

The Making of a Myth

The National Labor Alliance, Russian Émigrés, and Cold War Intelligence Activities

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In 1948 the anti-Communist organization Common Cause, Inc., held a press conference in New York City. The speaker was Konstantin Boldyrev, a Russian émigré who led the National Labor Alliance (NTS), “a world-wide Russian anti-Communist organization dedicated to the overthrow of the Stalin regime and the freeing of the Russian people from Soviet terror.” In comments that were reported widely in the U.S. press, Boldyrev claimed that the NTS had “several thousand active fighters behind the Iron Curtain working to topple the Stalin regime” and that the masses in the USSR were ready to revolt. The NTS could win the Cold War for the West, he declared, if it could raise \$10 million.¹

Boldyrev’s sensational announcements might seem to be an obscure footnote in the history of the Cold War. His claim that a revolutionary army in the USSR was connected to émigrés in the West was spurious, as his critics in Russian émigré circles were quick to point out.² NTS, a far-right organization of exiles with its headquarters in West Germany in the postwar years, had almost no active cadres in the USSR and had succeeded in developing a presence in the homeland only during World War II, when it had operated under the aegis of Axis occupation forces. Yet Boldyrev’s émigré grandstanding was not empty noise. Rather, the NTS had an important role in a secretive proxy war in which the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the British

1. U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Report sent from New York, 1 April 1949, p. 2, in Stanford University, Hoover Institution Archives (HIA), Constantin W. Boldyreff Papers, Box 7. Boldyrev’s press conference was covered by *The New York Daily Mirror* and *The Washington Post*. See also Constantine W. Boldyreff, as told to Edward B. Paine, “The Story of One Russian Underground Organization Attempting to Overthrow Stalin,” *Look*, Vol. 12, No. 22 (26 October 1948), pp. 25–27.

2. The prominent Menshevik Rafael Abramovich called Boldyrev’s claims about the NTS underground “absurd,” insofar as “not even an underground of 50 can continue to exist in Russia proper unless the NKVD [secret police] wants it to.” See “Man from Russia,” *Newsweek*, 25 October 1948, p. 38.

secret services supported exiles from the Communist world as instruments of espionage, subversion, and political warfare directed at the Soviet bloc.

Boldyrev's NTS remains largely unstudied and poorly understood. One cause of its obscurity was the NTS itself, a conspiratorial organization that specialized in fostering myths, as Boldyrev's press conference exemplifies. Until recently, the CIA also had revealed nothing about the NTS. However, CIA files that were released in 2007 in response to the Nazi War Crimes and Japanese Imperial Government Disclosure Acts shed light on at least parts of the NTS's Cold War activities in the 1950s, as do scattered archival holdings in research institutions in the United States and Germany.³ Taken together, these previously untapped materials facilitate detailed examination of an unlikely story—how a small, obscure group of Russian exiles functioned on the front lines of the Cold War in Germany.

The NTS's attempts to ignite a revolution in the USSR became enmeshed in a wider war between the superpowers' intelligence services. Recent scholarship has drawn attention to the place of exiles from Communist countries in U.S. and British plans to counter and even "roll back" Communism.⁴ The overall tendency of existing literature on the CIA, however, has been to argue that émigré-based intelligence operations—with the notable exception of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty—ended in failure and gridlock.⁵ This

3. The files pertaining to the NTS are located in the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Record Group (RG) 263, Records of the Central Intelligence Agency, Second Release, Entry ZZ-19 (Subject Files) and Entry ZZ-18 (Personal Files). The most important of these holdings are the files pertaining to the CIA project under the cryptonym AESAURUS/AENOBLE. See <http://www.archives.gov/iwg/decclassified-records/rg-263-cia-records/second-release/subject-files.html>. It is impossible to determine whether the declassified CIA collections on this or other operations are complete. Clearly, significant amounts of CIA documentation relevant to the study of the NTS have not yet been made available to researchers.

4. Simo Mikkonen, "Exploiting the Exiles: Soviet Émigrés in U.S. Cold War Strategy," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (Spring 2012), pp. 98–127. The best overview of the CIA's use of exiles from the Communist world remains Peter Grose, *Operation Rollback: America's Secret War behind the Iron Curtain* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000).

5. Hugh Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer: How the CIA Played America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), pp. 29–50; Grose, *Operation Rollback*; John Prados, *Safe for Democracy: The Secret Wars of the CIA* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2006); and Stephen Dorril, *M16: Inside the Covert World of Her Majesty's Secret Intelligence Service* (New York: Free Press, 2000). Literature on the CIA's operational engagement of wartime collaborators confirms the overall picture of the ineffectiveness of émigré-based covert operations. See Kevin Conley Ruffner, "Eagle and Swastika: CIA and Nazi War Criminals and Collaborators," Draft Working Paper, CIA History Staff, April 2003, Washington, DC, available at CIA, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Electronic Reading Room, <<http://www.foia.cia.gov>>; Christopher Simpson, *Blowback: America's Recruitment of Nazis and Its Effects on the Cold War* (New York: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1988); and Mark Aarons and John Loftus, *Ratlines: How the Vatican's Nazi Networks Betrayed Western Intelligence to the Soviets* (London: Heinemann, 1991). An account of the CIA and Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty based on archival evidence is A. Ross Johnson, *Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty: The CIA Years and Beyond* (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center

view has considerable merit. In the early years of the Cold War, the results of the NTS's quixotic mission to foment revolution in the Soviet Union were negligible, in large part because the organization found itself at the center of an intelligence war between the two superpowers that it was unable to navigate.⁶ However, failure did not lead to the NTS's irrelevance. In contrast to many émigré outfits that disbanded in the 1950s, the NTS continued to receive financial backing from the CIA for the duration of the Cold War.⁷

The reason for the NTS's tenacious place in Cold War Europe is suggested by Boldyrev's bluffing about an underground in Soviet Russia. The NTS was an organization that relied on posturing and misinformation about its capabilities and intentions as one of its core political strategies. After failed efforts to enlist the NTS for espionage, the CIA eventually found value in the NTS's long-standing deceptive *modus operandi* and set out to use the organization as an instrument of political and psychological warfare. In the process, the NTS came to play a role in the Cold War as a myth, the symbol of a powerful anti-Soviet Russian emigration that did not exist in reality.

Subversive Adventures

The NTS did not seem to be an organization well placed to curry favor with Western democracies after the Second World War. Known as the National Alliance of the Younger Generation, the NTS began its activities in the 1930s as an expression of the political ambitions of younger members of the White (anti-Bolshevik) émigré community. From the outset, the movement of "Solidarists" combined an imperial conservatism derived from late Tsarism with the fascist politics of interwar Europe. The NTS espoused an anti-Semitic version of integral nationalism combined with a corporatism drawn almost wholesale

Press, 2010). On related émigré operations pursued by the National Council for Free Europe, Inc., see Katalin Kádár Lynn, ed., *The Inauguration of Organized Political Warfare: Cold War Organizations Sponsored by the National Committee for a Free Europe/Free Europe Committee* (Saint Helena, CA: Helena History Press, 2013).

6. In this regard, my account differs from recent literature that depicts the postwar NTS as a capable anti-Soviet organization. See, for example, Bernd Stöver, *Die Befreiung vom Kommunismus: amerikanische Liberation Policy im Kalten Krieg 1947–1991* (Köln: Böhlau, 2002), pp. 502–530; A. V. Antoshin, "Rossiiskaya emigratsiya i apogei 'kholodnoi voiny,'" in Yu. A. Polyakov et al., eds., *Istoriya rossiiskogo zarubezh'ya: emigratsiya iz SSSR-Rossii, 1941–2001 gg.: Sbornik stat'ei* (Moscow: Rossiiskaya akademiya nauk, Institut rossiiskoi istorii, 2007), pp. 97–99 and Mikhail Nazarov, *Missiya russkoi emigratsii* (Stavropol: Kavkazskii krai, 1992).

7. According to long-standing leader E. R. Romanov-Ostrovskii, the NTS's CIA "subsidy" "did not end until the 1990s." "ERO v marte 1996 g.," in University of Bremen, Forschungsstelle Osteuropa (henceforth FSO), Fond (F) 98, Korobka (Kor.) 41.

from Italian fascism, one that called for transcending class conflict through construction of a “national labor state.”⁸

After a decade struggling against Soviet power with little effect, the NTS’s leaders placed their bets on Germany when the Axis seemed poised to conquer the Soviet Union in 1941.⁹ During the war, NTS members served in propaganda and intelligence agencies in Germany and on the eastern front.¹⁰ The NTS’s stance toward Germany was deceptive, however. The Solidarists who cooperated with the Germans simultaneously worked secretly to expand their own party’s power, mainly by using their institutional footholds in prisoner-of-war camps and in local administrations on occupied Soviet territories to recruit new NTS members. This double strategy eventually earned them the ire of the Nazi state and led to the arrest of many NTS activists by the Gestapo.¹¹ Despite the tragic outcome, the experience of wartime collaboration with Germany had a formative influence on the NTS’s strategy in the Cold War, teaching the Solidarists that the USSR’s foreign enemies could be exploited to serve the NTS’s agenda of fomenting a national revolution in Russia—and, indeed, that a future war involving the Soviet Union might offer a renewed opportunity for political work in the homeland.

The immediate postwar years were nevertheless bleak ones for the NTS. Fleeing the advancing Red Army and Allied bombing, surviving NTS members congregated in the western zones of Germany, where they eked out an existence in displaced persons (DP) camps. The NTS navigated the treacherous terrain of occupied Germany quite successfully, in part by cultivating ties with U.S. military and government officials to save the large numbers of Soviet citizens in its ranks from forced repatriation to the USSR.¹² However,

8. The most detailed account of the group’s origins and prewar political coloration, although far from an impartial one, is B. V. Pryanishnikov, *Novopokolentsy* (Silver Spring, MD: Multilingual Typesetting, 1986). See also Catherine Andreyev, *Vlasov and the Russian Liberation Movement: Soviet Reality and Émigré Theories* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 180–193; and Lyudmila Klimovich, “Narodno-trudovoi soyuz rossiiskikh solidaristov: Rannye stranitsy istorii,” *Neprikosnovennyi zapas*, No. 91 (May 2013), <http://www.nlobooks.ru/node/4018>.

9. Notably, the NTS received support from Poland, Japan, and Romania for its revolutionary work against the Soviet state. See Pryanishnikov, *Novopokolentsy*, pp. 75–90.

10. V. M. Baidalakov, *Da vozvelichitsya Rossiya, da pogibnut nashi imena: Vospominaniya predsedatelya NTS: 1930–1960 gg.* (Moscow: Avuar Konsalting, 2002), pp. 27–29; and Alexander Dallin, *German Rule in Russia, 1941–1945: A Study of Occupation Policies* (London: St. Martin’s Press, 1957), pp. 525–526, 556. On the participation of NTS members in the Holocaust, see Yuri Radchenko, “‘We Emptied Our Magazines into Them’: The Ukrainian Auxiliary Police and the Holocaust in Generalbezirk Charkow, 1941–1943,” *Yad Vashem Studies*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (2013), pp. 63–98.

11. Pryanishnikov, *Novopokolentsy*, pp. 158–159.

12. I discuss the NTS’s immediate postwar history in Germany in “How the West Was Won: The People’s Labor Alliance, Russian Émigré Politics and Cold War Europe” (unpublished ms.).

the NTS lacked a secure place in the postwar European order. The poverty and political restrictions among DPs limited the scope of NTS activities, and the organization's semi-fascist political orientation and checkered wartime record remained distinct liabilities.

Redemption would come only through Germany's new occupiers. Understanding this well, the NTS set out to become an acceptable political actor in the West by rebranding itself as a democratic party, erasing traces of its fascist past, and rewriting the history of its role in World War II by claiming that it had been a consistent opponent of both totalitarian regimes.¹³ U.S. intelligence officials saw through these efforts, but this did not matter much. Recent studies have shown that the CIA did not shy away from working with anti-Soviet groups with historical ties to Nazism. Harry Rositzke, a CIA official during this period, described the agency's support of émigré groups as "a visceral business of using every bastard so long as he was anti-Communist."¹⁴

A more damning liability than the NTS's suspect past was its distinct lack of accomplishments in its struggle against Soviet power. U.S. intelligence agencies were not taken in by the fanciful picture Boldyrev painted of an NTS Russian underground waiting for a signal to begin the revolution. Unlike Ukrainian, Belorussian, and Baltic DPs during this period, the NTS could not claim to have ties to partisan armies still resisting the Soviet regime in the early postwar years.¹⁵ The NTS's credentials as an intelligence outfit were also doubtful. Shortly before agreeing to bankroll NTS operations, CIA officials in Germany had established that the "NTS has not had any post war penetration of the Soviet Union, nor do they have many contacts within the Soviet Union who are actively sending out information."¹⁶ These conclusions only confirmed the Russian émigré community's reputation among Western intelligence agencies as a "paper mill" where down-and-out exiles sought to sell valueless or fraudulent information to the highest bidder. Kim Philby once admonished his colleagues in the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) that they must "never trust a Tsarist émigré. They're all as twisty as eels."¹⁷

13. *Ibid.*

14. Wilford, *The Mighty Wurlitzer*, p. 30.

15. Cf. Jeffrey Burds, *The Early Cold War in Soviet West Ukraine, 1944–1948* (Pittsburgh: Russian and East European Studies Program, University of Pittsburgh, 2001).

16. Chief FDS/West to Chief, FDS, 15 December 1950, in NARA, RG 263, Entry ZZ-19, 230/86/25/03, Box 24, AESAURUS/AENOBLE (hereinafter referred to as AESAURUS, with appropriate volume and part numbers), Vol. 1, pt. 1.

17. Dorril, *MIG*, p. 416. Philby's sentiment was widely shared in U.S. intelligence circles. See Ruffner, "Eagle and Swastika," pp. 13–14.

Doubts fell by the wayside in 1950, when the CIA initiated extensive support of the NTS. The new attractiveness of the NTS can be understood only in the context of the heating up of the Cold War, marked by the onset of the Korean War, the Communist victory in China, and the first Soviet nuclear bomb test. With war in Europe widely expected, improving the CIA's limited intelligence on the USSR trumped all other concerns. Agency officials also came to see the NTS as a promising asset in its own right, despite its disingenuousness. The NTS was larger and more active than other ethnic Russian émigré political outfits.¹⁸ Most important, the alliance, through its total ideology of National Labor Solidarity, could mobilize some of its members for what very few other Soviet exiles would risk undertaking: illegal missions to the USSR.¹⁹ For these reasons, the CIA agreed in 1951 to fund an NTS project (cryptonym: AESAURUS) that included several initiatives: propaganda activities designed to encourage defection among Soviet occupation forces in occupied Germany and Austria, the establishment of an anti-Soviet radio station, and—what was of paramount interest to U.S. officials—"Operation Carcass," which infiltrated agents into the USSR with the goal of creating a "net of revolutionary organizations" there.²⁰

The U.S. experience of supporting the NTS was conflict-ridden from the outset. In large part because of the NTS's long-standing anti-Western and anti-democratic ideology, the organization's functionaries mistrusted their CIA overseers. Accordingly, the Solidarityists fought to maximize CIA funding while minimizing its control—or, as one CIA document states, to "take us for all they can get."²¹ A CIA-NTS project that aimed to infiltrate agents into the Soviet Far East from Japan, an initiative of Boldyrev in the United States, was

18. According to a report by NTS chairman V. M. Baidalakov, the NTS had 643 members in early 1951. At that time, 287 remained in Europe (with the largest concentrations in West Germany, Belgium, the United Kingdom, and France), and 356 had already emigrated elsewhere (to North and South America, Australia, and Morocco). NTS membership grew to 808 by early 1954. See "Otchetnyi doklad Predsedatelya Soyuz a za trekhletie svoikh polnomochii, ot 24-1-1952 goda," 24 January 1952, p. 12, in Georgetown University Archives and Special Collections, Victor M. Baydalakoff Collection (hereinafter referred to as Baydalakoff), Box 1, Folder 9.

19. "Discussions with Mr. Angleton and [security deletion] regarding NTS," a report sent to Chief, FDS, on 14 September 1950, p. 1, in AESAURUS, Vol. 1, pt. 1.

20. "Narrative Summary of AIS Relationship with NTS," n.d., p. 1, in AESAURUS, Vol. 1, pt. 1.

21. "Commentary on Memoranda Prepared by NTS on Creation of Central Carcass School," n.d., p. 3, in AESAURUS, Vol. 1, pt. 1. The amount of CIA expenditure on NTS operations is impossible to estimate. Monetary sums, as well as the names of the vast majority of CIA operatives, are excised from nearly all of the CIA documents reviewed for this article. In May 1952, roughly a year after the CIA-NTS operations had been agreed upon, some \$114,000 had been spent on the suboperations Carcass, "Spain," and "Radio." See "Su: Summary and Evaluation of the Relationship of the NTS to CIA," Chief, SR/W to Chief, SR, 20 May 1952, p. 3, in AESAURUS, Vol. 1 pt. 1.

“aborted at the last minute due to NTS obstructionist tactics,” CIA officials in Germany reported.²² The AESAURUS project moved forward, but it, too, was marred by controversy, as a dispute arose over the intended use of NTS agents on Soviet soil. Self-styled revolutionaries, the NTS leaders refused to let their members engage in what they saw as the demeaning enterprise of traditional intelligence-gathering. Conversely, the CIA harbored doubts about the NTS’s intention to use infiltrated agents to create revolutionary cells in the USSR. If Carcass agents were to begin “laying on a leaflet campaign,” CIA officials reasoned, they would immediately be captured.²³ In the end, a compromise emerged regarding Carcass whereby the agents would focus on legalizing themselves in the USSR and collecting “operational intelligence” while refraining from revolutionary agitation.²⁴ Nevertheless, CIA officials remained frustrated with what they saw as the intransigence of the NTS leaders—so much so, in fact, that they created a doppelgänger Russian émigré group, the Central Organization of Postwar Émigrés (TsOPE in Russian), which pursued operations modeled after those of the NTS but under tight U.S. control.²⁵

What did the CIA-NTS operations accomplish? Evaluation of the results of AESAURUS is complicated by the NTS’s dishonest accounts of its own activities—what one knowledgeable observer, Ryszard Wraga, calls a deliberate “misinformation campaign” pursued against its foreign backers.²⁶ The most poignant NTS fabrication was the “molecular theory” of revolution proposed by V. D. Poremskii in 1949. The NTS cells abroad, Poremskii explained, would create revolutionary “molecules” of two to three individuals in the homeland whose only link to the foreign center would be the consumption of “one-way communications.” Shielded from detection by the Soviet state, the molecules would be ready to mount a rebellion against it at an opportune moment.²⁷ The “molecular theory” was deceptive, as it held that the NTS’s influence in the

22. “Su: Summary and Evaluation of the Relationship of the NTS to CIA,” p. 4.

23. “REDSOX/AESAURUS/Final Report on First Cycle of CACCOLA 1,” 4 June 1952, p. 1, in AESAURUS, Vol. 1, pt. 2.

24. Discussion of Carcass with CABOCHE 7, 10 September 1951, p. 4 in AESAURUS, Vol. 1, pt. 1.

25. Memorandum, Chief of SR Division to Deputy Chief of Operations, EE Division, 11 August 1954, in NARA, RG 263, Entry ZZ-19, Box 25, AEVIRGIL (hereinafter referred to as AEVIRGIL), Vol. 1.

26. Wraga had worked with NTS while on the Polish General Staff before World War II and maintained numerous ties to Russian political émigrés after the war. See “Effort to Analyse Soviet Provocation and Inspiration in Recent Years in Western Europe and Role in such Provocation Activity of Émigré Political Organisations,” pp. 7–8, 13 August 1954, pp. 7–8, in AEVIRGIL, Vol. 1.

27. V. D. Poremskii, *Strategiya antibol'shevitskoi emigratsii: Izbrannye stat'i, 1934–1997* (Moscow: “Posev,” 1998).

USSR was inherently invisible and unverifiable. By all indications, the NTS leaders did not believe their own sensational claims about their influence in the USSR, such as those made by Bolydrev in the U.S. mass media. Behind closed doors, NTS leaders acknowledged that they had created a “myth of our real strength on the front,” and E. R. Ostrovskii-Romanov admitted that little information was available about “the scale of our work in Russia.”²⁸ Ostrovskii-Romanov, a new émigré from the Donbass who served as editor of the alliance’s main publication, *Posev* (The Sowing), was in a position to know. He was the chief contact for the CIA within the NTS’s operational staff (the committee that controlled secret or “operative” work).²⁹

The disappointing outcomes of the CIA-NTS collaboration were difficult to hide. As of 1952, the most tangible accomplishment of the NTS was the operation of “12 small German nets” that directed propaganda materials to Soviet occupation forces in East Germany, probably with SIS support.³⁰ These operations allowed Solidarists in Germany to feel that they were taking the fight to the Soviet Union, as exemplified by the NTS cadre who boasted that security personnel in the eastern zone had “lost their heads” when “in a single day all of East Germany,” including some military barracks, was strewn with NTS leaflets and literature.³¹ What this appraisal neglected to mention is that much of the subversive paper never reached its audience. German propaganda runners had little incentive to risk their lives for the Russian national cause.³² Distribution problems were far greater with regard to NTS propaganda destined for Russia. The NTS’s Radio Free Russia might not have been powerful enough to reach the USSR, and the organization had only rudimentary means to deliver print propaganda across Soviet borders, such as launching massive unmanned hot air balloons laden with leaflets from West Berlin.³³ Even when Soviet troops or citizens did consume NTS propaganda, their reactions to it were very likely negative. Given the postwar USSR’s tight

28. The first words belong to A. A. Tenson. See “Protokol zasedaniya Soveta 23 yanvarya 1954 goda,” 23 January 1954, pp. 47–48, in Baydalakoff, Box 1, Folder 2.

29. Soviet-born displaced persons often adopted new surnames in the West to avoid repatriation to the USSR. In these cases, I provide both names to avoid confusion.

30. Memorandum, Chief, SR/W to SR Division, 7 January 1952, p. 1, in AESAURUS, Vol. 1, pt. 1.

31. V. Svetov to V. Z. Sorokin and Asia, 23 May 1952, in FSO, F. 98, Kor. 38.

32. Boris Pryanishnikov, “O revolyutsionnoi deyatel’nosti Natsional’no-trudovogo soyuza,” 1957, p. 88, in HIA, Boris V. Pryanishnikov Papers, Box 5, Folder 13. East German sources pertaining to the NTS’s German operations are used in Stöver, *Die Befreiung vom Kommunismus*, pp. 524–536.

33. On doubts regarding the strength of NTS’s radio capabilities, see Boris L. Dvinov, *Politics of the Russian Emigration* (Santa Monica: RAND Corp., 1955), p. 186.

political and police controls, leaflets and radio broadcasts calling on Soviet citizens to scrawl the NTS letters and trident symbol in public places and to prepare for an immediate revolutionary conflagration must have terrified or created suspicion in many of the Soviet citizens who came into contact with them. The propaganda materials probably led to the quick arrest of the few who took up their appeals.³⁴

The Carcass infiltration operation was both ineffective and tragic. On 27 May 1953, the Soviet press announced the capture, trial for espionage, and execution of four Russian exiles who had been parachuted into the USSR as U.S. spies from unmarked planes. The four were Carcass agents, and they had been discovered soon after landing thanks to unspecified “measures taken by the Ministry of Internal Affairs.”³⁵ Adding insult to injury, the Soviets provided a “candid exposé” of the entire Carcass operation, replete with details of the agents’ recruitment, training base, and dispatch.³⁶ (The embarrassment caused by these revelations was tempered by the U.S. press, which responded with incredulity to truthful Soviet claims that these and other captured parachutists were, in fact, U.S. agents.)³⁷ In the following years, the Soviet propaganda machine periodically “surfaced” additional CIA-infiltrated NTS agents, leaving the agency to gradually piece together that all the Carcass agents maintaining radio contact had in fact been captured and “played back” to them by the Soviets.³⁸ Trying to gain any benefit from the project, U.S. officials undertook lengthy radio games with these doubled agents that served little purpose other than offering an opportunity for up-close study of the methods of the Soviet internal security apparatus and foreign intelligence service.³⁹

34. On this point, see *ibid.*, pp. 179–185. See a similar conclusion reached on the basis of cases of NTS-related prosecutions for anti-Soviet propaganda and agitation in Rob Hornsby, *Protest, Reform and Repression in Khrushchev’s Soviet Union* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 164–166. For instances of Soviet citizens handing in NTS propaganda to the authorities, see Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Noveishei Istorii (RGANI), F. 5, Opis’ (Op.) 30, Delo (D.) 151, Listy (Ll.) 164. The NTS pointed to isolated cases of its cells in Soviet Russia, such as the Young Russia group in Leningrad that was uncovered by the KGB in 1956, as proof of the success of the “molecular theory.” “Seredina 50-kh: Molekulyarnaya teoriya v deistvii,” available online at <http://www.posev.ru/files/nts-about/ne7008.htm>.

35. “USSR Executes Four Spies of U.S.,” USSR International Service, 27 May 1953, in AESAURUS, Vol. 2, pt. 1.

36. See analysis of *Izvestiya* (No. 279) of 25 November 1955, in AESAURUS, Vol. 3, pt. 1.

37. See O. J. Cutler, “4 ‘U.S. Spies’ Tell All on Moscow TV Show,” *The Washington Post and Times Herald*, 7 February 1957, p. A6.

38. “Memorandum for Chief, SR Division, re. Termination of Project AENOBLE,” 13 October 1959, in AESAURUS, Vol. 3, pt. 1.

39. “General Evaluation of Operational Intelligence Produced by AENOBLE Cases,” 28 October 1955, in AESAURUS, Vol. 3, pt. 1. Soviet foreign intelligence underwent several reorganizations

The CIA was at a loss to explain the failure of the Carcass operation. Investigations after the first capture of agents posited that the low-flying planes had been spotted entering Soviet airspace, but the CIA was unable to rule out the possibility of “internal betrayal.”⁴⁰ In retrospect, given the fact that all the NTS agents were captured (and sometimes doubled), the latter scenario seems almost certainly to have been the case.⁴¹ Soviet intelligence had long experience penetrating émigré anti-Soviet groups with informers and agents provocateurs, and the postwar émigré community in Germany, mired in “an atmosphere of personal jealousies, professional gossip, and the fight for physical and political survival,” as Harry Rositzke writes, proved particularly vulnerable to infiltration.⁴² A CIA historian has shown that the majority of CIA projects to smuggle exiles back into the USSR during this period resulted in the agents’ capture, a pattern that demonstrates the success of Soviet countermeasures.⁴³ More to the point, Soviet intelligence pursued a long-standing and elaborate plan to penetrate the NTS, one that included activating and sending to the West NTS stay-behind agents captured during the war and, in some cases, recruiting family members in the USSR to approach NTS members abroad.⁴⁴

These efforts clearly bore fruit. In mid-1953, soon after the first group of Carcass agents was seized, the CIA uncovered a Soviet mole in the NTS leadership who was convicted of treason by a U.S. military court. Soviet Army Captain Nikita Khorunzhii-Müller had fled the eastern zone to marry a German woman in 1948. Soviet intelligence recruited him by threatening his new wife’s relatives as well as the family he had left behind in the

during the period in question, being located in the Committee for Information (1947–1951), then the Ministry of Internal Affairs, or MVD (1951–1953), and then the Committee of State Security, or KGB (1954 on).

40. “Investigation of the Capture of CACCOLAS 10, 20, 21 and 28,” Chief of Mission, Frankfurt to Chief SR, 7 July 1953, in AESAURUS, Vol. 3, pt. 1.

41. See the conclusion to this effect made by one of the NTS’s CIA contacts. William Sloane Coffin, *Once to Every Man: A Memoir* (New York: Atheneum, 1977), p. 112.

42. Harry Rositzke, *The KGB: The Eyes of Russia* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1981), p. 102.

43. By Ruffner’s count, “at least” 75 percent of the 85 agents infiltrated into the USSR through “REDSOX” operations (those involving the illegal return of defectors and émigrés to the USSR) “disappeared from sight and failed in their missions.” See Ruffner, “Eagle and Swastika,” p. 15. Although some of these operations were thwarted by Soviet agent Kim Philby, who had access to secret CIA information as SIS-CIA liaison, Philby was not in a position to compromise the NTS operations in 1952. See Grose, *Operation Rollback*, pp. 159–160, 170–172.

44. See the unsigned document “SHUBA 100 Penetration Operations,” n.d., p. 5, in AESAURUS, Vol. 3, pt. 1; and S. V. Stepashin and V. P. Yampol’skii, eds., *Organy gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti SSSR v Velikoi otechestvennoi voine: Sbornik dokumentov*, Vol. 4, Part 1: *Sekrety operatsii “Tsitadel”*: 1 yanvarya–30 iyunya 1943 goda (Moscow: Kniga i Biznes, 1995), p. 313.

USSR.⁴⁵ After receiving orders to penetrate the NTS, Khorunzhii-Müller quickly earned the confidence of its leaders and received an appointment as an instructor in its “cadre school,” a party training establishment in Bad Homburg that funneled NTS members to the CIA for recruitment as agents.⁴⁶ Whether Khorunzhii-Müller played a role in thwarting the Carcass operation remains unclear, but he did provide detailed information on agent candidates and instructors at the cadre school.⁴⁷ If he was not instrumental in compromising Carcass, other NTS leaders or members being trained by the CIA might have been: Khorunzhii-Müller’s testimony led to the identification of two Soviet agents studying at the school, and two others were arrested (on unknown charges) by West German police while studying there.⁴⁸

Khorunzhii-Müller’s exposure by a fellow agent had tumultuous consequences for the CIA-NTS collaboration. Evidence that the cadre school had been compromised forced the CIA to undertake a lengthy series of security investigations that postponed the training of future NTS agents for the Carcass operation.⁴⁹ Even more important was the impact that evidence of treason had on the NTS itself, which was already sliding into internal discord.

The Specter of Betrayal

The failure of Carcass and the Khorunzhii-Müller affair were both symptoms and causes of a wider crisis in the NTS that was gaining momentum in the early 1950s. With increasing regularity, NTS members voiced opposition to what they saw as the authoritarianism, lack of commitment to Solidarism, and dubious allegiances of the organization’s leadership. In 1955, this internal rift reached a climax when the long-standing head of the NTS, V. M. Baidalakov, made common cause with opposition elements and, after failing to convene a congress of the entire NTS to oust the reigning executive bureau, left the organization to form a splinter group, the Russian National Labor Alliance (RNTS). This internal split dealt a serious blow to the NTS, driving away

45. Nigel West, *Historical Dictionary of Cold War Counterintelligence* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2007), p. 175.

46. “Proposals for Resumption of Cycle C,” September 1953, pp. 1–2, in AESAURUS, Vol. 2 pt. 2.

47. See a report Khorunzhii-Müller issued to his Soviet handler soon before his capture. “Avgustovskii raport G. Myullera,” December 1953, in Baydalakoff, Box 3, Folder 5.

48. “Dorogoi drug,” from G. Ia. Kiverov and seven other NTS oppositionists, 10 January 1955, in Baydalakoff, Box 2, Folder 2.

49. “Proposals for Resumption of Cycle C,” p. 1.

some of its most committed cadres and tarnishing its image in the émigré community.⁵⁰ The causes of the NTS's rupture are difficult to establish, in part because participants in the drama staked out biased and self-serving positions at the time and afterward, and both sides accused their opponents of betraying the alliance to the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, sources show that two broad factors account for the division of the Solidarists: the emergence of different political-ideological approaches within the NTS and its entanglements with intelligence agencies on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

The internal NTS battle of the 1950s involved different visions of the alliance and its mission. Using terms common in the NTS at the time, a group of “pragmatic types” (*deloviki*)—the group that controlled the organization's leading bodies and eventually emerged triumphant in 1955—sought to pursue immediate revolution in Russia, while an oppositional camp of “spiritualizers” (*dukhovniki*) focused on ideological training and cultural work in the émigré community.⁵¹ The “pragmatic” NTS faction was led by Ostrovskii-Romanov. Taking advantage of his influence and control over purse strings, Ostrovskii-Romanov built up his own personal power in the NTS, gradually displacing Baidalakov, the nominal head of the organization—whose power had, in any case, weakened after he moved to the United States in 1947.⁵²

Ostrovskii-Romanov used his role as de facto leader to press the NTS toward pursuing immediate revolution in Russia, a line that placed emphasis on work for “the front” instead of the activities of the NTS membership in exile. Accordingly, Ostrovskii-Romanov ensured that the NTS and *Posev* focused on producing propaganda materials intended for a Soviet audience. *Posev's* ideological pronouncements eschewed NTS traditions in an effort to appeal to Soviet sensibilities, perhaps most controversially by distancing the organization from Orthodox Christianity and proclaiming that Soviet elites,

50. The most powerful and controversial figure in the NTS during its internal clash, E. R. Ostrovskii-Romanov, estimated that 20 percent of the NTS joined the opposition, but more of its members probably abandoned the troubled organization without taking sides in the dispute. Ostrovskii-Romanov in “Zametki o soyuze,” *Za Rossiyu*, No. 335–336 (2001), <http://ntsrs.ru/content/zametki-o-soyuze>.

51. For an example of this terminology, see Yurii Slepukhin, “Krushenie odnoi kontseptsii,” *Novoe russkoe slovo*, 26 April 1955.

52. Baidalakov alleged that Ostrovskii-Romanov conspired against him by strengthening *Posev* and the operational staff at the expense of the NTS's other bodies and by modifying the NTS regulations (*ustav*) to strip power from the office of the NTS chairman. See “K istorii zakhvata NTS Evgeniem Romanovichem Romanovym-Ostrovskim,” n.d., in Baydalakoff, Box 1, Folder 9.

including secret policemen, would prove faithful servants of a post-Soviet Russia and could therefore become NTS members in the present.⁵³

The “spiritualizers” saw the ostensibly “pragmatic” course of the postwar NTS as an abandonment of its true purpose. In sharp contrast to Ostrovskii-Romanov’s group, they were committed to National Labor Solidarism as a comprehensive worldview on the grounds that only serious ideas could defeat Bolshevism while ensuring the cohesion and moral stature of the NTS itself.⁵⁴ As a 1947 letter from an NTS member in Germany put it, the leadership’s pursuit of revolution at all costs and the principle that the NTS “exists only for the organization of the struggle” led inexorably to a “degeneration of the very essence of the alliance” in the direction of “bureaucracy and compulsion,” “party-mindedness and demagoguery.”⁵⁵ For some, Ostrovskii-Romanov was pursuing nothing less than the construction of “Bolshevism under a different sign.”⁵⁶ In seeking to explain the NTS’s current crisis, “spiritualizers,” many of whom hailed from the interwar exile community, pointed to generational differences. The NTS, they believed, had erred in accepting large numbers of Soviet citizens during the war, “littering its ranks with an element that is alien in spirit.”⁵⁷ They alleged that Ostrovskii-Romanov (their *bête noire*) and his new émigré allies were fundamentally Soviet in their culture and outlook. For instance, a scandal erupted when Ostrovskii-Romanov addressed an NTS audience as “comrades,” prompting a group of prominent Solidarists in New York to write to Frankfurt asking whether *Posev* was still “ours” at all.⁵⁸

The division of the NTS into hostile camps had deep ideological, cultural, and generational roots, but it is comprehensible only in the context of the intelligence wars in which the organization had become involved. The tidy division of NTS members into *deloviki* and *dukhovniki* is too simplistic—several of Ostrovskii-Romanov’s opponents had been employed in secret work at “the front.” In any case, the terminology itself was deeply politicized. By

53. “O Poseve: Vyderzhki iz pisem kadrov Sev. Amerikanskogo Otdela,” 7 July 1952, in FSO, F. 98, Kor. Poremskii.

54. Dmitrii Shul’gin, speech to Washington, DC, NTS Division, 15 September 1953, p. 2, in Baydalakoff, Box 1, Folder 3.

55. “Pis’mo pervoe,” unknown author in Hamburg, 12 July 1947, in FSO, F. 98, Kor. 6.

56. Speech by Baidalakov to the NTS Council, June 1952, p. 5, in Baydalakoff, Box 1, Folder 1.

57. Slepukhin, “Krushenie odnoi kontseptsii.”

58. NTS members in New York to Baidalakov, 4 November 1952, in Stanford University Libraries, Department of Special Collections and University Archives, National Alliance of Russian Solidarists: Correspondence and Photographs, 1930–1982 (M1909), Box 1, Folder 2 (hereinafter referred to as National Alliance of Russian Solidarists, with appropriate box and folder numbers).

labeling their opponents as “spiritualizers,” NTS leaders sought to discredit them as ineffectual émigré intellectuals uninterested in revolution.⁵⁹ The contrast between “spiritual” and “pragmatic” priorities also has limited purchase in explaining the outcome of the NTS’s lengthy internal battle. The crucial basis of Ostrovskii-Romanov’s power was his monopoly on CIA-supported operations. In 1955, many Solidarists sided with him because doing otherwise might have left the NTS without funds for its operations and sinecures for its cadres.⁶⁰

The CIA thus paved the way for factional warfare within the NTS by granting the divisive Ostrovskii-Romanov and his associates an exclusive right to handle ties to the agency. The CIA’s role in producing an acrimonious split in the organization it sponsored makes more sense than it might seem at first glance. The CIA’s approach to interacting with the NTS followed sound operational logic. By limiting contact with the NTS to a handful of trusted figures, the CIA hoped to prevent leaks of information and to keep its collaboration with the émigrés a secret. Moreover, the CIA had good reason to force the NTS to tighten its internal security after the Khorunzhii-Müller debacle.⁶¹ Whether the CIA could have pursued its relations with the NTS in any other way is doubtful given the general suspicion many Solidarists felt toward working with intelligence services. For example, a 1954 letter from several oppositionists to Baidalakov calls for ensuring the NTS’s “independence from foreign factors” through the subordination of the operational staff to “public opinion”—a demand that, had it been implemented, would have made further U.S. support of the organization impossible.⁶²

The CIA’s mode of handling the NTS nevertheless went far in generating a backlash among the rank-and-file toward the leadership. The CIA contributed to the postwar NTS’s bifurcated and top-heavy structure, one in which a small team in Frankfurt pursued covert operations using foreign funds while the wider membership was relegated to poorly financed semi-public activities in the émigré community.⁶³ Moreover, Ostrovskii-Romanov and his allies, no

59. For examples of the political use of the “pragmatic” line, see *Vestnik Ispol’nitel’nogo Byuro Soveta NTS*, 31 March 1952, p. 2.

60. Ostrovskii-Romanov’s hold on U.S. funding goes far in explaining the weakness of the opposition, which was strongest in the NTS organizations in the United States, Argentina, Australia, and Morocco but made little headway among the salaried activists in the NTS stronghold in West Germany. Pryanishnikov, “O revolyutsionnoi deyat’nosti,” p. 76; and Yu. Chikarlev, *Tragediya NTS: Epizod tainoi voyny* (New York: International University Book Exchange Service, 1987), p. 65.

61. “Proposals for Resumption of Cycle C,” pp. 1–2.

62. E. I. Mamukov et al. to the NTS Council, 18 January 1954, p. 3, in Baydalakoff, Box 1, Folder 3.

63. “Dorogoi drug,” pp. 3–4.

doubt operating on the instructions of the CIA, erected a wall of secrecy around NTS operational activities. Ostrovskii-Romanov and company went so far as to hide the operational staff's budget from the members of the NTS council, ostensibly the organization's governing body.⁶⁴ All of this created the perception that the NTS leaders in Frankfurt were power-hungry, cynical bureaucrats who held the wider membership in contempt.

The CIA's role in the NTS split was indirect and likely inadvertent. When the opposition splintered from the parent organization to form the RNTS, the CIA funded both groups for a time, a hedging of bets that perhaps demonstrates genuine confusion among agency officials about the political loyalties of both sides in this murky émigré dispute.⁶⁵ In stark contrast, the Soviet role in disabling the NTS was more direct and deliberate. Soviet foreign intelligence not only welcomed but actively worked to bring about the acrimonious divorce of the two NTS factions. Soviet security organs had a long history of battling anti-Soviet groups, including émigré organizations, by pursuing their "decomposition" (*razlozhenie*). This strategy aimed to paralyze and ultimately destroy anti-Soviet groups by compromising their leaders and creating confusion and internal divisions within them.⁶⁶ As a later document from the East German Ministry for State Security confirms, Soviet intelligence pursued precisely such an assault, that of stoking "mistrust and mutual accusations," against the NTS in the 1950s.⁶⁷

The overall contours of the Soviet effort to subvert the NTS seem clear enough, even if existing sources leave many specifics obscure. The foiling of the Carcass operation, for instance, was clearly intended to sap the NTS of confidence and internal trust. Through its carefully choreographed exposure of the entire CIA-NTS infiltration operation, Soviet intelligence accomplished several goals at once: fanning suspicions of the NTS leadership among NTS members, compromising the organization in the eyes of other émigrés and

64. "Obsuzhdenie Doklada Ispol'nitel'nogo Byuro," 20 January 1951, in Baydalakoff, Box 1, Folder 1.

65. Director to Frankfurt, Munich, Berlin, Bonn, 17 January 1958, in AEVIRGIL, Vol. 1.

66. See the discussion of *razlozhenie* in a formerly top-secret 1977 textbook on the history of the KGB: V. M. Chebrikov, *Istoriya Sovetskikh organov gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti: Uchebnik* (Moscow: Vysshaya Krasnoznamennaya Shkola Komiteta Gosudarstvennoi Bezopasnosti pri Sovete Ministerstva SSSR imeni F. E. Dzerzhinskogo, 1977), p. 521, posted in full on the Cold War Studies website of Harvard University. The employment of such tactics against interwar émigré groups, including the "Trust" operation, is discussed in Christopher M. Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Mitrokhin Archive: The KGB in Europe and the West* (London: Allen Lane, 1999), pp. 43–46; Dvinov, *Politics of the Russian Emigration*, pp. 369–389; and Paul Robinson, *The White Russian Army in Exile, 1920–1941* (Oxford, UK: The Clarendon Press, 2002), pp. 131–148.

67. Dienstanweisung Nr. 4/69, Ministerium für Staatssicherheit, 30 July 1969, p. 14, in HIA, John O. Koehler Papers, Box 21, Folder 7.

its CIA backers, and casting doubt on the ability of U.S. intelligence to operate on Soviet soil.⁶⁸ The exposure of Khorunzhii-Müller as a Soviet agent, while presumably not planned by the Soviet state security organs, deepened the process of decomposition by striking at the NTS's overall morale, especially among its reserve of idealistic young members willing to risk their lives for the cause. Even before the Carcass debacle and Khorunzhii-Müller affair, relatively few NTS members were willing to undertake the risky task of undercover work in the Eastern bloc. In 1948, NTS activist A. E. Shirishkina reported from Brussels that only an "insignificant percentage" of members would volunteer for secret work, with the majority refusing out of fear of losing their lives or of depriving their families of a breadwinner. In any case, most were not convinced that the NTS could foment a revolution in the USSR, at least without a "strike from the outside."⁶⁹ By raising the specter of Soviet infiltration, the exposure of Khorunzhii-Müller multiplied such doubts and fears and thereby shrank further the pool of volunteers for secret work.⁷⁰ A sign of the alarm caused by the news of Khorunzhii-Müller's unmasking as a Soviet agent was the reaction of the NTS division in Monterey, California, which demanded that the organization temporarily shelve all revolutionary work, end admission of new members, and conduct a thorough purge of its ranks.⁷¹

The NTS leadership failed to respond effectively to the disappointment and suspicion caused by the failures of its operations in the East. In fact, the reactions of the NTS to adversity struck some of its members as strange and even suspicious. The official line of the NTS leaders, stated in internal publications as well as in those directed to an external audience, was basically that the NTS's presence in Soviet Russia was growing and revolution was near. In 1952, the executive bureau went so far as to declare that the "molecules" of NTS members in the USSR would soon be large enough to permit a shift of the center of operations to the Soviet Union.⁷² Continuing this hyper-optimistic line, the executive bureau treated evidence of Soviet agents in the NTS as "a normal consequence of the growth and importance of the activities

68. Pryanishnikov, "O revolyutsionnoi deyatel'nosti," p. 100.

69. A. E. Shirishkina to V. M. Baidalakov, 22 August 1948, in FSO, F. 98, Kor. 38.

70. On the shortage of NTS agent candidates for Carcass in 1954, see "Project Outline: AESAURUS/AENOBLE," n.d., p. 1, in AESAURUS, Vol. 3, pt. 1. The NTS's false claims that Khorunzhii-Müller had been a marginal alliance member who was uncovered by the NTS itself created a furor among some high-ranking Solidarists. See "Protokol zasedaniya Soveta 23 yanvarya 1954 goda," pp. 41–42; and "Protiv klevety i dizinformatsii," *Novoe russkoe slovo*, 23 December 1953.

71. Pryanishnikov, "O revolyutsionnoi deyatel'nosti," p. 108.

72. "Zasedanie Soveta 2–12–1952," p. 2, in Baydalakoff, Box 1, Folder 1.

of the alliance,” while alleging that any criticism of its actions played into the hands of the NTS’s enemies.⁷³ Forced to reconcile the leadership’s claim to infallibility and the evidence of the alliance’s failures and vulnerability to infiltration, some members decided that the leadership was incompetent or, worse, that the entire edifice of the NTS-inspired underground in the USSR was “a fiction,” perhaps even a Soviet provocation.⁷⁴

A feverish search for internal enemies in the NTS followed. Both internal NTS dissidents and outside observers have asserted that high-ranking Soviet agents provocateurs played a role in producing the NTS’s crisis and subsequent schism. A recent account by a retired KGB official makes the unsubstantiated claim that G. S. Okolovich, the head of the NTS operational staff and the Solidarist most trusted by U.S. officials, was captured and turned after entering the USSR illegally in the 1930s.⁷⁵ Among dissidents from the NTS, suspicion has often fallen on Ostrovskii-Romanov, whose mysterious origins, sedulous conquest of power, and seeming embrace of Soviet political language appeared tailor-made to produce strife in the NTS.⁷⁶ Another candidate for the role of enemy within was Ostrovskii-Romanov’s close associate N. N. Rutysh-Rutchenko, who was rumored to have been a Soviet state security agent who had moved across German lines on a long-term mission to the West in 1940.⁷⁷ Rumors about Rutysh-Rutchenko persisted for decades. When a 1973 book repeated the charges about his allegiance to the Soviet regime, Rutysh-Rutchenko was evidently unsettled enough to write to his old associate Ostrovskii-Romanov to plead his innocence.⁷⁸

So long as pertinent sources on the Soviet side are unavailable, the allegations of Soviet infiltration that engulfed the NTS will be impossible to prove or reject. On the one hand, CIA investigations after the Khorunzhii-Müller case did not uncover additional Soviet agents, and the oppositionists who

73. This characterization of the NTS’s position comes from an appeal from NTS oppositionists. “Dorogoi drug,” p. 10. For an example of this rhetoric, see *Vestnik Ispol’nitel’nogo Byuro Soveta NTS*, 1 December 1952, p. 1.

74. S. M. Shvarts, “O krizise NTS,” *Sotsialisticheskii vestnik*, No. 678 (January 1955), p. 16; and Pryanishnikov, “O revolyutsionnoi deyateli’nosti,” p. 89.

75. S. A. Krivosheev, *KGB protiv NTS* (Moscow: Trovant, 2015), pp. 57–58. Krivosheev’s contention does not explain the multiple Soviet attempts on Okolovich’s life in the 1950s.

76. The most detailed version of this argument is Pryanishnikov, “O revolyutsionnoi deyateli’nosti,” esp. pp. 29–35, 61–70.

77. *Ibid.*, pp. 50–58.

78. N. N. Rutysh to E. R. Ostrovskii, 10 March 1973, in National Alliance of Russian Solidarists. The book in question was Michel Slavinsky, *Ombres sur le Kremlin: Une voix libre se fait entendre derrière le rideau de fer* (Paris: La Table Ronde, 1973), p. 108.

suspected foul play in the NTS failed to produce hard evidence.⁷⁹ Accusations against Ostrovskii-Romanov, Rutysh-Rutchenko, and others were hopelessly entangled in the web of rumor and mutual recrimination that accompanied the NTS crisis. On the other hand, the charges of betrayal that surfaced during the NTS political scuffle cannot be ruled out. Some former members of the operational staff—people with unprecedented access to the NTS’s inner secrets—remained convinced of crooked goings-on at the NTS headquarters in Frankfurt. One operational-figure-turned-schismatic wrote to a colleague that he was convinced that “some third force” other than the NTS executive bureau or “our Western friends” had been “leading our work.” He could not provide evidence of Soviet involvement, but he thought the repeated failure of NTS operations was proof enough. The organization’s “reserve” in the Soviet Union was smaller than it had been before U.S. support set in, he claimed, while NTS cadres abroad steered clear of taking on the kinds of risks for the NTS at “the front” that they had in the past.⁸⁰ Perhaps fortunately for the Ostrovskii-Romanov group, such charges never had the chance to undergo public scrutiny. The CIA placed a gag order on discussion of the CIA-NTS collaboration, thereby preventing the oppositionists from going beyond issuing dark hints about “hostile elements” within the organization.⁸¹

Complicating matters further, the CIA’s position on the possibility of Soviet infiltration in the NTS was more contradictory than its clear support of the Ostrovskii-Romanov group suggested. CIA officials who were in contact with the NTS assumed that the organization had been penetrated by Soviet intelligence to some extent. “Theoretically,” a CIA official from the Soviet Russia (SR) Division in Germany conceded in 1952, “the NTS could be penetrated from top to bottom.”⁸² The agency based this pessimistic evaluation

79. “Su: Notes on AETNA-1 Conference, Frankfurt, 12–17 February,” Chief of Mission, Germany to Chief, SR, 1 March 1954, p. 1, in AESAURUS, Vol. 3, pt. 1. A 1954 NTS investigation of Rutysh-Rutchenko—initiated, a source suggests, based on information from the U.S. military Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC)—found him innocent. “Protokol S’ezda Soveta NTS v mae 1954 goda,” May 1954, p. 8, in Baydalakoff, Box 1, Folder 2. Likewise, in 1954 the FBI reported that it had “no information concerning any Soviet or Communist infiltration into NTS.” National Alliance of Russian Solidarists, report made at New York, December 1954, p. 1, in NARA, RG 263, Entry ZZ-18, 230/86/24/04, Box 122, Vladimir Sokolov. Baidalakov stated in a memoir published decades later that he suspected Soviet infiltration of the NTS leadership, but he also expressed doubt that Ostrovskii-Romanov was working for the USSR. See Baidalakov, *Da vozvelichitsya Rossiya*, pp. 69–74.

80. See the unsigned letter to A. N. Danilov, 28 February [no year], in Baydalakoff, Box 2, Folder 2. The author was likely A. A. Tenson. Other operative sector cadres who came out against the leadership were B. B. Martino and E. E. Pozdeev.

81. B. B. Martino to P. P. Kalinovskii, 12 June 1955, in Baydalakoff, Box 2, Folder 2.

82. “Su: Summary and Evaluation of the Relationship of the NTS to CIA,” n.d., p. 2, in AESAURUS, Vol. 1, pt. 1.

on the NTS's poor security practices, including its lack of stringent procedures for screening cadres and its use of regular mail to communicate operational secrets.⁸³ Protocols of top-level discussions in the NTS confirm its vulnerability to outside penetration. As late as January 1954, the NTS had no regular mechanism for investigating reports of Soviet penetration of its ranks, perhaps because no one was trusted enough to control it.⁸⁴ No doubt, the laxity of NTS internal security reflected its nature as an ideological movement that lacked the counterintelligence capacities that only a state could possess. A "small group of near-destitute and often fairly incompetent fanatics," as one of the group's CIA handlers characterized them in 1954, the NTS members could evaluate their own cadres using only the unreliable guides of ideological correctness and émigré social ties.⁸⁵ Thus, despite funding from the CIA and the SIS, the NTS had a disadvantage in the intelligence war against the Soviet Union that was both inherent and inevitable.

The few known instances of Soviet penetration demonstrate the scope of the NTS's weaknesses and suggest the extent to which it might have been compromised. The Khorunzhii-Müller case showed the ease with which a Soviet agent introduced from the outside could enter NTS leadership circles—and, according to one source, Khorunzhii-Müller owed his ascent to none other than Okolovich, the head of the NTS operational staff.⁸⁶ An equally instructive case was that of Darko Cirkovic, a displaced Yugoslav national tried by a U.S. military court in West Germany for engaging in espionage for the Soviet Union. Cirkovic, whose friendship with NTS leaders originated in interwar Belgrade, received an assignment in early 1952 from Soviet foreign intelligence to penetrate the NTS leadership. Although Cirkovic failed to gain access to NTS covert operations, he maintained close relations with its leaders while he was under Soviet control. A. V. Pirang, an NTS leader and Cirkovic's neighbor in Munich, met daily with the Yugoslav and reported "everything that occurred the previous day in the Russian Organizations."⁸⁷ Even more

83. CSOB Progress Report for December 1952 in AESAURUS, Vol. 3, pt. 1.

84. "Protokol S"ezda Soveta NTS v mae 1954 goda," pp. 7–9; and "Su: Notes on AETNA-1 Conference," p. 2.

85. "Su: Notes on AETNA-1 Conference," p. 2.

86. See the CIA review of the security case of former NTS activist Aleksei Zotov, Chief, Munich Operations Group to Chief of Station, Germany, 12 January 1962, p. 8, in NARA, RG 263, Entry ZZ-19, 230/86/26/01, Box 56, QKACTIVE (project involving the American Committee for Liberation from Bolshevism), Vol. 7.

87. The source here is Vojislav Memedovic, a Soviet agent doubled by the CIC who helped expose Cirkovic. Agent report, HQ, Reg IV, 66th CIC Det., 18 September 1952, p. 9, in NARA, RG 319, Entry 134B: IRR Security Classified Intelligence and Investigative Dossiers—Personal Files, 270/84/01/01, XE 166913, Box 132, Darko Cirkovic (hereinafter referred to as Darko Cirkovic).

damning, it emerged at the trial that Poremskii had requested a top-secret meeting with Cirkovic *after* the latter had revealed that he had entered into contact with Soviet intelligence.⁸⁸ Assuming that Poremskii was not a Soviet agent himself, the most likely explanation is that he viewed Cirkovic as a doubled agent, an assumption that only underscores the amateurishness and recklessness of the NTS in intelligence matters.

Soviet intelligence also played a significant role in corrupting and splitting the NTS in ways other than through infiltration. Perhaps just as important as the Soviet Union's record of penetrating the NTS was the widespread *perception* that it had done so. The strategy of implying Soviet control was a crucial part of the Soviet state security organs' battle against the NTS. Commenting in general terms on postwar intelligence actions against the NTS, KGB archivist-defector Vasili Mitrokhin reports that Soviet "active measures" against the organization were meant to "put the thought into one's head that all the activities of the NTS fell under the control of KGB."⁸⁹

Soviet intelligence operatives created the impression that they mastered the NTS through a range of deceptive tactics. From 1954 to 1956, five exiles associated with the NTS—at least some of whom were surely long-term Soviet agents—returned to the USSR, where they wrote pieces for the Soviet publication distributed abroad called *Za vozvrashchenie na roдинu* (For return to the homeland), repenting their anti-Soviet pasts and exposing the NTS's ties to U.S. intelligence.⁹⁰ Such staged re-defections were designed to encourage exiles to return to the USSR voluntarily, but they also worked to compromise the NTS in the émigré community.⁹¹ Soviet state security organs also fostered the image of treachery in the NTS by turning other émigré groups against it. A group of far-right monarchists called the Russian National Popular State Movement (*Rossiiskoe Obschenatsional'noe Narodno-Derzhavnoe Dvizhenie* or RONDD) routinely used its newspaper *Nabat* (The Tocsin) to attack the NTS as crypto-Communists and paid Soviet agents. Materials from an

88. V. D. Poremskii to A. V. Pirang, 18 March 1952, in Agent Report, special agent George J. Fedzora, Reg IV, 66th CIC Group, 12 January 1953, p. 4, in Darko Cirkovic.

89. "National Alliance of Russian Solidarists. Folder 53. The Chekist Anthology," 1 June 2007, in History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Contributed to CWIHP by Vasili Mitrokhin, <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112272>.

90. The individuals were I. V. Pitlenko, B. N. Ol'shanskii, S. Rudakov, Iu. P. Telegin-Kondrashov, and I. A. Kurganov. Pryanishnikov, "O revolyutsionnoi deyatelnosti," pp. 116–122. Kurganov was almost certainly a Soviet agent from the outset. See NARA, RG 319, Entry 134B, H8005052, Box 446, Aleksey Kurganov.

91. On the wider campaign to encourage the voluntary repatriation of Soviet DPs, see Simo Mikkonen, "Mass Communications as a Vehicle to Lure Russian Émigrés Homeward," *Journal of International and Global Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (2011), pp. 45–61.

investigation by the U.S. military's Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC) strongly suggest that the RONDD's leader, E. Artsiuk-Derzhavin, was in the employ of Soviet intelligence.⁹² The Western press was also manipulated by the KGB to discredit the NTS. In 1954, the West German magazine *Deutsche Illustrierte* published a series of articles that used selective and misleading claims about the Carcass, Khorunzhii-Müller, and Cirkovic cases to link the NTS to Soviet espionage.⁹³ When the Solidarists investigated the issue, they found that the source for the article was the "Russian Information Bureau," a "dummy" organization under the control of Soviet intelligence.⁹⁴ Such sophisticated tools of disinformation subverted the NTS by increasing its external isolation and breaking down solidarity within it. Just as Paul Robinson has shown with regard to the exiled White army, Soviet intelligence created an atmosphere of paranoia in the NTS in which it became "increasingly difficult to trust anybody else" and in which any setback was "invariably laid at the door of Soviet *provocateurs*."⁹⁵

From Revolution to Cold War Bogeyism

Relentlessly deceptive, hostile to the West, and penetrated by the Soviet Union at least to some extent—a less desirable client for U.S. intelligence in the Cold War than the NTS would be hard to imagine. It is striking, then, that the CIA continued to support the NTS, in shifting forms and to varying degrees, until the end of the Cold War. The CIA's backing of the NTS is even more perplexing in light of other developments of the time. The SIS severed all ties

92. The 1952 CIC investigation, prompted by queries from the West German Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (BfV, Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution), did not find conclusive evidence that Artsyuk-Derzhavin was a Soviet spy. However, the statements of known Soviet agents Cirkovic and Memedovic to this effect seem to constitute convincing proof that he was. See agent report, Artsyuk, Eugenij, 6 October 1952, p. 61, in NARA, RG 319, Entry 134B, 270/84/01/01, XE 312364, Box 23, Yeugeny Artsuk (hereinafter referred to as Yeugeny Artsuk).

93. The mainstream émigré press relayed the *Deutsche Illustrierte* accusations at great length. "Delo Sovetskogo shpiona Myullera-Khorunzhago (informatsiya iz Myunkhena), *Novoe russkoe slovo*, 21 November 1953.

94. "Soobshchenie o provokatsionnoi deyateli nosti organov gosbezopasnosti, napravleny protiv Natsional'no-trudovogo soyuza," *Posev*, n.d., Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Bakhmeteff Archive of Russian and East European History and Culture, Boris Sapir Papers, Series VI: Papers of Boris L'vovich Gurevich, Box 63. See also the BfV report on V. Mosichkin to the 66th CIC Group, 20 April 1954, in Yeugeny Artsuk. Baidalakov and Poremskii tried to sue the magazine for libel but failed on procedural grounds. See "Begläubigte Abschrift in Sachen Baydalakoff gegen Illustrierte Presse," in Baydalakoff, Box 3, Folder 6.

95. Robinson, *The White Russian Army in Exile*, p. 141.

to the NTS in 1956 after its operations with the organization reproduced the pattern, already familiar to U.S. officials, of Solidarist agents coming under Soviet control or proving to have been provocateurs from the start.⁹⁶ On a broader scale, Western intelligence agencies backed away from support of émigré groups as the 1950s progressed, not only because of the frequent unreliability of the latter but also because the gradual opening of the Soviet bloc to the outside world after Iosif Stalin's death opened new avenues for intelligence-gathering in the USSR.⁹⁷

The CIA had a clear justification for maintaining support for the NTS, however. The organization had a kind of utility for the CIA in the mid-1950s, even if one far more modest than what agency officials had originally envisaged. Although the NTS had been discredited as an instrument of espionage—let alone of fomenting revolution—it promised to be an effective tool in Cold War propaganda, or what one CIA document suggestively called the “overt show in Germany.”⁹⁸ The reinvention of the NTS's role by the CIA followed the shifting wider contours of the Cold War in Europe. The onset of military gridlock, Stalin's death, and the Soviet Army's suppression of an uprising in East Germany in 1953 discredited plans for “rollback” and suggested that the Cold War might become a long-term ideological and civilizational conflict. In a rigid struggle between two heavily armed blocs, the manipulation of perceptions of power—both among policy elites and mass publics—became increasingly important. The more “institutionalized” Cold War of the 1950s, then, offered an opening to the NTS and its politics of projection and deception.⁹⁹

The CIA's new approach to the NTS, surprisingly, developed during a period when the émigré organization suffered draconian Soviet actions taken to disrupt it. In mid-1953, the post-Stalin Soviet leaders adopted an aggressive strategy of dismantling anti-Soviet émigré groups, including the initiation of secret subversion operations and “acts of terror” against the organizations' leaders.¹⁰⁰ Two such operations directed against the NTS proved crucial in the evolution of CIA-NTS collaboration. On 13 April 1954, NTS leader

96. “Project Outline, AESAURUS/AENOBLE,” 1 July 1956, p. 2, in AUSAURUS, Vol. 3, pt. 1; and Tom Bower, *The Perfect English Spy: Sir Dick White and the Secret War, 1935–1990* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), p. 206.

97. On the general trend in U.S. intelligence toward intelligence gathering by diplomats, travel delegations, and tourists, see Chebrikov, *Istoriya Sovetskikh organov*, p. 493.

98. “Su: Notes on AETNA-1 Conference,” p. 4.

99. On the “Institutionalized Cold War,” see Ralph B. Levering, *The Cold War: A Post-Cold War History*, 2nd ed. (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 2005).

100. See a September 1953 decree of the CPSU Central Committee in RGANI, F. 89, Op. 18, D. 31, Ll. 1–5.

A. R. Trushnovich was entrapped by an East German double agent in an apartment building in West Berlin, kidnapped, and taken to the East. After East German radio carried a statement attributed to Trushnovich, declaring that he was defecting to the Soviet side of his free will, he was never heard from again.¹⁰¹ Most likely, East German intelligence operatives abducted Trushnovich with the goal of faking his defection to the East but accidentally killed him.¹⁰² Just days later, NTS made international headlines again. In February 1954, Captain N. E. Khokhlov of the Soviet KGB had been sent along with two East German agents to assassinate Okolovich. According to the CIA, Khokhlov presented himself to his intended victim, detailed his mission, and—after Okolovich explained that he “desired to discuss the affair with American and British friends”—defected to the U.S. side.¹⁰³ In April 1954 Khokhlov went public, telling of his abandoned mission and demonstrating his “exotic murder weapon to the world’s media” at a press conference in Bonn.¹⁰⁴

The NTS leadership declared that the Khokhlov defection and the kidnapping of Trushnovich were clear successes for their revolutionary strategy. The Soviet regime’s acts of terror demonstrated just how dangerous the NTS had become, V. D. Poremskii explained to the NTS council. The Soviet regime was on the defensive in the face of the NTS’s activities and the “revolutionary

101. The East German agent Hans Glöske also worked for the Gehlen Organization, the U.S.-funded intelligence outfit of former wartime intelligence operatives in the East. For the immediate investigation of the affair, see Telegram, General Oliver to Bonn, 15 April 1954, in The National Archives of the United Kingdom (TNAUK), Foreign Office (FO) 371/09320/C560762. For unknown reasons, the abduction of NTS activist V. G. Tremf from Linz, Austria, in June 1954 received almost no publicity. See K. V. Boldyrev, “Reaction of the Soviet Government to the Revolutionary Activities of the N.T.S.,” n.d., in FSO, F. 98, Kor. 5 b n.

102. In the 1990s, the Russian government admitted to the kidnapping but claimed that Trushnovich’s death was an accident. See Carey Goldberg, “KGB’s True Confessions Spark Emigrants’ Anger: Spy Agency Admits It Killed Former Dissident. Accusations Fly as Documents Are Opened,” *Los Angeles Times*, 24 July 1992, p. 5. Why Soviet intelligence targeted Trushnovich instead of some other NTS leader is not known. In 1952, the CIA head in West Germany claimed that Trushnovich was a “poor security risk” and had been “cut out of all operations” in Berlin in favor of his son. See Memorandum, SR/West to Chief, SR Division, 7 January 1952, p. 1, in AESAURUS, Vol. 3, pt. 1.

103. See Okolovich, Georgi Sergeevich, 31 March 1954, in NARA, RG 319, IRR, XE235786, Georg Okolovich, obtained through FOIA request. In a variation on the CIA account, Khokhlov later claimed he had planned to sabotage the operation secretly and return to Russia unscathed but was handed over to the CIA by the NTS leadership. “Interv’yu s Nikolaem Evgenievichem Khokhlovym” in A. V. Okulov, ed., *V bor’be za Beluyu Rossiyu: Kholodnaya grazhdanskaya voina* (Moscow: Veche, 2013), p. 381. In contrast, Pavel Sudoplatov, who had been Khokhlov’s boss as the Soviet foreign intelligence special operations chief, claimed decades later that Khokhlov did not deliberately abandon his mission to kill Okolovich but was “caught and turned by the CIA.” See Pavel Sudoplatov et al., *Special Tasks: The Memoirs of an Unwanted Witness, a Soviet Spymaster*, trans. by Jerrold and Leona P. Schecter (Boston: Little, Brown, 1994), p. 247.

104. Andrew and Mitrokhin, *The Mitrokhin Archive*, p. 467.

situation in Russia” the latter had created.¹⁰⁵ However, it is hard to believe that the NTS leaders—fanatically committed to revolution in Russia as they were—actually believed that they posed a clear threat to Soviet Communism, at least in the short term. Rather, the NTS leaders sought to exploit the two spy scandals to boost the stature of their organization internationally and to expand their influence in U.S. and allied intelligence establishments. In Poremskii’s account, the Soviets’ attempts to cripple the NTS served as a kind of “recognition” of it, such that its leaders could now make a convincing claim to be “representatives of the struggling Russian people” in an international context. Foreign governments were now lavishing attention on the NTS, Poremskii explained. The newly sovereign West German authorities—who previously had taken an ambivalent position toward the NTS and sometimes hindered its activities—now took a more cooperative attitude, while negotiations were under way with Taiwan and South Korea about opening new paths to reaching the USSR in the East.¹⁰⁶ Being targeted by Soviet intelligence operatives thus raised the stature of the NTS across the world in a way that its poor record in combating Soviet rule had not.

The NTS’s posturing and deception regarding the 1954 affairs was also directed at Moscow. In the wake of the affairs, the CIA developed a new sense of the NTS’s utility as a weapon against the Soviet Union. With the Khokhlov defection, the CIA finally saw tangible gain from its support of the NTS, with the defector offering valuable information about the top-secret sphere of Soviet special operations. (Indirect evidence of Khokhlov’s importance was the KGB’s attempted poisoning of him in 1957—carried out, curiously enough, when he was attending an NTS event.)¹⁰⁷ More fundamentally, the Soviet Union’s assaults on the NTS suggested to the CIA that the NTS penetration operations might yield dividends after all. In a December 1954 memorandum on NTS operations, the CIA’s SR Division stressed that the attempted assassination of Okolovich confirmed “the Soviet desire to hamstring NTS operations in the USSR.”¹⁰⁸ Moreover, the document continued, “the most recent MVD defectors”—a group, no doubt, that included Khokhlov himself—“all confirmed independently that the Soviet government considers NTS to be one of

105. “Protokol S’ezda Soveta NTS v mae 1954 goda,” pp. 9–11.

106. *Ibid.*

107. “NTS Penetration Operations into the USSR,” Memorandum from Chief, SR, to Chief of Operations, DD/P, 8 December 1954, p. 5, in AESAURUS, Vol. 3, pt. 1; and “Soviet Use of Assassination and Kidnapping: A 1964 View of KGB Methods,” 1964, in CIA Historical Review Program, https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/kent-csi/vol19no3/html/v19i3a01p_0001.htm.

108. “NTS Penetration Operations,” p. 2.

the most dangerous émigré anti-Soviet organizations.”¹⁰⁹ Of course, the CIA was well positioned to judge that the Soviet regime’s estimation of the NTS was wildly exaggerated. CIA officials in Germany posited that Soviet officials were devoting “a far greater percentage of their security effort” in the hunt for NTS agents within Soviet borders “than in reality should be necessary.”¹¹⁰ The CIA derived from this picture of Soviet fear and overreaction a new approach to utilizing the NTS, which one CIA official called “a plan of attack aimed at building up the bogey of [NTS] strength in the USSR.”¹¹¹ In this new scheme, the CIA would do everything possible to make Soviet security forces overestimate the risk posed by the NTS, with the goal of forcing them to undertake costly and destabilizing countermeasures against it. Having failed to make the NTS a viable revolutionary force, the CIA decided to make of it a useful fiction.

The CIA sought to use the NTS myth against the Soviet regime through the continuation of infiltration operations. As the CIA officials hoped, training and secretly delivering NTS members across Soviet borders served as a “means of tying up and harassing MVD through the use of deception.”¹¹² However, the infiltration of NTS agents into the USSR remained an operational failure, both for the collection of intelligence and for the more limited purpose of disorienting Soviet intelligence and security forces. After three teams of émigré Carcass agents were captured and turned, the CIA started funding NTS operations in Berlin that aimed at recruiting Soviet personnel in the West prior to their return home.¹¹³ This shift in tactics also bore meager results, as at least three of the four agents thus recruited in Berlin—including a navy lieutenant and an army captain—were revealed to be under Soviet control and likely had been provocateurs from the outset.¹¹⁴ By the end of the 1950s, the CIA seems to have all but abandoned the NTS as an instrument for recruiting spies.

109. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

110. “Review of SHUBA 100 Internal Agent Cases,” Memorandum for Chief, SR/3, 9 June 1955, p. 3, in AESAURUS, Vol. 3, pt. 1.

111. “SHUBA 100 Penetration Operations,” p. 4.

112. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

113. In the process, the CIA created a joint operations base in Frankfurt with the British SIS, which had from the outset focused on recruiting Soviet personnel in the West and stay-behind NTS members in the USSR instead of the CIA’s “physical infiltration” of exiles. On this divergence in methods, see *ibid.*, p. 1.

114. See “Termination of Project AENOBLE,” Memorandum from Chief, SR Division, 13 October 1959, in AESAURUS, Vol. 3, pt. 1.

If infiltrating NTS cadres into the USSR fell short of expectations, another sphere of CIA-NTS collaboration seemed to hold more promise: that of propaganda and political warfare. Again, the Trushnovich and Khokhlov affairs provided a blueprint for how the CIA could make use of the NTS. The Soviet actions against the NTS in 1954 created a veritable media frenzy surrounding the organization. As NTS leader A. N. Artemov explained, “Before we ran after each journalist, but now we are sick of them.”¹¹⁵ The NTS had long endeavored to court mass opinion in the West, as Boldyrev’s 1948 press conference attests. In 1952, Poremskii had explained to his colleagues the importance of Western media exposure for the NTS. So long as the NTS was “in the focus of world events,” he explained, “the myth about us surpasses our objective importance.”¹¹⁶

The uses of the NTS’s mythical status changed with the Khokhlov and Trushnovich cases, however. Before 1954, the NTS had cultivated the fiction of its success, in large part, to manipulate the CIA and other power holders in the West. By contrast, in mid-decade the agency began to harness this same myth for its own ends. For instance, the wide media exposure given to Khokhlov was part of an agency design. In testimony to the Un-American Activities Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives, Khokhlov offered a scripted and possibly doctored account of his defection to the West. He claimed he had abandoned his mission and saved Okolovich in order to serve the “Russian anti-Communist underground,” which was the Soviet Union’s “enemy No. 1” — a carefully constructed account that both legitimized NTS’s claims about the scope of its revolutionary struggle and masked its ties to the CIA.¹¹⁷ Skeptical émigrés cast doubt on Khokhlov’s account of his wife, Iana, who, as Khokhlov alleged, was a deeply religious woman who had convinced him to abandon the Okolovich assassination and had remained in Moscow. Why, the skeptics asked, would Khokhlov place his beloved wife in danger by drawing attention to her role in his defection? And why had he abandoned his wife and son in Moscow in the first place, in effect sacrificing them to save the life of an unknown White émigré?¹¹⁸ No matter how unbelievable

115. “Protokol S”ezda Soveta,” p. 11.

116. “Protokoly S”ezda Soveta NTS v yanvare 1952 g.,” p. 5.

117. Testimony of Nikolai Khokhlov, “Thought Control in Soviet Art and Literature and the Liberation of Russia,” n U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Un-American Activities, *Investigation of Communist Activities in the Los Angeles, Calif., Area: Hearings* (Part 8), 84th Cong., 2nd Sess., 17 April 1956, p. 3798, in HIA, Nikolai Evgen’evich Khokhlov Papers, Box 1. See also his English-language memoirs, N. E. Khokhlov, *In the Name of Conscience* (New York: D. McKay, 1959).

118. Elena Kuskova, “Otvét g—nu N. Khokhlovu,” *Novoe russkoe slovo*, 27 November 1955. Years later, Khokhlov claimed that his strategy had been to protect his wife from Soviet reprisals by giving

Khokhlov's story was, the CIA clearly thought it was credible enough to serve as a weapon of political warfare against the USSR. Accordingly, Khokhlov's press conference and his appeal to Soviet leaders to free his family were broadcast to Soviet radio listeners on Voice of America and Radio Liberty.¹¹⁹

The media coverage of the Trushnovich kidnapping was, if anything, even more carefully packaged for Cold War propaganda, although whether the event would make good press was not immediately self-evident. In contrast to the Khokhlov defection, Trushnovich's disappearance in the East had the potential to create negative fallout, as it called into doubt the security of West Berlin and fueled speculation in the press (including the influential *Der Spiegel*) that Trushnovich had been a Soviet agent.¹²⁰ Nevertheless, the Trushnovich case became a cause célèbre for the NTS, which launched a vociferous propaganda campaign to demand Trushnovich's release, while charging that the abduction had shown only Soviet impotence and "brought shame" upon the USSR in international public opinion.¹²¹ An illustration of the campaign's sensationalism was the trip of Trushnovich's wife to Switzerland during the Geneva Conference to demand an audience with Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov about her husband's disappearance.¹²² Even more clearly than in the Khokhlov case, the U.S. government played a direct role in coordinating publicity around the Trushnovich kidnapping. For instance, the "free Trushnovich" campaign benefitted from the organization of ostensibly independent front organizations consisting of influential U.S. citizens and by the referral of the case (along with Khokhlov's) to the United Nations Human Rights Commission.¹²³

What did CIA operatives hope to achieve by publicizing the Khokhlov and Trushnovich campaigns on such a scale? Propagandizing instances of Soviet repression could put Soviet authorities on the defensive, something that might have been particularly desirable in the context of the unstable post-Stalin collective leadership. More importantly, the CIA viewed propaganda of the NTS-centered affairs as a means of undermining the domestic legitimacy of the Soviet state. In the first years of working with the Solidarists, the CIA

her an international reputation through the Western press. See "Interv'yu s Nikolaem Evgenievichem Khokhlovym," p. 381.

119. Pryanishnikov, "O revolyutsionnoi deyat'nosti," p. 113.

120. Telegram from Sir F. Hoyer Millar, U.K. High Commission in Germany, to Foreign Office, 28 April 1954, in TNAUK, FO 371/109320.

121. "Rezolyutsiya o novom etape bor'by," n.d., in Baydalakoff, Box 1, Folder 2.

122. U.K. High Commission in Bonn to the United Kingdom Delegation in Geneva, 20 May 1954, in TNAUK, FO 371/109320.

123. "To Rescue Dr. Trushnovich: Formation of Committee to Combat Kidnapping Is Welcomed," *The New York Times*, 26 May 1954.

seems to have been skeptical about the ability of NTS propaganda operations to stir discontent in the USSR, instead seeing them as a distraction from the infiltration program.¹²⁴ The Khokhlov and Trushnovich affairs, however, demonstrated that the CIA thought the NTS might be able to influence Soviet hearts and minds after all.

The NTS's path to winning such influence was seen as deception and incitement, for example with regard to infiltration operations. By devoting mass attention to the NTS in the West—and, to whatever extent possible, behind the Iron Curtain—the CIA believed it could increase the Soviet state's already inflated estimation of the NTS's power. If Soviet authorities could be provoked into undertaking punitive reprisals and propaganda attacks against the NTS, the argument went, the alliance would stand to gain visibility and, in the long run, support among the Soviet populace. This rationale underscored the CIA's persistent attempts to play up the NTS's ongoing presence in the Soviet Union. When the Soviet press announced in June 1954 that two additional Carcass agents had been apprehended in the USSR, the head of the CIA SR Division provided the NTS with "recommendations" on how to respond. The leaders should admit that the agents were members of the NTS, an organization that had "long conducted [the] struggle against Soviet power on Russian soil." The Soviets' charge that the two had been U.S. spies, however, was to be portrayed as a falsehood aimed at retaliating for the Khokhlov affair as well as an expression of "Soviet anxiety" over manifestations of anti-Soviet activity in the USSR.¹²⁵ Continuing this line of bolstering the NTS myth, numerous English-language publications about the Solidarists appeared in the following years, works that expressed the naïve populism characteristic of U.S. Cold War propaganda by depicting NTS members as virtuous Russian freedom fighters.¹²⁶

The CIA and the NTS agreed on how to pursue the strategy of provocation through mass publicity. This is somewhat surprising given the deep distrust that had plagued their relationship before. A speech by Solidarist R. N. Redlikh to NTS leadership cadres in May 1954 provided a clear if radical exposition of the joint CIA-NTS propaganda strategy. KGB officials, Redlikh explained, had

124. CIA officials agreed to bankroll the NTS's distribution of propaganda materials by hot-air balloon only so that they could dissuade the alliance from tasking agents in the USSR with disseminating propaganda materials. "Su: Notes on AETNA-1 Conference," p. 1.

125. Director to Frankfurt, 17 June 1954, in AESAURUS, Vol. 1, pt. 1.

126. Cf. George Gordon Young, *The House of Secrets* (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1959). On the U.S. brand of populism, see Gary D. Rawnsley, "The Campaign of Truth: A Populist Propaganda," in Gary D. Rawnsley, ed., *Cold-War Propaganda in the 1950s* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), pp. 31–46.

an “exaggerated notion” of the NTS’s presence on Soviet soil and increasingly used repression to uproot it. Propaganda campaigns and mass arrests against the specter of the NTS inevitably swept up many individuals with no connection to the organization. Redlikh even anticipated something like a replay of the Great Terror of the 1930s, with the NTS being a “candidate” for the role of internal enemy that Trotskyism had earlier occupied.¹²⁷ Such state repression would create discontent in Soviet society, while “popularizing” “the fact of the existence of a revolutionary force on the territory of the Soviet Union.” In short, Redlikh envisioned a vicious circle of provocation, repression, and radicalization that would benefit the NTS.

Whatever the Solidarists’ aims, it seems very unlikely that CIA officials expected or hoped to revive Stalinist mass terror. What stands out, however, is the similarity of views between the NTS leaders and their supporters in the CIA. Both envisioned exploiting the Soviet Union’s inflated estimation of the danger posed by the NTS, thereby provoking self-defeating responses. In effect, the CIA had decided to use the NTS’s longstanding practices of misinformation and posturing as weapons of psychological warfare against Soviet Communism.

Conclusion

What emerged from the CIA’s collaboration with the People’s Labor Alliance was a paradoxical situation in which illusions of NTS power outstripped the modest reality. The CIA sought to convince the Soviet regime that the NTS posed a grave threat to it, hoping thereby to provoke costly and disruptive measures to counter the underground movement and, in the longer term, to destabilize the USSR and spur damaging and embarrassing defections such as that of Khokhlov. The motives of the NTS leaders were also clear enough. They, too, aimed to use the NTS myth as an instrument of psychological warfare and provocation against the Soviet regime. For at least some NTS members, no doubt, more mercenary motives were also at work. Trushnovich’s fate shows that the Russian political émigré movement remained a dangerous business. Yet the NTS’s struggle against the USSR also provided an otherwise obscure outfit of exiles with money and public recognition.

A crucial set of questions regarding the exercise of power remains to be answered. Was the fabricated illusion of NTS power an effective weapon in

127. R. N. Redlikh, “Kontury griadushchego etapa (doklad na sobranii chlenov Rukovodiashchego Kruga v Frankfurte 11 iyunia 1954 g.),” pp. 1–5, in FSO, F. 98, Kor. 41.

the Western camp's arsenal during the Cold War? How did Soviet leaders understand the threat posed by the NTS and its relationship to the CIA, and what did they stand to lose from it? There is good reason to think that the CIA's strategy of exploiting deception and the "overt show" yielded some results. The sheer scale of Soviet reactions to NTS propaganda operations seems to confirm Cirkovic's statements that Soviet officials saw the organization as "more dangerous than all the rest of the Russian emigration" and that it gave the KGB "many worries."¹²⁸ In 1956, the KGB reported to the Soviet Communist Party's Central Committee that it had discovered, in just a six-month period, balloons containing over 56,000 NTS leaflets strewn across Soviet regions from Tyumen to Omsk.¹²⁹ That the NTS expanded its presence on Soviet soil over time also seems plausible. Writing on the late Soviet period, Vasilii Mitrokhin notes that the NTS had the special attention of the KGB as it was "active and large in number," and had "supporters in the USSR."¹³⁰ CIA officials for their part believed that the NTS made some progress in establishing its influence in the USSR in the 1950s. A report from the CIA's Berlin chief of base (COB) in 1960 claims that "virtually every defector" from the Soviet armed forces in East Germany in the previous few years had "been aware of the existence" of the NTS as well as of TsOPE, and that such knowledge had exerted "some effect on their individual decisions to defect."¹³¹

The CIA's strategy of mass propaganda and incitement—its exploitation of Soviet leaders' fear of the basically illusory specter of a politically effective Russian émigré organization seems to have widened the NTS's influence, in essence making the myth a reality over time. What remains unclear is whether Soviet officials were as deceived by the NTS myth as the CIA seemed to think. Shorn of many of its cadres from 1955 and infiltrated at least to some extent by Soviet intelligence, the NTS was not a serious threat to the Soviet regime in any direct sense. Few Soviet citizens in the 1950s took up the NTS's calls to revolution, as Soviet Procurator's Office materials on prosecutions for "anti-Soviet and counterrevolutionary propaganda and agitation" demonstrate.¹³² One can go further by suggesting that at least some Soviet officials must have

128. Testimony by Cirkovic, 27–28 September 1952, p. 2, in Darko Cirkovic.

129. A copy of the KGB report is stored in RGANI, F. 5, Op. 30, D. 141, Ll. 54–56.

130. "National Alliance of Russian Solidarists. Folder 53," p. 1. This view is supported by Andrei Okulov, *Kholodnaya grazhdanskaya voina: KGB protiv russkoi emigratsii* (Moscow: EKSMO: IAUZA, 2006).

131. See COB, Berlin, to COS, Germany, 2 June 1958 in AEVIRGIL, Vol. 1.

132. This conclusion is a result of examining V. A. Kozlov and S. V. Mironenko, eds., 58–10: *Nadzornye proizvodstva prokuratury SSSR po delam ob antisovetskoï agitatsii i propaganda—Annatirovannyi katalog, mart 1953–1991* (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnyi Fond "Demokratiya," 1999).

been *knowingly* complicit in building up the stature of the NTS in the West. For instance, Ryszard Wraga thought that the Khokhlov and Trushnovich affairs were elaborate Soviet provocations aimed at keeping the NTS “in the good graces of its sponsors” after the bruising experience of Carcass.¹³³ Even if one rejects such conspiracy theories—which are not proven by available evidence—the pattern of Soviet policies toward the NTS still seems oddly ham-fisted and inconsistent. In the first postwar years, the Soviet press avoided mentioning the NTS by name, presumably to avoid giving it free publicity within Soviet society. Starting in 1953, however, the USSR launched highly publicized attacks on the NTS, including by issuing official diplomatic protests to several Western governments for tolerating the activities of the organization in their countries—all of which the NTS eagerly appropriated for its own propaganda to serve as proof of its political importance.¹³⁴ Observing this dynamic by which the NTS boasted of the news coverage it received in the USSR, skeptical observers hypothesized that the Soviet state was deliberately supporting the prestige of the NTS in the West.¹³⁵

One can suggest a few reasons why Soviet leaders might have bolstered the NTS’s stature in such an underhanded way. First, the ongoing existence and perceived impact of a Russian émigré movement against Soviet rule, especially one backed by the United States, helped officials in Soviet intelligence and security organs to secure bureaucratic prerogatives and resources.¹³⁶ Second, U.S. patronage of the controversial NTS helped to fuel internecine struggles in the Russian émigré community while tying up U.S. resources that might have been siphoned off to more effective projects. Finally, the “overt show” of propaganda and publicity in which the NTS specialized was by no means a one-sided affair. The Soviet propaganda apparatus published numerous attacks on the NTS in Western languages, stressing the organization’s allegedly fascist origins and its record of collaboration with the Nazis. This line of propaganda

133. In Wraga’s view, Khokhlov served as an “unconscious Soviet agent well prepared for the role of a ‘murderer conscience-stricken at the last moment.’” In the margins next to this statement, an unidentified and clearly unconvinced CIA official wrote “brother!” in exasperation. “Effort to Analyse Soviet Provocation and Inspiration,” p. 11. Somewhat similarly, the NTS oppositionist N. I. Osipov saw the Khokhlov affair as a “dark game between two intelligence services.” E. I. Mamukov to V. M. Baidalakov, 19 June 1954, in Baydalakoff, Box 2, Folder 2.

134. For a list of diplomatic protests, see Boldyrev, “Reaction of the Soviet Government.” See also Soviet Section, F.O.R.D., 29 May 1954, in TNAUK, FO 371/111795/C560762.

135. “The Soviet press is the best friend of the NTS,” Pryanishnikov argued. See B. V. Pryanishnikov to R. P. Ronchevskii, 29 May 1960, p. 1, in HIA, Pryanishnikov Papers, Box 3, Folder 9. See also “Effort to Analyse Soviet Provocation,” p. 11.

136. “Interv’yu s Nikolaem Evgenievichem Khokhlovym,” p. 372. I am grateful to A. Ross Johnson for drawing this point to my attention.

was a convenient way to discredit the politics of the Russian émigré community as a whole while adding substance to the fundamental Soviet position that the West was imperialist and militaristic.¹³⁷

The CIA's strategy vis-à-vis the NTS was one of deception, and the Soviet side was likely also complicit in this game, at least to some extent. If so, then the NTS was the focal point for a curious struggle, one in which the intelligence services of both superpowers sought to gain advantage through manipulating the fiction of a politically active Russian émigré organization. The NTS thus provides an example of Cold War politics par excellence. The willingness of the two superpowers to wield the NTS myth reflects the growing pragmatism of Cold War intelligence, which was increasingly fueled on all sides by opportunism and bureaucratic motives rather than grand ideological objectives.¹³⁸ More broadly, fighting over a largely illusory organization was an exercise well suited to an international conflict that relied on nuclear bluffing and the pursuit of indirect battles as surrogates for military conflict. If, as Philip M. Taylor suggests, the Cold War in the 1950s became "a war fought mainly on the human mind," then the willful production of mirages could pass as the very stuff of geopolitics.¹³⁹

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137. See, for instance, the exposé, translated into several languages, by an NTS agent who had absconded to the USSR. K. K. Cherezov, *Maska NTS, ili NTS bez maski* (Berlin: Izd. Sovetskogo komiteta po kul'turnym svyazyam s sootchestvennikami za rubezhom, 1965). See also N. N. Iakovlev, *CIA Target, the USSR* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1982), pp. 96–110.

138. On Soviet defectors as "opportunists seeking to better their own circumstances," see Nigel West, *Games of Intelligence: The Classified Conduct of International Espionage* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1989), p. 98. A shift away from ideology has also been posited with regard to Soviet agents in the West. See Reg Whitaker, "Cold War Alchemy: How America, Britain and Canada Transformed Espionage into Subversion," *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (2000), p. 179.

139. Philip M. Taylor, "Through a Glass Darkly? The Psychological Climate and Psychological Warfare of the Cold War," in Rawsley, ed., *Cold-War Propaganda*, p. 226.