence in his fight against communism.

This chapter had two goals. The first goal was to provide the reader with information on Ivan Ilin's early life in order to form a better understanding of his background. The second goal was to show how Ilin reacted to the historical events he witnessed. Understanding Ilin's reaction was necessary as memories of those events would cause an even further shift in Ilin's ideas during the emigration. A development on three themes was described: on participation in political action, support for the White Army and perception of violence. The main conclusion of this chapter on these three themes is that in every one of them it can be described as a gradual shift, instead of a radical break. While the Bolshevik's *coup* resulted in a larger shift than other events, the first signs of the developments were already seen in the past.

[72] Lisitsa, *Pis'ma, Memuari, 351.*
[73] Ibidem, 351.

Chapter 2: Berlin: the Capital of Russia Abroad, life from 1923 to 1928

The philosopher's ship, sent away from the shores of the motherland and carrying 160 of the best representatives of Russian intelligentsia, was not sent into the abyss of an unknown foreign land. As we will see, by the time Ilin and his companions arrived, Berlin was already home to a blooming Russian community. The reasons why this community was established in Berlin, the capital of a country which not so long ago was the main enemy of Russia, plays an important role in the developments which would take place shortly after the arrival of the philosopher's ship. Those developments, in their turn, would cause a shift in the thought of Ivan Ilin. This chapter begins by providing a short historical overview of Russia Abroad, in order to understand its uniqueness compared to other migrant communities, and of how Berlin came to be known as its capital. This is followed by a description of the vibrant migrant community at the time of the arrival of the philosopher's ship. After this, I will show the main themes (better called 'tasks', *zadachi*) for which the migrants felt responsible and which connected the emigrant community, and discuss how those tasks were interpreted by Ilin. This discussion is continued by an explanation and description of how this community started to disintegrate and the role this disintegration played in the ways Ilin came to interpret the solution to the Russian problem. By doing so, this chapter will place Ivan Ilin in the context of the trends, themes and events which were going on inside the Russian community in Berlin. The main purpose of this chapter therefore is showing the connection between Ilin and his environment and the role the emigrant community in which he came to live played in his life.

Russia Abroad

Before describing why it was Germany, and especially Berlin, that became the first and most well-known capital of Russia Abroad, more explanation is needed about this phenomena of 'a country inside a country' that spread over the world and created one of the most unique migrant communities.

The migration which created Russia Abroad was caused by the end of the First World War and the following outbreak of the Russian Civil War. It started in 1917, when the first military units of the White Army fled the country, and it continued until the middle of the 1920s, as long as the borders of the Soviet Union remained more or less open. It is very difficult to estimate the accurate numbers of migrants who left Russia during that time. There are multiple reasons for this problem.

The first reason is the chaos which accompanied the migration. People fled in a hurry from the Red Army, violence and persecution, so in most cases, it was not possible to collect accurate information or count the refugees. One must also remember that those who left the country often used falsified documents or did not have any documents at all, and they were therefore difficult if not impossible to trace. Also, fear of being deported encouraged many to never officially register as migrants or refugees.

The second reason is that the institutions which were established to count the refugees lacked the structure and resources required to do so. The numbers provided by every organisation were very different, varying from 635.000 to 2.935.000 in 1921-1922.[74] Sometimes those numbers were willingly manipulated in order to achieve certain (political) goals; for example, it has been said that Russian refugees in Germany provided higher total numbers so they would be perceived as a legitimate representation of the Russian state and people. Russian Jews, on the contrary, diminished the numbers of their group in order to show that they were not a threat to the German economy and society.[75] There were also people inside Russia Abroad who left the country earlier, for example during the First World War, and never returned. Some of them were prisoners of war; others became dislocated, as the land they were living on was overtaken during military actions. After the war was over, many of these people could not or did not want to return to the new Russia.[76] Since they were, technically speaking, already living abroad, they were never officially registered as refugees. While considering all of these issues, it is still necessary to establish the scale of the migration if we are to understand it. The numbers which are most often used by historians in order to estimate the size of the community are those issued by the American Red Cross, which has stated that at the 1st of November 1920, Russian emigres totalled 1.999.500 people. A rough estimate of two million therefore gives us a grip on the size of this problem.[77]

The first destination for most refugees was Istanbul. Istanbul became the new home for the armies of generals Denikin and Wrangel, who were rescued from the Crimean peninsula by Entente powers. As Turkey was not very willing to house thousands of refugees, most moved, with many settling in the neighbouring Slav and Balkan countries. Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, for example, were short of working power and therefore welcomed the refugees with open arms. The second route was into the political chaos of Poland and Eastern Germany. For the new refugees, it was relatively easy to cross the border, and it was here that the prisoners of war and dislocated citizens came to live.

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[74] Raeff, *Rossija za Rubezgom*, 38.

[75] O. Budnitski, A. Polyan, *Russki-Evreiski Berlin: 1920-1941* (Moscow 2013) 33.

[76] J. Baur, Zwischen „Roten" und „Weißen" - Russische Kriegsgefangene in Karl Schlögel ed., *Deutschland nach 1918 in Russische Emigration in Deutschland 1918 bis 1941: Leben im europäischen Bürgerkrieg* 93-108, there 93.

[77] Y. Tsurganov, *Neudavshijsja revansh: Bellaja Emigratsija vo Vtoroi Mirovoi Voine*, (n.p., 2001) 10.

The third and last main destination was on the other side of the world: the Chinese city of Harbin. Harbin had, since its establishment, been closely connected to Russia, and it became a part of Russia Abroad as the White Army was pushed to Russia's Eastern borders.

While the movement of the migrants in this description is linked to the White Army, it is wrong to say that the emigration was completely formed by the military. The army accounted for a quarter to a third of the total number of the refugees.[78] The remaining part of the emigration was a very mixed community. In historical research up to this day, most attention has been given to the 'elites' of the emigration: intellectuals, nobles, writers and artists. Historian Mark Raeff states that, while these groups were indeed slightly more common in the emigration than in Imperial Russia, they still formed a very small percentage of Russia Abroad. Most migrants were lower- to middle-class workers, farmers and merchants of varying wealth. The three main categories in the emigrations were those who left the country during the first Revolution of 1917, those who had to flee the violence of the Civil War and, finally, those who refused, or, like Ilin, were not allowed to live under the Bolshevik regime.[79]

Finally, it is important to understand why this community became known as 'Russia Abroad', as a country inside a country, instead of being seen as just one of many groups of migrants. First, both in terms of ethnicity and sociological background, all levels and groups of Imperial Russia were well represented.[80] Second, the group actively distinguished itself from the community in which it came to exist. Moreover, many migrants tried to build their lives as an idealised, most pure representation of Russian culture possible.[81] And lastly, Russia Abroad was able to establish structures and organisations which could keep the community functioning with little to no need for contact with the receiving German society. It had its own newspapers, shopping and entertainment establishments, doctors, lawyers and charities.[82] Therefore, everyone could fulfil every need, from basic support for food and juridical help, to luxurious entertainment, inside the community. Some researchers even conclude that, when comparing Russia Abroad and Russia itself, Russia Abroad was the more 'authentic' and productive in cultural terms.[83] For those reasons, this group of Russian emigrants came so close to being a representation, even a conservation of the pre-revolutionary Russia, that the term *Russia Abroad* was coined.

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[78]Tsurganog, *Neudavshijsja revansh,* 10.

[79] M. Popov, Rossijskaja Diaspora v Germanii (1921-1923): Chislenost', Sostav I Material'noje Polozgenie, in Gramota, Vol. 12, No.1 (2017), 154-157 <https://www.gramota.net/materials/3/2017/12-1/39.html> as seen on 15-07-2020.

[80]Raeff, 15.

[81] Ibidem, 15.

[82]Raeff, Recent Perspectives on the History of the Russian Emigration, 319.

[83]Raeff, *Rossija za Rubezgom,* 16.

Berlin: A Capital

Russia Abroad, like the real pre-Revolutionary Russia, distinguished sharply between its centre and its periphery. The centres were responsible for the creation of cultural resources, which then spread to other regions, slowly thinning out.[84] The first and arguably the best known of the capitals of Russia Abroad was Berlin. It became the (temporary) home for more than 360.000 Russians out of the approximately 400.000 who were living in Germany during the peak.[85]

The cultural and historical connection between Russia and Germany, like the migration of people between the two countries, has a very long history. The most famous example of mass migration from Germany to Russia is the migration of the so-called Volga Germans. It was started by Tsarina Catherine the Great in 1763 when she invited poor German farmers to settle in some of the depopulated areas of Russia. The earliest mass migration from Russia to Germany started in the late 19th century and consisted of Russian Jews who tried to flee the rise of antisemitism and the pogroms which had started to take place on a massive scale after the assassination of Alexander II in 1881.[86] Russia had a long history of anti-Jewish legislations. By 1881, those were taken further: Jews were not allowed to own property in rural areas, were expelled from Moscow and banned from certain professions. Therefore, many decided to leave Russia and flee to Germany.[87]

There have also always been aristocrats, scientists, writers and artists of all kinds who have travelled between the two countries or have even stayed for a longer time, to study or work at the court or in other institutions. Ivan Ilin himself was a classic example of this tradition. For a few years, he conducted his research on Hegel in Germany, starting from 1910. This was especially common among the Russian-Jewish students who were restricted from joining universities in Russia and therefore often travelled to Germany to enjoy higher education. Then, already in the beginning of the 20th century, Russian papers wrote on tens of thousands of Russian tourists who filled the streets of the German capital.[88] Therefore, many of the Russians who came to Berlin later as refugees already knew the city, more or less: it was less foreign to them than many other capitals in Europe. For Russians and Germans alike, Berlin became a 'window' which connected Europe with Asia. As the famous historian Karl Schlögel wrote: "all the German ways to Russia were leading through Berlin, and all the Russian ways to Europe were also leading through it."[89] Thus,

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[84] Raeff, *Rossija za Rubezgom* 18.

[85] S. I Mihalchenko, E. V Tkachenko, Russkij nauchnij institute v Berline v Memuarah I Perepiske Russkoi Emigratsii, in *Vestnik BGU*, Vol. 4 No.34 (2017).

[86] Hosking, *Russia and Russians*, 341.

[87] Ibidem, 342.

[88] Budnitski, Polyan, Russki-Evreiski Berlin 30.

[89] K. Schlögel, *Berlin, Vostochni Vokzal: Russkaja Emigratsija V Germanii Mezgdu Dvumja Voinami 1918-1922*,

even long before the so-called ‘first-wave migration’, the connection between the two countries and cultures was very close. Nevertheless, the largest wave of Russian migration, the one which would establish the community which would be called 'Russia Abroad', was yet to come.

Three factors are recognised as primarily responsible for making Berlin the capital of Russia Abroad: geographical closeness, the cultural and political connection to Russia and the Soviet Union and the low cost of living.[90]

The first factor does not require explanation. Until 1918, when Germany was stripped of many of its territories by the Treaty of Versailles and Poland was established, the two countries shared much of their border. Even when Poland was re-established, the situation at the border remained chaotic, which allowed refugees to cross the border on both sides relatively easily.[91] It must also be said that, for many refugees, being physically as close as possible to Russia was very important. They were afraid that by leaving, for example, for the New World, they would become ‘normal migrants’ like those who had left before the war for economic reasons. [92]

The second factor requires slightly more explanation. In April of 1922, Germany signed the Treaty of Rapallo, thereby becoming the first major European nation to *de jure* recognise the Soviet Union.[93] This resulted in the lifting of travel restrictions, which made Germany the only country to officially allow entry the of Soviet citizens.[94] This development became a double-edged sword. On one side, contacts with the Soviet Union allowed many, including the philosophers of the philosopher’s ship, to enter the country. This resulted in a spike of the Russian population and gave Berlin, and therefore Russia Abroad, some of its best known writers, artists and activists. On the other side, it made the lives of many migrants more complicated. The refugees who, until this moment, were legally represented by the old ambassadors of Imperial Russia lost their legal protection as the Soviet ambassadors, who established a permanent mission in Berlin, refused to work with them.[95] With recognition from the German government, Berlin became a window to the West both for the migrants and for the Bolsheviks. The Soviet Union, of course, could not miss a chance for propaganda and actively started trying to spread their ideological and cultural influence to Germany and the migrants. It actively supported pro-Soviet movements among refugees, organised public lectures and concerts of Soviet artists and spread pro-Soviet literature.[96] The most

(Moscow 2004) 22.

[90] Popov, Rossijskaja diaspora v Germanii, 155.

[91] Raeff, *Rossija za Rubezgom* 35

[92] Ibidem, 15.

[93] Thomas R. Beyer, *Russische Autoren und Verlage in Berlin nach nem Ersten Weltkrieg* (Berlin 1987) 9.

[94] V. Sorokina ed., *Russkij Berlin,* (Moscow 2003) 3.

[95] Beyer, *Russische Autoren*, 24.

[96] Budnitski, *Polyan, Russki-Evreiski Berlin*, 151.

famous example was an art exhibition which was organised in 1922. It was a cooperation of German and Soviet governmental officials, one of whom was the famous Soviet writer and politician Lunacharski. Both immigrants and Soviet artists were shown, and the exhibition was visited by more than 15.000 people.[97] In the early years of 1920, the cultural life of emigre Berlin was formed between those polarised fronts: the Soviet government on one side, and the extreme anti-Soviet emigres on the other. Still, the boundaries between the two worlds were not yet closed.[98]

The last reason was of a practical kind. Due to inflation, Berlin became the cheapest city of Europe to live in, as the German mark kept dropping. While this was a disaster for the Germans, for the migrants, many of whom had some savings in foreign currencies or precious metals, Berlin became the place to be. At its peak in 1923, a loaf of bread cost 430 milliard marks. An anecdote tells how famous writer I.V. Gessen, whom Ilin often scolded for his leftist ideas, paid a bill of 75 million German marks with 50 American cents.[99] One should not overestimate the wealth of Russian migrants, as most did not have enormous savings. Still, publishing an article in a foreign newspaper once in a while, like Ilin did, provided him with enough savings to make ends meet. In the end, during the best years of Russian Berlin, about a third of all migrants were able to earn their living without the support of aid organisations while simultaneously being able to support the arts.[100] Supporting the arts, which sounds like a luxury to the contemporary reader, was of the utmost importance to the migrant community, as it was seen as a contribution to saving Russian culture. This was one of the emigrant's tasks, as is discussed in the following part of this chapter.

Our tasks:

Though life in Berlin was boiling over with culture, and although the migrants were relatively well-off, they still had a dark past to deal with. Reading the diaries of the refugees, one finds that their perception of Berlin was of an alien, depressing city. Migrants were not much focused on the culture which surrounded them (and which would produce some of the best Russian works of the 20th century) but rather on the motherland which was lost, on the fear to lose their identity and on an overall feeling of displacement.[101]

The selective memory and idealisation of pre-revolutionary Russia helped the migrants cope

[97] Budnitski, *Polyan, Russki-Evreiski Berlin*, 151.
[98] Ibidem, 152.
[99] Ibidem, 34.
[100] Popov, Rossijskaja Diaspora v Germanii, 156.
[101] N. Rimar, S.Somova, Berlin nachala 20' godov v vosprijatii Russkoi Emigratsii, in *Izvestija Samarskogo Nauchnogo Tsentra*, Vol. 2, No.4, (2012).

with the hardships of their lives. To survive in the hostile world, where emigrants faced constant threat of poverty and assimilation, they needed to construct a new sense of community.[102] This sense was established in an idea which was very well summarized by the writer Dmitri Merezkovski: "We are not in exile - we are on a mission!"[103] By recognising this mission, emigration became more than a simple way of survival.[104]

This idea of a mission was so strongly connected with the migrants' images of themselves that Michail Nazarov, a modern Russian Christian and monarchist publisher, said that "it was not a free choice of the migrants to pursue this mission", and even that "the only way for the migrants to avoid this 'mission' would be by stop being themselves."[105]

This idea was recognised by Ivan Ilin who, on arriving in Berlin, wrote to Petr Struve, a fellow emigrate to whom Ilin had already been connected during his time in Russia and who came to be one of Ilin's closest connections in emigration:

> Every day I thank God that he let me join this tragic process, this satanic hellfire, full of mystico-cosmical meaning. It is a spiritual experience *ohne seines gleichen*. And arriving here, we did not feel like exhausted commoners who had lost five years of their lives but (it is scary to say it this way) rather like missionaries, who went through purgatory and [who are] persevered with a great and quite possibly impossible responsibility. It might be that we are small [and] weak, [and that we] will not succeed in our task, but what is given to us, taken on us and commanded to us is unique in its meaning.[106]

The shared idea on the Russian emigration was that it was experienced through the lens of the loss of the motherland and fear of the loss of identity. Most faced various degrees of personal grief and homesickness.[107] Mark Raeff has even written that "everyone who would look at the pictures of the refugees who just had escaped the danger […] would see faces shadowed with despair."[108] Not despair, however, but rather the will to act seemed to fill Ivan Ilin on his

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[102] A. Cohen, Oh, That! Myth, Memory, and World War I in the Russian Emigration and the Soviet Union *in Slavic Review*, 2003, Vol. 62, No. 1, 69-86, there 73.

[103] M. Nazarov, Missija Russkoi Emigratsii, (Moscow, 1994) 6.

[104] Raeff, *Russia Abroad,* 14.

[105] Nazarov, Missija, 6.

[106] Lisitsa, *Dnevnik, Pisma, Documenti*, 116-117.

[107] A. Cohen, 'Our Russian Passport': First World War Monuments, Transnational Commemoration, and the Russian Emigration in Europe, 1918-39, in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 49, No. 4, 627-651, there 631.

[108] Raeff, *Russia Abroad*, 42.

arrival in Berlin. Ilin even had found a solution against feeling homesick. According to him, one could not be disrupted from the fatherland, *otechestvo*, as the essence of Russia was not its geographical location or its people but rather the sense of spiritual belonging. For Ilin, this sense of spiritual connection with Russia was the essence of himself and his every action and therefore, the motherland was always with him.[109]

So what was this mission which was so important for migrants and which motivated Ivan Ilin so much that even his five years in Russia, the years during which his life was constantly in danger, were perceived by him as being worth the trouble? While different researchers provide slightly different variations of the ways in which it is described, three main tasks can be distinguished in all accounts.

The first task can be described as keeping alive the memory of pre-revolutionary Russia and its national identity.[110] This was done by, on the one hand, becoming a physical, living representation of pre-revolutionary Russia. On the other hand, it was done by making sure that this pure legacy would be passed on to future generations, so that it could live on.

The second task was to help those who were still in Russia, and fighting the communist government, trying to stay alive and fighting for traditional values.[111] The rejection of the results of the Revolution and the total rejection of the Soviet government was, unsurprisingly, a unifying factor among all emigrants.[112] The community believed that the Soviet Union would very soon fall, and it saw contributing to this fall as one of its main tasks.

While the first two tasks demanded action, the third task of the emigration was more linked with spirituality and philosophy, as it was to understand the tragical events of the Russian Revolution.[113] This was done on two levels. The first level was focused on understanding why the Bolsheviks were able to seize power and how the Revolution could have happened. Once this understanding of the mistakes of the past was formed, the second level of this task was to create a new system of thoughts and beliefs to make sure that the disasters of the Russian Revolution would never occur again.

In the following text, I will show some of the ways in which Ivan Ilin tried to contribute to fulfilling these tasks. The third, more theoretical task, is knowingly excluded from the analysis. This is not because Ivan Ilin did not contribute to it. On the contrary, most of his published work was focused on understanding the Revolution and constructing a narrative for a future Russia. This

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[109]Y. Lisitsa, Zgisn' I dejatelnost' I.A. Ilina v Emigratsii, in *Russkoje Zarubezgje* No.1, 2011, 120.
[110]Nazarov, *Missija*, 10.
[111]Ibidem, 11.
[112]Raeff, *Russia Abroad*, 29.
[113]Nazarov, *Missija* 12.

choice is made because I believe that my approach and the sources used in this study, Ivan Ilin's letters and personal documents, do not allow me to do this subject justice. This task should be approached from a more philosophical perspective and should therefore be discussed in future research.

The tasks were formulated by the emigrants long before Ilin's arrival in Berlin. Nevertheless, until that moment, the community seemed unable to fulfil them, at least according to Ilin himself, as he sighed in a letter: "And with pain we watched from there, not able to understand why the Russian emigration is so ideologically empty and unfruitful."[114]

Ilin was very critical of the ways in which the emigrants worked on the mission until his arrival. He jokingly stated that, "Our Berlin 'in exile' is cooking up various plans and plots in 25 [different] pots. We all want to participate [...] it would be a pity if we would mess up."[115] Now it was time for Ivan Ilin to see if he was the one who could fulfil the mission.

The Russian institute

The first mission of the emigration, the dream to keep Russian identity and the memory of pre-revolutionary Russia alive, was what brought Ivan Ilin to Berlin. According to Mark Raeff, the way in which most emigrants came to define this mission of saving the Russian culture for the future and avoiding assimilation was by educating Russian youth within the traditions which corresponded with their vision for the country's future. Raeff concludes that it was this opportunity to educate their own children in a 'right' way which, for many migrants, became the reason to leave Russia in the first place.[116] While it was not the reason why Ilin left, it was the reason why he settled in Berlin.

When Ilin first arrived in Berlin, Peter Struve, who was mentioned in the previous chapter, tried to convince him to move to Prague. The environment in Prague was better than that in Berlin, a fact which Ilin himself recognised:

> Of course, a stable currency is nicer[…] of course, it is easier there, where everything is already established […] of course the study materials in Prague are better […] of course, the professors are better qualified and an income is more certain. [...] Not to

[114]Lisitsa, *Dnevnik, Pisma, Documenti*, 117.
[115]Ibidem, 118. In the original text, Ilin here played with words: f*iguriruem (*we participate) and riruem figu, something that very loosely can be translated as messing up.
[116]Raeff, *Russia Abroad*, 65.

mention that [my] heart is yearning for [my] friends. [117]

As with many factors affecting the lives of Russian migrants, this difference between the situation in the two cities was due to a difference in the policies adapted by the local government. In Czechoslovakia, the government of President Tomáš Masaryk launched the so-called Russian Action: a large investment of government money which resulted in the opening of the Russian University in Prague in 1922.[118] Supported directly by the government, this stable situation attracted some of the emigration's best scientists. Nevertheless, Ilin's moral compass made a different decision:

> I believe that for me and for us […] it is better to settle down in Berlin where there is as yet no seat for Russian spiritual culture, where it must yet be established, where already all the ways and means are opened for it and where we are already busy with various arrangements and agreements. With the finances of the American-Christian bond, we are already opening the Academy of Philosophy and Religion and the Russian Institute with the finances of the Dutch-Christian Bond; the last one is scientific and public [in its goal]. Things being such as they are, to pack everyone in Prague where everything is already established would simply be a morally wrong step.[119]

Ilin was therefore not choosing for practical reasons but for the direction which for him felt like the best way to fulfil his spiritual mission. The institute Ilin was talking about came to be known as The Russian Scientific Institute. It was opened on the 17th of February 1923 and Ivan Ilin was one of the two first speakers at the opening.[120] The institute had three faculties: spiritual culture, economy and law. The choice of these subjects was closely linked to the goals for which it was established. In Ivan Ilin's own words, these goals, or as he called them tasks, were "to give Russians a spiritual [and] scientific vision and knowledge" and "to establish the experience of national self-awareness from bad fortune to rebirth."[121] This is very much in line with the main goal which, overall was connected to the education in Russia Abroad in historical research. This goal was to develop and maintain an understanding and sense of Russian pre-revolutionary culture, Russian *samo-soznanie*, self-awareness. To establish this national self-awareness, the main focus of the studies was shifted from math and physics, which came to be known as international sciences, and therefore could easily be studied using locally available methods, to more humanities-oriented subjects. Such courses were meant to provide students, who often had left Russia at an early age, with an

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[117] Lisitsa, *Dnevnik, Pisma, Documenti* 136, 115.
[118] Raeff, *Russia Abroad*, 82-83.
[119] Lisitsa, *Dnevnik, Pisma, Documenti*, 115-16.
[120] Mihalchenko, Tkachenko, Russkiy nauchnyy institute v Berline, n.p.
[121] Lisitsa, *Dnevnik, Pisma, Documenti*, 314.

emotional connection to and practical knowledge of a country with which they were otherwise not very acquainted.[122] This development caused multiple discussions among migrants about the essence of Russian culture and the way it should be transmitted to the new generation. One such discussion, for example concerned keeping the old way of spelling. The reform of spelling was prepared long before 1917, but it was postponed because of the war. Therefore, it was the Bolshevik government which realised it on the governmental level. If it had been made official before 1917, it is likely that no one would have made a large problem out of it.[123] Now, it became associated with the break between the old Russia and the communists. Ilin himself was an active advocate of the old spelling, and asked to publish his work with it.[124] On one occasion, Ilin wrote a review of a book he disliked using the new spelling, "as it was a stylistically correct robe (in its disgracefulness), for the disgraceful ideas of the writer."[125]

The main goal of having the youth learn about Russia and establishing that spiritual sense of connection, though dressed up in philosophical and theological constructions, was very practical. All migrants believed that, sooner rather than later, the Soviet Union would fall. When, (and the question was not if, but when) that happened, it was these youths, trained in the most pure traditions of old Russia in Russia Abroad, who would have to rebuild it.[126] These new youths were very much needed, as during the First World War, the years of the Civil War and first five years of communist rule, Russia had lost most of its intelligentsia. While the emigration believed that they had many supporters inside Russia, they were not very useful for the spiritual rebuilding, as the level of education inside early Soviet Russia was extremely low, thus leading to a whole generation that did not receive proper education. The Russian students abroad were often unable to join local universities due to legislations, a lack of documents or language skills. Participation in local universities was also not something the emigration wanted to encourage out of fear that the youth would lose their Russian culture. Therefore, Russia Abroad itself had to establish those organisations.

It was this interest in getting a hold on the people who would rebuild Russia in the future which caused foreign political players to invest in the establishment of the Russian educational centres, as was the case with the Russian Action in Prague. This also happened in Berlin. While it were the professors who were expelled from Russia who became the face of the Russian Institute, they were not the ones who provided it with financial support. The plan was for a large part realised

[122]Raeff, Russia Abroad, 67.
[123]Ibidem, 69.
[124]Lisitsa, *Dnevnik, Pisma, Documenti*, 322.
[125]Ibidem, 125.
[126]Mihalchenko, Tkachenko, Russki Nauchni Institut v Berline, n.p.

by cooperation with the German government - first with the ministry of Foreign Affairs and later with the Ministry of Culture and Science, German scientists and the support of the League of Nations.[127] This, for the right reasons, caused suspicion in the migrant community, who were afraid that the Germans might influence their institution. It is surprising that Ilin seemed to be unaware of the fact that it was the German government which sponsored the institution:

> First the board was afraid that we would have German orientation, but then they received proof that the only orientation we have is the Russian-patriotic one, and that we took not a cent from the Germans, have never [even] asked for it and [are not planning] on taking it.[128]

While it is at this stage not possible to determine why this fact was unknown to him or why he tried to hide it, it must be said that he was not alone: I. Gessen, Ilin's colleague, for example thought that the starting capital for the institute was provided by an American-Jewish organisation.[129] Overall, Ilin's mood about the institute was very enthusiastic: "The scientific Institute is working. The atmosphere has cleared up and has grown stronger […] nothing undesired is even on the horizon."[130] This was soon about to change, but for now, lectures were well visited and hopes for the future of Russian emigration were high.

It must also be said that it was the institute which connected Ivan Ilin with his greatest hero, General Wrangel. Wrangel contacted Ilin in 1923 in the hope of arranging enrolment in the Institution for "about 300 of young Russian men, who followed the Army abroad, [… thereby] saving 300 young lives, valuable for Russia, to prepare [them as] future workers [...] for rebuilding our Fatherland (*Otechestvo*)."[131] Ilin gladly agreed and wrote that, "[for the Army] I will always do everything in my power." and "that her enemies will become my enemies and her friends will become my friends."[132] A very close friendship, which came to form some of Ilin's main ideas, was born. It was Wrangel and with him the White Army which, for Ilin, became the personification of the second task of the Russian emigration.

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[127]Sorokina, *Rissian Berlin*, 283.
[128]Lisitsa, *Dnevnik, Pisma, Documenti*, 123.
[129]Mihalchenko, Tkachenko, Russki Nauchni Institut v Berline, n.p.
[130] Lisitsa, *Dnevnik, Pisma, Documenti*, 123.
[131]Ibidem, 210-11.
[132] Ibidem, 211.

The White Army

In the chapter on the tasks of the emigration, the second task was described as "helping those who still were in Russia and were fighting the Communist government, those who were trying to stay alive and fight for traditional values." Practically speaking, while the first task was more focused on the preservation and continuation of the Russian legacy, this one involved calling the migrants to political action. Like the other tasks, this task, when closely examined, could be divided into separate, smaller sub-categories. To begin with, this task had a very solid goal, one which could be seen in the context of the main unifying belief of the emigration: that the Soviet regime was destined to fall. This task was asking the migrants for the active political participation which would realise this historical event.

The emigration was able to participate by virtue of two kinds of actions. The first was spreading knowledge of the horrors of the Russian Revolution and the Soviet Union. This was done to convince (European) political powers that the Bolshevik government was illegitimate, against the will of the Russian people and criminal in both its origin and its actions. By doing this, the emigration hoped to disconnect the young Soviet Union from political and economic contacts with the rest of the world and to start an international intervention which would result in the downfall of the regime. Ilin, for example, published works in German and participated in public lectures to spread this knowledge. Nevertheless, the segregation between the emigrants and the receiving community resulted in the limited range of this kind of actions.

The second kind of action was more practical and was focused on contributing to the physical actions which would result in the downfall of the Soviet government. For example, one could think of preparing terrorist acts in Russia to sabotage production, transportation or the military. During the early years, we could already see that Ivan Ilin had to face some of the extreme supporters of such actions who, to destroy the Soviet government, were even ready to spread infectious diseases among the population. The calls for using contagious diseases and even poisoning grain supplies in order to bring down the Soviet Government could still be heard among the most extreme groups of the White movement.[133]

For most people, the contribution to the downfall of the Bolsheviks was performed by support of the White Army. Military culture was one of the main ways by which the migrants tried to maintain the continuity of Russian tradition and deal with living without a state.[134] This was also the case for Ivan Ilin, for whom the White Army ruled by General Wrangel gained a religious

[133]J. Glad, *Russia abroad writers, history, politics*, (Michigan 1999), 137.
[134]Cohen, Oh that! Myth, Memory and World War One, 73.

connotation and became the essence of Russia's past and future. For Ilin, Wrangel's White Army became a knighthood, an order: "Russia had fallen because she lacked such an order; Russia could not be reborn without it."[135] The idea of freeing Russia from Bolshevism became connected with the idea of *Vesenny Pohod*, the Spring intervention. This idea was established during the evacuation of General Wrangel's Army from Crimea in November of 1920. Even before the ships which evacuated the army arrived in Istanbul, the discussion regarding ways to continue the fight against the Bolsheviks started.[136]

The first plan was that by the 1st of May 1921, with the support of the Entente powers, the White army would be dropped off on the coast of the Black Sea and would resume fighting against the Bolsheviks. As those plans were never realised, the date of the intervention was pushed further into the future, acquiring almost something of a symbolic value, a reason to live, instead of a real plan of action.[137]

For General Wrangel, Ilin became an important source of information. On multiple occasions, the General told Ilin that it was Ilin's opinion, that of a person who had lived under Soviet rule for five years, but was able to maintain his love for the White Army, which he especially valued.[138] The spiritual and emotional connection was obviously not the only reason for Wrangel's interest in Ilin. The philosopher, who lived in the Soviet Union longer than anyone at the top of the White Army, was the perfect source for information on Bolshevik's politics and the level of support for the new government among the population, as he knew the political and social situation in the Soviet Union from the inside out. Ilin was more than willing to help, and he shared lengthy analyses of the Soviet politics and the character of its most prominent figures, of the problems which had to be solved in order to successfully overthrow the Bolsheviks and of the tactics according to which the attack had to be performed.

Inside the community, there were multiple points of discussion regarding how this intervention had to be performed. Questions were raised regarding the political structure of the future state, the distribution of land to the farmers, and whether or not to legally persecute those who collaborated with the Bolsheviks. These discussions became more and more heated, slowly dividing the emigration.

Ilin had his own answers to all these questions:

-All groups should have the same rights (this was connected to the question of Russian serfdom, a structure which officially was abolished, but was still experienced by the

[135] Lisitsa, *Dnevnik, Pisma, Documenti*, 211.

[136] Tsurganov, Neudavshijsja Revanch, 11.

[137] Ibidem,10.

[138] Lisitsa, *Dnevnik, Pisma, Documenti*, 212, 224.

peasants).

-The soil should be distributed to the peasants.

-Most people should receive amnesty, but a selected few should be targeted and liquidated.

-The power had to be united by a person with a strong will, who would be able to make decisions overlooking social classes.[139]

Even more interesting is Ilin's opinion on one more special topic which was discussed among the emigrants: whether the intervention should be performed with or without the help of the European powers. Ilin strongly believed a myth which was very common among the White-monarchist movement: that Russia would have won the war if the Bolshevik-German plot had not destroyed the nation. This was the Russian variation of the famous "stab in the back" myth which was very popular in Europe during this time. In Russia, this idea originated from the anti-German feelings which arose during the First World War. As we have seen in the first chapter, even Ilin was sensitive to such rumours. Those first emotions now formed a strong belief: the conspiracy between the Germans and the Bolsheviks, not only at the beginning of the Bolshevist movement (this is until today a controversial subject among researchers) but even in the 1920s, could not be doubted.[140] There was an explanation of the popularity of this idea among the supporters of the White Army: first of all, it made the war honourable. For those who believed the myth, the war was not lost due to the mistakes of the commanders, or to soldiers who lost their morale and fled the battlefields. The army did everything it could, committing the ultimate sacrifice, only to lose on the home front through subversion.[141] Therefore, the honour of the military was maintained. The second reason for believing the Bolshevik-German conspiracy was to provide the White Movement with the legitimacy to continue the fight against the Bolsheviks.[142] This myth interconnected the glorious past of the First World War with the current existence within emigration. The Bolsheviks committed treason during the war: they conspired with the enemy and thus became an enemy themselves. Ilin even had an explanation for why the Germans wanted to conspire with the Bolsheviks: "[l]ikely, we must understand the German politics in such a way: Russia was the loot they planned on. [From which] the [costs] of the whole war and compensation will be paid."[143] It was also due to conspiracy that the White movement was still unable to start the Spring Intervention: "too many in Europe are afraid of the intervention […] [T]herefore, it is unlikely that the powers of the Russian Army will be involved [by others] in an

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[139] Lisitsa, *Dnevnik, Pisma, Documenti*, 216.

[140] Ibidem, 218.

[141] Cohen, Oh that! Myth, Memory and World War One, 75.

[142] Ibidem, 75.

[143] Lisitsa, *Dnevnik, Pisma, Documenti*, 219.

intervention of any form."[144]

The only solution, according to Ilin, was to start the intervention not by joining a foreign power but rather by joining the powers of the White emigration, and, by their own power to overthrow the Bolsheviks.[145]

This was a bold statement, and Ilin himself understood that the current condition of the emigration would not allow for such a campaign to succeed. The Whites lost the Civil War to the Bolsheviks partly because they lacked a shared message which could mobilise the Russian people and were too divided between small camps inside the White movement. To unify Russia Abroad became Ilin's main mission for the years to come.

The year 1924 brought a massive disappointment for Wrangel, Ilin and all the migrants who hoped to see their lost homes soon. France, England, Italy and Greece followed the German example and also established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. Without the support of the main European powers, the hopes to restart the intervention or re-open a new front in Russia seemed gone. Still, many of the leaders of the While Army believed that, as time passed, the European powers would reconsider their choice of supporting the Soviet Union, and the fight with Bolshevism would continue.[146] In those circumstances, with an intervention disappearing into the unknown future, General Wrangel faced a new challenge similar to the one Ilin chose for himself: Somehow, he had to keep the Russian Army united and alive.[147] It is with this goal in mind that Wrangel established the Russian – All-Military Union (ROVS). The ROVS became the biggest and most visible of Russia's emigrant organisations, with 40.000 to 60.000 members in the interwar period.[148] One rule made it especially unique compared to all the other unions, parties and bonds which were a part of Russia Abroad: The members of ROVS were not allowed to become members of any political organisation, or even participate in a political gathering. "The White army abroad had to become the core of National Russia, around which all the Russians who put the Motherland higher than a party or a leader would be united." [149] Becoming associated with a political party would strip the army of this legitimacy of representing Russia as a whole.

At this point, neither Ilin and Wrangel could have known that their dreams of unifying the White emigration would never come true. First Berlin in its role of the capital of Russia Abroad, then

[144] Lisitsa, *Dnevnik, Pisma, Documenti* 219.
[145] Ibidem, 219.
[146] Tsurganov, Neudavshijsja Revanch, 12.
[147] Ibidem, 13.
[148] Cohen, Oh that! Myth, Memory and World War One, 73.
[149] A.Seregin, Monarchisti-Legitimisti I Russkij Obshevoinskij Sojuz, in *Novi Istoricheski Vestnik*, No. 39, 2014, 92.

Russia Abroad itself were about to start crumbling. A few years later, ROVS which was established to unite the emigration, would contribute to its downfall.

The dissolution

The delay of the Spring Intervention to the unknown future was not the only bad news which 1924 would bring to the migrants. To fight hyperinflation, the German Bank issued a new currency: the *Rentenmark*. It was not backed by gold but by the 'real goods', i.e., by the amount of land which was used for agricultural production or business. By the beginning of the year, the value of the mark stabilised, at the same time skyrocketing the cost of living for the migrants.[150]

In older literature on Russia Abroad, the stabilisation of the mark is directly linked with a decline in the Russian population in Berlin and a shift of the capital of Russia Abroad to Paris.[151] Recent research shows that this is not entirely correct: the stabilisation did result in a short decline in the population in 1924, but by 1925 it once again reached the level of 1922.[152]

This does not mean that the impact on the community was not enormous. The combination of skyrocketing prices for living expenses with the loss of hope that the Bolshevik regime would fall any time soon had the result that the number of students at the Russian Institute drastically and quickly started to decrease. By March 1924, Ilin's lectures were visited by such a small number of people, that he could teach from his own home.[153] This trend continued. By 1926, the Russian Institute in Berlin, which was established to create the youth who were to rebuild Russia, completely ceased its educational activities. With no students to teach, the institute struggled to survive, and salaries were often delayed for months.

Ilin, who had always had a weak health, fell ill. He desperately needed to get money to restore his health. Hoping to get some help from the other professors, he wrote to Berdyaev, one of the co-founders of the institute: "If you are willing to, and if there is anything you can do, help me!"[154] This must have been extremely tough on Ilin, who was always known for his independent and proud personality.

In no time, the relationships between the professors, who were all under extreme financial pressure, worsened. Conflicts emerged, which, as one of Ilin's colleagues described, were "mere

[150] Budnitski, Polyan, *Russki-Evreiski Berlin,* 35.
[151] Raeff, *Russia Abroad*, 54.
[152] Budnitski, Polyan, *Russki-Evreiski Berlin,* 36.
[153] Lisitsa, *Dnevnik, Pisma, Documenti*, 320.
[154] Ibidem, 322.

catfights over a piece of bread, masked as and [at the same time] worsened by political fighting."[155] The philosophers of the institute were not the only ones who found themselves in a constant state of conflict. In 1923, conflicts about who was to become the head of the Russian Church resulted in a schism in the Orthodox community. In 1924, a scandal about the right of succession to the Russian throne split the monarchists.[156]

While there were some uplifting and good moments, the positivity and the energy of the first days of emigrations, during which Ilin could not wait to perform his sacred mission, never returned. By 1926, he wrote to Struve: "The life in Berlin is silent and hard. The cost of living is high, everyone is struggling to earn money (deflation!); because of this, there are [everywhere] fewer people, [more] concerns, a lack of enterprise."[157] What a different world from the Berlin of 1922, when Ilin was complaining that everyone was *too* busy and *too* willing to act.
The community, which in the beginning had shared a sense of unity, now started to drift apart.

Last hopes

The last massive attempt to re-unite the White Movement and finally construct a shared message, a message which the Whites lacked from the start- one that would provide it with enough energy and backbone to once again form a front against the Bolsheviks, became known as the *Rossiski Zarubezghni Sjezd*, the Russian Congress Abroad.

From 4th to 11th of April 1926, 400 delegates from 26 different countries came together in a hotel in Paris in order to discuss the future of the movement, the possibilities for the unification of the emigration and the way in which the Soviet Union was to be treated once the intervention (which for many was still a dream to die for) would succeed.[158] The delegates had to pay for the transport and other costs themselves, which made it difficult for many to come as by this time most migrants were struggling to make a living. Nevertheless, the fact that it was possible to organise such a gathering, and that 400 delegates were able and willing to travel from different continents, meant that enough hearts were still ready to fight for the White cause.

Ilin and Struve were very well connected with the organisation of the Congress, as Ilin was selected as a member in the organisational committee and Struve was chosen to be the chairman during the

[155] Mihalchenko, Tkachenko, Russki Nauchni Institut v Berline, n.p.

[156] A. Solzginitsin ed., *Rossijski Zarubezgnij Sjezd 1925 Parisj*, (Moscow, 2006) 7.
[157] Lisitsa, *Dnevnik, Pisma, Documenti*, 162.
[158] A. I. Solzginitsin, *Zarubezgnij Sjezs*, 9.

seven days of the gathering. The preparations for the event are well documented in the correspondence between the two. While Ilin in the beginning was quite energetic about organising the congress, his mood shifted as the political fighting among different White groups continued. He warned Struve: "[W]e even dreamt that the French would ban the whole congress […] That is how dangerous we believe it is."[159]

The danger he was speaking about this time was not coming from the Bolsheviks, Germans or other outsiders. The group Ilin was so concerned about came from inside the White Movement itself. It was the so-called Russian Monarchist Union: an extreme-right-wing party closely connected with the *chernosotenstvo* movement, 'the Black-Hundreds'. The Black Hundreds were known for their extreme nationalism and anti-Semitism. Just as Ilin, they were anti-revolutionary and monarchist, but their ideas were a lot more extreme. The Black Hundreds were not afraid to use violence and they participated in numerous raids against the Jewish population during the Civil War.[160] Ilin was afraid that, by manipulating the vote during the congress and by political play, the Black-Hundreds would come to force its extreme vision on the rest of the White emigration.[161] From 1923 on, Ilin warned Struve about the extreme antisemitism of the leader of this movement, Nikolai Markov.[162] It was Markov about whom Ilin wrote on multiple accounts that it would not be fair to only keep attacking the left-wing of the emigration: the extreme-right-wing was just as bad, possibly even more dangerous. Therefore, he felt the need to attack the ultra-right-wing in his writings just as much as he attacked the left.[163] Struve was not listening: he was writing his own political agenda, Ilin's pamphlets attacking the Black Hundreds were never published in Struve's journal. Still, Ilin had made it his goal to make sure that the Monarchist Union would not be able to dictate its will to the Congress. By the end of February 1926, Ilin told Stuve once again: "[I] really need to battle the Black Hundreds."[164]

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159 Lisitsa, *Dnevnik, Pisma, Documenti*, 168-169.

160 Encyclopedia Britannica, 'Black Hundreds', <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Black-Hundreds> as seen on 20-07-2020.

161 Lisitsa, *Dnevnik, Pisma, Documenti,* 162.

162 Ibidem, 122.

163 Ibidem, 191.

164 Ibidem, 166

The congress did not live up to the hopes the White Movement had for it. The coup by Markov was avoided, and the conflict regarding the succession of the throne resolved with the recognition of the Great Duke Nikolai Nikolayevich as the leader of the emigration.[165] However, no real progress was achieved either. The conclusions regarding the goals of the White movement formed by the Congress and which had cost so much effort were almost identical to those which Ilin had sent to Wrangel when all of this had just begun. The press was divided over whether the Congress had failed, had had no result or had even caused further schism.[166] It is in any case safe to say that it was not able to create a message, an idea or an organisation which would be able to unite, revive or make the White movement sustainable. Because of Wrangel's ban on joining political organisations, the army was left out of the congress, which made unification impossible in the first place. General Wrangel died in 1928. He was never to see the Spring Intervention. The Great Duke followed him in 1929. He was never able to, or quite likely even willing, to claim his throne. The message with the goals for the White Movement that was created during the congress was, ironically, mocked by the White youth:

> Words, words, words […] they are the pest of Russia: our old Intelligentsia, […] for 40 years fighting only each other, and for the straightforward fight with Bolshevism there is nothing you can achieve.[167]

The idea among those young men was that Russia could only be saved by those who were ready to make the sacrifices necessary to achieve it. Those men wanted actions instead of words. They and their ideas regarding the sacrifices which were necessary to save Russia are the subject of the next chapter.

The purpose of this chapter was to connect Ivan Ilin with his environment, to research the way he perceived the Russian emigre community and the role this community played in his life. In order to explain why certain themes became important for the Russian refugees, the first two parts of this chapter showed the background of the Russian emigration and highlighted some of the aspects which made it unique. Then, by introducing the model of 'mission' and 'tasks', tools to compare Ilin to his environment were provided. Ilin completely recognised ideas of 'mission' and tasks. Even though he believed that the community was unsuccessful in fulfilling those, he shared the same goals and ideas as the people around him. Ilin's main goal became the idea of the unification

[165] A. Solzginitsin, *Zarubezgnij Sjezsd,* 673.
[166] Ibidem, 675.
[167] Ibidem, 11.

of the emigration, an idea which he connected with the ideal of the White Army as Russia's unifying force: something he believed since the First World War. Ilin's hopes were never to come true as economical and political forces from outside started crumbling down Russia Abroad. It disintegrated even further, due to lack of a shared message, conflicts among the smaller groups of emigrants and the rise of the ultra-right. Ilin's fears about the Black Hundreds were about to become reality, the unity and energy of Berlin in its early years were never to return. Nevertheless, this chapter has shown that the community and environment were of utmost importance for Ilin's understanding of his own personality, his goals and him coming to terms with being exiled from Russia.

Chapter 3: In the Dark

This chapter will address the Berlin life of Ivan Ilin at the dawn of one of the darkest periods of human history: the Nazi rule. The approach and the main question of this chapter remain the same as those in chapter two: I will once again describe the developments which took place in Ivan Ilin's Berlin and which role those had on him. Nevertheless, the main purpose of this chapter is different.

While the previous chapter did provide new insights on the way Ivan Ilin, and therefore his legacy, was influenced by the emigre community, it was not very actively challenging Ivan Ilin's image as constructed by Timothy Snyder. The findings which are made while conducting this research are different from the image that is shown in *The Road to Unfreedom* in such a way, that for this chapter it was decided to shift the main focus towards highlighting those differences. At this point in time, Ilin is popularly known as a Nazi supporter who "was impressed by Adolf Hitler", "hoped that Nazi Germany would destroy the Soviet Union" and "[w]ho nodded with approval that Hitler's antisemitism was derivative of the ideology of Russian Whites."[168] Regarding the access to the sources and the conclusions to which these led, this study can be used to challenge this image.

Thus, we must begin by forming a clear understanding of Ilin's experiences during the Nazi period and his relation to it. Therefore, three main themes which were important to the Russian community and which are currently used as accusations by Snyder will be discussed: support of Nazi Germany, anti-Semitism, and the collaboration with German government to destroy the Soviet Union. Many more themes could be highlighted, but I believe that, within the current state of our knowledge of Ivan Ilin, these are the most important ones to bring to light first. A second change is the following: besides letters, Ilin's infamous pamphlet on National Socialism will be used as a source on a few occasions. This decision was made because this pamphlet is often presented as proof that Ilin was a supporter of Nazi Germany. By connecting it to the historical events and the sources which are considered in this chapter, I hope to add more nuance to this vision. This chapter begins by describing the migrant community at the moment Hitler established his power in Germany: the canvas to the events to come. After this, it provides a short introduction to the rise of support for fascism and National-Socialism among the Russian White movement, a subject which already was lightly touched upon in the previous chapter. Finally, an analysis of the challenges Ilin faced with the establishment of the Nazi rule is provided.

[168] Snyder, *The Road to Unfreedom*, 19-20, 33.

Russian Berlin in the 30s: the numbers

To begin with, it is important to understand how the Russian community in Germany changed compared to the situation in the previous chapter. By 1930, because of the developments already described, the community had shrunk to about 90.000 people. In 1937, four years after Hitler became Reichs Chancellor, those numbers went even further down, to 45.000.[169] For a long period of time, researchers connected those two facts to each other. The history of Russian Berlin was divided in before and after 1933. New research presented by Oleg Budnitski and Alexandra Polyan in their work on Russian-Jewish Berlin, suggests that this connection, though very understandable, is not correct.[170] By comparing the numbers of the Russian population in other (European) countries, they had shown that Germany was not the only place where the number of Russian migrants quickly decreased. The number of Russians living in Greece, Italy and Romania, for example, also decreased by two to three times. In France, the country which housed most of the Russian refugees who left Berlin, the number went down from 175.00 to 110.000 in the same period. [171] Moreover, other research has shown that, by 1933, the year in which Hitler came to power, the number of Russian migrants had already dropped to 50.000. Most of the drop in the Russian population can therefore not be linked with Nazi rule. Therefore, the reasons for this development must be explained by factors other than the shift in German politics.

The decrease seems to be linked to two factors. The first was the terrible economic crisis which hit Germany in the early 1930s. Even the German population sunk to an extreme level of poverty. For the migrants, who were often restricted from finding work due to legislation, the crisis hit even harder.[172] The second factor which contributed to such a drastic decline was the demography of the population. The mortality rate among the Russian emigres was very high. This was linked with age, as many people were already old by 1930, and with the health of the migrants, which often was not very strong due to hardships they had endured during the Revolution, the Civil War and in emigration. Low birth-rates and assimilation of the children who were born abroad also contributed to the decline in numbers.[173] Taking into account that, by 1933, the Russian population in Germany totalled about 50.000 people, the years 1933-1937 only accounted for a decline of 5.000, which is a far less drastic decline than was thought previously. Nonetheless, the fact that that

[169] Raeff, *Russia Abroad*, 55.
[170] Budnitski, Polyan, *Russki-Evreiski Berlin*, 232-233.
[171] Ibidem, 233.
[172] Raeff, *Russia Abroad*, 54.
[173] Budnitski, Polyan, *Russki-Evreiski Berlin* 233. Also Raeff, *Russia Abroad*, 38-40.

the decline was small does not mean that the society was not influenced and disrupted by the Nazi regime. The reasons why people stayed in Berlin are discussed later in this chapter. The community, already divided in the past by politics, was now divided even further by race.[174]

Ivan Ilin and Nazi Germany

On the 17th of May 1933, three months after Adolf Hitler came to power, Ivan Ilin published an article which would become associated with his name forever. It was called: "National Socialism. A New Spirit".[175] In this text, Ilin stated that National-Socialism had been wrongly understood by most Europeans. It was not based on racism but on positivity. Hitler was a leader who was powerful enough to halt the greatest evil Ilin had ever seen: communism. Ilin could never have imagined what National Socialism would turn into. Ilin was far from being alone in the White community to see Hitler's rise to power with enthusiasm. About 80% of the emigrants were right-wing and they saw countries, one after another establish a right regime (more or less) within the rules of the Constitution. The first one being Italy, followed by Portugal and now Germany, many believed that Russia was next to come.

The second reason why there was little to no protest against Hitler during this first period, is that during the first year of Hitler's rule, little changed for the Russian community in Berlin. The fresh Nazi government was too busy solving its own internal start-up problems, and it would take another few years before the 'problem' of Russian immigrants would become an official issue.[176] Therefore, the Russian institute, like many other Russian organisations, continued to exist in one form or another during those first years of Nazi Berlin. According to the memories of a colleague who by then long left Berlin, Ivan Ilin was established as the new head of the institute and joined by a German commissar who oversaw him. "Ilin, who never was a Nazi […], very soon caused a quarrel with this commissar. But, during the time of his rule [he] achieved to fire a part of his past colleagues, among whom was Yasinski, [who] ended up in extreme poverty and died soon."[177] A side note on Yasinski is necessary. Vsevolod Yasinski was the first director of the Russian Institute. While he had made it his life goal to keep the institute alive and worked extremely hard, the conflicts between him and other professors had already emerged in 1923. By 1924, those conflicts

[174] Budnitski, Polyan, *Russki-Evreiski Berlin,* 233.

[175] I. Ilin, Natsional-socializm: Novij duh', (Paris 1933) As retrieved from Zvezdi Russkoi Kulturi v Internete: Ivan Ilin tribute site. < http://iljinru.tsygankov.ru/works/vozr170533full.html http://iljinru.tsygankov.ru/works/vozr170533full.html> seen on 20-06-2020, no page count.

[176] Budnitski, Polyan, *Russki-Evreiski Berlin* 235.

[177] Mihalchenko, Tkachenko, Russki Nauchni Institut v Berline, n.p.

became so large that the institute started to look for a new director.[178] Therefore, it is possible that there were multiple reasons for Yasinski being fired.

No accounts of this event can be found in Ilin's letters. Nevertheless, it is quite possible that Ilin was indeed established as the institute's new head: in 1932-1933, the last head of the institute in its old form was represented by S. Frank, one of philosophers' ship's refugees. Frank was from a Jewish background, and it is likely that the changes in German racial policy caused his dismissal.

The pressure and the problems erupted from inside the White community itself. Ilin had long ago warned about the dictatorial ambitions of the Black Hundreds. Now, Hitler's rise to power gave them hope that their time had come. The White armies had been known for a long time for their antisemitism, nationalism and use of violence. During the Civil War, 100.000 to 150.000 Jews were killed in Southern Russia and Ukraine by the armies of General Denikin. Michael Kellog, a researcher of the relationship between Russia's extreme-right movement and the Nazi Germany, even suggests that it might have been cooperation between the Russian White extremists and the German military during the Civil War that resulted in the rise of National Socialism.[179]

Many researchers have tried to explain the extreme use of violence and antisemitism within the Russian Army. Even in its earlier stages, Russian antisemitism seemed to combine multiple factors: the Christian religion, which is the oldest form of anti-Semitism, based on the myth that the Jews killed Christian babies as a religious sacrifice and the idea that the Jews had to be punished for crucifying Jesus; the extreme antisemitism of the Russian officials like the last two Tsars; and the racial theories which were developed in the second half of the 19th century and imported into Russia. [180]

As less extreme groups of the community disintegrated due to political differences and disputes, as described in the previous chapter, this ultra-right-wing seemed to be the only one that truly stayed together and active. Hitler came into power in January of 1933; four months later, the first organisation which broke the emigrants' unwritten rule to not intervene with German politics was

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[178] Mihalchenko, Tkachenko, Russki Nauchni Institut v Berline; also Lisitsa, *Dnevnik, Pisma, Documenti,* 132.

[179] Michael Kellog, *The Russian Roots of Nazism: White Émigrés and the Making of National Socialism*, 1917–1945 (Cambridge 2009) 17.

[180] Pål Kolstø, Sources of Russian Anti-Semitism in the Late Nineteenth Century: A Socio-Economic Explanation, in *Scando-Slavica*, Vol. 55 No. 1 (2009), 43-64, there 44.

established. It was called ROND, which is short for *Russkoje Osvoboditelnoje Natsionaljnoje Dvizgenije*: the Russian National Liberation movement. As the name suggests, ROND saw itself in continuation of the dream for the Spring Intervention, which was still alive among the migrants. But while the older migrants were against foreign participation in the intervention, to maintain Russia's independence, ROND worked closely with the SA. ROND, due to its extreme actions, had a very short life, but the talks on collaboration with the Germans in order to free Russia gained more and more support, even among the (in theory) a-political ROVS.[181] One sometimes heard people say that "[e]ven if it was cooperating with the Devil himself, as long as it was against the Bolsheviks."[182] To establish the Spring Intervention, this group of Russian migrants worked very hard to be recognised by Nazis as allies. To prove their loyalty and to clear a path for their own institutions, the extreme-right-wing organisations, of which by this time there were many, started to denounce the most prominent old Russian emigrants.[183] Ilin became one of their first victims.

The prosecution

The exact events which transpired during the years Ivan Ilin was living in Nazi Germany are very difficult to trace back and place on a timeline. The reasons for this are the same as during the Civil War: Ilin was well aware that the state police which was investigating him, might open his letters and use them against him. Therefore, he was very cautious about the things he wrote. Still, during his trips abroad, and by using suggestions, he was able to tell his connections what was going on. In 1938, as he was working on escaping to Switzerland, Ilin sent a timeline of the events which had happened in the period between 1933 to 1938 to multiple friends in order to be accepted (for the second time in his life) as a political refugee. This timeline will be used to place all the information along.[184]

Ivan Ilin's enthusiastic piece on National Socialism was published on the 17th of May 1933. Naturally, some time had passed between the period in which he wrote the article and the moment it was published. Shortly after the publication, he noticed the first signs of the evil that National Socialism was about to bring. According to his own recollections, the first persecutions began in

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[181] Robinson, *The white army in exile*, 219-221.

[182] This quote is in various sources connected with Kazakh leader Krasnov, one of the sources that mentions it is E. Samoilov, Ot Beloi gvardii- k faschizmu, Militera: Military History <http://militera.lib.ru/h/sb_neotvratimoe_vozmezdie/07.html> seen on 22-07-2020.

[183] Budnitski, Polyan, *Russko-Evreiski Berlin*, 235

[184] In the following text, the timeline Ivan Ilin presented in a letter to his close friend Ivan Shmelev will be used. I.A Ilin to I. S. Shmelev, 13.10.1938 as in Y.A. Lisitsa ed., I.A. Ilin, *Sobranie Sochinenij: Perepiska dvuh Ivanov Tom 2*, 241.

April of 1933. Between April and July, the secret police started to put pressure on him, "in order to use me against the rest of the emigration."[185] Ivan Ilin's persecution and later his arrest were caused by denunciations submitted by Russian Nazi-supporters who tried to reform the emigrations' institutions. In his later letters Ilin was also clear on the topics on which he and the Russian Nazi's clashed: it was due to Ilin refusing to spread antisemite propaganda and him refusing to support the Russian-German combined invasion of Ukraine.

In his later letters, Ilin would remember that by September 1933 his house had already been searched by the secret police and that he was restricted from participating in political activities and was even warned that he would be sent to a concentration camp if he continued his ways.[186] While no proof of this last statement could be found in the sources, a letter which Ilin managed to send during his short time in Switzerland in September 1933, proves that the secret police visited him: "[Whether] financially or, politically, there will be no rest [for me]. I have already been visited at home."[187] He continued by warning his friend not to mention anything on German politics, as his letters were being traced. Those were just small steps compared to what was about to come. In the summer of 1934, Ilin was fired from the Russian Institute. He wrote as follows:

> In the beginning of July, I was fired, together with all my fellow countrymen, from the place which I attended for 12 years. Fired for being Russian. It is a big blow through and through, and I experience it quite responsibly, though it is burdensome. Financially, I will, probably, be able to make ends meet for a few months; but spiritually and patriotically, this is a heavy experience, a complete disaster.[188]

It is very likely that Ilin was not *only* fired for being Russian. A few months later, Ilin would claim that losing his position at the Institute was a result of his refusal to spread antisemitice propaganda. This seems to be true if we consider the pamphlets which were spread among the Russian community in order to defame him. Surprisingly for someone who is currently believed to be an antisemite, the pamphlets accused Ilin of the contrary: him being a very active supporter of the Jewish people and refusing to join the debate on the Jewish question.[189]

The question of what Ilin's ideas about the Jewish people were is one that should be addressed in more detail, as antisemitism is one of accusations made by Timothy Snyder in *The*

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[185] Y.A. Lisitsa ed., I.A. Ilin*, Sobranie Sochinenij: Perepiska dvuh Ivanov Tom 2* (Moscow, 1999) 241.
[186] Ibidem 241.
[187] Y.A. Lisitsa ed., I.A.Ilin, *Sobranie Sochinenij: Perepiska dvuh Ivanov Tom 1* (Moscow, 1999) 405.
[188] Ibidem, 472.
[189] Lisitsa, *Dnevnik, Pisma, Documenti*, 346-347.

Road to Unfreedom.[190]

In his book, Snyder addresses the pamphlet on National Socialism, which was already discussed above. The quote Snyder addresses is "To begin with, I totally refuse to analyse the events of the past three months in Germany, from the point of view of the German Jews. […] I cannot make this a criterium of good and evil."[191] It has been used out of context by popular writers and journalists on Ilin for a long time. When the rest of the pamphlet is taken into consideration, this quote can be seen as an example of a very unlucky choice of words, but not an example of antisemitism. In his pamphlet, Ilin compared the situation of the German Jews to that of the Russian Migrants during the Civil War and expressed regret that the Jewish population was a strong supporter of the Bolshevik government:

> Communists stripped from us not some, but all rights; the county was overtaken, enslaved and robbed; one and a half million Russian people had to emigrate. And how many millions Russians were shot, imprisoned, killed by hunger [?][192]

Ilin was angry that during the 15 years of that hell, German-Jewish newspapers were most supportive of the Bolshevik dictatorship. Maybe it is better to let Ilin himself explain his statement:

> The Jew, who loves Russia and fights communists, is my like-minded person […] in whom we all see a friend and a companion. […] In contrast, Jews who support communism and communists in Russia destroy Russia, and are her enemies, and are therefore our enemies.[193]

Therefore, it was not because those people were Jewish, that Ilin made the earlier statement but because they were defending the communists. Especially during the later period of his time in Germany Ilin occasionally commented on German antisemitism and how he was unable to accept it. Once, after presenting a whole analysis on how antisemitism would hurt Russia and the emigration, he added "[n]ot even starting on it being unfair."[194] Ilin kept defending his view, though he believed it had cost him his job, and once again it had put his life in danger. His ideas on 'The Jewish question' were very clear:

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[190] Snyder, *The Road to Unfreedom*, 20.
[191] Ilin, National Socialism, n.p.
[192] Ibidem.
[193] Lisitsa, *Dnevnik, Pisma, Documenti*, 347.
[194] Lisitsa, *Perepiska dvuh Ivanov 1*, 491.

> Antisemitism, which tries to remove this line and blame all the bad [and evil] on the Jews, is a 'school' which I did not believe in and still do not believe in. During the last few months, I had to fiercely oppose joining antisemitic propaganda, and [had to] accept everything this choice brought along.[195]

The wide-spread anti-Semitism was not the only 'trend' that was breaking down what was left of Russia Abroad. As the Nazi's militarism rose, so did the extreme-right-wing hopes that together with the Germans they would be able to start the Spring intervention. The place where the front against the Bolsheviks was about to be opened was Ukraine. Ukraine was not a very surprising choice as the idea of Spring Intervention was closely linked with Crimea: the peninsula became the symbol of White's Army last hold, this was the place they had to flee from, but had promised to return to. Opposing Snyder's idea, Ilin was not supporting these plans for an combined occupation. Already in the pamphlet on National Socialism Ilin was critical:

> [i]t is completely impossible for me […] to perceive the new events in Germany from the point of "when" and "where" Russian and German enemies of the communism will start marching together.[196]

The first talks on invasion of Ukraine started in 1934, Ilin mentioned refusing to spread those ideas as one of the main reasons for his persecution.[197] In April 1938, as Germany was approaching 1939, and real plans to invade Eastern Europe had to be constructed, Ilin was questioned by Alfred Rosenberg's assistant. Rosenberg was one of the most prominent figures among the Nazis. Ilin remained true to himself. He answered that "Ukraine is not in my power, but I would never approve its occupation and its abstraction."[198] The Russian Nazi's hoped that combined intervention would be the first step in freeing Russia. Ilin, by now, knew the dark face of Hitler's Germany: he understood that the Nazi's would never allow the Whites to keep the territories and that Ukraine was just a first step in the Nazi plan.

While those are very important points considering the current debate on the ideas and beliefs of Ivan Ilin, this was not what hurt him the most at the time. The propaganda accused

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[195] Lisitsa, *Dnevnik, Pisma, Documenti,*346.
[196] Ilin, National Socialism, n.p.
[197] Lisistsa, *Perepiska dvuh Ivanov 1*, 490.
[198] Lisitsa, *Perepiska dvuh Ivanov 2*, 242.

Ilin, who had always been a fierce opposer of the Soviet Union and had made it his life goal to fight against it, of being a Soviet spy. Many believed those lies that were spread by pamphlets, because by this point the whole community was filled with paranoia about Bolshevik agents being installed in emigrations' highest positions.[199] This broke him, and by the end of 1935, Ilin once even mentioned thinking about committing suicide.[200] The community he worked for his whole life in emigration had turned against him, rejected him, had made him the enemy. The memories of the Civil War came back. Ilin recollected a moment from 1918 when he was told to hide, as the Russian police were looking for him. He was at a train station and tried to get in a wagon. In each wagon, he was met by a wall of angry people who did not let him in, who told him to go away or scolded him. "Wagons are full, and the people do not let me in and are not wanting to let me in" became Ilin's symbolic representation of Berlin in the 1930s.

If the situation surrounding him was so bad, why did he not leave Germany earlier than 1938? This was for the same reasons which held for the other Russians, even the Russian Jews who stayed: a hope that the storm would pass, a gradual development in which things got worse, a lack of money and difficulty of getting abroad to begin with. At the dawn of the Second World War, neighbouring countries were not exactly waiting for political refugees with open arms.[201] Ilin started to talk about leaving Germany in 1934, but as the number of accusations against him grew, and Ilin was rejected by the community, the ways in which he planned to escape became impossible. It was only in 1938 that he was finally able to escape Germany. For the second time in his life, Ivan Ilin became a refugee. For the rest of his days, Ivan Ilin would live in Switzerland, not with the vibrant Russian community which had betrayed him, but in a small town surrounded by mountains. He continued his work in the hope that Russia Abroad and the lost Motherland would one day be united again:

> "In confidence I want to tell you this: I have left the country in which I used to reside with all my belongings, books, furniture. I will not come back anymore. […] They only tolerate traitors and their own agents in there. Neither of the two is possible for me." [202]

The goal of this chapter was to dive deeper into Ivan Ilin's life under the German rule in order to challenge the current established opinion on his being a supporter of Nazi Germany, an antisemite

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[199] Robinson, *White Army*, 212-213.
[200] Lisitsa, *Dnevnik, Pisma, Documenti,*311.
[201] Budnitski, Polyan, *Russki-Evreiski Berlin*, 245-248.
[202] Lisitsa, *Perepiska dvuh Ivanov 2*, 236

and an advocate of German-Russian united intervention of the Soviet Union. In order to do so, I once again followed those three themes, showing which role they played in the Russian community in Berlin and the way Ivan Ilin reacted to them. I showed how and why Ilin, just as many others started with a positive image of Hitler's rise to power. This changed when Nazi Germany tried to put pressure on Ilin and convince him to spread ideas he did not support. In the previous chapter Ivan Ilin could embrace the trends and the ideas inside the emigre society, now he had to oppose it. This opposition did not only resulted in Ilins' life being in danger as he was prosecuted, it also broke his heart, as the community to which he was closely connected rejected and even denounced him.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to fill the gap in our knowledge regarding the person and ideas of Ivan Ilin by gaining a better understanding of his life and thoughts. This was done by introducing a new approach to the research on Ivan by studying him as a part of a larger community. The problem with the approaches that have been used before is that the researchers have focused too much on pushing Ilin's legacy, and therefore the man himself, into a certain political corner. As a result, his works have been analysed as if they were written in an ahistorical vacuum: not chronologically and without connecting them to the background in which they were written. I believe that it is impossible to come to correct conclusions about a work without first understanding the social and cultural background in which it was made. Therefore, I decided to use personal sources written by Ivan Ilin to connect him to his environment. The question that was asked for this research was: "How did the historical context of Ivan Ilin's life influence his ideas?" In order to form an answer, each chapter had one or more goals.

I had two goals for the first chapter. The first goal was to create a basic timeline of the main events in Ivan Ilin's life and thereby to gain a certain level of understanding of his background, which influenced the way Ilin's ideas would develop in the future. An example of this is his German background, which resulted in his interest and specialisation in German philosophy. The second goal was to show how Ivan Ilin reacted to the historical events of his time. Overall, we could see that the described events, from the Revolution of 1905 to the Bolshevik seizure of power in October 1917, had caused a shift in his political opinions. For example, Ilin gained a strong affection with the White Army, whilst he also shifted from philosophical theory to active participation in anti-Bolshevik military movement. Furthermore, he developed his ideas regarding the justification of the use of violence.

The goal of the second chapter was to connect the ideas of Ivan Ilin to the emigrant community he was living in, and show how the challenges which were faced by him and the people around him were interconnected, and influenced each other. To do this, the model of the so-called 'tasks' was used. In this chapter, we could see how Ivan Ilin embraced the model of mission and tasks, which was shared by the whole community. The three tasks were: to keep Russian culture alive; to help those who were fighting against the Soviet Union; and to establish an understanding of why the Revolution happened and how one could prevent it from happening again. Ivan Ilin adapted these tasks to his own, already established, ideas and ideals. For example, he decided to

contribute to the establishment of the Russian Institute in Berlin so as to perform the task of keeping Russian culture alive and passing it on to the next generation. Keeping in mind the end goal of the Russian community abroad: to bring down the Bolshevik government, and guided by General Wrangel, who became Ivan Ilin's personal representation of the White Army, Ilin selected his own ultimate goal: the unification of the emigration. This was a task he would never be able to fulfil.

The third chapter focused on showing the complex relationship between Ilin, Nazi Germany and his own background as a Russian emigre. The goal of this chapter was to challenge the current image of Ivan Ilin as supporter of Hitler and antisemitism. That was done by showing Ilin's reaction to the developments in emigrants' community as it shifted to radical-right-wing and his persecution by Nazi Germany. When Hitler came to power, Ilin, just as many others, was very optimistic. In the person of Hitler, he saw a possibility to establish a powerful state within the rules of the constitution. At the same time, he saw in Hitler a power which could stop the horrors of communism, horrors he knew so well and which he fearfully saw gripping power in Germany. Ilin knew nothing about the horrors of National-Socialism, which were yet to come. As soon as he experienced those, he refused to participate in the spreading of propaganda and antisemitism. This choice came at a high price, as his life was once again in danger: He was accused of being a Soviet spy: the enemy he had so fiercely fought against. Ilin was rejected by his own community: the community which he in the recent past had hoped to unite.

Concluding these findings, the answer to the research question is as follows: Ivan Ilin's historical context influenced Ivan Ilin's ideas by providing him with themes, subjects and tasks that were constructed by historical events and the communities surrounding him. The first period of his life, Ilin followed the public reactions to the historical events which were happening around him gradually developing his political ideas and constructing the base for his beliefs in his later life. Ilin had gradually shifted from barely participating in political actions, as he did in 1905, to becoming a part of the Russian White movement. During the second period, Ilin embraced the themes which were provided to him by the emigrant community and adapted those to his own established ideas which were formed before the emigration. As the community started to disintegrate and radicalise, Ilin began to make choices which opposed trends inside the community and in the end alienated himself from it.

Some of the results of this research, for example that Ivan Ilin was not an antisemite and that he, very soon after the publication of his infamous pamphlet, changed his mind about Nazi Germany, could be directly adjusted in the current (popular) understanding of Ivan Ilin's legacy as constructed by Timothy Snyder. Other results, even though just as important, are less direct. This research for example showed the importance of community, both to Ivan Ilin as a person and to his legacy. It became his life goal and broke his heart when he was rejected by it. This should be taken

into consideration by future researches in selecting an approach for their studies.

The second important idea is that the legacy and ideas of Ivan Ilin are far more nuanced than is now presented by Timothy Snyder. Ilin was indeed right-wing and a nationalist, which can be explained due to his moral duty to the shared mission of Russia Abroad, but he still was and remained a critical thinker. Ilin was ready to address issues when ideas went too far and stayed true to his ideals, even though it resulted in him being once again persecuted by the state. This image is far different from the idea of a religious, nationalist fanatic, as is currently presented by Timothy Snyder and the media. Snyder constructed a narrative on the way Putin used Ivan Ilin's legacy to create his almost godlike position as the head of the Russian state. The problem is that Snyder himself was not understanding Ilin correctly. Taking into consideration this more nuanced understanding of Ilin's ideas might bring us to different conclusions in the future research on Putin's interpretation of Ivan Ilin.

It is important to mention that this study was barely able to scratch the gigantic legacy of Ivan Ilin: a legacy which, independent of whether one agrees or disagrees with his ideas, can teach us a great deal about many subjects. Various debates on Russia Abroad, Russian Emigration, Russian intellectual history, nationalism and many other topics can be aided by research on the gigantic body of historical sources that Ilin left us. The format of this research and the need to provide enough background information on both his time in Russia (a subject which is important to understanding where he came from and which has until now not been researched enough) and the subject of Russia Abroad (the information without which understanding the community in which Ilin lived would not be possible) left limited space to tell everything that I was initially planning to. Collecting the primary sources and connecting them to the theoretical framework of Russia Abroad, I constantly found myself needing to delete information which was very interesting, but which would not allow other very important subjects to be mentioned. In the end, this research strikes a compromise between going into detail on a few topics to show the nuance and details which were needed to do Ilin justice, and at the same time providing an overview of large developments and trends inside the whole community.

It was not the purpose of this thesis to defend Ilin, or to place him somewhere on the spectrum of 'good' and 'bad', 'right' and 'wrong': categories which, in our times, cannot be separated from words such as *fascism*, *dictatorship*, *democracy* and *freedom*, because *we* do know what those words came to symbolise. But we must not forget that *they*, the people who were living during those times did not have the knowledge we do have now. People were simply living their lives, and their 'bad' and their 'good' sometimes were completely opposite from the way we understand them now. Sometimes, especially with people such as Ivan Ilin, it is better to take a step

back and try to understand where a person was coming from and where he wanted to go. As in an actual conversation, one should try not to put words in someone's mouth but to ask through time and space: "What did you mean by that?" Who knows, the answer you receive might be surprising.

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