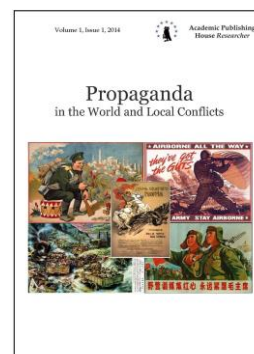


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## Formation and Combat Use of Russian Anti-Soviet Military Units as an Integral Part of German Propaganda during World War II

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### Abstract

The article considers the formation and combat use of Russian collaborationist units in the German army during the Second World War on the basis of a significant number of historiography sources.

The author pays attention to the use of collaborationist units in both front-line combat operations and as reconnaissance and sabotage units.

In conclusion the author notes that the Russian units that were on the side of the Third Reich during World War II performed a variety of functions: they were engaged in anti-partisan activities, in front-line combat operations, and also in reconnaissance and sabotage work behind the front line. Most of these units were distinguished by their reliability and existed until the fall of Germany.

**Keywords:** Russian anti-Soviet military units, World War II, Third Reich, German propaganda.

### 1. Introduction

The participation of collaborators on the side of Germany during World War II is poorly studied. The reason for this phenomenon is that this topic was prohibited during the Soviet era, since the official Soviet propaganda did not recognize the fact of a significant number of Soviet citizens siding with the enemy.

### 2. Materials and methods

Recent Russian and foreign materials published on the topic were used as materials for the research, as well as sources of personal origin, such as memoirs and diaries.

The methodological basis of the study was formed by the principles of objectivity and historicism, implying an unbiased approach to analyzing the problems of formation and combat use of collaborationist units, a critical attitude to sources, making conclusions only after analyzing the facts and revealing concrete historical situation in certain development and context.

### 3. Discussion and results

**3.1. Russian squadron.** In early 1942, the German counter-intelligence agency created an agent-political organization, the “Combat Union of Russian Nationalists” (CURN). From its name it is clear what this organization was, an agent-political structure, a reconnaissance and sabotage unit, intended to send saboteurs to the USSR. Soviet prisoner of war, lieutenant colonel

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I.G. Radionov was considered the nominal leader and creator of the CURN (V.V. Gil). Former commander of the 48<sup>th</sup> rifle division, Major General Pavel Bogdanov, who had surrendered on July 17, 1941, also took an active part in the creation of this organization. In September 1941, Bogdanov appealed to the German command with a request to allow him to form a detachment to fight the Red Army. After that, he was transferred to a propagandist school in Vulgide, where he was recruited in the CURN. Soon, in one of his appeals to prisoners of war, Bogdanov declared that he renounced his Soviet citizenship as well as his rank of a Red Army General.

In June 1942 the German command started the formation of military units from the members of the CURN. "Militia number 1" numbering up to 500 people was created in the city of Parczew (Poland) and Radionov was appointed the squadron leader. Later in the "SS - Sonderlager of the Guides" near Lublin a "Squadron No. 2" was established, numbering about 300 people. Both of these units were used in Belarus in anti-partisan operations.

In March 1943, the German counterintelligence decided to merge the detachments into the 1<sup>st</sup> Russian National SS Regiment, and the Special SS Detachment stationed in Breslau was attached to the squadrons as reinforcement. The commander of the formed regiment was Radionov. Bogdanov was promoted to Major and appointed Head of the counterintelligence regiment. A month later Bogdanov was promoted to Major General of the Russian Liberation Army and remained in his previous position.

Despite the seemingly small number (only 1.2 thousand people), the division had powerful strike weapons, which included 60 guns of various calibers, 18 mortars, 95 machine guns and rifles (Okorokov, 2000: 81).

In April 1943, when reinforcements from prisoners of war were "poured" into the regiment, it was reformed into the 1<sup>st</sup> Russian SS National Brigade, consisting of up to 3 thousand people. Bogdanov became the Head of the brigade's counterintelligence and Radionov became its Commander (Reshin, 1994: 171). Along with the active use of the division in anti-partisan operations, the formation process continued, and by June 1943 there were about 8 thousand soldiers and officers in the brigade, which caused the re-formation of the division. The battalions were turned into regiments, and were reinforced by the tank and artillery divisions (Okorokov, 2000: 83).

On August 14, 1943, returning from the "cleaning" of the Belarusian village, a part of the brigade along with its commander (2.2 thousand people) joined the partisan unit of Zheleznyakov. On the eve of this event, Radionov arrested Bogdanov and handed over to the partisans who brought the chief counterintelligence to the Mainland (On April 24, 1950, Bogdanov was sentenced to death by execution – auth.). The German "core" of the brigade (an average of 8-10 people per company) was shot. The German command hastily took measures to apprehend and terminate the rebellious unit, but without any significant results.

The remnants of the brigade that did not join the partisans were subsequently transferred to one of the German counterintelligence units for use as a punitive detachment and recruiting agents.

**3.2. 1<sup>st</sup> Russian National Army.** The creation of this army is connected with the activities of its commander Boris Alekseevich Holmston-Smyslovsky (the former captain of the Imperial Guards regiment, during civil war he fought on the side of the Tzar) who immigrated to Poland and then moved to Germany to study at the Military Academy. Considering that Russia can be liberated only with foreign aid, he worked solely for this purpose. When the war with the USSR began, Smyslovsky entered the Eastern Front and in July 1941, with the approval of the command of the 16<sup>th</sup> German Army, he was appointed the Head of the 1<sup>st</sup> Russian Foreign Training Battalion. Gradually, he created 12 combat battalions in the city of Pskov (Drobyazko, 2000: 21). Besides these battalions there were also large groups of partisans reaching almost 20 thousand people in the Soviet rear. The "Russia" special division was formed by the High Command of the Wehrmacht from these troops at the beginning of 1943. Several sources refer to the "Russia" special division as the "R." division. And thus, Smyslovsky became the first Russian to become the Commander of an anti-Bolshevik division, which remained a regular part of the Wehrmacht until the end of the war (Tolstoi, 1991: 116). It was engaged in reconnaissance and sabotage work in the rear of the Soviet troops and partisan areas, and this explains the large number of soldiers of the division in the rear of the enemy.

On January 23, 1945, due to the threat of the approach of the Red Army, the headquarters of the "R" division was hastily evacuated from Breslau to Bad Elster, near Dresden. Here, on February

12, an order was received to reorganize the division into a “Special Green Army”. Cadets of reconnaissance and sabotage schools as well as volunteers from prisoner camps were additionally introduced into the “Green Army”.

On March 10, 1945, Himmler gave Smyslovsky’s division the status of the 1<sup>st</sup> Russian National Army, and Smyslovsky was promoted to Major General. There were about 6 thousand soldiers and officers, organized in two regiments as part of the newly formed army (Andreev, 1997). Colonel Ryasnyansky was appointed Chief of Staff of the 1<sup>st</sup> RNA, Lieutenant Colonel Tarasov-Sobolev was appointed Commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Regiment and Lieutenant Colonel Bobrikov was appointed Commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regiment.

Having lost most of his forces in battles, Smyslovsky moved with the rest to the west, intending to unite with the emigre Russian Corps from Belgrade and the 3<sup>rd</sup> division of the Armed Forces Committee of the Liberation of the Russian People under the command of Shapovalov. But these plans failed, since the defense of the entire Eastern Front of Germany was rapidly deteriorating. In April 1945, personnel of the Warsaw reconnaissance and sabotage school were added to the 1<sup>st</sup> Russian National Army. With the remnants of these troops, Smyslovsky moved to Feldkirch, the most western city of Austria. On May 2, 1945, the unit entered the land of Liechtenstein, with 494 members: 462 men, 30 women and 2 children. It must be added that not a single soldier of General Smyslovsky was forcibly extradited to the Soviet Union (Tolstoi, 1991), despite the pressure from the USSR on this small European state.

**3.3. Russian Corps.** Former Russian citizens - white emigres took an active part in the development of Soviet collaborationism. In the course of the revolution and the Civil War, more than 2 million Russians went abroad, more than 70 % of whom were men in their majority at the most able age (Bocharova, 1998).

With the beginning of the Great Patriotic War, the desire to liberate the Fatherland intensified among white emigres, and a significant part of them joined the various volunteer legions of the SS and the army. However, there were also purely Russian formations, such as the Russian Corps in Yugoslavia, a military unit that comprised 80 % of the ranks of the Russian All-Military Union (RAMU).

In 1941, 30 thousand Russian emigrants lived in Yugoslavia, where the 4<sup>th</sup> Division of the RAMU was located. They came up with the idea to recreate a white military unit with the help of the Germans and continue the armed struggle against Bolshevism. This initiative was headed by General M. F. Skorodumov. Being an implacable enemy of the Soviet regime, he, like many other emigrants, knew about the huge crimes of the Bolsheviks, whose victims in the USSR were estimated to be up to 45 million people (Nazarov, 1993: 74). General Skorodumov considered all foreigners to be the enemies of Russia, so it did not matter to him from which state to get weapons and which country to use for the liberation of the Motherland. But there was one more reason pushing Russian emigres in Serbia to take up arms.

In August 1941, a partisan war began in Yugoslavia, led by communist I. Tito. The victims of the partisan raids were not only German soldiers, but also Serbian citizens who did not share Tito’s Bolshevik views. These were, first of all, priests, wealthy peasants, intellectuals, Russian immigrants living throughout the Kingdom and all the others who fell into the hands of the red partisans. According to the Bureau for the Protection of Russian Emigration in Serbia, about 250 Russian people were killed. General Skorodumov appealed to the German command with a request to protect emigration from the Communists by forming the Russian Corps. For this, Skorodumov formulated and advanced his own conditions, among which were: 1) the ranks of the Corps were to be subordinate only to their commanders, and the Corps commander himself was subordinate to the German command; 2) the Corps should not be broken up into smaller parts in order to second them to the German regiments; 3) they should wear only Russian uniforms; 4) – when the Corps finished formation, and communism in Serbia was suppressed, the German command should transfer it to the Eastern front, in order to fight the Red Army (Russkii Obshche-Voinskii Soyuz: 11).

To this, the Germans offered the Russian volunteers to join the nearest German regiments. However, Skorodumov replied that the Russians were ready to fight only against the Communists, and the German regiments could be deployed on other fronts. Meanwhile, the rebel communists in the city of Sabac attacked the civilian Russian Cossacks and killed five families. Then the Cossacks under the command of the centurion Ikonnikov, obtained some weapons from the Serbs and

Germans, formed two hundred people detachments and fought off the partisans. In this situation, it was necessary to take urgent measures, and on September 12, General Skorodumov issued an order No. 1 on the formation of the Separate Russian Corps. This order began with the following words: *“Today, on the day of the Holy Blessed Prince Alexander Nevsky, patron of the long-suffering Russian Land, the cherished desires of the Russian people to begin serving their Homeland in the Russian Army were fulfilled.*

*On September 12, I received the order of the German Command with the consent of the Serbian authorities on the call of the Russian emigration in Serbia for the formation of the Separate Russian Corps. I was appointed the Commander of the Russian Corps.*

*1). Based on the above, I declare the recruitment in the military of all persons between the ages of 18 and 55” (Russkii Korpus na Balkanakh: 47).* According to this order, within the next 10 days, volunteers should be recruited for infantry, cavalry, artillery, Cossacks, technical and air troops. General Skorodumov organized all those capable of serving Russian emigres, but as soon as he began this work ... he was arrested by the Germans. The Corps command was automatically taken over by the chief of staff of the Corps, another Russian general, Lieutenant-General Boris Alexandrovich Steifon.

The reason for the arrest of Skorodumov, most likely, was the Germans’ distrust to the White Guards. The words of Hitler at a meeting in July 1943 are significant in this regard: *“... They do not see our national goals, in perspective they see their own goals. Every nation thinks only about themselves and about nothing else. All these emigrants and advisers only want to prepare their own positions for the future” (Russkii Korpus na Balkanakh: 47).*

So, Hitler understood that after the victory over the Bolsheviks, the Russian national interests (they were always expressed by the White Guards) and the interests of Germany would enter into an insoluble contradiction. Therefore, at the initial stage, the Germans restricted the “flow” of volunteers into the Russian Corps. The German authorities allowed the replenishment of the Corps only from the countries of southern Europe and Russian emigration (even from Germany itself) was not allowed to replenish their ranks. Later, volunteers began to be called in from the countries of Eastern Europe: Poland, Latvia, Romania, Bulgaria, and finally, from Russia, where Soviet prisoners of war became main volunteer forces.

However, let us return to the process of forming the Corps, which happened very quickly. On the first day, a Russian platoon emerged from the guard barracks<sup>1</sup>, on the second it was already a company and on the third – a battalion. During the formation some oddities took place, for example, at first, without understanding what was happening, the Serbian communists came to the Corps. It is not difficult to imagine their surprise when they found out that this was a white Russian Corps, and not a Soviet one from Moscow, which they were impatiently waiting for.

The personnel of the Corps were outfitted in the form of the Imperial Army, and a white militia cross on a helmet was their distinction sign. By October, about 2,000 soldiers and officers were in the Corps, and this newly created 1<sup>st</sup> regiment was immediately thrown against the Yugoslav partisans in Serbia.

On January 30, 1942, an order was issued by the Office of the Affairs of the Russian Emigration (OARE) in the Protectorate, which concerned the increase of the number of the volunteers in the Security Corps. In this order it was noted that the Russian Security Corps, organized for the struggle against the Bolsheviks, under the command of Lieutenant-General Steifon was part of the German armed forces. Enlisting of volunteers was carried out on the instructions of the Corps commander, by Colonel N. A. Bigaev, and he should have been contacted for reference information. In the case of actions against the recruiting campaign, the leaders of the Russian military organizations were warned that it would be regarded as sabotage, with all the consequences of the war-time (Getmanenko, 1989: 47).

Initially, the Russian Security Corps was formed only as a security unit for the guard service, and therefore it was subordinate to the administrative and economic service of the German army. However, for the Security Corps or the Security Group it was necessary to perform purely combat functions, for example, counter-partisan operations. In this regard, on November 30, 1942, the Security Corps was transferred to the status of an army Russian Corps, as it joined the armed forces

<sup>1</sup> The Corps was formed in the Topchider Guards Barracks.

of Germany - Wehrmacht, and was outfitted in a German uniform. The armament of the Corps was also replaced by more modern types, including anti-tank weapons.

The fact that during the period from 1941 to 1943 not a single person was taken captive from the Corps indicated the high fighting qualities of the Russian Guard Corps, despite all the difficult situations it was in ([Russkii Korpus na Balkanakh: 52](#)).

In 1942, the Corps included four rifle regiments located in Belgrade, Loznica, Krupno, Kraljevo and other places. Each regiment had three rifle battalions, each of which, in addition to small arms, consisted of four 81-mm mortars. In the regiments there was one platoon of three 37-mm guns, a weak howitzer platoon with two 75-mm field guns, a cavalry squadron, and a bomb squad ([Mun'ozha, 1999: 26](#)). The Corps also had auxiliary units: two field hospitals, a supply company, a reinforced communications company, a guard of honor company, a veterinary and a spare company. The main task entrusted to the guard Corps by the German Command was the protection of mines and railways. There is evidence that Cossack hundreds were included in the Corps to be sent to the Don region during the battles near Stalingrad. In December 1942, the Corps was officially incorporated into the Wehrmacht by a decision of the OKW.

At the beginning of 1943, the 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment was formed from the White emigres of Bulgaria, which was able to break up a large partisan unit on August, 7. After this, the 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment received the name "shock regiment".

In September 1943, the Corps listed 4.8 thousand people, and within a year - 11 thousand ([Drobyazko, 2000: 19](#)).

Later, during the retreat, part of the Corps took their place in the rear guard of the 1<sup>st</sup> Mountain-Jaeger Division and covered it during their retreat. The role of the rearguard was performed by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Regiment under the command of General Petrovsky. For their very short period of being in the rearguard, the General was awarded two Iron Crosses for counterattacks. One of such attacks is remembered by V. P. Albrecht: *"...Near the village of Yakubovats they collided with parts of the 169<sup>th</sup> Guards Regiment of the Red Army. Numerical advantage as always was on the side of the enemy. Here, once again, General Petrovsky showed his brilliant military abilities. Using the element of surprise, he hit first, not giving the enemy an opportunity to look around. This, he said, was the shortest way to victory.*

*Automatic weapons have proven to be particularly valuable in melee attacks. The Corps opened heavy fire on the Soviet Guard. The impression was that the Corps was twice as numerous as the Red Army. There was complete confusion in the 169<sup>th</sup> Red Guard regiment. And then from nowhere, there was a powerful Russian "Hurray!", "Hurray, for National Russia!"*

*The battlefield, against all military laws, remained behind a handful of Corps soldiers. It is truthful to say that, in previous days, in numerous clashes with regular units of the Red Army, the battalion was victorious; but those were ordinary or penalty units... The spirit was so elevated that the Germans perceived the Corps members as suicidal. They were not far from the truth - the Corps adhered to a popular saying: "Company in distress makes trouble less" ([Russkii Korpus na Balkanakh: 309-311](#)). After these battles, at the time of leaving the entourage, the 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion was reduced from 882 to 21 people (including 7 wounded), and was able to make its way to Belgrade, where the Corps was situated. General Petrovsky was killed.*

On September 26, 1944 The Russian Corps, along with units of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Brandenburg Regiment and battalion of the 1<sup>st</sup> Mountain Division clashed with Soviet troops near Belgrade. The desperate two-day assault on Belgrade (September 26-27) did not bring success to the Red Army units. Belgrade fell only on October 19, and in that battle several hundred soldiers and Corps officers were killed. Speaking about the further fate of the Russian Corps, we note that during the entire war it remained in the Balkans, participating in battles against the Yugoslav partisans. The German Command never sent it to the Eastern Front, and on May 12, 1945, the Corps crossed the border of Austria and handed over their weapons to the British troops. During the war, 17,090 people passed through the Corps, the majority of being RAMU officials. It should be noted that many soldiers who fought in the Russian Corps died in heavy defensive battles of 1944 (including Generals Zborovsky and Zinkevich) ([Kazantsev, 1992](#)).

**3.4. SS Special regiment "Varyag".** The formation of a "Special Group K" on the basis of the volunteer White emigre battalion began in Yugoslavia in March 1942. It was intended for a landing operation in Novorossiysk. The formation of the unit was entrusted to the White emigre officer of the Imperial Army, M. A. Semenov, and the Breitenmark military camp was specially

allocated for their training, in which the deployment of the 1<sup>st</sup> battalion under the leadership of senior sergeant Major A. Orlov began. Initially, the unit was intended for military operations on the Eastern Front, but due to the exacerbation of the situation in Yugoslavia, a special group was involved in providing protection for strategic sites and anti-partisan struggle.

At the end of 1944, in Slovenia the battalion was deployed to the regiment and received a new name “Special SS regiment “Varyag”. By the beginning of 1945, it consisted of 3 battalions of three companies, a mortar, a guard, a reconnaissance company, an artillery battery, a commandant platoon, a platoon of guns, an engineer platoon, and economic and medical services (Okorokov, 2000: 55). Private personnel were almost completely recruited from prison camps, and former Soviet officers occupied 60 % of all officer positions in the command post.

After the capitulation of Germany, on May 8, 1945, the regiment fought its way to the state border of Yugoslavia-Austria, where it surrendered to the British.

**3.5. Russian National People's Army.** In 1942-1943 attempts were made to create large semi-autonomous formations under the Russian command. One of such units was the Russian National People's Army (RNPA), which began to form in March 1942 in the village of Osintorf near Orsha on the initiative of emigrant officers S. N. Ivanov, I. K. Sakharov, K. G. Kromiadi and others. It was assumed that by the end of the summer the RNPA this military unit, would be brought to a division, starting with a platoon, and then, it should cause a massive transfer of its soldiers and commanders to its side after their attack on the Red Army. Soon the RNPA leadership changed, introducing the former prisoners of war, the former Commander of the 41<sup>st</sup> rifle division of the Red Army, Colonel Boyarsky, and the former member of the Military Council of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Army, Brigadier Commissar Zhilenkov (who had received the rank of Lieutenant General of RLA from the Germans by that time).

The basis of the RNPA was a small, up to 200 people, reconnaissance and sabotage group, called the “Gray Head”<sup>1</sup> and was a part of the German counterintelligence. Consisting from Soviet prisoners of war and people from the occupied territories, this group, commanded by the former major of the Red Army, Bocharov, in May 1942 received its baptism of fire. It happened in the area of Vyazma and Dorogobuzh where the RNPA clashed with parts of the 1<sup>st</sup> Guards Cavalry Corps, led by Lieutenant General P. A. Belov. The RNPA detachments were disguised in the Soviet uniform and tried to penetrate the Corps location and capture its headquarters. As a result of the operation, about 100 fighters from 300 joined the Soviet side, up to 70 were killed and only 120 came back along with a small number of Red Army soldiers who joined them.

In the middle of summer, by the permission of Army Field Marshal von Kluge's commander of the “Center” Group, four infantry battalions, an artillery division and an engineer battalion joined the RNPA. These units were the so-called 1<sup>st</sup> RNPA brigade, and were widely engaged in punitive operations against partisans in the Orsha region, and later along the Mogilyov-Minsk highway (Reshin, 1994: 162).

In September 1942, there were 8 thousand soldiers and officers in the RNPA (Levin, 1995: 136), armed with 8 76-mm guns, the same amount of 45-mm anti-tank guns, 9 82-mm mortars, 20-25 50-mm company mortars, Mosin rifles and SVT <sup>2</sup> and 2 armored vehicles (BA-10(r) and BA-20(r)) (Drobyazko, 2000: 16). The personnel of the RNPA wore a Red Army uniform with Russian three-colored cockades and German shoulder straps with Red Army insignia.

On October 16, 1942, Field Marshal von Kluge, commander of the Army Group “Center”, visited the RNPA, and after his review of the Russian volunteer forces, declared that the Russians had made a positive impression on him. After the inspection, Kluge decided to check out the RNPA units in battle and gives the order to transfer two battalions to the Berezino area in order to suppress the partisan movement. Despite the fact that this operation was a failure, three fully equipped battalions were ordered to advance to the Velikiye Luki region and aid the surrounded German group. When they tried to break through the front line to the surrounded garrison, they were scattered and almost completely exterminated.

It is also worth noting that the number of volunteers willing to join the RNPA was twenty times higher than the number of available positions there. Eyewitnesses recalled that when the

<sup>1</sup> Abvergroup – 203.

<sup>2</sup> SVT – Soviet semi-automatic rifle.

RNPA battalions marched through the surrounding villages, the population warmly greeted them (Kvitsinskii, 1999: 95).

In January 1943, the RNPA was reformed into the 721<sup>st</sup> Eastern Special Regiment under the command of German Colonel Coretti. The 721<sup>st</sup> regiment continued punitive operations against the partisans of Belarus, deploying east of the city of Borisov, until October 1943. Then it was transferred to France to be disbanded in the area of Marseille. The battalions that were part of it received new numbers and were assigned to German divisions stationed on the Breton Peninsula.

**3.6. Separate units.** In addition to the above-mentioned units, in 1942, the prisoners of war separate regiments were formed as part of the German armed forces. For example, the 1<sup>st</sup> Eastern Reserve Regiment was formed on June 1 in Bobruisk, in the Army Group Center, with the active assistance of white emigres and it consisted of the “Dnepr” and “Berezina” battalions. In September, these battalions were assigned serial numbers of the 601<sup>th</sup> and 602<sup>nd</sup>. At this stage they enlisted 1 thousand soldiers and officers, led by the White emigre lieutenant colonel N. G. Yanenko. By June 20, the 603<sup>rd</sup> reserve battalion was formed in Bobruisk, which was in charge of back up training, and by the end of the year, this battalion was deployed in combat and the regiment received a three-battalion detachment. In addition to these units, the Eastern Battalion “Pripyat” (604<sup>th</sup>), a cavalry squadron, and several artillery batteries were also formed there. There was even an officer school within the reserve battalion. Another distinctive touch was the fact that the commanding staff of all parts of the regiment was from the former officers of the Red Army, and the German personnel were represented only by communication officers and instructors.

Such autonomy soon showed positive results. At the beginning of 1942, the battalions “Dnepr” and “Berezina” fought against partisans and despite the leaflets distributed by air they did not surrender to the partisans. One company of “Berezina” battalion was surrounded by partisans for 28 hours, and was repeatedly told to surrender, but despite all the proposals and significant losses, not a single person followed this call.

In the same year, in April, the command of the rear area of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tank Army, in Bryansk, formed a volunteer regiment “Desna” consisting of HQ, three rifle battalions (615<sup>th</sup>, 616<sup>th</sup> and 617<sup>th</sup>), 621<sup>st</sup> artillery battalion, a mounted reconnaissance platoon, a combat training department and an economic company. In addition, another battalion was in formation at Trubchevsk - the 618<sup>th</sup> Infantry battalion. Thus, the regiment had 2.7 thousand people, and in their service they had 2 howitzers of 122-mm caliber, 6 76-mm caliber guns, 6 anti-tank guns - 45-mm, 9 battalion and 24 company mortars, 46 machine guns and rifles (Okorokov, 2000: 73).

Some of the other eastern battalions were also combined into regiments. For example, the 709<sup>th</sup> special regiment (“Titien” group) operating in the summer of 1943 on the eastern outskirts of the Bryansk forests had in its composition the 628<sup>th</sup>, 629<sup>th</sup> and 630<sup>th</sup> eastern battalions, an artillery division and a tank platoon with 7 tanks. The other regiment of the 45<sup>th</sup> Eastern Yegersky consisted of the 666<sup>th</sup>, 667<sup>th</sup> and 668<sup>th</sup> battalions and provided security for the lines of communication in the rear of Army Group North (Drobyazko, 1994: 16).

**3.7. Russian People's Militia.** The creation of the Militia was associated with the activities of two associates of the Russian Imperial Union-Order (RIU-O) by brothers N. I. and P. I. Sakhnovsky. Together with 20 Russian volunteers, they entered the Belgian Valonsky Legion, which first acted as part of the Wehrmacht, then as part of the Waffen SS, then, in 1943, as part of the 5<sup>th</sup> Panzer SS “Viking” division. During the fight in the Valon Legion, a special volunteer detachment was created from Soviet prisoners of war, but this unit was not prepared ideologically. In this regard, N. I. Sakhnovsky with the sanction of the German Command in 1943 began the formation of a military unit in the area of Korsun, in Ukraine, in which the first place was given to Imperial propaganda. Sakhnovsky addressed the neighboring peasants with a speech that said: *“You all know perfectly well the difference between the Bolsheviks, the Germans and our Valon unit. It is not for me, the Russian white emigrant, to explain to you, who are living here this year, what Bolshevism is and what the collective farms are. It is also not for me, wearing a German uniform, to explain to you what the Germans are - you have been seeing them here for two years now. You should not have expected that ... they will save us from the Bolsheviks. It is time to understand that the Germans are not serving Russia, but Germany. But we Russians, above all, are concerned and interested in the fate of our Motherland, our people. So in order to our Motherland to be happy and powerful... we need a **Russian national government**, strong enough to protect the Truth ... what our Orthodox Church teaches us.*

... Our Valon unit will not remain staying here indefinitely. We will be replaced by either the Germans or the Bolsheviks. Therefore, I invite everyone to join the new volunteer detachment. We will take part in battles against the Bolsheviks, first in this uniform, but at the first opportunity we will fight on our own”.

Soon, about 200 people were enrolled in the unit (*Rossiiskii Imperskii Soyuz-Orden*). As a distinctive sign, an emblem was developed and adopted: an Orthodox cross with the inscription “In this sign thou shalt conquer!”. The emblem was located on the left side of the uniform, opposite the heart. The unit also had regular worship services. According to N. Sakhnovsky, this group was decided to be called the Russian People’s Militia. However, their intention to create a powerful liberation movement failed. The German group, which also included a company of the militia, was surrounded (Korsun-Shevchenko's operation of the Red Army). On January 4, 1944, in difficult climatic conditions, armed only with small arms and hand grenades, the militia collided with the Red Army on the march. Only a small group of fighters was able to break through the Soviet surroundings when entering hand-to-hand combat. This ended the activities of the Russian Militia at the front of World War II.

**3.8. Guards brigade of the Russian Liberation Army.** At the beginning of 1943, at the initiative of White emigre officers Ivanov and Sakharov and Major General of RLA Zhilenkov, a detachment of 500 Soviet prisoners of war was formed in the village of Kryshov, seventeen kilometers from Pskov. They agreed to serve in the RLA Guards brigade and participate in front-line activities. The brigade was to consist of two regiments: small for punitive operations and a special one for undercover and sabotage work. The special regiment, according to the concept of General Zhilenkov, was to ensure the landing of assault forces to Moscow, Leningrad, Kuibyshev, Sverdlovsk, Gorky, Ivanovo and Yaroslavl in order to organize the anti-Soviet underground, introduce agents into the Red Army, conduct propaganda among the population and organize terrorist acts. The groups were planned to be small-numbered, 3-8 people each, in order to minimize losses in case of being captured or disclosed. However, it was believed that the number of such groups should be on maximum. Only in the area of Moscow in two months it was planned to land up to 75 assault forces. General Zhilenkov made a proposal to try to carry out several noisy terrorist acts and the Soviet government leaders were chosen as targets: Stalin, Molotov, Kaganovich, Beria, Zhukov and Rokossovsky. They also planned to send the assault forces to the area of concentration camps and exile settlements in the hope of organizing a partisan movement in the deep Soviet rear.

In November 1943, after 150 brigade soldiers joined the partisans, the unit was disbanded, and its personnel were transferred to the formation of the Russian air group.

#### 4. Conclusion

Summing up, it is important to note that the Russian units that were on the side of the Third Reich during World War II performed a variety of functions: they were used in anti-partisan activities, in front-line combat operations, and in reconnaissance and sabotage work behind the front line. Most of these units were distinguished by their reliability and existed until the fall of Germany.

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