

STUDIE / ARTICLE

Between Monarchism and Nazism: the career of General Vasily Biskupsky in exile (1919–1945)¹

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This study examines General Vasily Viktorovich Biskupsky's (1878–1945) career in exile. Biskupsky was part of the first wave of Russian emigrants after the 1917 Revolution and Civil War, and he permanently settled in Germany in 1919. As a radical right-wing monarchist, he aimed to create connections between Russian emigrants, German far-right circles, and German conservative monarchists. His ultimate goal was to build a coalition of conservative and far-right forces, restore the monarchy in Russia, and strengthen the Russian-German alliance. However, due to his questionable contacts and suspected involvement in various affairs, such as the Kapp Putsch in 1920 and the Munich Putsch in 1923, Biskupsky acquired a negative reputation. He played a significant role in the monarchist-legitimist movement centred around Grand Duke Kirill Vladimirovich, a pretender in exile to the Russian imperial throne. After 1933, Biskupsky collaborated closely with the Nazi regime, seeing them as the best ally for his political plans. In

1 The study was supported by the Czech Science Foundation (GAČR), project No. 20-09721S “Russian Radical Right in Emigration, 1918–1945”.

1936, he was appointed head of Russische Vertrauensstelle (the Russian Commission for Germany), a position he held until the end of World War II. This study provides the first biographical sketch of Biskupsky's life in English.

Key words: Vasily Biskupsky (1878–1945); White Emigration; Russian Radical Right; Russo-German Relations; 1919–1945

Mass emigration from Russia after the 1917 Revolution and the Civil War (1917–1920) brought numerous remarkable personalities to Europe. Among the defeated White Guards were sincere patriots, reckless adventurers, and unscrupulous careerists. General Vasily Viktorovich Biskupsky was a small quantity of each.

For many years, Biskupsky was known only to a small circle of scholars and experts on the history of Russian emigration. Nevertheless, in his time, he was a relatively well-known figure among the Russian exiles. He spent twenty-five years in Germany, and throughout this time, he actively participated in the émigré political life. He was not a theorist but an experienced political practitioner who usually stood in the background rather than at the head of parties and movements. In many respects, he was a controversial figure who embodied many general traits and problems of the Russian exile. The émigré community itself was divided in its view of Biskupsky. He could not count on a favourable opinion even among the monarchists, whom he adhered unwaveringly. For some, he was “the most outstanding personality of the Russian emigrant community in Munich”, while others considered him “a natural and notorious schemer” and “an unprincipled adventurer”.² A negative assessment prevailed and influenced historians, who began dealing with Biskupsky in the first scholarly works on Russian interwar emigration as early as the 1960s.³ It was then that the primary image of Biskupsky as a political adventurer appeared: “a man of considerable cunning (and) a schemer in the

2 Garald Karlovich GRAF, *Na sluzhbe imperatorskomu domu Rossii 1917–1941. Vospominaniia* (Sankt-Peterburg: Russko-Baltiiskii informatsionnyi tsentr “BLITS”, 2004), pp. 48, 553, note 24; Nikolai SNESSAREV, *Kirill Pervyi ... imperator Koburgskii* (Berlin: s. l., 1925), p. 51; Institut für Zeitgeschichte (IfZ) München, MA 128/5, unpag.

3 Walter LAQUEUR, *Russia and Germany. Century of Conflict* (Boston: Little and Brown, 1965); Hans-Erich VOLKMANN, *Die russische Emigration in Deutschland 1919–1929* (Würzburg: Holzner Verlag, 1966); Robert C. WILLIAMS, *Culture in Exile. Russian Emigrés in Germany, 1881–1941* (Ithaca – London: Cornell University Press, 1972); John J. STEPHAN, *Russian Fascists. Tragedy and Farce in Exile, 1925–1945* (New York – London: Harper & Row, 1978).

grand style, always engaged in some major financial or political intrigue” (Laqueur); “undoubtedly one of the most universally disliked men of the Russian emigration” (Williams).⁴

Only in the 1990s did Biskupsky become the subject of the first individual study. Bettina Dodenhoeft wrote the first biographical overview of the general’s life. It was relatively brief and based only on German archival sources, but it articulated fundamental questions about the relationship of Biskupsky to German National Socialism.⁵ Biskupsky appeared as a key figure in Johannes Baur’s and Michael Kellogg’s books.⁶ Both authors used German and Russian archival sources. Biskupsky has gradually come to the attention of Russian historians studying the monarchist movement or Russian emigration into Germany.⁷ His name, however, has made minimal appearances in more comprehensive studies. Although his contacts with the German far-right and, more generally, the relationship of Russian emigrants to the Nazi movement are well known, scholars of Nazism view the “Russian trace” as a marginal phenomenon. Biskupsky is thus of primary interest to historians studying Russian emigrants.

The sources on Biskupsky are fragmented, and he has no separate archival collection, unlike many other significant Russian military and political emigrants. Much information is scattered in various archives in Russia (Moscow), Germany (Berlin, Munich), and the United States (Hoover Institution Archives at Stanford, Bakhmeteff Archive at Columbia University in New York). So far, no one has managed to bring these materials together. Other emigrants, both colleagues and collaborators or opponents, frequently mentioned Biskupsky. First of all, there are the

4 W. LAQUEUR, *Russia and Germany*, p. 108; R. C. WILLIAMS, *Culture in Exile*, p. 73.

5 Bettina DODENHOEFT, *Vasilij Biskupskij – Eine Emigrantenkarriere in Deutschland*, in Karl SCHLÖGEL (ed.), *Russische Emigration in Deutschland 1918 bis 1941: Leben im europäischem Bürgerkrieg* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995), pp. 219–228.

6 Johannes BAUR, *Die russische Kolonie in München 1900–1945: Deutsch-russische Beziehungen in 20. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1998); Michael KELLOGG, *The Russian Roots of Nazism. White Émigrés and the Making of National Socialism 1917–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). Here, Biskupsky is erroneously referred to as *Vladimir* instead of *Vasily*.

7 German Sergeevich CHUVARDIN, “Imperator Kirill I” i pravomonarchicheskoe budushchee Rossii: *nadezhdy, otchaianie, fars*, in Vestnik Riazanskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta im. S. A. Esenina, 2019, unpag.; Alexandr Vladimirovich SEREGIN, General V. V. Biskupskii v dvizhenii monarchistov-legitimistov, in *Istoricheskaia i social’no-obrazovatel’naja mysl’*, vol. 9, no. 1/1, 2017, pp. 79–88.

diaries and correspondence of General Alexei A. von Lampe.⁸ For many years, von Lampe competed with Biskupsky for influence among emigrants in Germany, but eventually, he had to cooperate with his rival due to external circumstances. The memoirs of Harald (Garald) Graf are also important. As Head of the Office of Grand Duke Kirill Vladimirovich, Graf came into regular contact with Biskupsky, especially in the 1920s, and he gave a detailed account of his activities.⁹ Last but not least, Biskupsky's name appears in countless reports of Soviet intelligence, which systematically monitored the situation of Russian military and political exiles.¹⁰

The questions we raise concerning Biskupsky are not entirely new. Previous authors have addressed several of them. What role did Biskupsky play in Russian émigré circles? What was his ideological ground, and how did he try to apply his values in his political activities? What was his relationship as a monarchist to the ideology of National Socialism? How did he perceive the developments in the USSR and the possibilities for the Russian émigrés to change the situation in their homeland? How did Biskupsky's position change after the Nazis seized power in Germany in 1933, and what did World War II mean for him? Furthermore, was he only a cunning schemer, changing loyalties and seeking for his profit?

Historiography has not answered all these questions, or not always sufficiently, primarily because of the narrow selection of sources, which led to a somewhat simplified perception of Biskupsky's activities. One of the main contributions of our study is that we combined findings from archival sources (some of them previously unused) with published sources that were not available to earlier authors. We do not provide an exhaustive biography of Vasily Biskupsky. Neverthe-

8 Von Lampe (1885–1967) was a prominent Russian All-Military Union (ROVS) representative. He was Commander of Department II, which included Germany and other Central European countries. He kept detailed diaries in exile and became an unofficial chronicler of Russian émigré life. Von Lampe's diaries are, for the most part, deposited in Moscow (GARF, f. 5853); the diaries written from 1945 onwards are in the Bakhmeteff Archive in New York (BAR, Lampe Papers). For a detailed biography of Lampe, see Laura Sophie RITTER, *Schreiben für die Weisse Sache. General Aleksej von Lampe als Chronist der russischen Emigration, 1920–1967* (Wien – Köln – Weimar: Böhlau, 2018).

9 It provides a valuable characterisation of Biskupsky's personality and plenty of behind-the-scenes information from the monarchist movement. However, memoirs must be approached cautiously. Graf is unreliable in capturing events in which he was not directly involved. Cf. G. GRAF, *Na sluzhbe*.

10 An extensive edition of documents on military emigration is particularly beneficial. See *Russkaia voennaia emigratsiia 20–40-kh godov XX veka. Dokumenty i materialy*. 10 vols. (Moskva – Kursk: Izdatel'stvo Geia, 1998–2017).

less, our “features of the portrait” provide a basic overview of his life in exile, filling in many blank spots in his biography and revising some claims or errors.

War, Revolution, and exile

Vasily Viktorovich Biskupsky was born on 27 June 1878 in Kharkiv province.¹¹ His family belonged to the provincial nobility. Biskupsky’s military career did not differ much from that of many other professional soldiers. He graduated from military schools, served in the Imperial Guard Horse Regiment, fought in the Russo-Japanese War, and received several awards.¹² Baron Pyotr Wrangel, his fellow regiment officer, described him as “a skilful and capable officer, very intelligent and with great ambition, with an irresistible desire to be the first always and everywhere”.¹³ As a result of a scandal caused by an unsuitable marriage, he had to retire with the rank of colonel (1911), but after the untimely death of his wife, he returned to the service. From 24 March 1913, he was assigned to the 16th Irkutsk Hussar Regiment.¹⁴

He entered World War I as a senior staff officer. He was wounded on the third day of the fighting and was treated in an infirmary for over two months. In December 1914, he was appointed commander of the 1st Moscow Leib-Dragoon Regiment and was in charge of that until 15 January 1917. For participating in the Brusilov Offensive, he was promoted to Major-General in June 1916.¹⁵ General

11 Historian Petrov refers to Biskupsky’s military service file in the Moscow archive. However, in Germany, Biskupsky declared St. Petersburg as his birthplace. Igor PETROV (ed.), “‘Povsiudu rasprostranil slukh, chto ia nichego ne dobilsia.’ Perepiska V. Biskupskogo s A. Rozenbergom,” in D. A. ZHUKOV – I. I. KOVTUN (eds.), *Posobniki. Issledovaniia i materialy po istorii otechestvennogo kollaboratsionizma* (Moscow: Piatyi Rim, 2020), p. 308; B. DODENHOEFT, *Vasilij Biskupskij*, p. 229.

12 For Biskupsky’s advance in rank see *Spisok polkovnikam po starshinstvu. Sostavlen po 1-e Marta 1914 g.* (S.-Peterburg: Voennaia tipografiia Imperatrity Ekateriny Velikoi, 1914), p. 1292; Hoover Institution Archives (HIA), Stanford University, Yudenich Collection, Box 3, folder 3.27, pp. 96–97 (Biskupsky’s signed account of his career up to 1919).

13 Petr Nikolaevich WRANGEL, *Zapiski (noiabr’ 1916g. – noiabr’ 1920g. .)*, vol. 1 (Moskva: Menedzher 1991), p. 29.

14 *Spisok polkovnikam*. p. 1292.

15 In exile, his rank was confirmed by Grand Duke Kirill Vladimirovich, and he was appointed General of Cavalry for his faithful service. Institut für Zeitgeschichte (IfZ) Archiv, München, MA 297. Bericht über die russischen monarchistischen Organisationen in der Emigration, 18 October 1935, Appendix 2 (dated 3 October 1930).

Nikolai Golovin, Biskupsky's superior, spoke of him mostly positively: "Smart, gifted, self-controlled, brave". At the same time, he pointed out his adventurous nature and a certain lack of character, manifested by carelessness in his reports, which did not always correspond to reality and were worded in such a way as to show Biskupsky in the best light.¹⁶

After the February Revolution, Biskupsky continued to serve in the army until September 1917. He accepted the revolution and, like many other officers, the fall of the monarchy, as it was supposed to ensure victory for Russia in the ongoing war. Biskupsky commanded the 3rd Cavalry Division (May 3 – June 5) and temporarily the 6th Army Corps (September 8–24). According to some evidence, he was elected as a delegate of the 6th Army Corps to the Petrograd Soviet, where he was active, delivered speeches, and visited sailors in Kronstadt. Perhaps he even hoped to be elected chairman of the military section of the Soviet. However, his "bet on the revolution" failed, and consequently, he left Petrograd.¹⁷

While in Kyiv, he served under Pavlo Skoropadskyi, the Hetman of Ukraine, not later than in July 1918.¹⁸ Skoropadskyi's government existed under the patronage of Germany and the Austro-Hungarian Empire. At this time, Biskupsky likely established his first contacts and ties with German military officials, which gave rise to his lasting orientation towards Germany. From then on, he was convinced that the defeat of the Bolsheviks would be possible only with the help of Germany.¹⁹ This belief was strengthened shortly after his disillusion with the unsuccessful French intervention in the Odessa region. Biskupsky collaborated with the French in Odessa for a while; in April 1919, he was evacuated along with the French contingent.²⁰

Passing through Istanbul, he headed to places where the first Russian émigré political centres were being created. He spent a short time in Belgrade and probably

16 Bundesarchiv (BArch) – Militärarchiv (MA) Freiburg im Breisgau, MSG 241–14, p. 193.

17 Biskupsky did not mention his work for the Petrograd Soviet in the service record he signed in 1919. It was Baron Pyotr N. Wrangel who was later highly critical of Biskupsky and provided information about his activities in the Soviet. The historian Alexandr Seregin confirms the information with reference to Russian archival sources. Cf. HIA, Yudenich Collection, Box 3, folder 3.27, pp. 96–97; P. N. WRANGEL, *Notes*, vol. 1, p. 29; A. V. SEREGIN, *General V. V. Biskupskii*, p. 80.

18 Biskupsky stated that from 20 July 1918, he commanded the 1st Cavalry Division. General Wrangel met Biskupsky in Kyiv in August 1918. Cf. HIA, Yudenich Collection, Box 3, folder 3.27, pp. 96–97; P. N. WRANGEL, *Zapiski*, p. 63.

19 G. GRAF, *Na sluzhbe*, p. 48.

20 P. N. WRANGEL, *Zapiski*, p. 110.

also in Czechoslovakia before moving to Germany.²¹ In Berlin, there was a Military-Political Council of Western Russia (Voenno-politicheskii sovet Zapadnoi Rossii), comprised of representatives of pre-revolutionary Russian politics and the army. On 22 July 1919, the Council formed the West Russian Government in Berlin (Zapadno-russkoe pravitel'stvo) and elected Biskupsky as its head.²²

The West Russian Government aimed to establish an anti-Bolshevik and pro-German front in the Baltics. The organisation was monarchist and pursued a Greater Russian agenda. Although it recognised Finland's independence, it disregarded the political reality of the Baltics and the emergence of national governments. According to the West Russian Government, Estonia and Latvia were to remain part of the restored Russian Empire, albeit with extensive autonomy. The government was strongly oriented towards Germany and isolated within the White movement.²³

The funding for building the army was to be provided primarily by Germany. Biskupsky envisaged a subsidy of 300 million marks per month for the first two months, and subsequently, it would change according to the situation. He was highly optimistic, believing he could easily and quickly build an army of 150,000 men.²⁴ At that time, however, the West Russian Government had only the West Russian Volunteer Army of General Pavel R. Bermond-Avalov, which it could not fully control. Bermond's army was more German than Russian, and he was very independent.²⁵ He refused to submit to the commander of the Northwestern

21 Bettina Dodenhoeft claims that he “stayed in France for about a year”, which we can almost certainly rule out. He left Odessa in April 1919, and by the summer, he had already appeared in Berlin. In a letter to General Yudenich dated 16 November 1919, Biskupsky mentioned that before Berlin, he had been in Serbia and Czechoslovakia. His stay in Belgrade is also mentioned in the memoirs of General Pavel R. Bermond-Avalov. Cf. HIA, Yudenich Collection, Box 3, folder 3.28, p. 6; Pavel Rafailovich BERMONDT-AVALOV, *V bor'be s bolshevizmom* (Glückstadt – Hamburg: Izdatel'stvo i tipografiia I. I. Augustina, 1925), p. 237; B. DODENHOEFT, *Vasilij von Biskupskij*, p. 220.

22 Cf. “Zapadno-Russkoe pravitel'stvo,” in *Rossia v grazhdanskoj voine 1918–1922. Entsiklopediia v trekh tomakh*, vol. 1 (Moskva: ROSSPEN, 2021), pp. 801–802; Vasilii Zhanovich TSVETKOV, *Beloe delo v Rossii: 1917–1919 gg.* (Moskva: Iauza-Katalog, 2019), p. 787ff.

23 V. Z. TSVETKOV, *Beloe delo v Rossii 1917–1919*, pp. 794, 798–801, 804–808.

24 HIA, Yudenich Collection, Box 3, Folder 3.27, file 11, p. 105. Biskupsky's message to Alexandr I. Guchkov, 8 August 1919.

25 Of the approximately 52,000 soldiers, up to 40,000 were Germans. Some were part of the Freikorps, the Baltic militia, and General Rüdiger von der Goltz's Iron Division. Rüdiger von der GOLTZ, *Meine Sendung in Finnland und im Baltikum* (Leipzig: K. F. Koehler Verlag, 1920), p. 225.

Army, General Nikolai Yudenich. He did not obey his orders to march to Estonia and unite the two armies before marching on Petrograd, which the Bolsheviks controlled. He pursued his policy and fought the Latvian nationalists instead of the Bolsheviks. An attempt to capture Riga in early October 1919 failed, and Yudenich removed Bermond-Avalov from command of the Western Army.²⁶ The West Russian army collapsed, and its remaining forces were evacuated to Germany. The so-called Bermond affair significantly damaged the White movement, not just the Baltics.²⁷

Biskupsky's activity as the head of the West Russian Government was just a short episode, as was the cabinet's existence. In September/October 1919, a financial scandal destroyed the Government, and Biskupsky was directly involved. Trying to provide the Government with finances, he fell into the trap of a provocateur. A certain Moschel pretended to represent the American banking house of J. P. Morgan in Berlin. The Finance Committee of the Government, headed by Biskupsky, negotiated a loan of 300 million marks with Moschel, while the bank was to receive guarantees for its future business in the territory controlled by the Government. Moschel was promised a commission of 4.5 million marks. It soon became clear that the Berlin branch did not exist, and Moschel was a provocateur linked to independent German socialists and also to the former Soviet ambassador Adolph A. Ioffe, who gave Moschel money for spreading Bolshevik propaganda in Germany. The affair was also discussed in the Reichstag, to the amusement of the left-wing deputies, and the Russian emigrants did not easily forget it.²⁸ Biskupsky was discredited and resigned from the presidency of the Government on 29 September. He blamed his resignation on the unfavourable political situation in Germany, which made it impossible for him to build an army according to his plan and

26 HIA, Aleksei Aleksandrovich von Lampe Papers, Box 5, a copy of Yudenich's order dated 9 October 1919.

27 Andrei Vladislavovich GANIN, *Russkii ofitserkii korpus v gody grazhdanskoi voiny. Protivosostoi-anie komandnykh kadrov 1917–1922 g.* (Moskva: Tsentrpoligraf, 2021), p. 226; Evgenii Iur'ievich SERGEEV, *Bolsheviki i Anglichane. Sovetsko-britanskii otnosheniia, 1918–1924 gg. Ot intervent-sii k priznaniuu* (Sankt-Peterburg: Nauka, 2019), pp. 268–269; Anton SHMELEV, *In the Wake of Empire. Anti-Bolshevik Russia in International Affairs, 1917–1920* (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2021), pp. 323–324.

28 Emmanuil P. BENNIGSEN, *Zapiski 1917–1955* (Moskva: Izdatelstvo im. Sabashnikovykh, 2018), p. 232; General von Lampe diary, 6 August 1920, GARF, f. 5853, op. 1, ed. khr. 3 (microfilm no. 1), p. 902.

ideas. “Compromising contradicts my convictions,” he said bitterly.²⁹ The entire Government was soon dissolved.

Less than two months later, he recounted his activities in a letter to General Yudenich.³⁰ He complained of adversity and repeated his desire to continue the struggle against the Bolsheviks. He saw a chance for success in building an international army. Before arriving in Germany, he had attempted to establish an “international white guard” in Serbia and Czechoslovakia, claiming that the idea was met with enthusiasm everywhere. He explained his failure only by the lack of funding and misunderstanding on the part of the Entente.³¹ Rather idealistically, he imagined the Entente could accept military action with significant German participation or even mere support from the recent enemy. Another manifestation of his blindness was the belief that the Baltic nations would willingly join the anti-Bolshevik intervention because “they are absolutely friendly towards Russia”.³²

In November 1919, the White movement in the Baltics and elsewhere in Russia did not have the capacity for an effective offensive. Yudenich, to whom Biskupsky had addressed his plan, had recently been defeated while attempting to conquer Petrograd, and his army started disintegrating. Biskupsky’s determination did not seem to be affected by these events. He grew more convinced that Russia could only be saved by a broad coalition of international forces. Although the history of the West Russian Government had been short and personally unsuccessful for Biskupsky, it was then that he first articulated the plan that he would pursue in the following years – the creation of an international anti-Bolshevik front.

Between Munich and Berlin (1920–1923)

After the end of the Baltic episode, Biskupsky settled permanently in Germany. He married for a second time and fathered a son and a daughter. The family first lived on the rest of the valuables he had brought from Russia, and then Lyubov Biskupskaya (née Vtorova) founded a fashion salon in Munich.³³ From the early 1920s

29 HIA, Yudenich Collection, Box 3, folder 3.27, p. 100.

30 HIA, Yudenich Collection, Box 3, folder 3.28, file 11. Letter to Yudenich from Berlin, 16 November 1919.

31 Ibidem, pp. 6–7.

32 Ibidem, p. 7.

33 BArch – MA Freiburg, MSG 241-14, p. 193.

onwards, Biskupsky pursued his activity in two basic directions. Firstly, he focused on working for the monarchist movement, and secondly, he created and maintained contacts with the German far right, especially the National Socialist Movement. Both tendencies were intertwined, and Biskupsky followed them until the end of his life.

After the episode with the West Russian Government, Biskupsky briefly filled the position of “Inspector General of Russian troops interned in Germany”. The Germans financed his office and were interested in Biskupsky, already perceived as a Germanophile, taking command. The inspectorate served as a cover for German intelligence and propaganda. Because of his previous activities, Biskupsky soon faced resistance from other émigré figures and had to relinquish the inspectorate to General Ivan A. Holmsen.³⁴

Though not entirely proven, it is possible that Biskupsky was involved in the monarchist Kapp Putsch in March 1920. According to various sources, the putschists maintained connections with the Russian monarchists, and Biskupsky could have served as a liaison. For these tasks, he allegedly received fifty thousand marks a month. The cooperation of the two groups was based on an agreement to restore the monarchy in Russia, which would subsequently cooperate with the German government.³⁵ A few years later, Ignaz Trebitsch-Lincoln, a conspirator and an adventurer of international scale, revealed the details of Biskupsky’s involvement in the putsch in a newspaper interview: “General Biskupsky was given a special role in the preparation of the Kapp Putsch: he was to organise units of Russian prisoners of war, who were supposed to be involved in the putsch. Since this required money, it was decided to print Russian banknotes. Russian monarchists pledged to recognise the banknotes officially when they returned to power.”³⁶

34 RGVA, f. 40147, Shtab voiskovoi gruppy Bermond-Avalova, ed. khr. 48, pp. 1–2. Report dated 8 April 1920; BAR, General Manuscripts Collection, Kholm’sen Memoirs, pp. 70–73; R. C. WILLIAMS, *Culture in Exile*, pp. 97–98.

35 On his involvement in the Kapp Putsch see: J. T. TREBITSCH-LINCOLN, *Největší dobrodruh XX. století? Pravda mého života* (Praha: Nakladatelství Hladík a Ovesný, 1932), p. 144. The adventurer Trebitsch-Lincoln might not be a credible source. However, Biskupsky himself admitted that he had friendly relations with some of the participants in the putsch and was, therefore, “an undesirable element for Red Berlin”. See BArch NS 19/1939, p. 2, report of 18 October 1935; IfZ München, MA 297.

36 “Tchernyi internatsional,” *Dni*, No. 972, 4. 4. 1926, p. 1. There were still large numbers of Russian prisoners of war in Germany. The German and Soviet governments signed an agreement on mutual repatriation only on 19 April 1920. R. C. WILLIAMS, *Culture in exile*, pp. 108–109.

Whatever the role of Biskupsky in the putsch was, his activities at that time went beyond the boundaries of German politics. He developed various plans to reconstruct Eastern Europe in a conservative monarchist spirit. In the summer of 1920, he helped organize an ambitious and highly fantastic plan to restore the monarchy in Germany, Austria, Hungary, and Russia. In the first phase, Poland was to be defeated in the ongoing Polish-Soviet war, followed by a coup in the Red Army and the establishment of a military dictatorship. A large-scale purge combined with foreign intervention would eliminate the Bolsheviks and culminate in the restoration of the monarchy on a Central European scale.³⁷

The plan was conceived between Munich and Budapest. Colonel Max Bauer (previously involved in the Kapp Putsch) and General Erich Ludendorff were the key figures on the German side, with Biskupsky representing the Russian side. The adventurer Trebitsch-Lincoln, who was of Hungarian Jewish descent, was also involved. In Hungary, the counter-revolution of Admiral Horthy had succeeded shortly before, and the new conservative-monarchist regime inspired White émigrés.³⁸ To what extent some actors were motivated primarily by personal enrichment from the expected Hungarian government subsidies of 6.5 million Hungarian koronas is unclear.³⁹ Given Biskupsky's views in previous months, we can assume he took this initiative seriously. As was his custom, he conceived ambitious, albeit unrealistic, scenarios. He even tried to persuade the German government to allow the transfer of some of the interned members of the Bolshevik Red Army from Hungary to Bavaria. Biskupsky intended to campaign among the prisoners and form them into a military unit suitable for future intervention in Russia, but the German side did not appreciate this intention.⁴⁰ The Hungarian government

37 Tsentralnii derzhavnii arkhiv vishchikh organiv vladi ta upravlinn'ia Ukrainy (TSDAVO), f. 1429, op. 2, case 29. Copy of the Memorandum of General Biskupsky, 8 June 1920. For a brief plan explanation, see Bernard WASSERSTEIN, *The Secret Lives of Trebitsch-Lincoln* (New Haven – London: Yale University Press), 1998, pp. 169–172.

38 See the positive view of the Hungarian regime of General von Lampe, who was sent to Budapest as a military agent of Baron P. N. Wrangel. Attila KOLONTARI (ed.), *Aleksei von Lampe – voennyi agent barona Vrangelia v Vengrii. Sbornik dokumentov* (Moskva: AIRO-XXI, 2012), p. 7; Giovanni SAVINO, “From the White Armies to Nazi Collaboration. Alexei von Lampe (1885–1967),” *IERES Occasional Papers*, no. 7, October 2020, “Transnational History of the Far Right” Series, p. 8. On the Hungarian counter-revolution in general, cf. Thomas LORMAN, *Counter-revolutionary Hungary, 1920–1925: István Bethlen and the Politics of Consolidation* (Boulder: East European Monographs, 2006).

39 According to General von Lampe, Biskupsky “took much money from the Hungarians and disappeared from the Budapest horizon”. GARF, f. 5853, op. 1, d. 6, p. 383.

40 *Russkaia voennaia emigratsiia*, vol. 1, part 1, p. 163.

subsequently withdrew from the negotiations after finding the whole plan too risky and unrealistic.⁴¹

Although the “restoration of the monarchies” plan was conceived as top secret, the newspaper *Volia Rossii* (The Will of Russia), published by Russian socialist emigrants in Prague, wrote about it as early as December 1920. The operation details were leaked thanks to the deliberate indiscretion of one of the key stakeholders, Trebitsch-Lincoln.⁴² The information handed to the press sounded so fantastic that it was considered untrustworthy, and only a few newspapers published it. In Berlin, it was *Rul'* (“The Rudder”), the newspaper of the Constitutional Democrats, whose article Biskupsky publicly refuted in a letter to the editor, denying any connection with the “Bauer project”.⁴³ The exposure in the press had an ambiguous effect on Biskupsky. His reputation suffered, but at the same time, he “made himself known” and became a significant and influential figure in many people’s eyes. Evgenii Efimovsky, leader of the constitutional monarchist’s group, explained to General von Lampe that Biskupsky’s activities “are not a myth, and the exposure of *Volia Rossii* has come across a really serious monarchist organisation”.⁴⁴ General Wrangel considered Biskupsky’s activities so significant and, at the same time, dangerous that he secretly ordered von Lampe to “defame” him by all means.⁴⁵

What was Biskupsky’s position in 1920? What did they think of him in Germany? Documents of the Bavarian Prime Minister Dr. Gustav Kahr show two opposite views of Biskupsky, his personality, and his significance among the Russian emigrants. The materials from September 1920 evaluated him as the only genuinely pro-German Russian émigré who “plays fairly” and earned the trust of Germans.⁴⁶ In contrast, the October 1920 report completely marginalised the general’s significance (“Biskupski ist ein Mann, der keineswegs ernst zu nehmen ist”;

41 *Aleksei von Lampe – voennyi agent barona Vrangelia v Vengrii. Sbornik dokumentov* (Moskva: Airo-XXI, 2012), p. 41.

42 “Evropeiskii monarchicheskii zagovor”, *Volia Rossii*, 7 December 1920; “Monarchisty za rabotoi”, *Volia Rossii*, 7 December 1920; “Evropeiskii monarchicheskii zagovor. Dokumenty”, *Volia Rossii*, 24 December 1920. Cf. I. TREBITSCH-LINCOLN, *Největší dobrodruh*, pp. 192–200; B. WASSERSTEIN, *Trebitsch-Lincoln*, pp. 179–180.

43 “Zagovor monarkhistov”, *Rul'*, No. 4, 20 November 1920, p. 3; “Pismo v redaktsiiu”, *Rul'*, No. 6, 23 November 1920, p. 6.

44 GARE, f. 5853, op. 1, d. 5, p. 8.

45 *Ibidem*. Von Lampe followed Wrangel’s instructions. When Admiral Horthy asked him in Budapest what he thought of Biskupsky, he declared him “an adventurer”. A. KOLONTARI (ed.), *Aleksei von Lampe*, p. 505.

46 Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv München (BayHStA), Nachlass Gustav Kahr, Nr. 40. Folder General Vasily Biskupsky. Memorandum of 28 September 1920.

“Biskupski ist eben vollkommen einflusslos und wird nicht ernst genommen”).⁴⁷ The latter view corresponded to the attitude of the Soviet agents, who kept an eye on Biskupsky but did not attach much importance to him then.⁴⁸

The Kapp Putsch initiated the first contact between the German right and Russian emigrants, which lasted even after the putschists fled to Munich. The Bavarian capital became the main centre of Russian right-wing exile in Germany in the winter of 1920/1921. The émigré community was not large (500–800 people) but politically active.⁴⁹ One of its members described the community as “grey intellectual mediocrity, dreams about returning to an unforgettable past, intense inbreeding with its petty gossip – cursing the Bolsheviks, the Jews, and The Yid-Masons and looking for tomorrow money.”⁵⁰

Among the men Biskupsky met in Munich was the Baltic German Max Erwin von Scheubner-Richter.⁵¹ They established close cooperation, which lasted until Scheubner-Richter died in 1923. Scheubner-Richter served on the German General Staff during World War I and also worked for the administration of the Supreme Commander of All German Forces in the East (*Ober-Ost*), where he met General Ludendorff.⁵² It was Scheubner-Richter who introduced Biskupsky to the newly formed NSDAP and also to Ludendorff. Biskupsky made an agreement with the general, envisaging the restoration of the 1914 German-Russian border after the monarchy in Russia was restored with German help.⁵³

47 The negative assessment corresponded to the author’s general scepticism about the significance and role of Russian emigrants in Germany: “The Russian circles here, pretending to be friends with Germany, either want to finance their situation, or they are secret Anglo-French agents, and they are rarely honest people; almost all of them are dishonest.” BayHStA, Nachlass Gustav Kahr, Nr. 40. Folder General Vasily Biskupsky.

48 *Russkaia voennaia emigratsiia*, vol. 1, part 1, p. 229.

49 J. BAUR, *Die russische Kolonie*, pp. 66–67; R. C. WILLIAMS, *Culture*, pp. 165–166.

50 N. SNESSAREV, *Kirill Pervyi*, p. 47. On the Munich colony, see Botkin to Girs, 8 May and 12 July 1920, HIA, Girs Papers, folder 32, and Biskupsky’s 1923 memorandum entitled “Polozhenie o Kolonii russkikh bezhentssev v Bavarii”, HIA, Girs Papers, folder 33.

51 According to the memoirs of the monarchist Efimovsky, Biskupsky and Scheubner-Richter met through General von der Goltz while preparing for the Monarchist Congress in Bad Reichenhall at April and May 1921. However, they must have known each other earlier because at the end of 1920, they had already founded *Aufbau*. Cf. E. A. Efimovsky, “Sorokaletie reikhengallskago obshchemonarkhicheskago s’ezda,” *Vozrozhdenie*, No. 130 (1962), p. 108.

52 Jay LOCKENOUR, *Dragonslayer. The Legend of Erich Ludendorff in the Weimar Republic and Third Reich* (Ithaca – London: Cornell University Press, 2021), p. 101.

53 The exact date of the agreement is unclear. Biskupsky later mentioned only the year 1923. BA, NS 43/35, 8. 9. 1939, pp. 47–49, 54–55. The contacts between Biskupsky and Ludendorff were re-

The main joint project of Biskupsky and Scheubner-Richter was establishing the organisation *Aufbau Vereinigung (Reconstruction)* at the end of 1920. They published two magazines that featured articles on German and Soviet politics and reports on emigration. Biskupsky was vice-president of the organisation and headed its Russian part. However, the key figure was Scheubner-Richter, without whom the organisation would not have arisen and whose authority held it together.⁵⁴ It was never a mass organisation but rather an elitist society, a “think-tank” aimed at informing the public about the situation in Russia and persuading them that Bolshevism was a blight on Russia, Germany, and the world. In his articles, Scheubner-Richter justified the reason for the establishment of the magazine as the intention to explain to the Germans that Russia was ruled by the Third International, dominated by Jews and Freemasons.⁵⁵ Any cooperation between the Weimar Republic and Soviet Russia was a dangerous illusion, and the future lay in cooperation between a revived conservative Germany and a monarchist Russia. Biskupsky summed up the ideological basis of *Aufbau* in straightforward words: “Germanophilism, anti-Marxism, anti-Semitism and anti-Freemasonry.”⁵⁶

In a short time, Biskupsky met several Baltic Germans who were at the origins of the Nazi movement in Bavaria and later, after 1933, would rise the career ladder of the Third Reich. The prominent figure was Alfred Rosenberg, who, thanks in part to his experience in the *Aufbau*, became editor-in-chief of the *Völkischer Beobachter* (from November 1921), the party newspaper of the NSDAP. Arno Schickedanz, a friend of Rosenberg and Scheubner-Richter, worked in the *Aufbau*, among other things, as Biskupsky’s personal secretary.⁵⁷ The ideology of

ported to Soviet intelligence as early as December 1920. Cf. *Russkaia voennaia emigratsiia*, vol. 1, part 2 (Moskva: Izdatel'stvo Geia, 1998), pp. 11, 15.

54 Scheubner-Richter was editor-in-chief of two journals: *Aufbau. Zeitschrift für wirtschaft-politische Fragen Ost-Europas*, and *Wirtschafts-politische Aufbau-Korrespondenz über Ostfragen und ihre Bedeutung für Deutschland*. Cf. J. BAUR, *Die russische Kolonie*, pp. 253–270.

55 “Zum fünften Jahrestag der Revolution”, *Wirtschafts-politische Aufbau-Korrespondenz*, 9 November 1923, vol. 3, no. 35.

56 IfZ Archiv, München, Bericht, 18 October 1935, p. 11. From articles documenting the main views of the *Aufbau* cf. e.g. “Dem Bolschewismus entgegen”, *Aufbau*, 9 September 1921, no. 9, “Die Grosse Illusion”, *Aufbau*, 2 December 1921, no. 12, “Deutsch-russischer Vertrag von Rapallo”, *Aufbau*, 21 April 1922, vol. 2, no. 16, “Die anmaschierende Weltrevolution”, *Aufbau*, 30 August 1922, vol. 2, no. 35, “Der Katastrophe entgegen”, *Aufbau*, 6 September 1922, vol. 2, no. 36.

57 A group of Baltic Germans (Scheubner-Richter, Rosenberg, Schickedanz, Otto von Kursell) knew each other. Before the war, they had belonged to the “Rubonia” fraternity in Riga. Cf. M. KELLOGG, *The Russian Roots*, p. 41; A. V. SEREGIN, *General V. V. Biskupskii*, p. 82.

the Aufbau also impressed Hitler, who had taken little interest in Russia until then. Thanks to the influence of Scheubner-Richter and Rosenberg, he changed his attitude, and the Eastern question, including the myth of Judeo-Bolshevism, became firmly entrenched in Hitler's ideological world.⁵⁸ The activities of the Aufbau were closely tied to the development of the NSDAP. It cooperated with Ludendorff, and it was through the Aufbau that Ludendorff met Hitler in March 1921.⁵⁹

The Aufbau could function thanks to the generous financial support of conservative Bavarian businessmen. In this case, Biskupsky was not a theorist writing texts for the magazine. His most significant contribution was securing finance for the Aufbau from Baron Boris G. Köppen and Baron M. A. Taube. Scheubner-Richter received funds from the industrialist Baron Cramer-Klett. Funding also came from the United States from the automobile magnate and well-known anti-Semite Henry Ford.⁶⁰

The Aufbau's ambition was to unite all White émigrés. With this intention, Biskupsky and Scheubner-Richter organised a monarchist Congress in Bad Reichenhall (29 May-6 June 1921).⁶¹ The Congress was supposed to gather all Russian monarchists, from former liberals to far-right, and show their unity. The Congress received financial support from Bavarian businessmen, who were impressed by the Russian monarchists' connection with Ludendorff.

Although the congress succeeded in gathering many émigré monarchists (more than 100 delegates), the desired effect was not achieved. At the first anniversary of the congress, the Aufbau presented the formation of more than 80 monar-

58 Cf. M. KELLOGG, *Russian Roots*, p. 278; Thomas WEBER, *Becoming Hitler. The Making of a Nazi* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 207–230 (Chapter 9 “Hitler's Pivot to the East”). On Judeo-Bolshevism, emigration from Russia, and National Socialism more generally cf. Matthias VETTER, “Die Russische Emigration und ihre “Judenfrage,” in Karl SCHLÖGEL (ed.), *Russische Emigration*, pp. 109–124; Paul HANEBRINK, *A Spectre Haunting Europe. The Myth of Judeo-Bolshevik* (Cambridge, Mass. – London: The Belknap Press, 2018), pp. 35–36.

59 M. KELLOGG, *The Russian Roots*, p. 128.

60 Köppen was married to Olga, Biskupsky's cousin. He inherited \$500,000 from his American relatives and donated a substantial portion to the *Aufbau*. He was also a member of the Monarchist Union in the USA, an organisation based on the platform of the Bad Reichenhall Congress and subordinate to the VMS. The agent for the funds transfer from Henry Ford was the lawyer and literary critic Boris Lvovich Brasol. Cf. M. KELLOGG, *The Russian Roots*, pp. 131, 145, 203; James POOL – Suzanne POOL, *Who Financed Hitler. The Secret Funding of Hitler's Rise to Power 1919–1933* (London: Macdonald and Jane's, 1978), pp. 113–115; A. V. SEREGIN, *General V. V. Biskupskii*, p. 82.

61 On the Congress in detail see J. BAUR, *Die russische Kolonie*, pp. 103–118; M. KELLOGG, *Russian Roots*, pp. 143–150, 156; R. C. WILLIAMS, *Culture in Exile*, pp. 175–180.

chist organisations around the world during one year as a success, but that could also be interpreted oppositely.⁶² Fragmentation was not the strength of the monarchists but their weakness. The congress constituted the Supreme Monarchist Council (*Vysshii Monarchicheskii Sovet*, VMS), and Nikolai Markov, a veteran of far-right politics, the leader of the far-right faction in the State Duma, and one of the presidents of the pre-Revolutionary Union of the Russian People, was elected chairman.⁶³ Markov's group had a majority at the Congress (over 40 delegates) and gained control over the VMS.⁶⁴ However, many monarchists did not recognise the authority of the VMS, as they were concerned by Markov's conflicting personality. Even the VMS was not united. Alongside Markov were moderate monarchists, "constitutionalists", Evgenii A. Efimovsky, Alexandr M. Maslennikov, and Alexandr N. Krupensky. Biskupsky was co-opted into the VMS as a member of the Military Council. It is quite possible that this was primarily due to his connection with Ludendorff, one of Markov's chief financial sponsors.⁶⁵ The VMS chose Berlin as its capital, but Munich remained a key centre for right-wing monarchists. Biskupsky stayed in Munich, where he was a founding member of the Russian Monarchist Union, recognising the authority of the VMS.⁶⁶

Biskupsky's position within the monarchist movement was not firmly established at the time of the Reichenhall Congress. Although he claimed to have been a member of the far-right Union of the Russian People before World War I,⁶⁷ in the early 1920s, he fluctuated freely between the monarchist-constitutionalists and the far right. He cooperated with the constitutional monarchist Efimovsky from the

62 "Reichenhall", *Wirtschafts-politische Aufbau-Korrespondenz*, 7 July 1922, no. 27, p. 1.

63 On Markov and his pre-revolutionary career, see Dmitrii STOGOV, "Predislovie," in Nikolai E. MARKOV, *Dumskie rechi. Voiny temnykh sil* (Moskva: Institutu russkoi tsivilizatsii, 2011), pp. 5–28; Zbyněk VYDRA, *Život za cara? Krajní pravice v předrevolučním Rusku* (Červený Kostelec: Pavel Mervart 2010), pp. 84–85, 152–153, 267–273, 366–367, 453–454.

64 *Russkaia voennaia emigratsiia*, vol. 1, part 2, p. 463.

65 RGVA, f. 308k, op. 9, ed. khr. 615, p. 168.

66 BayHStA MInn 71624. Stanovy Russkago Monarchicheskogo Obiedineniia v Bavarii, 5 December 1921. In some documents, Biskupsky is mentioned as a delegate of the Monarchist Union at the congress in Bad Reichenhall. However, the meeting took place earlier, on 29 May–5 June 1921. Cf. *Russkaia voennaia emigratsiia*, vol 1., part 2, pp. 462, 465.

67 In his biographical study on Biskupsky, Seregin questions his membership of the URP, arguing that there is no evidence for this in the sources or the memoir literature. However, Biskupsky claimed this to the German authorities at the end of the 1930s. See BArch, NS 43/35, p. 56. Cf. A. SEREGIN, *General V. V. Biskupskii*, p. 80.

end of 1920 until 1922.⁶⁸ In March 1922, he participated in the constituent conference of the Russian People's Monarchy Union in Berlin.⁶⁹ In May 1922, General von Lampe noted in his diary that "*Efimovsky raves about Biskupsky*".⁷⁰ The constitutionalists supported Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich's candidacy for the Russian throne. A cousin of Nicholas II, he was considered the most liberal of the Romanovs, primarily because of his involvement in the murder of Rasputin. After arriving in Berlin in March 1921, Biskupsky tried to persuade Dmitri to declare himself the head of the dynasty.⁷¹ While still at the Bad Reichenhall Congress, he supported the candidacy of Dmitri Pavlovich.⁷²

At the same time, Biskupsky maintained contacts with the far-right group centred around Markov. On 26 February 1921, the *United Monarchist Party* was founded in Berlin. The leadership mainly consisted of monarchists of the older generation, such as the former senator Aleksei V. Bellegarde (Bel'gardt), recently a colleague of Biskupsky in Berlin's West Russian Government. Biskupsky joined as a military adviser. The party established a working committee to prepare for the Monarchist Congress in Bad Reichenhall.⁷³

Biskupsky drifted away from the constitutionalists while participating in the Reichenhall Congress and working for the Aufbau. He also changed his preferences regarding the succession to the throne. Dmitri Pavlovich showed little interest in politics. At the same time, Grand Duke Kirill Vladimirovich decided to move to Germany. Also a cousin of Nicholas II, Kirill was the first in the order of pretenders to the throne, according to the dynastic laws. Biskupsky concluded that he could be the only legitimate head of the dynasty.⁷⁴ He contacted Kirill's wife, Vic-

68 Von Lampe dated the contact between Biskupsky and Efimovsky to December 1920. GARF, f. 5853, op. 1, d. 8, p. 21). Soviet agents reported on the beginning of cooperation between Efimovsky and Biskupsky in November 1920 and again in February 1921. See *Russkaia voennaia emigratsiia*, Vol. 6, p. 757.

69 Cf. *Trudy Uchreditelnoi Konferentsii Russkago Narodno-Monarchicheskago Soiuzna (Konstitucionnykh Monarkhistov) s 25 marta po 5 aprilia 1922 goda* (Munich 1922), p. 76 (list of conference participants).

70 GARF, f. 5853, op. 1, D. 8, p. 21 (minutes of 13 May 1922).

71 G. GRAF, *Na sluzbbe*, p. 511.

72 J. BAUR, *Die russische Kolonie*, p. 114.

73 "Rossiiskoe monarchicheskoe ob'edinenie", *Rul'*, no. 87, 1 March 1921, p. 3; "Ustav 'Monarchicheskogo ob'edineniia'", *Rul'*, nr. 89, 3 March 1921, p. 5; J. BAUR, *Die russische Kolonie*, p. 104.

74 Kirill already applied to the German authorities for permission to move to Coburg in March 1920. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs had no objections. After the Revolution, they lived in Finland and later in France. Kirill and his family definitely moved to Germany in the spring of

toria Feodorovna, at the first possible opportunity in Munich. The Grand Duchess liked Biskupsky's pro-German orientation, especially since she had relatives in Coburg.⁷⁵ At a meeting of the Russian Monarchist Union in Munich, Biskupsky subsequently expressed his criticism of Dmitri Pavlovich and announced that he was moving to the camp of Kirill Vladimirovich. General Nikolai A. Epanchin, who took part in the meeting, said that Biskupsky then became not only a supporter of Kirill but his "grand vizier".⁷⁶

From the moment Biskupsky joined the "Kirillovites", he was one of the leading activists of the emerging legitimist movement. He urged the Grand Duke to declare himself the head of the dynasty quickly, also because the VMS tried to persuade Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich to do the same in Paris. Nikolai was the eldest of Romanovs, the last emperor's uncle, and still enjoyed considerable popularity among the military émigrés. Nikolai declined to play the role of "emperor in exile" as he insisted that the future system of government should be decided only by Russians in Russia after the fall of the Bolshevik regime. Still, the legitimists feared that Nikolai had a chance of gaining the support of the French government and wide Russian émigré circles. Biskupsky, therefore, wanted Kirill to act quickly and be ahead of Nikolai, but the Grand Duke was hesitant about claiming the title of emperor. Despite being reconciled to the fact that Nicholas II had indeed been murdered, both Kirill and Victoria Feodorovna wanted to proceed cautiously.⁷⁷ In August 1922, Kirill declared himself "Guardian of the Throne" and head of the dynasty. Biskupsky co-authored a manifesto written in a strongly pro-German tone.⁷⁸ Since there were many supporters of Grand Duke Nikolai in Munich, Kirill's move was discussed and criticised. The legitimists met with Nikolai Markov, who assessed Kirill's move as "premature" and criticised the fact that it was made without agreement with the VMS. For Kirill's supporters, this was a denial of the

1924. BayHStA, MA 104 351, folder "Grand Duke Kirill"; IfZ Munich, MA 128-5, Biskupsky's Zeugenaussage, 11. 3. 1930, p. 2.

75 G. GRAF, *Na sluzhbe*, p. 49; BA - MA Freiburg, MSG 241-14, p. 195. Carl Eduard, the Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, was one of the leading aristocratic supporters of the NSDAP. Cf. Stephan MALINOWSKI, *Nazis and Nobles. The History of Misalliance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 201–202.

76 N. A. EPANCHIN, *Na sluzhbe trekh imperatorov* (Moscow: Izdanie zhurnala "Nashe nasledie" 1996), p. 497.

77 G. GRAF, *Na sluzhbe*, p. 50.

78 N. SNESSAREV, *Kirill Pervyi*, pp. 47–54.

principle of monarchist legitimism. Thus, many émigrés broke with the VMS and withdrew from the Munich Russian Monarchist Union.⁷⁹

The monarchist movement had never been united, and now the fragmentation was evident. In 1923, the legitimists gained the upper hand among the monarchists in Munich and succeeded in expanding abroad. In April, seventeen legitimist groups were registered worldwide.⁸⁰ Biskupsky was primarily involved in the Munich group associated with the *Aufbau* and worked with the legitimists around Grand Duke Kirill.⁸¹

Biskupsky had close links with German and Russian right-wing radicals in Munich in 1921–1923. Due to these connections, he was suspected of being involved in the attempted assassination of Pavel N. Milyukov. Pavel N. Shabelsky-Bork and Sergei N. Taboritsky opened fire on Milyukov, the leader of the Russian liberals, during his public lecture in Berlin on 28 March 1922. Milyukov was unharmed, but another prominent liberal, Vladimir Dmitrievich Nabokov, was killed. The assassination significantly tarnished the image of the monarchists.⁸² It also affected Biskupsky, who was in Berlin at that time attending a congress of constitutional monarchists. Because of his reputation and the fact that he had known the assassins in Munich, he was detained by the police on 29 March and interrogated. He was quickly released with no evidence of his being directly involved in the assassination or familiar with the assassins' plans.⁸³

The turning point for Biskupsky's further work in Munich was Hitler's failed "Beer Hall Putsch". It ended a very active stage of his life. He did not participate in the putsch directly, but his close contacts with the National Socialists put him in trouble. The assumption that Biskupsky participated in Hitler's putsch was based primarily on his cooperation with Scheubner-Richter in the *Aufbau*. Arno Schickedanz, another member of the *Aufbau* whom Biskupsky knew very well, was banished from Bavaria for active participation in the putsch. The police believed that Biskupsky must also have been involved, or at least "provided assistance with

79 G. GRAF, *Na službbe*, pp. 51–52.

80 See the list in *Vestnik russkago monarkhicheskago ob'edineniia*, No. 4, 20 April 1923.

81 G. S. CHUVARDIN, *Imperator Kirill I*, n. p.

82 J. BAUR, *Die russische Kolonie*, p. 194; Igor Romanovich PETROV, "Vse samochintsy proizvolala...": podlinnaia biografia Sergeia Taboritskogo," *Neprikosnovennyi zapas*, nr. 6 (122), 2018, pp. 162–189 (here pp. 180–184).

83 BayHStA MInn 71624. Police headquarters in Munich. Colonel Vinberg's statement of 3 April 1922 (p. 1) and General Epanchin's of 3 April 1922 (p. 6); BArch, R43II/1488a, p. 61. Cf. J. BAUR, *Die russische Kolonie*, p. 194; B. DODENHOEFT, *Vasilij von Biskupskij*, p. 221.

advice, especially because it is clear that Biskupsky is a political adventurer and also maintains connections with French circles and people who are engaged in French or Polish politics.”⁸⁴

The police assessment of Biskupsky’s ties to France and Poland should not be taken seriously. It corresponded to many conflicting rumours that soon emerged after the putsch. According to one of them, Biskupsky had instigated the putsch as a secret agent of the Bolsheviks. At the behest of Moscow, he persuaded Hitler to attempt a putsch to spark a civil war in Germany and facilitate the rise of Bolshevism. Other versions made him an agent of the general staff of France and Poland.⁸⁵ There was also a rumour that Hitler had hidden in Biskupsky’s house after the putsch had been put down.⁸⁶ The monarchists-legitimists, therefore, issued an official statement in support of Biskupsky.⁸⁷ Given various accusations, Biskupsky was to be banished from Munich. He appealed, and since neither his participation in Hitler’s putsch nor his association with the Bolsheviks had been proved, the banishment was cancelled.⁸⁸

Later, during the trial of the putschists, Biskupsky was named as one of the sources of funding for the NSDAP. There was no specification of the amounts he allegedly provided to the NSDAP, and further details on financial transfers were given.⁸⁹ Other sources, however, clarify that a financial connection existed between the NSDAP and the legitimists, and Biskupsky played an essential role as a mediator. In September 1923, he initiated a meeting of Grand Duchess Victoria Feodorovna with General Ludendorff, Hitler, and Scheubner-Richter. At the meeting, it was agreed to create a joint fund to finance the restoration of the monarchy in Germany and Russia. The Grand Duchess donated 500,000 marks

84 BayHStA, MIInn. 71625. Report of the Police Headquarters in Munich on Biskupsky, 28 March 1924.

85 *Russkaia voiennaia emigratsiia*, vol. 5, Moskva: Nauka, 2010, p. 127.

86 A. V. SEREGIN, *General V. V. Biskupskii*, p. 83. Another source states that Hans Frank, the future Governor-General of Poland, hid in Biskupsky’s apartment. See BA MA Freiburg, MSG 241–14, p. 195. The speculation about Hitler hiding out in Biskupsky’s home was questioned by historians already in the 1960s. Cf. W. LAQUEUR, *Russia and Germany*, pp. 142–143.

87 *Russkaia voiennaia emigratsiia*, vol. 5, pp. 126–129.

88 BayHStA MIInn, 71625. Inquiry to Biskupsky from the Reich Commissioner for the Supervision of Public Order to the Police Headquarters in Munich, 1 February 1924.

89 The contact person between Biskupsky and the NSDAP was allegedly the deputy of the Landtag of Bavaria, Alexander Glaser, a German People’s Party (DVP) member. BayHStA, MA 103 476/1, p.113.

to the fund. Biskupsky was appointed controller of the fund for the Russian side.⁹⁰

During the suppression of the putsch, Scheubner-Richter was shot. General von Lampe said his death did not mean a significant loss for the Russian emigrants. On the contrary, it was liberating since Scheubner-Richter was primarily pursuing German interests.⁹¹ Some Russian monarchists certainly had reasons for regret, and the VMS dedicated an obituary to the deceased, praising him as a close friend of Russian monarchism and “the great enemy of the Third International.”⁹² For Biskupsky, it was a palpable loss. With the death of Scheubner-Richter, the *Aufbau* soon came to an end. It was reorganised, and without a leading figure to dampen its internal strife, there was a conflict between Biskupsky, with his Greater Russian concept, and the pro-Ukrainian faction represented by the ambitious “Hetman” Ivan Poltavets-Ostrianysia. In mid-1924, the *Aufbau* ceased its activities.⁹³

“The Grand Vizier of Coburg”. Cooperation with the monarchists-legitimists in the 1920s.

Compared to the hectic period from 1920 to 1923, the following years were much quieter for Biskupsky. After the fiasco of Hitler’s putsch, the NSDAP was officially banned (until 1925), and Biskupsky intensified his activities in the camp of the monarchists-legitimists. Kirill Vladimirovich appointed him “General with special authority” and gave him extensive powers to conduct negotiations with political groups and European governments, make agreements, and handle contacts with other Russian émigré groups.⁹⁴ Biskupsky visited Coburg regularly, once or twice a month, as needed.⁹⁵ According to the reports of the Soviet Secret Service, Kirill paid him a monthly salary of 600 marks so he could afford an office and a secretary for conducting correspondence. The entire region of Central Europe fell under his

90 BArch, R1501/5004, letter of P. N. Shabelskii-Bork, 20 September 1933, p. 4; graph; G. GRAF, *Na službbe*, p. 82; J. POOL – S. POOL, *Who Financed Hitler*, pp. 113–115.

91 Cf. L. S. RITTER, *Schreiben*, p. 301 (GARF, f. 5853, op. 1, D. 13, p. 36 – minutes of 11 and 12 November 1923; p. 40 – minutes of 13 November 1923).

92 *Vysshii Monarkhicheskii Sovet. Ezhenedelnik*, 25 November 1923, no. 109, p. 8.

93 Biskupsky described the demise of the *Aufbau* in his report on Russian emigration to Heinrich Himmler dated 18 October 1935. IfZ Archiv, München, MA 297. Cf. W. LAQUEUR, *Russia and Germany*, p. 83; R. C. WILLIAMS, *Culture in Exile*, p. 220.

94 IfZ Archive, München, MA 297, Bericht, power of attorney of 17 March 1925 (appendix No. 1).

95 G. K. GRAF, *Na službbe*, p. 69.

authority, and the general also travelled to Bulgaria and Yugoslavia as Kirill's representative.⁹⁶ During these years, Biskupsky made numerous contacts within these groups and with various émigrés and established an information network that kept him informed not only about the situation among the legitimists but also about the Russian émigré situation in general. In Germany, he maintained contacts with the Stahlhelm, a paramilitary organisation of war veterans, from which he received financial support.⁹⁷

In April 1924, Grand Duke Kirill founded the Corps of the Imperial Army and Navy (Korpus imperatorskoi armii i flota, KIAiF). It was a deliberate counterweight to the Russian All-Military Union (ROVS), led by General Wrangel and loyal to Grand Duke Nicholas. Kirill wanted to eliminate the ROVS and merge the émigré armed forces into an organisation subordinate to himself. Biskupsky became a member of the Corps, and Kirill promoted him to General of the Cavalry. In the following years, Biskupsky tried to undermine the ROVS and bring its members into the legitimist camp. As a result, he often came into conflict with General von Lampe, the commander of the ROVS in Germany.⁹⁸

Biskupsky strongly advocated for Kirill to accept the title of Emperor. This was done officially on 13 September 1924. It was intended to strengthen the legitimist camp and to “overtake” Grand Duke Nicholas. Kirill was reluctant to do so; the ambitious Viktoria Feodorovna was easily persuaded. Biskupsky proposed to convene a conference to prepare the Tsar's manifesto. The innermost circle of Kirill's advisers was not united, and according to Nikolai Snessarev, the manifesto would have remained unsigned “in a drawer” had it not been for the vigorous Biskupsky.⁹⁹

96 The Munich office was located at Ludwigstrasse 11. Biskupsky lived in the Munich suburb of Solln (Hofbrunnstrasse 50). See *Russkaia voiennaia emigratsiia*, vol. 6, pp. 509–510. See also the Report of the Prague residency of the Foreign Department of the OGPU, 17 December 1924, in: *Russkaia voiennaia emigratsiia*, Vol. 4, Moskva: Nauka, 2007, pp. 51–52.

97 Cf. BArch, NS 43/35, Biskupsky to Schickedanz, 31 May 1933, p. 120.

98 *Polozhenie o Korpuse Ofitserov Imperatorskoi Armii i Flota*, Novi Sad 1924, in BAR, Nikolai Dmitrievich Nelidov Papers. Cf. G. S. CHUVARDIN, *Imperator Kirill I*, n.p.; Von Lampe's Diaries, GARE, f. 5853, op. 1, ed. khr. 30, microfilm 1, 9. 47; microfilm 2, p. 143.

99 Nikolai Snessarev (1856–1928) was a journalist, writer, and deputy of St. Petersburg City Duma in the 1910s. He emigrated in 1918. Originally a supporter of Grand Duke Kirill in Coburg, he became his fierce critic. N. SNESSAREV, *Kirill Pervyi*, pp. 111–112. The debate on adopting the imperial title is described in detail by G. GRAF, *Na sluzhbe*, pp. 94–95. Cf. BAUR, *Die russische Kolonie*, pp. 137–138.

Biskupsky enjoyed the considerable trust of Grand Duchess Victoria Fyodorovna, whereas Grand Duke Kirill was more reserved towards him. He always considered Biskupsky a reckless man with adventurous inclinations. Perhaps that is why Biskupsky was not privy to the details of subversive activities against the USSR provided by Kirill's men. Unlike military organisations (e.g. the ROVS), which sought armed resistance, Kirill's associates limited themselves to smuggling and distributing monarchist newspapers on the territory of the USSR. Biskupsky did not know the names of the people involved in these activities because "there was no reason for him to know them".¹⁰⁰

Caution in dealing with Biskupsky was in place. In his entrepreneurial spirit, Biskupsky was open to dealing with anyone, convinced everyone needed to be heard. "You never know where you will find and where you will lose."¹⁰¹ With such an attitude, he easily fell into the traps of swindlers and agents-provocateurs. He did not seem to have learnt his lesson from the Moschel affair in 1919 and repeatedly put his trust in persons he believed to be members of secret resistance organisations in the USSR. In fact, they were OGPU agents.¹⁰² His biggest mistake was blindly trusting Colonel Alexander D. Khomutov, his liaison in Berlin, who had been reporting to Soviet intelligence from the mid-1920s.¹⁰³

Biskupsky bothered many Russian monarchists. He was criticised and attacked when he appeared near Grand Duke Kirill. The legitimists in Paris (General Lokhvitsky, Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich, Professor A. Bashmakov) were particularly pessimistic about him and were troubled by his strongly pro-German position.¹⁰⁴ In addition, there were accusations that he was collaborating with the Bolsheviks. The rumour circulated in 1923 and reappeared in mid-1924 when the OGPU agents in Prague and Vienna noted it.¹⁰⁵ The investigation of the Police Headquarters in Munich did not confirm his connection with the Soviets.¹⁰⁶ The

100 G. GRAF, *Na službe*, p. 142.

101 *Ibidem*, p. 139.

102 *Ibidem*, pp. 90; 153.

103 *Ibidem*, p. 287. Cf. I. PETROV, *Vse samochintsy*, p. 164; Oleg BEYDA – Igor PETROV, *Stakeholders, Hangers-On and Copycats: The Russian Right in Berlin*, Illiberalism Studies Program Working Papers no. 6, April 2021, pp. 3, 10, 21, 23, 25.

104 *Russkaia voennaia emigratsiia*, Vol. 6, pp. 519, 529, 538, 555-556.

105 BayHStA, Abteilung II, Geheimes Staatsarchiv, MA 103009. Deutsch-Russische Beziehungen, Bd. II, 1919–1929. Reichskommissar für Überwachung der öffentlichen Ordnung is inquiring at the Munich Police Headquarters, 2 June 1923; *Russkaia voennaia emigratsiia*, vol. 4, pp. 52, 129.

106 BayHSTA MInn, 71625. Police report on Biskupsky from 28 March 1924.

accusations most probably came from Wrangel's ROVS and were part of the struggle of the supporters of Nicholas against Kirill's followers.¹⁰⁷

The attempt to discredit Biskupsky, however, was not very successful. His position with Kirill was not shaken, while among other émigré groups, he already had a bad reputation. Rather than harming one person, intrigues of this kind were damaging for both camps of monarchists. From the point of view of Soviet intelligence, the mutual struggle significantly reduced their danger: "Both movements are not eventually dangerous for Soviet Russia because most emigrants have given up thinking about an active struggle against the USSR and are concerned only with organising their personal affairs. The contingent of Don Quixotes is tiny and morally weak; they are unable to create anything solid (corps, army), and no one will go there."¹⁰⁸

The German authorities were also reserved in their assessment of Kirill's legitimist camp. Its essential potential was not denied, and its pro-German orientation was appealing. However, this was not enough for government support. The lack of financial resources and Grand Duke Kirill's circle personnel, including Biskupsky, were considered a weakness: "General Biskupsky had already collaborated with all parties, and his political activities in Berlin and Munich were always deceptive."¹⁰⁹

In the mid-1920s, the centre of gravity of Russian émigré life moved to France, and the previous centres began to lose their importance.¹¹⁰ In 1928, Kirill

107 Biskupsky criticised Wrangel's ROVS for its pro-French stance and questioned the possibility of intervention against the USSR with the assistance of France. He wished to destroy the Bolshevik regime but with the help of Germany. BayHStA, Abteilung II, Geheimes Staatsarchiv, MA 104351. Document no. 4840, Berlin, 20 February 1925. Bavarian Embassy in Berlin – to the MFA to Munich. See also the report of the Soviet intelligence station in Paris, 6 November 1925. *Russkaia voennaia emigratsiia*, vol. 6, p. 519. At the same time, General von Lampe, commander of the 2nd ROVS Department in Germany, called Biskupsky a "scoundrel". A. KOLON-TARI (ed.), *Aleksei von Lampe*, p. 184.

108 *Russkaia voennaia emigratsiia*, vol. 4, p. 129.

109 Cf. the report of the Office of the Reich Commissioner for Public Order of 11 March 1925. RGVA, f. 772k, op. 1, ed. khr. 98, pp. 13–15. At the same time, reports from Soviet secret agents provided information about the lack of finances in Kirill's camp. See *Russkaia voennaia emigratsiia*, vol. 6, p. 452.

110 The Russian community declined continuously in Germany: from 600,000 in 1923 to 150,000 in 1928 and 60,000 in 1932. Bettina DODENHOEFT, *Lasst mich nach Russland heim. Russische Emigranten in Deutschland von 1918 bis 1945* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1993), p. 10. On Paris as the "metropolis of emigration", see Robert H. JOHNSON, *New Mecca, New Babylon. Paris and the Russian Exile, 1920–1945* (Kingston – Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), pp. 21–22.

Vladimirovich moved permanently from Coburg to his Breton residence in St. Briac to bring the “court” closer to Paris. The failure of the negotiations with the German monarchists probably played a role in this decision. Although Biskupsky continued to make contacts, everything went very slowly. According to Garald Graf, the negotiations were delayed by the Germans. This could indeed be true since various Soviet intelligence reports stated that Bavarian industrialists were not very willing to entrust finances to the untrustworthy Biskupsky. Older rumours that had stuck to Biskupsky because of Hitler’s putsch and other previous affairs were probably an important factor. It was not until 1931 that small sums of money to publish the newspaper were received from the German monarchists.¹¹¹

Biskupsky remained the central figure among Kirill’s followers in Germany, but losing direct contact with the Grand Duke inevitably deprived him of some influence.¹¹² While he regularly commuted to Coburg from Munich or Berlin, he could not obtain a visa to travel to France. Graf, in turn, could not often leave St. Briac, so meetings became rare.¹¹³ This also affected the financial situation. Biskupsky admitted that by 1928, he had lost a significant part of his income.¹¹⁴ This was probably why he began to cooperate with Rear Admiral Magnus von Levetzow, supplying him with information about Russian emigration and news about the situation in the USSR (some of which he received from Khomutov). Cooperation took place with certainty in the years 1928–1930.¹¹⁵

Despite the distance between them, Biskupsky attempted to exert influence on Kirill. He urged the Grand Duke to issue a manifesto outlining his policy plans for a future Russia in both 1928 and 1931. The idea was to allow people to see and understand his vision for the country.¹¹⁶ At the same time, he warned against disregarding the possibility of a political alliance with the Nazis, being convinced of their future political success.¹¹⁷ In a meeting with Graf in June 1931, he was optimistic about the NSDAP’s chances of political success. The Nazis now seemed to be a much more promising force than the inactive monarchists. Biskupsky observed the Nazi

111 G. GRAF, *Na sluzhbe*, pp. 81–84, 115; *Russkaia voennaia emigratsiia*, vol. 6, pp. 458–459, 509–510.

112 G. GRAF, *Na sluzhbe*, p. 142; *Russkaia voennaia emigratsiia*, vol. 9, p. 158; vol. 10, p. 472.

113 G. GRAF, *Na sluzhbe*, p. 188.

114 BArch, NS 43/35, pp. 102, 168. Letters of Biskupsky to Arno Schickedanz, 13 January 1933 and 22 March 1933.

115 I. PETROV (ed.), “Povsiudu...” p. 323. Cf. BArch – MA Freiburg, Nachlass Levetzow, N239/57.

116 G. GRAF, *Na sluzhbe*, pp. 152, 271.

117 *Ibidem*, pp. 81–84.

NSDAP gaining strength as it achieved electoral success in 1930 (18.3 % of votes, 2nd strongest party in the Reichstag) and believed in its ultimate triumph.¹¹⁸

1933 – a year of failed expectations

The electoral successes of the NSDAP in 1930 and 1932 and the appointment of Adolf Hitler as Chancellor indicated new opportunities for Biskupsky, particularly a greater chance of fighting the Soviet power. He had already tried unsuccessfully to engage with well-known political figures. Now, he has increased his efforts. It turned out, however, that the standpoints of the NSDAP and the Russians were drifting apart. Alfred Rosenberg, the leading expert on the “East”, rejected the possibility of restoring Russian borders in 1914. He did not hide his scepticism about the idea of the Great Russian Empire. He supported Ukrainian separatism and the right to self-determination of other peoples of the Soviet Union. He identified the alliance between Berlin and Kyiv as one of future German foreign policy priorities. Such a view terrified the Great Russian monarchist emigrants.¹¹⁹ In 1931, the Paris newspaper *Vozrozhdenie* (No. 2382) published an alleged interview with Rosenberg. Biskupsky wrote that he had always had sympathy for him but could not agree with him on Russia’s division.¹²⁰ The interview turned out to be fabricated, and Rosenberg reacted to Biskupsky with a reserved response: “Germany cannot base its foreign policy on the hopes of Russian nationalists.”¹²¹

The Nazis’ rise to power found resonance within the emigrant community of Berlin. During 1933, there were several attempts to build a Russian fascist movement there, strongly copying the Nazi style. Biskupsky was also initially enticed to get involved. He attended a meeting of the organising staff of the “Russian national socialists”, from which the Russian Popular Liberation Movement (ROND; Russkoe Osvoboditel’noe Natsional’noe Dvizhenie) arose. The people around the movement did not seem credible, so he did not join the organisation, preferring to

118 Biskupsky spoke about this at a meeting with Graf in Munich in June 1931. See G. GRAF, *Na sluzhbu*, p. 266.

119 Alfred ROSENBERG, *Der Zukunftsweg einer deutschen Aussenpolitik* (Munich: Franz Ehr Verlag, 1927), pp. 93–97. Biskupsky’s letter of 28 September 1926, BARch Berlin, NS 8/290, p. 44. Cf. Hans-Adolf JACOBSEN, *Nationalsozialistische Außenpolitik 1933–1938* (Frankfurt am Main – Berlin: Alfred Metzner Verlag, 1968), p. 51.

120 IfZ Archiv, München, MA 128/5, unpag. Biskupsky to Rosenberg, 22 December 1931.

121 IfZ Archiv, München, MA 128/5, unpag. Rosenberg to Biskupsky, 30 December 1931.

disassociate himself from it entirely within a few days.¹²² In the following months, the ROND was the most significant attempt of the Russian fascists in Germany in 1933 to build an independent movement. The ROND, however, was short-lived and fell apart because of internal disagreements and external pressure. The development of German politics did not favour independent political activities.

On 1 April 1933, Alfred Rosenberg became leader of the APA (NSDAP Office of Foreign Affairs), a new party office partially duplicating the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.¹²³ Biskupsky promptly congratulated him and continued to propose various forms of cooperation. He hoped to get a position in the APA and even made proposals for the organisation of the office. It was not to be built like other foreign policy bureaux but as a direct antithesis to the Comintern. Biskupsky offered the services, experience, and contacts he had gained in exile to establish the Russian department, which would have to be organised as a “conspiracy cell”.¹²⁴ In addition to these proposals, he cooperated with an unspecified “Paris group” he claimed to be close to. Probably, this was the “Mladorossi” (the Union of Young Russia). The group would supply information about emigrants in Paris and their anti-German activities, as well as Moscow’s policy in France, on the condition of financial support.¹²⁵

Rosenberg did not respond. The former colleague showed no helpfulness and ignored Biskupsky when he visited Munich in mid-April.¹²⁶ Disappointed, Biskupsky then turned to Schickedanz, Rosenberg’s deputy in the APA.¹²⁷ He referred to 1921–1923 and their shared past in the Aufbau. However, neither did Schickedanz accept Biskupsky’s proposals, although the latter showered him with an avalanche of letters with various political projects and ideas.¹²⁸ Rosenberg and Schickendanz showed little interest in cooperating with the Russian monarchist, given their rise to power and the earlier shift in their views on Russia. Besides that,

122 O. BEYDA – I. PETROV, *Stakeholders*, p. 6; IfZ Archive, München, MA 128/5, unpag. Shabelsky-Bork to Schickendanz, 14 March (no year) and 4 April 1933; Biskupsky to Schickendanz, 22 March 1933.

123 H.-A. JACOBSEN, *Nationalsozialistische Außenpolitik*, pp. 45–46.

124 BArch, NS 43/35, pp. 179–180. Biskupsky to Rosenberg, 6 April 1933.

125 BArch 43/35, Biskupsky to Rosenberg, 26 April 1933, p. 111; Biskupsky to Schickendanz, 20 April 1933, p. 112.

126 BArch, NS 43/35, Biskupsky to Schickendanz, 30 April 1933.

127 On Schickendanz’s position in the APA, see H.-A. JACOBSEN, *Nationalsozialistische Außenpolitik*, pp. 56–57.

128 Igor Petrov edited Biskupsky’s correspondence to Rosenberg and Schickendanz. See I. PETROV (ed.), “Povsiudu...” pp. 307–381.

Biskupsky's information was hard to verify. With his reputation as a notorious adventurer and schemer in émigré circles, Biskupsky deliberately spread rumours, which he admitted in one of his letters to Rosenberg: "In case you accept my proposal, before I depart from Berlin I had spread the rumour everywhere that I had achieved nothing – neither with the government nor with the party. After all, this rumour initially corresponds to reality."¹²⁹ In his letters to Schickedanz, Biskupsky asked for financial help for himself and his colleagues. He repeatedly drew attention to Peter Shabelsky-Bork's difficult situation.¹³⁰ Instead of a satisfactory reply, the general received an unpleasant surprise, which awaited many Russian emigrants. On 28 June 1933, he was arrested and taken into custody by the Bavarian Gestapo.

The wave of arrests among the Russian emigrants began in June 1933 and seemingly had no logic. The number of denunciations among Russian emigrants precluded preliminary investigations, and thus, the police preemptively arrested "everyone" and only then figured out who was who. As a result, Biskupsky was among those arrested, as was his competitor, General von Lampe. The police had no tangible evidence against von Lampe, except for a denunciation that he worked for the French intelligence and the Soviet OGPU. The denunciation likely came from Biskupsky, who was settling old scores with von Lampe.¹³¹ Von Lampe spent several weeks in prison and wrote bitterly in his diary: "General Biskupsky is in the cell above me!"¹³²

Biskupsky's wife immediately mobilised all her contacts to help him. She wrote letters to Rosenberg and Schickedanz and asked Scheubner-Richter's widow to call Heinrich Himmler, the Munich police chief. She learned that Biskupsky's situation was "hopeless". According to Himmler, "the order came directly from Berlin", while they had nothing against her husband in Munich.¹³³ Later it turned out that the Berlin Gestapo had reported to Munich as early as 24 May that Biskupsky

129 BArch, NS 43/35, Biskupsky to Rosenberg, 6 April 1933.

130 IfZ München, MA 128/5 (unpag.). Biskupsky to Schickedanz, 22 March 1933, 27 March 1933 and 28 April 1933; BArch NS 43/35, pp. 167, 170.

131 IfZ Archiv, München, MA 128/5 (unpag.), Shabelskii-Bork to Schickedanz, 29 March 1933; RGVA, 7k, op. 4, ed. khr. 168, p. 8. Von Lampe printed a rebuttal to one of the rumours in the Paris newspaper *Vozrozhdenie*, no. 2922, 2 June 1933, p. 6.

132 O. BEYDA – I. PETROV, *Stakeholders*, p. 15. On von Lampe's arrest cf. L. S. RITTER, *Lamp*, pp. 320–324.

133 IfZ Archiv, München, MA 128/5, unpag. Liubov N. Biskupskaya to Schickedanz, July 1933.

was a staunch supporter of the Entente, did not hide his hostility towards Germany, was a sworn enemy of Nazism, and also had ties to the OGPU.¹³⁴

The Bavarian police could not verify the veracity of the denunciation for a long time, and Biskupsky remained in custody until 19 September. He was released under a written promise to cease all political activity.¹³⁵ It is possible that the letter of Grand Duke Kirill Vladimirovich, sent with some hesitation to Hitler, also affected his release, or at least that was Biskupsky's belief.¹³⁶ Compensation for the arrest, which brought the Biskupsky family to the brink of financial ruin, was not paid. Hitler personally decided that "the Russian general Biskupsky from Munich will not receive support from official sources."¹³⁷

The three months spent in prison probably finally deprived Biskupsky of any illusions about the benefits he could get from "old friends" from the Aufbau. In the following months, he made no further attempt to contact Rosenberg. However, this did not mean the end of his efforts to cooperate with the Nazis and strengthen his position in émigré circles. Biskupsky merely switched his attention from the APA to the Gestapo. At the end of 1933, upon receiving Heinrich Himmler's contact details, he sent him messages about the monarchist émigré movement.¹³⁸ In 1935, he wrote a comprehensive report on the relations within Russian émigré circles, in which he also summarised his work in Germany from 1920. He, of course, stressed his loyalty to Germany and his collaboration with the NSDAP. He did not forget to mention Scheubner-Richter and the Aufbau.¹³⁹ The amount of detail probably impressed the Reichsführer-SS and his staff and advanced Biskupsky's further career. Biskupsky became a Gestapo informer, and the secret police turned

134 According to French intelligence, Biskupsky was arrested on suspicion of spying for the British. RGVA, f. 7k, op. 2, ed. kh. 2801. Svedeniia ob areste germanskimi vlastiami agentov britanskoi razvedki Khomutova i fon Biskupskogo. 1921–1933.

135 On the charge and arrest, see Heydrich's letter to Rosenberg, 1 December 1933. BArch, R43-II/1488a, p. 61–62; B. DODENHOEFT, *Biskupskij*, p. 223.

136 In his memoirs, Graf even states that the charges included participation in a conspiracy against Hitler. In this particular case, however, Graf is not a reliable source since he was mistaken about the date of Biskupsky's imprisonment by three years. According to him, the general was detained from June to September 1936, which does not match the correspondence of Biskupsky and his relatives with the authorities. The Russian historian Seregin takes up Graf's error uncritically. Cf. G. GRAF, *Na sluzhbe*, pp. 304–305; A. V. SEREGIN, *General V. V. Biskupskii*, p. 86.

137 BArch R43/1488a, Ministerial Councillor Thomsen to Schickedanz, 16 February 1934, p. 77.

138 IFZ Archiv, München, MA 297. Bericht über die russische monarchistischen Organisationen in der Emigration, 18 October 1935, p.10.

139 IFZ Archiv, München, MA 297. Bericht über die russische monarchistischen Organisationen in der Emigration, 18 October 1935.

to him with questions about Russian emigrants, considering him an expert.¹⁴⁰ He cooperated with the Third Department, where he was in contact with Obersturmführer Franz-Josef Pech.¹⁴¹ In addition, he remained an APA informant.¹⁴²

A career peak: head of the *Russische Vertrauensstelle*.

When Biskupsky arrived in Coburg on March 2, 1936, for the funeral of Grand Duchess Victoria Feodorovna, he met Garald Graf. After the funeral ceremony, Biskupsky explained to him the current intentions of the German government, at least as he understood them as an outside observer: “Germany has long aimed at the destruction of communism, after which the question of the restoration of the monarchy in Russia will arise.” He also confided that he expected to be soon appointed “the leader of the Russian emigrants in Germany.”¹⁴³

His view of German policy towards Russia was distorted by his fixation on the idea of the monarchy’s restoration, but this time, he was not wrong in his second prediction. In May 1936, the German authorities abolished the unofficial office for Russian emigrants (*Vertrauensstelle für russische Emigranten*), which had existed since 1922. They replaced it with a new state institution with Biskupsky at its head. The new *Russische Vertrauensstelle in Deutschland (RVst)* was located at Berlin-Charlottenburg, Bleibtreustrasse 27.

The difference between the original and independent *Vertrauensstelle* and the new institution was that the latter was established and controlled by the state. Correspondence to the RVst did not come directly but through the Gestapo. The RVst was not supposed to carry out any political activity; its task was to register all Russian emigrants, becoming a kind of “consular office”. People over fifteen were given an ID document with a photo and signature. When dealing with the Immigration Police, emigrants were required to present their ID. The RVst could represent individuals before the authorities and could be confidentially queried when a foreign passport was to be issued to individual USSR nationals. Other tasks included assistance in finding employment and applying for a residence permit. In addition, the RVst had to share information about emigrants with the authori-

140 For example, in July 1935, the Gestapo inquired about the leader of the Russian fascists in Manchuria, Konstantin Rodzaevsky. RGVA, f. 1323, op. 2, ed. khr. 172, pp. 487–489.

141 BArch-MA, MSG 241-14, p. 197.

142 H.-A. JACOBSEN, *Nationalsozialistische Außenpolitik*, p. 88.

143 G. GRAF, *Na sluzhbe*, pp. 303–304.

ties.¹⁴⁴ For example, from 1938, it had to provide the addresses of Russian Jews, who were then expelled.¹⁴⁵

Biskupsky was a well-known figure, and his leadership of the RVst garnered immediate attention not only among emigrants. He gave an interview to the Parisian newspaper *Vozrozhdenie*, which was one of the most widely read émigré periodicals. In the interview, he explained the reasons for the creation of the RVst, citing the need to address the long-standing chaos among emigrants. He also emphasised the office's apolitical, impartial, and independent policy.¹⁴⁶ However, given Biskupsky's reputation among some émigré circles, his statement was not convincing. The liberal periodical *Poslednie novosti* (Paris) labelled him as a "dictator over Russian émigrés in Germany".¹⁴⁷ The *Pariser Tageblatt*, the newspaper of German emigrants in Paris, recalled his 1920 plan to restore the monarchy.¹⁴⁸ The influential French periodical *Le Temps* warned against strengthening the "clan of implacable and interventionist emigrants" who could become an instrument of German anti-Russian policy.¹⁴⁹ The reactions were primarily adverse, and the interview for *Vozrozhdenie* could hardly convince anyone. The prevailing opinion was clear: the new office was merely an instrument of German politics. Although Biskupsky did not admit it publicly, he became "a German official, subordinate to the Ministry of the Interior and the state secret police" (General von Lampe's assessment).¹⁵⁰

Despite the adverse reactions, not all emigrants disagreed, and some reacted positively to Biskupsky's appointment. They saw the establishment of the RVst as a signal for mobilisation. A group of 150–200 officers in French exile even applied for permission to travel to Germany to join the fight against Bolshevism. However,

144 BArch, R 58/270, pp. 35–37 (Gestapo information on the establishment of the RVst, 7 July 1936); pp. 75–77 (circular with an overview of the tasks of the RVst, Office of the Reichsführer-SS, 19 May 1937).

145 B. DODENHOEFT, *Biskupskij*, p. 224.

146 "Naznachenie generala V. V. Biskupskago," *Vozrozhdenie*, 5 May 1936, no. 3989, p. 4.

147 "Diktator nad russkoi emigratsiei v Germanii," *Poslednie novosti*, 6 May 1936, BArch, NS 43/35, p. 86.

148 "Hitler und die russische Emigration. Die Rolle des Generals Biskupsky," *Pariser Tageblatt*, 24 May 1936, BArch, NS 43/35, p. 76.

149 "Dans L'Émigration Russe. Défaitistes et défenseurs," *Le Temps*, 19 May 1936, BArch, NS 43/35, p. 78. A similar message was evident in the article "Hitler Collects Russian White Guards," *Berner Tagwacht*, 4 June 1936, BArch, NS 43/35, p. 73.

150 HIA, Arkhangel'skii Papers, Box 2, unsorted. Colonel Macylov's conversation with General von Lampe, Paris, 26 June 1947.

the Gestapo viewed such offers with distrust and forbade Biskupsky from responding to the letter.¹⁵¹

There were objections to Biskupsky's appointment as the head of the RVSt. One warning stated that he was not a suitable candidate because of his ties to Grand Duke Kirill and unpopularity among emigrants. Another one questioned him as a "Great Russian", which the Bolsheviks would use in counter-propaganda in speculation as "fascists pitting a Russian against Ukrainians, Georgians, etc".¹⁵² The warning letters were addressed primarily to the APA, which, however, did not decide on the establishment of the RVst and the appointment of Biskupsky. Everything rested in the hands of the Gestapo, which kept a close eye on the activities of the RVst. The observation and control were justified by the experience that "emigration practically equals demoralisation".¹⁵³ According to the Gestapo, Russian emigrants, divided and quarrelsome, often struggling for bare existence, represented a long-term unstable element and a permanent threat to internal political conditions. From a security point of view, the greatest risk was the penetration of "Bolshevik, Jewish, Masonic, and foreign influences" among emigrants, who then became "politically unreliable".¹⁵⁴

The German authorities wanted to calm and clarify the situation among Russian emigrants so that it could be more easily controlled from the centre. Minor associations were dissolved or merged with other organisations. The goal was to have only one representative organisation of each kind: one student union, one youth organisation, one charity organisation, one military union, etc.¹⁵⁵ The "Gleichschaltung" took some time, but gradually, the associations were dissolved, and new organisations were created. For example, in May 1939, the National Organisation of Russian Youth (NORM), a united Russian youth organisation similar to the Hitlerjugend, was founded.¹⁵⁶

Even military organisations were not spared from the transformation. The German authorities demanded that the 2nd ROVS Department, commanded by General von Lampe, be transformed into a separate organisation. The Brussels-

151 Politisches Archiv des Auswärtiges Amtes (PAAA), R104376, Colonel Vetchinkin to Biskupsky, 20 January 1937; rejected by the Gestapo, 4 March 1937.

152 IfZ Archiv, München, MA 128-5, unpag. Letters from 24 April 1936, 29 April 1936, 5 May 1936.

153 BArch, R 58/3016a. RSHA. Lageberichte und Meldungen der Staatspolizeistellen 1937, pp. 77–81.

154 Ibidem.

155 L. S. RITTER, *Schreiben*, p. 312; B. DODENHOEFT, *Biskupskij*, p. 226.

156 BArch, R58/582, p. 29.

based ROVS commander-in-chief, General Arkhangelsky, initially rejected any change, but Biskupsky presented the ROVS leaders with a clear choice – either they would agree to the split of the ROVS 2nd Department into a separate organisation, or it would be closed at the request of the German authorities. If organisations with headquarters abroad did not transform, they would be dissolved or moved abroad, so the ROVS could not expect an exception. Biskupsky did not see this as a manifestation of the hostility of the German authorities towards the ROVS.¹⁵⁷ General von Lampe was well aware of the hopelessness of the situation. The ROVS had no choice: “The day is approaching when ROVSojuz will have to finally choose with whom it will have to go and will have to leave its present independent position. The whole of Europe is more and more definitely divided into two parts – fascist and pro-Bolshevik ones. It is clear that we can ONLY be with the former...”¹⁵⁸ The 2nd Department was organised separately, the “Union of Russian Military Unions” (*Ob’edinenie Russkikh Voinskikh Soiuzov, ORVS*).¹⁵⁹ Von Lampe remained at the head and regularly reported to Biskupsky about the activities of the ORVS. Their former bitter rivalry turned into mutual respect and cooperation in the following years.¹⁶⁰

The process of “Gleichschaltung” was also delayed by the expansion of German rule in Europe. More offices of the RVSt were established in the territories, which gradually fell under German control after 1938. An office was established in Vienna in the spring of 1938. In the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, the German authorities counted over 70 Russian emigrant organisations in May 1939.¹⁶¹ Biskupsky, therefore, went to Prague to subordinate the local Russian emigrants to the Russian, or rather German, leadership from Berlin.¹⁶² After his visit, the Prague office of the Vertraunstelle was opened.¹⁶³

157 *Ruskaia voennaia emigratsiia*, vol. 9, pp. 653–654 (letter from Arkhangelsky to Biskupsky, 29 April 1938), 654–655 (Biskupsky’s letter to von Lampe, 1 June 1938).

158 *Ibidem*, p. 657 (von Lampe’s letter to Arkhangelsky, 3 June 1938).

159 *Ibidem*, pp. 665–666.

160 J. BAUR, *Die russische Kolonie*, pp. 289, 294; Vladislav Ivanovich GOLDIN, *Soldaty na chuzhbine. Russkij Obschche-voinskii Soiuz, Rossiia i russkoe zarubezh’e in XX–XI vekakh* (Arkhangelsk, 2006), pp. 268–269.

161 BArch, R58/582, Lagebericht über die illegale kommunistische und marxistische Bewegung Deutschlands für das 2. Vierteljahr 1939, p. 30.

162 BArch, NS 43/35. Letters from Biskupsky to Schickedanz, 9 December 1939 and 19 December 1939, p. 29–30.

163 *Ruskaia voennaia emigratsiia*, vol. 9, pp. 701–702, 705–708, 710–711, 724–726, 729–732; Anastázie KOPŘIVOVÁ, *Střediska ruského emigrantského života v Praze (1921–1952)* (Praha: Slovanská knihovna, 2001), pp. 58, 79.

Biskupsky used his new position to promote the interests of Grand Duke Kirill. As the head of the RVst, he had to act above party politics, which did not prevent him from maintaining old relations with the legitimists,¹⁶⁴ who could not involve themselves in political activities in Germany. The arrest of Biskupsky in 1933 and the pledge not to resume political activities after his release also affected the legitimists, for whom he was the main person in Germany. In October 1933, Grand Duke Kirill closed the offices in Berlin and Hamburg, suspending the activities of the legitimists in the country.¹⁶⁵ Nevertheless, Biskupsky was able to assist the legitimist movement and tried to do so. In particular, it involved financial affairs and building the best possible relationship of the Romanovs with the Nazi regime.

For the Romanovs, Biskupsky tried to obtain the funds deposited by Tsar Nicholas II in the Mendelssohn bank, where, in 1937, there were approximately 339,000 marks in cash and securities.¹⁶⁶ In theory, ten contenders could claim the property, including the USSR and the allegedly surviving Grand Duchess Anastasia, daughter of Nicholas II. Biskupsky advocated paying the funds to Kirill, who was entitled to the money as head of the House of Romanov and pretender to the throne. The effort was probably motivated by Kirill's promise to pay him a commission of 15 % of the total amount. Biskupsky argued that Kirill's family was entitled to the payment since it had financed General Ludendorff with more than a million marks in 1922–1923 and was promised a refund at the earliest possible opportunity. In 1937, 275,000 marks were transferred to the state account so that, theoretically, nothing stood in the way of a payout.¹⁶⁷ For unknown reasons, it was delayed, and the death of Kirill in 1938 brought everything to a halt. The payout was again postponed, and in 1939, Biskupsky planned legal proceedings to get the money, which, however, did not happen. The money remained in the bank, and there was no information about Biskupsky trying to get it again during the war.¹⁶⁸

In May 1938, Biskupsky was a guest at the wedding of Grand Duchess Kira Kirillovna to Prince Louis Ferdinand of Hohenzollern, grandson of the ex-emperor Wilhelm II. There is no evidence that Biskupsky had any involvement in arranging

164 G. GRAF, *Na sluzhbe*, pp. 305, 374.

165 PAAA, R31664k, "Innere Politik, russische Emigranten und Monarchisten im Ausland, 1933–1934," P. N. Shabel'sky-Bork's letter, 4 November 1933.

166 BArch, NS 43/35, pp. 32–37. Department of Justice report of 7 December 1939.

167 B. DODENHOEFT, *Vasilij von Biskupskij*, p. 225.

168 BA NS 43/35, Biskupsky to Schickedanz, 23 October 1939, p. 9. For a case summary, see R. C. WILLIAMS, *Culture in Exile*, pp. 349–350.

the marriage. Still, he considered the wedding advantageous for the legitimist movement, given the dynastic ties and social prestige of the Hohenzollern dynasty. At the same time, it was also slightly problematic because of the groom's critical attitude to the Nazi regime.¹⁶⁹ Shortly afterwards, Grand Duke Kirill Vladimirovich died (2 August 1938), and his twenty-one-year-old son Vladimir Kirillovich became the pretender to the throne. Biskupsky felt the opportunity to strengthen his position in the inner circle of the young and relatively inexperienced Vladimir. It seemed to him that there was too much of an anti-German mood in the "tsar's court" because of the influence of the Mladorossi.

In 1923, Biskupsky assisted in creating the Mladorossi movement, but after 1933, there was an estrangement between them.¹⁷⁰ Since 1930, the Mladorossi, led by Alexandr L. Kazem-Bek, had been acting as a party close to Grand Duke Kirill, trying to take the "first monarchist party" position. They brought a new dynamic to the monarchist movement and, by promoting the provocative slogan "The Tsar and the Soviets", set themselves apart from the older generation, which wished to restore the monarchy in the pre-1917 style. Although the motto was not a direct creation of the Mladorossi, the Orthodox monarchists perceived it as blasphemy, betrayal, and a manifestation of collaboration with Bolshevism.¹⁷¹ Although the Mladorossi were also inspired by fascism and showed sympathies for Hitler's "national revolution" in 1933, they became increasingly anti-German in the second half of the 1930s, mainly because of German foreign policy. Biskupsky was alarmed by their statements in the press, as they aroused German distrust of the legitimist movement.¹⁷²

The Mladorossi also perceived Biskupsky as a threat. They feared his potential influence on Vladimir Kirillovich, the young and inexperienced successor to

169 Cf. Stephan MALINOWSKI, *Die Hohenzollern und die Nazis. Geschichte einer Kollaboration* (Berlin: Ullstein, 2021), pp. 348–349.

170 Biskupsky's name does not appear anywhere in the official documents on the formation of the Mladorossi in early 1923. However, the legitimists initiated the movement in the circle of Grand Duchess Victoria Feodorovna, to which Biskupsky belonged. He admitted his participation in the formation of the Mladorossi, even though it may have been disadvantageous for him since, at that time, the Mladorossi were anti-German. BArch, NS 43/35, Berlin, 8 September 1939, p. 55. For the documents on the foundation of the Mladorossi, see BAR, Nelidov Papers. *Iz vlechenie iz postanovlenii Soveschchaniia predstavitelei zarubezhnykh organizatsii russkoi natsional'no-mysliashchei molodezhi*, Munich 16–20 January 1923; *Ot Glavnago soveta Obedinennoi Russkoi Molodezhi*. Cf. also J. BAUR, *Die russische Kolonie*, pp. 165–168.

171 Petr Nikolaevich BAZANOV, "A. L. Kazem-Bek – lider dvizheniia Mladorossov," *Vestnik Russkoi khristsianskoi gumanitarnoi akademii* 16, 2015, no. 4, pp. 117–126 (here pp. 120–121).

172 G. GRAF, *Na sluzhbe*, p. 319.

the throne. They disapproved of Vladimir's planned trip to Germany in January 1939.¹⁷³ According to the Mladorossi leader Alexandr Kazem-Bek, Biskupsky represented "active evil"; he was "an intriguer ready for any trick" who acted under the supervision of the Germans.¹⁷⁴ Although they were unsure of Biskupsky's real influence and overestimated it, their fears were not entirely unfounded. Biskupsky actively worked against the influence of the Mladorossi. He believed that after 1934, Mladorossi had gradually departed from the "Aufbau platform" and fallen under the influence of England and Freemasonry.¹⁷⁵ Kazem-Bek was denied a visa to come to Berlin with Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich in 1937, and Biskupsky influenced the decision.¹⁷⁶

From Biskupsky's point of view, Vladimir Kirillovich's trip to Germany had two main goals: introducing the Grand Duke to the émigré community and strengthening the bond of the Romanovs to Germany. Therefore, he arranged a meeting with representatives of the NSDAP. Furthermore, Biskupsky envisaged Vladimir to enter a German cadet school and receive a military education there. He also suggested that Vladimir marry Princess Cecilia von Hohenzollern, sister of Louis Ferdinand. Strengthening the ties with Germany would allow Vladimir Kirillovich to become a tsar in Ukraine after the Germans occupied it.¹⁷⁷ Did he mean it seriously? Was this not just a ploy to gain German attention and financial support for the legitimist movement? Accepting such a scenario would mean abandoning the idea of Great Russia and reconciliation with the country's partition. It is possible that this was just a tactical concession or an acceptance that Russian emigrants would have to adapt to German plans, including the possible breaking up of the Russian Empire.

Vladimir came to Berlin with Garald Graf (who lived in Biskupsky's apartment). On 23 January, he met Harald Siewert, head of the Russian political department in the Rosenberg Foreign Policy Office. Siewert had known Biskupsky for a long time and was very friendly with him, but it seemed to Graf that the Germans

173 RGVA, f. 64k, op. 1, ed. khr. 1, p. 14. Mladorossi leadership meeting, 31 January 1939.

174 RGVA, f. 64k, op. 1, ed. khr. 1, pp. 11–13. Mladorossi leadership meeting, 3 February 1939.

175 IFZ Archiv, München, MA 297, Bericht, p.12; BArch, NS 43/35, Berlin, 8 September 1939, p. 55.

176 PAAA, R104376, Gestapo recommendation of 8 April 1937.

177 G. GRAF, *Na službe*, pp. 345–346. Speculation about the offer of rule over Ukraine also appeared in various places in the foreign press and was immediately denied. S. MALINOWSKI, *Die Hohenzollern*, p. 349.

were not interested in monarchists at all.¹⁷⁸ A day later, the expected ceremonial audience of Vladimir Kirillovich with Berlin Russian organisations was held. The old animosities were overcome on this occasion, and at least 400 people attended the meeting. However, it was noticeable that the audience took place in a rather tense atmosphere due to the German supervision of emigrant organisations. On a similar occasion, the atmosphere in Paris was much warmer.¹⁷⁹

Biskupsky was no longer given much time to develop his plans of bringing the Romanovs closer to Germany. He still managed to write a draft of a greeting from Vladimir Kirillovich to emigrants at Easter 1939. The pro-German tone of the text could be seen from the fact that, according to Biskupsky, it was necessary to speak about the struggle against communism in general, not against the USSR.¹⁸⁰ Biskupsky felt that German foreign policy was moving towards an agreement with the Soviets and did not want to irritate the German authorities unnecessarily. If we believe the memoirs of Gerald Graf, Biskupsky expected a German-Soviet agreement as early as the end of June 1939.¹⁸¹

To the bitter end. Biskupsky during World War II

The outbreak of the war caused much uncertainty among the Russian emigrants residing in Germany. This was mainly due to the German-Soviet Pact signed on August 23, 1939. Biskupsky was summoned back to Berlin from his leave to be briefed on the current situation. It was not supposed to have any effect on the activities of the RVst. Russian emigrants were primarily expected to be passive. All organisations were forbidden to indulge in any political activity and were not allowed to make negative statements about the USSR. Compliance with the ban was to be supervised by the RVst.¹⁸² Biskupsky immediately tried to find something positive in the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, as if it was a continuation of his plan of

178 G. GRAF, *Na službce*, pp. 372–373.

179 *Ibidem*, p. 374.

180 *Ibidem*, p. 382.

181 Graf's meeting with Biskupsky in Berlin at the turn of June and July 1939 was their last. G. GRAF, *Na službce*, pp. 391–392.

182 BAArch, R58/1031. The Gestapo orders of 25 October 1939 and 10 November 1939. The ban also included wearing uniforms or clothing resembling uniforms and the public display of flags.

1919–1920 (the destruction of Poland as the first stage of the restoration of the monarchy in Russia) or of the 1923 agreement with Ludendorff.¹⁸³

Given his long-standing views and work to date, it is evident that he was hoping for the defeat of the Bolsheviks in the war and the long-awaited change in political conditions in Russia. Nazism was to serve monarchism, which Biskupsky stressed in his speech to Russian emigrants in Prague: “I have to tell you that I am a monarchist. As a monarchist, I cannot be a Nazi because the idea of the monarchy and the idea of the Nazi state do not align. Nevertheless, I am personally reconciled to Nazism by the fact that there is a dangerous common enemy – communism. That is why I supported the leader of the German people, Adolf Hitler, as much as I could. [...] This Reich will, of course, sooner or later defeat world communism, and its defeat will mean the emergence of the Russian monarchy.”¹⁸⁴ Other emigrants similarly consoled themselves. In June 1941, the commander of the ROVS, General Arkhangel'sky, assessed Germany positively because it was the enemy of communism.¹⁸⁵

The next turning point came with the German attack on the USSR in June 1941. Although we do not know Biskupsky's immediate reaction, he had no reason to condemn the invasion, given his long-standing views. Finally, the path to Bolshevism's destruction and Russia's revival was opening. This is precisely how the ROVS leaders perceived the war.¹⁸⁶ Meanwhile, Germany was not seriously interested in the involvement of Russian emigrants in the struggle against the USSR for a long time, despite assurances of loyalty and active service offers.¹⁸⁷ The RVst offices received clear instructions prohibiting the movement of emigrants without

183 BArch, NS 43/35, Biskupsky's conversation with Viktor Larionov, 8 September 1939, pp. 54–55. The fall of Poland was also perceived positively by von Lampe, who immediately issued an order of loyalty to Germany to the ORVS members after the outbreak of the war. Cf. *Russkaia voennaia emigratsiia*, vol. 9, pp. 766 (order of 2 September 1939), 767–768 (on the extinction of Poland).

184 G. GRAF, *Na sluzhbe*, p. 590, note 24. Cf. Nikolai Efremovich ANDREEV, *To, chto vspominaetsia. Iz seminykh vospominanii Nikolaia Efremovicha Andreeva (1908-1982)* (Tallinn: Izdatel'stvo Avenarius, 1996), p. 90.

185 HIA, Arkhangel'skii Papers, Box 4, unsorted. Letter of 21 June 1940.

186 BAR, Aleksei P. Arkhangel'skii Collection, Box 3, Folder Manuscripts. Reports, speeches, etc., on general topics. *Pamiatnaia zapiska po voprosu ob uchastii Russkoi emigratsii, v chastnosti Russkikh voinskiikh organizatsii v bor'be protiv Sovetskoi vlasti i bol'shevizma*. Brussels, 29 June 1941.

187 HIA, Arkhangel'skii Papers, Box 4, unsorted. Copy of von Lampe's letter to von Brauchitsch, 21 May 1941; letter from von Lampe to General Arkhangel'sky, 6 July 1941. Cf. V. I. GOLDIN, *Soldaty*, pp. 274–275, 280.

the authorities' permission. Members of military associations were particularly closely monitored.¹⁸⁸ The ban on the political activities of emigrant organisations also remained in effect.¹⁸⁹ Biskupsky was aware of the requests to enlist in the German army and their rejection, and he called for patience: "It is necessary to expect a solution to the issue by doing one daily work and thereby save both one's own position and that of all the national emigrants living in Germany."¹⁹⁰

Despite the lack of interest on the part of the Wehrmacht, emigrants eager to fight on the Eastern Front enlisted for military service as volunteers.¹⁹¹ This was undoubtedly why the High Command reiterated the ban on the combat involvement of emigrants on the Eastern Front in June 1942. If any emigrants were on active duty, they would be withdrawn immediately.¹⁹² At the same time, however, the Wehrmacht needed interpreters, and the RVst in Germany had supplied about 1,200 of them by May 20, 1943.¹⁹³ In total, 15,000 to 20,000 Russian emigrants were recruited into the Wehrmacht, and not only for the position of interpreters. The largest part, about 11,000 men, served in the Russian Protective Corps (Russkii okhrannii korpus/Russisches Schutzkorps). However, the Corps was not deployed in the USSR but in Yugoslavia against partisans.¹⁹⁴ Some emigrants, primarily individuals, were accepted for service in the Abwehr.¹⁹⁵ The Cossacks were a particular

188 Iurii Stanislavovich TSURGANOV, *Neudavshiiia revansh. Belaia emigratsiia vo vtoroj mirovoi voine* (Moskva: Intrada, 2001), p. 93.

189 BArch, R58/1031. Gestapo circular to police presidents, 2 August 1941.

190 HIA, Arkhangel'skii Papers, Box 2, unsorted. Report on the discussion of General Biskupsky with the commander of the south-eastern department of the ORVS, Colonel Gegelashvili, Prague, 1 January 1943.

191 V. I. GOLDIN, *Soldaty na chuzhbine*, pp. 287–288; Sergei Igorevich DROBIAZKO, *Pod znamenami vraga. Antisovetskii formirovaniia v sostave germanskikh vooruzhennykh sil 1941–1945 gg.* (Moskva: Eksmo, 2004), pp. 86–87; Konstantin Konstantinovich SEMENOV, *Russkaia armiiia na chuzhbine. Drama voennoi emigratsii 1920–1945 gg.* (Moskva: Veche, 2019), p. 285; Iu. S. TSURGANOV, *Neudavshiiia revansh*, pp. 94–95, 137.

192 BArch-MA, RW 4/507, OKW, 27 June 1942, "Verwendung von Russischen Emigranten in der Wehrmacht", p. 1.

193 According to the OKW order, only emigrants with German citizenship and Reich Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories consent were to be accepted as interpreters (BArch-MA, RW 4/507, 27 June 1942, p. 1). The German citizenship requirement was dropped after several months due to a lack of interpreters. BArch – MA, RW 4/507, 2 November 1942, p. 1; BArch-MA, RH2/2123, Dolmetscher-Lehrabteilung beim OKW an OKH, 20 May 1943, p. 4; BArch-MA, MSG 241-14, p. 198; I. PETROV, "Vse samochintsy...", p. 170.

194 O. BEYDA, *Iron Cross*, p. 448; S. I. DROBIAZKO, *Pod znamenami*, p. 93. On the Russian Protective Corps, see Iu. S. TSURGANOV, *Neudavshiiia revansh*, pp. 111–123; K. K. SEMENOV, *Russkaia armiiia*, pp. 319–321.

195 K. K. SEMENOV, *Russkaia armiiia*, p. 286.

case, as they were allowed to form independent combat units. They were primarily not emigrants but citizens of the USSR who joined the Wehrmacht during the occupation of the Cossack regions of the Don and Kuban.¹⁹⁶ When the Main Administration of the Cossack Troops, headed by General Peter N. Krasnov, was created in March 1944, Biskupsky welcomed it but did not interfere in its affairs.¹⁹⁷

The attitude towards Russian emigrants only changed after the summer of 1943. The German military began to develop the idea of the combat deployment of Soviet prisoners of war under General Andrey A. Vlasov, and the old emigrants were confronted with the possibility of joining the forces of the Russian Liberation Army (ROA).¹⁹⁸ The old emigrants were not delighted with Vlasov's open letter (*"Why I Have Taken Up the Struggle Against Bolshevism"*), published in March 1943.¹⁹⁹ General von Lampe bitterly stated, "The whole idea with Vlasov is based exclusively on the Reds, with an undoubted ban on association with the Whites. Not only do they not want us, but for some reason, greatly exaggerating our significance, they are afraid of us (more than the Reds). What have we come to?"²⁰⁰

The first negotiations between Vlasov and the representatives of the emigrants began in mid-1943. Vlasov, when interrogated in a Soviet prison, stated it was as late as November 1944. He was significantly wrong since von Lampe noted his first meeting with Vlasov as early as 22 May 1943.²⁰¹ It is likely that Biskupsky did not attend this meeting and negotiated with Vlasov later. Biskupsky unequivocally advocated the monarchy, rejected any other state form for Russia, and even linked his joining the Committee for the Liberation of the Peoples of Russia (KONR) to this viewpoint. Von Lampe, in turn, demanded that Vlasov respected the position of the ROVS as the oldest and most significant Russian military organisation in exile. Vlasov rejected both demands.²⁰²

196 In the autumn of 1943, over 20,000 Cossacks fought in various units supported by the Germans. Alexander DALLIN, *German Rule in Russia 1941–1945. Study of Occupation Policies*, second revised edition (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1981), pp. 298–301.

197 Iu. S. TSURGANOV, *Neudavshiiia revansh*, pp. 136–137.

198 For an overview of the negotiations with Vlasov, see L. S. RITTER, *Schreiben*, pp. 347–352; Iu. S. TSURGANOV, *Neudavshiiia revansh*, pp. 165–186.

199 *Dobrovolets*, 7 March 1943. BAR, Lampe Papers, Box 22. Cf. Catherine ANDREYEV, *Vlasov and the Russian Liberation Movement. Soviet reality and émigré theories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989). Appendix B, pp. 210–215.

200 V. I. GOLDIN, *Soldaty*, p. 295.

201 He corrected his initial impression of Vlasov: "[...] much better than I expected". HIA, Arkhangel'skii Papers, Box 2 (unsorted), von Lampe's letter to Arkhangel'sky, 23 May 1943.

202 L. S. RITTER, *Schreiben*, p. 348. Cf. the protocol from Vlasov's interrogation in a Soviet prison: <https://arctus.livejournal.com/205973.html>. (page visited 5. 2. 2024).

Biskupsky's negative attitude towards Vlasov and the KONR corresponded to the reservations of the old émigrés towards the generation brought up in the USSR and until recently serving the Bolshevik regime. The difference in political opinions was evident. Vlasov did not intend to return to the pre-revolutionary monarchy; on the contrary, he emphasised democracy and peoples' rights based on the ideas of the February Revolution.²⁰³ In the following months, Biskupsky insisted on his position and, as head of the RVst, tried to prevent emigrants from joining the emerging ROA. With the approval of the Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories, Biskupsky issued an order forbidding Russian emigrants to indulge in any cooperation with the Vlasovites, labeling them as "suspicious because of their sympathy for democracy".²⁰⁴ The attitude of Von Lampe and the leaders of the ROVS was more flexible. General Arkhangelsky agreed to cooperate with Vlasov if the ROA was indeed to be an "anti-Bolshevik and national Army". In this case, the old White émigrés should not remain indifferent and idle.²⁰⁵ Von Lampe at first insisted that the emigrants take a unified stand against Vlasov, but because of the development of events, he decided to allow the possibility of "individual entry" into the KONR in October 1944. However, he refused to join the organisation.²⁰⁶

The final negotiations with Vlasov occurred at a Prague conference on 14 November 1944.²⁰⁷ Biskupsky was present, as was General von Lampe. The KONR manifesto could not satisfy the monarchist Biskupsky, and the general declared his disapproval of it. He was bothered by the references to the "progressive character of the people revolution of 1917".²⁰⁸ Biskupsky certainly did not hide his dislike for Vlasov. Biskupsky did not sign the manifesto and openly expressed his dislike for Vlasov, stating that "Vlasov hates the Germans and will never get rid of his Bolshevism".²⁰⁹ Biskupsky's scepticism was shared by many emigrants who saw

203 Interview with Vlasov, 30 April 1943. BAR Lampe Papers, Box 22.

204 V. I. GOLDIN, *Soldaty na chuzhbine*, p. 295.

205 HIA, Arkhangelskii Papers, Box 2 (unsorted). Copy of Arkhangelsky's letter to von Lampe, 3 July 1943.

206 TSURGANOV, *Neudavshiisia revansh*, pp. 174–176; SEMENOV, *Russkaia armiiia*, pp. 293–294.

207 For a description of the conference at Prague Castle see V. I. GOLDIN, *Soldaty*, p. 302; A. V. OKOROKOV, *Antisovetskie voinskie formirovaniia v gody Vtoroi mirovoi voiny* (Moskva: Voennyi Universitet, 2000), pp. 116–118. See also documents in the von Lampe archive: BAR, Lampe Papers, Box 22. Folder General Vlasov.

208 V. I. GOLDIN, *Soldaty*, p. 302; Manifest KONR, BAR Lampe Papers, Box 22.

209 BArch-MA Freiburg, MSG 241-14, p. 198.

the whole campaign as a manifestation of German wartime despair: “At first Germany did not want to hear about the emigrants’ help, because it had imperialist goals in Russia, and now, when it is on the deep defensive, it calls the emigrants to arms to fight.”²¹⁰

It is unclear how Biskupsky perceived the turn in the war and the impending defeat of Germany. In November 1943, an Allied air raid on Berlin destroyed his apartment and office in the house at 27 Bleibtreustrasse.²¹¹ The RVst archive burned down. Biskupsky moved into a tiny apartment at 112 Kantstrasse. According to some accounts, in the summer of 1944, he fell under suspicion of involvement in the 20 July plot. Considering his background and loyalty to the German authorities, the accusation seems odd. If the accusation was indeed made, it would not have had significant consequences, especially since Biskupsky continued to hold his position as head of the RVst.²¹²

Biskupsky’s attendance at the Prague conference in November 1944 was the last public event in which he certainly participated. At the very end of the war, the Gestapo prevented him from leaving Berlin. Nevertheless, the sick Biskupsky escaped in one of the last hospital trains sent from the city. He was in the countryside near Augsburg when Germany surrendered. Though his health improved, he suddenly suffered another stroke and was taken to Munich, where he eventually passed away on 18 June 1945. General von Lampe attended his modest funeral on 21 June 1945.²¹³

210 BArch, R58/1003. “Anlage zur SD-Tagesbericht Nr. 98/44”, p. 3.

211 Iu. S. TSURGANOV, *Neudavshiiia revansh*, p. 218.

212 See V. I. GOLDIN, *Soldaty na chuzhbine*, p. 298; Mikhail V. NAZAROV, *Missiia russkoi emigratsii (Na fone kataklizmatov XX century)*, Vol. 1, Moscow-S. - Peterburg: Russkaia Ideia-Russkaia Lira, 2020, p. 428. The information comes from the memoirs of Sergey L. Voytsekhovskiy, head of the RVst in Warsaw. Cf. S. L. VOITSEKHOVSKII, *Trest. Vospominaniia i dokumenty* (London, Ontario: Zaria, 1974), pp. 176–177. In the comments on Garald Graf’s memoirs, besides unverified information about Biskupsky’s participation in the anti-Hitler plot, it is stated that he subsequently suffered a stroke, went into hiding, and died in 1945. We cannot exclude the stroke, as it is also mentioned in von Lampe’s diary. However, his participation in an anti-Hitler conspiracy certainly could not have happened. Otherwise, he would hardly have participated in the negotiations with Vlasov in Prague in November 1944. Cf. G. GRAF, *Na sluzhbe*, p. 635; BAR, Lampe Papers, Box 22.

213 BAR, Lampe Papers, Box 43, Folder 1, pp. 43–44.

Conclusion

“Intrigues, the complete absence of any conviction and the overwhelming, unstoppable desire to play a role run like a red thread through this man’s entire life [...] Biskupsky was and forever will remain a petty schemer.”²¹⁴ The words of Count Adam P. Bennigsen, who served with Biskupsky in the Imperial Guard before World War I, sound uncompromising. They fit more or less into the picture we have sketched. Indeed, Biskupsky was a man who revelled in behind-the-scenes activities, conspiracies, intrigues, and spreading rumours. However, other politically active emigrants also used similar tactics. It was all part of a struggle for influence, which was often more imaginary than real.

Biskupsky acted consistently as a monarchist and an enemy of Bolshevism. He was politically active throughout his life in Germany, but as he was mainly in the background, it is not easy to determine the extent of his engagement. His name is often associated with political unrest and affairs (Kapp’s Putsch, the attentate on Pavel Milyukov and Nabokov’s assassination, Hitler’s Munich Putsch). Despite various testimonies and archival sources, his role in these events is not completely clear. Was he an active participant or just a passive spectator who created an image of an influential man? Or was this image of him, mainly a negative one, made by his rivals and competitors? He was undoubtedly an important figure in the Russian monarchist exile movement and played a key role in forming the legitimist camp around Grand Duke Kirill Vladimirovich. At the same time, he contributed to the fragmentation of the monarchist movement through his actions, so he failed in one of his primary goals, i.e., building a united front to fight Soviet Bolshevism. He was not alone in this, and apparently, it was not in the power of any individual to overcome the multiple contradictions within the heterogeneous emigrant community.

Bettina Doedenhoft raised some questions in her 1995 study of Biskupsky. Was Biskupsky a committed supporter of National Socialism, or did he see it as a tool to achieve his goals? Was he merely being used by the Nazis? Some of these questions can now be better answered by comparing other sources, thanks to general advances in research on Russian emigration. Dodenhoft concluded that while Biskupsky’s knowledge of the emigrants was useful to the Nazis, he was not significant. We agree that Biskupsky actively cooperated with the Nazis, but he was certainly not a Nazi by conviction. Throughout his life, he remained a monarchist faithful to the Great Russian idea. Indeed, his reputation was notoriously bad. We

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agree that he was scheming. Nevertheless, we do not believe that Biskupsky had “an absence of conviction”. His political shifts were not unprincipled, as he always joined a group where he could effectively fight for Russian monarchism after 1918. He was undoubtedly motivated by his material interests, but it is not easy to distinguish when he sought money for personal gain or to support his broader political activities.

Biskupsky hoped that loyalty to Germany would help him achieve the desired goal – restoring the monarchy in Russia. The White emigrants had no power to change anything in the USSR on their own and needed allies. The link with the National Socialist Movement was supposed to help execute the political plans of the Russian monarchists. It is not easy, however, to assess Biskupsky’s position in the tangle of the Nazi authorities. Did he only follow the orders of the Gestapo, or did he have the space to implement his plans and follow his path? He tried to work for the Russian monarchist cause, but his options were limited. In Nazi Germany, there was no room for an independent emigrant policy. Biskupsky learned this during the first year of Nazi rule. When he then became head of the *Vertrauensstelle*, he was utterly subordinate to the Nazi security forces. He had no other choice but to join the Nazis. Throughout his exile, he believed in Germany as the only real force capable of defeating the Bolsheviks. At the same time, he saw that hopes for restoring the conservative monarchy in Germany were slim. That left the bet on the Nazis. Biskupsky’s connection with the far right was long-standing and so strong that it was impossible to withdraw from it quickly. The fate of Vasily Biskupsky reflects the life stories of other Russian emigrants and the dilemmas they had to resolve concerning their lost homeland.

SUMMARY

In this biographical study, we have tried to summarise the activities of General Vasily V. Biskupsky (1878–1945) in exile. We defined several essential questions: What role did Biskupsky play in Russian émigré circles? What was his ideological ground, and how did he try to apply his values in his political activities? What was his relationship as a monarchist to the ideology of National Socialism? How did he perceive developments in the USSR and the possibilities of the Russian émigrés changing the situation in his homeland? How did Biskupsky's position change after the Nazis seized power in Germany in 1933, and what did World War II mean for him?

Biskupsky acted consistently as a monarchist and an enemy of Bolshevism. He was politically active throughout his life in Germany, and as he was mainly in the background, it was not easy to determine the extent of his engagement. Throughout his exile, he pursued two main lines of political activity: engagement in the Russian monarchist movement and cooperation with ideologically related groups in Germany. The two lines were complementary and intertwined. As a Germanophile, he was convinced that restoring the monarchy in Russia was possible only with the help of a strong Germany. In the early 1920s, he supported the restoration of the monarchy in Germany (the Kapp Putsch) but soon came to believe that the future would belong to National Socialism. He collaborated with the Nazi party in the period of its formation (1920–1923) through personal contacts and the Aufbau society.

Biskupsky was an important figure in the Russian monarchist exile movement. He was instrumental in forming the legitimist camp around Grand Duke Kirill Vladimirovich. At the same time, he contributed to the fragmentation of the monarchist movement through his activities, so he failed in one of his primary goals, i.e., building a united front to fight Soviet Bolshevism. He was not alone in this, and apparently, it was not in the power of any individual to overcome the multiple contradictions within the heterogeneous émigré community.

Was Biskupsky a steadfast supporter of National Socialism, or did he merely see it as a helpful instrument for his goals? Was he merely being used by the Nazis? Although he actively collaborated with the Nazis, he was certainly not a Nazi by conviction. It is not easy, however, to assess Biskupsky's position in the tangle of the Nazi authorities. Did he only follow the orders of the Gestapo, or did he have the space to implement his plans and follow his path? We have demonstrated that he tried to work for the Russian monarchist cause, but the possibilities were limited. In Nazi Germany, there was no room for an independent emigrant policy. Biskupsky learned this during the first year of Nazi rule. When he became

the head of the *Russische Vertrauensstelle*, he was entirely subordinate to the Nazi security forces. When he pursued the goal of restoring the monarchy in Russia and wanted to use the support of Germany for his intentions, he had no other choice but to join the Nazis. Biskupsky's connection with the far right was long-standing and so strong that it was impossible to withdraw from it easily. The fate of Vasily Biskupsky reflects the life stories of other Russian emigrants and the dilemmas they had to resolve concerning their lost homeland.