

## Schalburg og Rusland

Under og efter den tyske besættelse af Danmark fik navnet »Schalburg« en helt særlig betydning i Danmark. Christian Frederik Schalburg var under besættelsen kommandør for det forhadte Frikorps Danmark, han var erklæret nazist og antisemit og lagde efter sin død navn til det foragtede »Schalburgkorps« og på samme vis til den tyske terror mod den danske civilbefolkning, den såkaldte »Schalburgtage«. Schalburg blev et skændselsnavn i Danmark, og et symbol på ondskab og landsforræderi.

Men hvem var mennesket Schalburg? I 2008 udgav historiker Mikkell Kirkebæk biografien *Schalburg – en patriotisk landsforræder*, der med en kildenær tilgang beskrev Schalburg som en langt mere kompliceret og sammensat person, end det tidligere var fremgået af det sort-hvide kollektive erindringsbillede.

Schalburg er oftest blevet set og forstået som dansker, men som søn af en dansk far og en russisk mor kan historien om Schalburg også ses og forstås i russisk perspektiv. I begyndelsen af 2022 – inden den russiske invasion i Ukraine – udkom den danske biografi om Schalburg i en russisk oversættelse. Dette åbnede for russiske fortolkninger og russiske perspektiver på Schalburgs liv. Historiker og ph.d. Oleg Beyda, University of Melbourne, der var historisk konsulent på oversættelsen af den danske biografi om Schalburg, giver i denne artikel en russisk vinkel på Schalburg, og andre russere, der tænkte og handlede som ham. Beyda er ekspert i de russiske (militante)eksilmiljøer, der opstod i Vesteuropa under og efter den russiske borgerkrig 1917-1922 – en borgerkrig, der førte til en bolsjevikisk magtovertagelse i Rusland og en stor russisk kejsertro og antibolsjevikisk diaspora i Vesteuropa.

Beydas artikel indledes med et forord af Mikkell Kirkebæk, der kort opsummerer Schalburgs levnedsløb for de læsere, der ikke måtte kende til Schalburgs specielle og komplicerede livshistorie.

## Forord

### Mikkel Kirkebæk

Formålet med dette forord er at skabe en forståelsesramme for ph.d. Oleg Beydas glimrende analyse af Schalburgs liv og handlinger set i russisk perspektiv. De læsere, der har kendskab til Schalburgs livshistorie, kan med fordel gå direkte til hovedartiklen. Alle øvrige kan her læse en kort gennemgang af de vigtigste relationer og begivenheder i Schalburgs liv.

### Schalburgs opvækst og ungdom

Schalburg blev født i Sibirien den 15. april 1906 – ikke som en dansk – men som en russisk dreng. På familiens besiddelser i det østlige Rusland voksede Schalburg op under sit fødenavn Konstantin Feodorovitch Schalburg. Schalburgs far var en dansk forretningsmand, der havde tjent mange penge på at producere og eksportere sibirisk smør til Vesteuropa, og moderen, der var russer, tilhørte en af de ældste og fornemmeste russiske adelsslægter. Familien var velhavende, velstillet og tilhørte overklassen i det, der dengang var Tsarens Rusland.

Schalburg beskrev senere selv sin barndom i Rusland som lykkelig og ubekymret. Den russiske revolution i 1917, og den efterfølgende bolsjevikiske magtovertagelse, vendte imidlertid op og ned på familiens liv. I lighed med mange andre fra den gamle russiske elite blev familien udstødt og forfulgt, og efter en dramatisk flugt ankom familien i slutningen af 1917 til Danmark som flygtninge. Schalburg var på dette tidspunkt 11 år gammel og talte kun russisk.

På grund af flugten havde familien efterladt alt, hvad de ejede, i Rusland og måtte derfor starte deres liv i Danmark under fattige kår i en lille lejlighed i København. Det var svært for familien, der ikke trivedes under de nye og efter tidligere målestok usle forhold. Men Schalburg kom i skole, lærte sig dansk, tog studentereksamen og knyttede sig efterhånden til sit nye hjemland, hvor konge og fædreland blev vigtige omdrejningspunkter i hans liv som dansker. Han mistede dog aldrig sin russiske identitet og dyrkede bl.a. denne i det russiske emigrantmiljø i Danmark og gennem sin russisk-ortodokse tro.

Selvom Schalburg efterhånden fik etableret en ny tilværelse i Danmark, var begivenhederne i Rusland på ingen måde et overstået kapitel for ham. Den russiske revolution og oplevelserne under denne kom tværtimod om noget til at præge Schalburgs videre liv.

Schalburg opfattede sig selv som ”ægte” russer, mens kommunister og jøder ikke kunne regnes som russere, men derimod en art besættelsesmagt, der havde ”ranet” hans fædreland. Allerede som stor dreng havde Schalburg derfor svoret,

at han ville tage hævn over kommunisterne, og kampen mod ”jøde-bolsjevismen” blev uden tvivl den stærkeste ledetråd for hans liv. Schalburg så det som sin hellige pligt at vende tilbage til Rusland, ikke alene for at udrydde den kommunistiske ideologi, som han foragtede, men også for personligt at hævne de ting, der var overgået familien.

Efter den russiske borgerkrigs afslutning i 1922 og konsolideringen af den kommunistiske magt i Rusland så det imidlertid ikke ud til, at Schalburg skulle få sit ønske om hævn over kommunisterne opfyldt lige med det første. Efter moderens ønske påbegyndte Schalburg derfor medicinstudiet i 1924, men trivedes ikke med det, hvilket øjensynlig skyldtes, at studiet var for fjernt fra hans livsmål om at befri det russiske fædreland. Efter lidt over et års studier besluttede han derfor, at han ville gå militærvejen, idet han ønskede at forberede sig bedst muligt til den antikommunistiske kamp, som han håbede på at komme til at kæmpe på et tidspunkt.

## Tiden i den danske hær

På denne måde kom Schalburg i gang med den militære karriere, der kom til at tegne resten af hans liv. Han begyndte i 1925 som rekrut i Den Kongelige Danske Livgarde og avancerede derefter i graderne, indtil han i 1929 dimitterede fra Hærens Officersskole. Samme år blev han gift, og fem år senere fik han en søn, som han holdt meget af.

Som militærmand har Schalburgs tilhængere altid fremhævet ham som prototypen på en perfekt soldat, men det er en sandhed med modifikationer. På Kornetskolens bestod han som nummer 68 ud af 68 elever og på Officersskolen som nummer 24 ud af 24 elever – så noget lysende militært geni var Schalburg ikke. Men han var en meget populær officer i den danske hær både blandt officerskammerater og det mandskab, han havde under sig. Han praktiserede en for hans samtid noget særegen føringsstil, hvor han trods sin officersstatus selv deltog i alle sit mandskabs øvelser. Han var heller ikke bleg for at hjælpe mandskabet med at slæbe det tunge udstyr eller bære rygsækken for en udmattet soldat. Schalburgs foresatte lagde naturligvis mærke til og påskønnede hans gode forhold til mandskabet, men samtidig havde man fokus på visse andre af Schalburgs karaktertræk, som blev anset for dybt problematiske. Det var især den til tider meget ukontrollerede voldsomhed, hvormed Schalburg førte sine enheder under kampøvelser, der bekymrede. Schalburg blev således anset for at være alt for impulsiv og uberegnelig i sin føring. Et andet problem var, at Schalburg ofte ikke kunne dy sig for at lufte sin antisemitisme og antikommunisme over for mandskabet. Sin popularitet blandt de menige til trods var Schalburg derfor også en meget kontroversiel personlighed, der på flere punkter afsøgte grænserne for, hvorledes man som officer kunne tillade at opføre sig, militært såvel som politisk og ideologisk. Ikke desto mindre blev Schalburg i november 1936 udnævnt til kaptajnløjtnant i Livgarden, hvor han gjorde tjeneste som kompagnichef.

Hans tilknytning til Livgarden var ikke tilfældig. Schalburg var nemlig meget tæt knyttet til den danske kongefamilie, hvilket sandsynligvis skyldtes hans nære tilknytning til det russiske kejserhof. Schalburgs gudmor var ingen ringere end Storfyrstinde Olga, der var søster til den russiske Tsar Nicolai II og i øvrigt datter af den danskfødte kejserinde Dagmar. Mens Tsar Nicolai II blev dræbt af bolsjevikkerne efter revolutionen, lykkedes det den danskfødte kejserinde Dagmar og hendes datter storfyrstinde Olga at flygte fra Rusland til Danmark, præcis som det havde været tilfældet for Schalburg og hans familie. I Danmark var Schalburg meget knyttet til de landflygtige kejserlige og så dem ofte. Det var derfor heller ikke en tilfældighed, at netop Schalburg stod æresvagt ved kejserinde Dagmars begravelse, ligesom det ikke var et tilfælde, at flere medlemmer af det danske kongehus plejede venskabelig omgang med Schalburg.

For Schalburg blev tiden i Livgarden en slags national skole – han lærte at elske Danmark, ligesom han elskede Rusland, og Schalburg blev et menneske med to fædrelande – Rusland og Danmark. På dette tidspunkt i Schalburgs liv – i slutningen af 1930'erne – var der ingen, der ville drømme om at kalde ham landsforræder. Faktisk blev Schalburg regnet som en god patriotisk dansk mand helt frem til den tyske besættelse af Danmark den 9. april 1940.

## Schalburg bliver nationalsocialist

At Schalburg allerede i 1938 – altså to år tidligere – havde indmeldt sig i Danmarks Nationalsocialistiske Arbejderparti (DNSAP), ændrede ikke ved dette forhold. I hvert fald var der ingen af hans venner i officerskorpset eller for den sags skyld i kongehuset, der slog hånden af ham, fordi han meldte sig ind i nazistpartiet. Det skete først to år senere, da de tyske tropper angreb Danmark, og de danske nazister derved ikke kunne adskilles fra besættelsesmagten. For Schalburg var det antikommunistiske aspekt i nationalsocialismen en af de væsentligste grunde til, at han meldte sig ind i DNSAP. Schalburg mente, at DNSAP som det eneste parti havde forstået, at kommunismen skulle bekæmpes med alle midler. Tog man for let på den røde trussel, ville det gå Danmark, som det var gået Rusland. Men der var også andre gode grunde for et menneske som Schalburg til at melde sig ind i det danske nazistparti. DNSAP gik ind for en kraftig styrkelse af Forsvaret, og som professionel soldat kunne Schalburg ikke være andet end enig i, at en markant oprustning var påkrævet efter mange år med Socialdemokratisk og Radikal "Hvad-skal-det-nytte-politik" på forsvarsområdet. Schalburg var også antidemokrat og antisemit om en hals og passede således også på disse punkter fint ind i DNSAP. Schalburg gjorde hurtigt karriere i DNSAP og blev i 1939 leder af partiets ungdomsafdeling. Som landsungsdomsfører for Nationalsocialistisk Ungdom opnåede han hurtigt stor anseelse og anerkendelse blandt partikammeraterne og blev samtidig en af de mest populære skikkelser i det nazistiske miljø i Danmark.

## Vinterkrigen i Finland og 9. april

På trods af de fine stillinger såvel i Livgarden som i DNSAP valgte Schalburg i starten af 1940 at lægge det hele til side og forlade landet. I Finland var Vinterkrigen brudt ud, og Schalburg meldte sig sammen med ca. 1000 andre danskere til det danske Finlands-Korps for at kæmpe på finsk side mod Sovjet. Schalburg befandt sig derfor i Finland, da de tyske besættelsestropper den 9. april 1940 overskred de danske og norske grænser. For Schalburg var der ingen tvivl om, hvorledes han mente, at Danmark skulle reagere på den tyske aggression – den angribende fjende skulle imødegås med alle til rådighed stående midler. Da han sammen med de andre Finlandsfrivillige erfarede, at Danmark var faldet uden kamp, brød han bogstavelig talt hulkende sammen som et lille barn. Det var fuldstændig uforståeligt og overvældende for ham, at der ikke blev kæmpet mod Tyskland. Schalburgs afmagt blev dog hurtigt afløst af en voldsom vrede. Han forsøgte derfor at overtale de andre officerer til, at de danske Finlandsfrivillige skulle stikke af til Norge for derfra at fortsætte kampen mod Tyskland.

Efter nogle turbulente dage i Finland efter 9. april faldt der dog efterhånden ro på gemytterne, og det danske Finlands-Korps blev nogle måneder senere fragtet hjem til Danmark i god ro og orden. Men efter hjemkomsten fra Finland kunne Schalburg stadig ikke forlige sig med situationen. Han følte sig forrådt af regeringen, der havde overgivet landet uden kamp, og havde ingen respekt for den store del af befolkningen, der efter 9. april valgte at affinde sig med situationen og søgte at tilpasse sig de nye forhold.

## Hvem var landets egentlige fjende?

I Schalburgs analyse af situationen var tyskerne imidlertid ikke længere hovedfjenden efter den danske kapitulation den 9. april og derfor ikke dem, man skulle vende sine våben imod. I et brev til DNSAP-partifører Frits Clausen kort tid efter hjemkomsten fra Finland gjorde Schalburg rede for sine overvejelser: ”Vor nationale Ære er svinet til af Systemet [de demokratiske politikere] den 9. April; der er ingen Undskyldning, heller ikke for nogen af os andre, der har overlevet det. Vi har intet at bebrejde Tyskerne og maa ønske at de vinder Verdenskrigen, da i modsat fald hele Kontinentet bliver Sovjetrepublikken.”

Skulle Danmark reddes fra denne overhængende fare, krævede det nu kamp for et nyt politisk system (det nazistiske) og kamp mod kommunismen. Ifølge Schalburg foregik denne kamp bedst ved, at man i verdenskrigen kæmpede med tyskerne, og ikke mod dem. For Schalburg blev løsningen at melde sig til Waffen-SS. Det var en beslutning med mange facetter – langt flere, end der kan beskrives her. Men en væsentlig pointe er, at Schalburg var af den faste overbevisning, at hans kamp i Waffen-SS skulle redde Danmark – og ikke mindst Rusland, som det vil blive uddybet i det efterfølgende.

## Waffen-SS

I Waffen-SS blev Schalburg stabsofficer i Division Wiking og senere øverstkommanderende for Frikorps Danmark. Han fik et godt forhold til Heinrich Himmler, der bl.a. introducerede ham til Adolf Hitler. Schalburg var en ganske uforfærdet soldat, utrolig dristig og impulsiv. Han faldt på Østfronten den 2. juni 1942 under et slag, hvor han, uagtet sin status som øverstkommanderende for hele Frikorpsen, ledede et angreb i de forreste linjer. Schalburg blev kun 36 år gammel og levede dermed kun et halvt liv. Mens både russere og danskere så ham som en forræder, gik han selv i døden med overbevisningen om, at han havde kæmpet for begge sine fædrelande.

«A Life Without The Tsar»:  
Konstantin Fedorovich Schalburg.  
The Psychological Portrait of... a Russian?

*“Sur cette terre, il y a quelque chose d’effroyable, c’est  
que tout le monde a ses raisons”.<sup>1</sup>  
Jean Renoir, “La Règle du Jeu” (1939)*

That is one familiar surname, is it not? A symbol of treachery, a Life Guard’s officer and an officer of the SS — all these characteristics are familiar almost to every Dane. Long time has passed since Schalburg vanished into the murky waters of the past, leaving behind a dark legacy: his name equalled with the ultimate treason of the Danish Crown. With no riddle lurking behind these truisms, it just begs the question of “Why did he do it?” Almost 80 years that separate us from the wound in human history called “the Second World War,” render us to take another look at this life and the entangled topics of patriotism, split loyalties, and military violence.<sup>2</sup>

His personality is key. This time we will try to steer clear of the “Danish” part of his life, instead sketching the Russian roots of Schalburg, analysing his personality through the *exiled Russian* lens rather than any Danish one. We will try to approach Schalburg’s figure not as anomaly of the Danish past, but as a logical product of the Russian world of exile.

Loneliness of the Outcast: the psychological context

Indeed, the central character had an inseparable bond to Russia — through his ethnic background, his native language, his Orthodox Christianity, his birthplace, his upbringing, his teenage years, and, as it turned out, his death. However, what is more important that his was not the only case. Just like hundreds of thousands of other Russian exiles, Schalburg had lived in a Russia outside of

1 “The most terrible thing in this world is that everyone has their reasons.”

2 Mikkel Kirkebak, *Schalburg. En patriotisk landsforræder* (København: Gyldendal, 2008).



its traditional geographical borders, a sort of dreamy extraterritorial land with no existing passport and citizenship, a country no more. Yet, it remained so tangible thanks to the Russian world that kept it alive. If one drop in an ocean is the ocean itself, with all its chemical elements and basic features present, then Schalburg's life accordingly mirrors the hopes and desires of the large portion of inhabitants of this alternative Russia.

We should start there, in this world where he had spent decades, with the non-Soviet Russian dimension. At all times, emigration is but a process of psychological alienation: the old life comes to an end, and yet one is defined by it, making it a very complex process to fit into a new life. The historical case of 1917 and its' fire of the unprecedented social catastrophe, forged the Russian exile, otherwise known as "the first wave." It was an excruciatingly painful experience. Running in a hurry, leaving behind the essence of previous lives itself, with families stranded and brought apart for years and years — all this had psychologically maimed the Russians. With the trauma came reflection, decades of inward dialogue in search for an answer to the reasons behind the imperial and social collapse.

There was no singular way, and hence no unilateral exile experience, yet the process of traumatic separation from the 'Russian norm' was ubiquitous for all the exiles. The process of alienation and learning the baby steps of a new life was a personal matter. Accordingly personal were the memories of the past, about the "lost normality," the Russian life before the revolutions. Ever important, these memories of homeland lost became the foundation, a steppingstone on which the new, exiled life had been built. With years and decades floating by, the images of the past had naturally worn thin, losing the saturated colours, sounds, and taste. Yet since they were at the beginning of every breath the Russian exile drew, at the core of its' very psychological matrix, this led to an immediate idealisation of the past life, since the 'lost norm' was so much familiar.

Due to the constant attentive focus on the past and the Russia of past, the exiles' thought process, as well as their evaluation of the worldly events, were shaped in a multifaceted form. One can say that the Russians lived in a three-dimensional world. At the beginning there was the glorious past, the times of stability and familiar norms lost, the everlasting feeling of being attached to Russia that did not exist anymore ("Back then"). Then there was the second layer, the steep decline of standards and generally a very poor everyday life in exile ("Now"). This grind, strangely, did not play such a prominent role, since many Russians lived "from a suitcase" for years. One of them aptly characterized this condition as a



“temporary fake life”<sup>3</sup>: why would one strive to make a career if we are bound to go home soon, in just a few years? And the crowning third layer in thinking was the cathartic image (“Future”): the time of return to Russia, the time of all-national contrition, the pious rebuilding of the glorious era in a “national” format — which one, how and when, that the exiles did not know themselves for sure.

Simply put, the Russians were stuck between the ideal image of the paradise lost and the illusions of the grandiose return, when they would again be reunited with their people, build their own state, and there will be a good life — again, just like it used to. This nostalgic element was frequently inseparable with a more prosaic one, and a darker one at that — hatred. The Russians wanted to avenge sevenfold their own ruined lives, the humiliation they had to endure in foreign lands.

Every émigré, granted he or she had preserved the buoyancy of spirit, was an “activist.”<sup>4</sup> Exile “activism” meant not only *desiring* the future Russia but *doing* something for it; usually that meant staying sharp, doing military training, and conducting political planning. Thus, there was more complexity: the “activists” approached reality, filtering it twice, through the lens of Russia’s past and then its future. Every event, be it a new war, an economical crisis, or just a law, was carefully weighed on the scales of Russia in the making. These scales had two pillars: one was the morality that preached “the good old days” and the second one was “the shiny future.” Every major political event was measured according to the “benefit” or “harm” to the future Russia, the one that will be, or at least to the struggle for it.

Orthodox Christianity further cemented this outlook, preserved its’ stainless, sacrosanct status. The system of imagining the past *and* the future simultaneously was a psychological dead end, a close-circuited network that fed on its own self. This blended image was the diaspora’s real engine, at the same time it was her doom. The image of desired Russia had explained to the Russians just *why* they lived; and this same picture was the end result of the cultural activity of exiles. “There was a great Russia of the past, the one that collapsed, the one that we carry within ourselves, the one that will emerge because of it” — this is, once again, if we put it simply.

The reality remained deaf to these prayers. Time and again, real life trampled the axioms of diaspora. True, a famous Russian novelist and an émigré, Ivan Bunin

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3 Vladimir Varshavskii, *Ozhidanie: proza, esse, literaturnaia kritika*, ed. By T. N. Krasavchenko & M. A. Vasil’eva (Moscow: Dom russkogo zarubezh’ia imeni Aleksandra Solzhenitsyna, Knizhitsa, 2016), p. 55.

4 On exile activity and the resulting social cohesion, Anatol Shmelev, “Gallipoli to Golgotha: Remembering the Internment of the Russian White Army at Gallipoli, 1920–3” in *Defeat and Memory: Cultural Histories of Military Defeat in the Modern Era*, ed. By Jenny Macleod (Basingstoke, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 203–210.

was the first Russian to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1933. Indeed, this was a clear international nod to the alternative anti-Soviet Russians and their lives, yet this did not change the fact that more and more countries had shaken hands with the Soviet diplomats. And more and more the foreign states called these Bolsheviks “Russians,” and their revolutionary proletarian dictatorship “Russia.” The Red Army was growing in spades. There was no popular uprising on the horizon.

How was this assessed in the exile? With utter grief: the hopes of exiles were watered down, the future was losing its potential, or maybe it had even ceased to exist. Yet, if it was impossible to approach the events and news by weighing them on the scales of the “Russian past” and the “Russian future,” then this reality was just pushed out from the exile’s mind. Because, as you remember, the reality, “now,” did not play too much of a role. This mechanism was especially obvious in the exiles’ discussions of the new European wars, in which they had strived to find ‘a truly Russian side,’ when in fact these conflicts had nothing to do with Russia or the exiles *per se*.<sup>5</sup>

What was more pressing, sacred, and important was the *fight to change* something, and again, Orthodox Christianity and the miracle of Christian resurrection lent a helping hand. The exiles resented and rejected the world without a spiritual dimension attached to it. Accordingly, the exiles altogether discarded the idea of Russia being dead. To the demands of life, to the hardships, to the feeling of uselessness, to depression and perplexity there was an answer — a godly, mysterious plan reserved for Russia. In exiled minds, God loved Russia and its people, yet in his infinite wisdom he was testing them. And if indeed there was a miracle after the crucifixion at Golgotha, then the blood, tears, and suffering would fill the cup of suffering to the brim, and this cup would become the only chance at Russian redemption. The hour of the holy war would strike again — that was understood as any anti-Bolshevik war, intervention, or national uprising — which would inevitably lead to a promised victory of anti-Communist forces and the restoration of the ‘Russian norm.’ The key to this future was apparently to be forged in exile.

Thus, the world of exile in its very deep core was almost a magical land that had lived in wait for the miracle of deliverance, the one that would take place *when the time is right* — this is the key to those people’s mindset, this is exactly how they perceived the world around them. Indeed, it was nothing but a spiritual anaesthesia, because it was so painful to look the truth straight in the eye. Here are a few hypotheses: Russia of old is no more; the civil war is lost forever, there

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5 The strongest example would be the Spanish Civil War, which was hotly debated. See the introductory discussion in: Vladimir I. Kovalevskii, *An Anti-Communist on the Eastern Front: The Memoirs of a Russian Officer in the Spanish Blue Division (1941–1942)*, ed. by Xosé M. Núñez Seixas & Oleg Beyda (Havertown, PA: Pen & Sword Books, 2023).

is no Russian military force to alter the result against the Red Army; that means there is no more hope of a homecoming; that means that the Russian people did not fight the Bolsheviks tenaciously enough, or maybe did not fight them at all; worst case scenario, the new regime had brokered an agreement with its subjects, and is now enjoying popular support. Finally, this means that the fire the exiles had kept going in absentia would not find any compassion once the great return happens. At best, the “new” Russians would not understand the message. At worst, they will put the fire out.

Accepting these maxims was akin to a spiritual suicide, since, had this all been true, then all the plans to a new lease on life, on return, were exercises in futility and these truths rendered them empty self-boasting. That meant that decades of lives were spent for nothing. Thus, this truth was never accepted, and the émigré activists countered this defeatist realism with a potent mixture of nationalism, religion, and the desire to continue their civil war.

This logic of cognitive disruptions led to a peculiar lens: in the terrible debacle of world conflicts the Russians heard the music of their national future. To any non-Russian, this would have sounded nothing but odd. While the rifles were cracking in civil wars in China and Spain, while the guns were howling in the Winter War, the émigrés heard the machine-gun staccato in the Russian steppes — they saw all these wars as a chance to renew, and replay, and then finish their own civil war. Adolf Hitler’s ascension to power and his murderous ideology was accordingly weighed against the paradigm of the “benefit” to a very broadly sketched “Russian future.” Of course, National Socialists had never felt any respect towards the Russians: indeed, they did not trust the exiled ones, and those living in the USSR were nothing but potential slaves to them. Again, this clear disinterest (to say the least) was simply and deliberately overlooked by many exiles.<sup>6</sup>

In a private sense, living, thinking, and feeling like this was a heavy burden. Russians remained very much cut off from even a bleak possibility of anyone but another exile understanding them properly, thus the Russians were doomed to remain a very lonesome people in a very lonesome world. This is the (short) psychological portrait of Russia in exile.

## Revolving Persona

Schalburg’s figure is atypical: very few of the Russians had the capacity to climb any career ladder that high. Yet, Schalburg’s figure is typical: being part and par-

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6 Oleg Beyda, “‘Rediscovering Homeland’: Russian Interpreters in the Wehrmacht, 1941–1944”, in *Communication, Interpreting and Language in Wartime: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. by Amanda Laugesen & Richard Gehrmann (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), pp. 131–152.



Konstantin Schalburg (left) and his sister Vera (in the arms of their Russian nanny). The picture was made in Kherson, Ukraine, circa 1906. [Schalburg family archive]

cel of the Russian diaspora, he had imbibed and acquired its' outlook on the world. And yet, this was an *extremely* contradictory person.

His childhood and early teenage years were spent among the bluebloods and elite grandstanding. The world of Russian aristocracy had soon extinguished forever, yet it had forged the basic ideal in Schalburg's life, that "glorious past" we spoke of — the Russia of a manor house, not the Russia of bast shoes he had never worn. His extraordinary — for a Dane — outlook on life, his illusions were perfectly *normal* and fitting for almost any Russian exile. The images in his head were a whirlpool of happy memories, the carcass of "the lost norm," his dreams, and his hatred for the suffering endured in 1917. Even his service in the Danish Royal Life Guards can be rendered as an attempt to relive an outlandish dream of his service to imperial Russia, an officer's career that had never taken place — the

one where he would serve his Tsar. In the absence of the Tsar, the Danish King was a perfect enough substitute. Then followed the second layer of his life — “the now”; and again, a typical Russian exiled fate, one of a very meagre existence and years of poverty.

The principle of his thinking was hierarchical, a by-product of his highfalutin upbringing, that shared an immediate connection with the military-disciplinary outlook on life in general. Idealism filled the waters of his thought process, and that idealism was another concoction of absurdist contradictions. Schalburg defined himself through a potent mixture of imperial Russian patriotism and Danish nationalism; ardent Orthodox faith; radical anti-Semitism, of which a consequence was his anti-Bolshevism, since the latter was derived from the former; and the disdainful mistrust towards the democratic political regimes.

Schalburg's political identity was inseparably linked with Christian dogmatics. His Christian faith time and again brought joyful colours of hope, contrition, and national rebirth to his otherwise bleak, grey, hard life. The world around “laid in evil,” and thus it possessed a strict structure. In his mind, the imperial Russia was “the light,” but since the world was doomed from the beginning, the godly kingdom on Earth has fallen as well, and the wisdom of monarchy was substituted with a cancerous rule of “evil forces.” Instead of the god-fearing Russian people there remained enslaved shells, desecrated by the revolutionary sin. He did not want to analyse the tangible reasons behind the two revolutions of 1917; thus, he had indiscriminately blamed the Jewish people for the all-Russian tragedy. With years, his primitive hatred only further warped his mind, sharpened and rooted deeper, since he fed it with anti-Semitic literature. Later on, it manifested in his agreeing and welcoming the genocide of the Jews.

In his eyes, the state incepted in the wedlock of the Russian “dark times” did not even bear the right to the name — “Russia.” The outer world, the one that invariably equated the non-Soviet and the Soviet Russians under one name, the one that did not want to see a difference between the types of one ethnic entity, had only further aggravated Schalburg. His method of understanding and measuring Russia was akin to apophatic Christianity: that is, he described the “true” Russia through what she *is not*. The “true” state could not be Soviet, Bolshevik, not Orthodox, non-Christian, Jewish, with no Tsar, not an Empire and so forth. The end of monarchy for him was an existential finale. And yet, he had stubbornly denied that the defeat was final. Yes, all the exiles' hopes, and Russian lives took place in foreign lands, outside of Russian territory: in itself, that could have been sufficient to conclude that there is no sense in clinging to the past which had come to an abrupt end. But the defeat of 1917 did not put Schalburg's thinking to the test that maybe his thinking was detached from reality, that maybe the radical attitude was nothing but a sealed deadlock. The “final battle” was always shifted into the future, with it making the struggle for that future his life's only lodestar, and the only *raison d'être*. That is why Schalburg craved war, and that is why he prepared for it.





In exile Schalburg retained a very close connection to the Russian imperial elite. In October 1928 in the St. Alexander Nevsky Church, he stood as a guard of honour at the last rites ceremony for the Princess Dagmar of Denmark. Schalburg is second from the right, with his back to the camera. [Schalburg family archive]

He had loved the image of a “wounded eagle” — more than once he compared Russia to a mighty bird, with wings undercut. Apparently, this was the result of a specific literature diet, the one that was Russian, not Danish. In the 1930s he joined the Russian National Socialist Movement (RNSD) — a rather obscure attempt of the NSDAP at controlling the Berlin exiles through creating a copycat party for them. On a copy of the newspaper, published by the RNSD, brandishing an eagle holding a swastika, Schalburg wrote in Russian: “When one day you will spread your wings, and soar afield you will.” This was a slightly incorrect quote from a pre-revolutionary romance “The wounded eagle” sung by César Cui; the correct quote does not have “when one day”, and the “wings” are “mighty.” The romance was quoted in an extremely popular two-tome diaspora novel “From the Two-Headed Eagle to the Red Flag, 1894-1921” penned by the Major General Pyotr Nikolaevich Krasnov, which saw light in Berlin in the 1920s. It is a safe bet that Schalburg read it.

In fact, there was one major psychological peculiarity rendering and differing Schalburg from turning into a simple, commonplace émigré activist — his being a half-Dane. The second part of his personality evolved and grew, although

steeped into the Russian counterpart of his personality. It was as if his personality was a revolving door, with one part taking a step back when the other one was in the front, and vice versa. This “Danishness” smoothened out the bumps of émigré worldview, the one described above. And at the same time, it had only further complicated things for him. In the end, there was constant duplicity: between the world he hated and the one he desired, between the Soviet Russia and Russia of his dreams, and between his being a Dane and a Russian.

That is why the people around him always had a choice: they could approach him as — truly, a strange one, but! — a Dane, or they could focus on the Russian. This arguably helped him in his career: Hitler would not meet with a Russian, but why not meet a prominent Danish officer? The constant dialogue between the two spectres of his personality explains his personal evolution. He started off a Russian noble boy, later on he imbibed the Danish life and came of age to be an officer, and with that identity he took to the Winter War in Finland. In the last two years of his life, 1940–1942, his persona had undergone a heavy inner crisis: his decision to cast his lot behind the German National Socialists who had occupied his adopted fatherland led to him betraying the crown, and effectively to many friends severing their ties with him. Losing the social support network around him inflicted more psychological traumas. He had died being a Danish officer of the German, heavily politicised army branch, and there was no base in that war where he could have applied the Russian side of his personality. The side Schalburg fought on strived to eradicate any and all form of Russian future safe for complete subjugation. Plus, the peoples of Russia had also undergone changes, and thus his outdated approach to the psyche of ‘his people’ was nothing more than an attempt at imposing archaic values that had no ground anymore. The paradox of his life was that time and again he had returned to his Russian understanding, to the Russian identity of himself, as if waiting for an answer to come. This constant search for an answer only further confused him — the reality was a far cry from everything he harboured and knew.<sup>7</sup>

In simple words, even when he became a Dane, he remained a Russian, the one that constantly gazed back at the “Russian psychology” that led him, consoled him, explained the world to him for decades. Yes, his understanding of the world and the “Russian” in him continued to live during 1941–1942, yet it failed to explain *even a single thing*. The “Russian” did not help forging the bond with the Danish population — they saw nothing but a Life Guard, the one that betrayed the Crown and served the German occupiers. The “Russian” did not advance his career in the SS — the rune-bearing Danish volunteers did not see any use in him being different than them, or at least this type of psychology remained consistently alien to a typical SS soldier, who never fought for any ‘Russia,’ but rather

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7 Kirkebæk 2008, p. 29, 113–116, 139, 146 ff., 192, 202.



against it. His German commanders would have been at odds with him being “a Russian patriot.” After all, the Nazis wanted a perfect poster boy, a Danish Nazi aristocrat with a combat record that went by the name of Christian. They had no need for a confused, angry, weird Orthodox émigré Russian that went by Konstantin.

## On the outskirts of exile

With the Nazi aggression against the USSR, the hopes of Russian exiles sprung up to an unbelievably high level. It seemed that the “liberation of Russia” was just a shot away, and the sacred “time” had finally come. Schalburg participated in the first wave of the invasion, laying death and destruction together with the 5<sup>th</sup> Motorized SS Division “Wiking.” And yet, even his anabasis in the land of Soviet Russia was not as confident as one might think.

Just as 3,000–5,000 émigrés that joined the German army in its “crusade” on the Eastern front, he saw the unimaginable poverty and the hardships of a simple Russian peasant. Since his own world was separated into black and white, he had accordingly judged his compatriots with the same yardstick, grouping them into “valuable” and “expendable.” Yet with the campaign dragging on, this crude scheme of thinking ground to a halt.<sup>8</sup> Six months of war have passed and with it, millions of destroyed and imprisoned lives, thousands of tons of churned out steel, — yet the red Soviet frontline on the map was slithering but refused to break. During interrogations, the lice-infested Soviet POWs decried their misery in the collective farms — yet their comrades in the Red Army were still charging against the overwhelming odds, in untold numbers running against the German machine guns, and showed doggedly, cold resistance. The Red Army men did not start a mutiny. Neither did the peasants in the rear. The system, ushered in by the Bolsheviks, stood fast and strong. Schalburg could not fathom just how this was possible. In the letters to his wife, he mused over the fear, gnawing at him, that maybe the Russian people “degraded” after the two decades of Communist power. Some German commanders, like Gotthard Heinrici, were perplexed over the same issues. All of them failed to grasp the Soviet “controlled chaos,” where even the heaviest military defeat could not alter the adaptiveness of the Bolshevik system.

Many peasants, now finding themselves under a heavy German heel, were glad at the beginning that the churches became open again and ardently waited for the collective farms to be disbanded and the pieces of land redistributed. By the end of 1941, the new agrarian policy and resource order was in place: the collective farms were to be preserved (Germans thought it was a perfect system of control), the impoverished peasantry was to be an obedient servant to the new

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8 Kirkebæk 2008, p. 235-41 and note 504.

German master race. The peasants were squashed for the last crumbs of their food, they were routinely humiliated, and in case of the slightest disobedience, they were hanged or summarily shot. Despite the Bolshevik regime destroying millions of lives in the two decades prior, this new foreign imposter could never rally any massive popular support. The Germans had thus lost their war in a strategic sense already by early 1942.

Schalburg saw this. He slowly grasped that Hitler was waging war not to “liberate” anyone. At first, in a typical émigré fashion, he had just put this revelation onto a backburner, but bit by bit he was pushed to acknowledge that the Russian Empire was not in the cards.<sup>9</sup> His brothers-in-arms and personal friends Tikhon and Guri, the sons of Grand Duchess Olga Romanova, did not blame him for siding with the Germans, and understood just why he had made such a choice.<sup>10</sup> With that, they had firmly rejected his invitation to join Waffen-SS and fight for the Germans, that waged war to acquire colonies, and not because they ever cared about the Russians. The basis of Schalburg’s worldview had thus taken a hard hit.<sup>11</sup>

In 1942, Schalburg lamented the fear that gripped the population. Indeed, people cursed Stalin’s rule, but the 20 years of living under Bolsheviks experience shaped them anew to an extent there was nothing ‘Russian’ left in them. They were passive, or they were fighting for the Bolsheviks, not against them. Other émigrés that served in the Wehrmacht and SS and left diaries and letters were thinking of the same problems.<sup>12</sup> Monological thinking excluded any complexity, i.e. it was unfathomable that someone could believe in Communism, or fight because of hatred and a desire for revenge, or that they just simply got used to the idea of serving in the Red Army, or maybe because they saw the Germans as evil. Imperial idealism in Schalburg’s mind was fizzing out, and a murky, briefly defined pan-Germanism had started to substitute it. This was yet another syncretic utopia, under which the Danes, the Germans, and the Russians would be unified into one racial entity. Just as previously, he attempted to reconcile the elements that were in principal irreconcilable: Danish nationalism, Russian traditions, and Tsarist culture, welded together with German racial colonialism.

Did Schalburg find any understanding among the peasantry, and did he, in fact, know the country he had invaded? He had suffered in 1917, yet he had left

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9 Kirkebæk 2008, p. 251-52.

10 Kirkebæk 2008, p. 319 and 419.

11 Kirkebæk 2008, p. 251-52.

12 Rostislav V. Zavadskii, *Svoia chuzhaia voina. Dnevnik russkogo ofitsera vermakhta 1941–1942 gg.*, ed. By Oleg Beyda (Moscow: Sodruzhestvo “Posev”, 2014); Oleg Beyda, “‘Mesiats v Germanskoi Armii.’ Iz vospominanii D. Khodneva.”, in *Posobniki. Issledovaniia i materialy po istorii otechestvennogo kollaboratsionizma*, ed. by Dmitrii A. Zhukov & Ivan I. Kovtun (Moscow: Piatyi Rim, 2020), pp. 384–422.



For Schalburg, Hitler's invasion of the USSR was not a murderous campaign of racial genocide, but an idealistic "crusade for the liberation of Russia" — a purely Russian exile sentiment. The elated feelings proved to be short-lived. Here he is talking to the Russian peasants, circa summer 1941. [Schalburg family archive]

quickly enough not to witness further Russian sorrows, thus his life was shielded from the common general fate of the Russians that remained. He did not see the Civil War and the utter desolation it brought. He did not know what the deadly hunger of the early 1930s was like. He did not experience the Great Terror of 1937-38. He did not learn what it is to live under totalitarian rule, he was not afraid of saying "the wrong thing," nor did he learn how to think the same. Schalburg's world remained galaxies apart from the world of a Russian peasant: true, for commonplace Danes, his was a very modest life, but to any Russian grain-grower who had survived the collectivisation, this would have been a dreamy life in a prosperous country of tiled rooftops. The world of a Russian peasant was simply unknown to Schalburg the nobleman: forever deafened by his own melody of vengeance, he had never partaken in a yearly peasant cycle of sowing and reaping.

Schalburg waited for the peasants to emerge accordingly to *his* understanding, the latter being out of sync with the rhythm of *their* lives, and in a silent reverse, it was him, Schalburg, that remained out of sync with reality. And he was the one who's watch was still standing at "1917," when the world had moved beyond this

date in an old calendar. In the end, Schalburg, clad in an alien uniform, speaking perfect statuesque pre-revolutionary Russian language, was deeply archaic. It was as if he had jumped out of a time capsule and into a new mechanised war of annihilation. And, just like his Danish volunteers and the Germans, he was *learning* the country rather than *knowing* it. What was probably even more important for his relationship with the peasants was a simple fact: he barged in on their lives, being part of the force that laid destruction and woe, and thus he was either directly or indirectly adding to the balance of suffering these destitute people had to withhold. As if without the German invasion there was not enough grief for them in the last 24 years of Bolshevik rule.

## And?

Finally, you, the reader, might ask: “Who was Mr. Schalburg?”

It is challenging to provide a simple answer, yet there is no doubt that he was defined, warped and formulated by the Russian first, Danish next, experience. The second, Danish component of his life created a thick layer, adding to the core of childhood and teenage joys and traumas, *all* of which had their roots in Russia. When he turned into an adult, it was as if he had chosen to keep his psychological wounds and scars of private history fresh instead of attempting to heal them.

And it is not just about him effectively betraying his second fatherland. Yes, Schalburg voluntarily fought to preserve the criminal dictatorship of National Socialism, however the last two years were but a home stretch, to which there were two preceding decades of spiritual displacement. He grew up, nurturing the cycle of utopian dreams of Russian grandeur, radical politics feeding this fire of illusions. A private tragedy, a decades-long bitterness, a desire for vengeance — this is a dark triad of his life, the one that forged a unidimensional irreconcilability, the one that rendered him an idealist in the eyes of some people, and an egoist in the eyes of the others like his son. Schalburg effectively married himself to hatred, choosing his fate that at the same time was defined by the events outside of his control. If by the end of the 1930s his friends had made uneasy peace with his unimportant radicalism (DNSAP’s influence was but microscopic), then after April 1940 they had turned away from him. Thus, he had lost his second fatherland as well — the one and only left was the illusory Russia, the land in his mind’s eye. In a time of a private crisis, the Germans waltzed in on his life, and with them the evil they had harboured, the one that promised the realisation of his revenge plan. And he bowed to this evil, and he accepted its methods, and he rose arms in its defence.

There is a question of what this biography can teach us? A moral dimension almost inevitably commands our attention in this case. Schalburg’s example is but another confirmation that the quality of being sincere, the natural gifts and abilities, the noble upbringing cannot and would not preserve a person from giving in to the temptation of becoming a fanatic, and later on from slipping into

the darkness. There is no guarantee that the person would learn to see the complex aspects of life, or that the person would develop an acute desire to look for an alternative path. There is no guarantee that the person would step through the life on his own, without mapped out ways, with no ready-made dogmas imposed. Accordingly, there is no guarantee that the person would be free from the tenets of the past, with which this person was shaped.

Then there is a question of “Why did it happen?” The reasons for such fateful trajectories, and their readiness to jump head straight into conflicts and wars, are many, yet arguably the most important factor for the Russian émigrés was the *social chaos*. The sudden collapse of the 1917, magnified by the catastrophe of the First World War, morphed into a civil war and the dissolvment of the state. Behind it was the death of empires, traditions, values, and the whole *way of life* — that lead to the erosion of the “norm” itself. As if it was cast into a giant volcano, this revolutionary chaos had evaporated centuries-old dynasties and the familiar patterns of life of former Russia, and with it the moral norms were evaporated as well. These enormously high European “political temperatures,” tectonic social shifts created a warped macrocosm. In it, former Imperial subjects that now were no more than the discarded shards of kingdoms lost, ran amok. They went every which way, they were afraid, they had no home, they had tasted violence, and they were incredibly angry — the terrifyingly unfamiliar, unstable world was to blame. The only thing that at least somehow allowed them to come to relative peace with themselves (and explained the wild world around them) was their own identity.

This conflict of post-imperial self-awareness proved to be so sharp that the next 30 years were awash in blood brought by the tsunami of political violence. The Second World catastrophe was thus not a battle of Axis vs Allies, but maybe a battle of mentalities — very different, and very complex. Among the many colours and minds that clashed in 1939–1945 there also was an option of “new archaic,” that is there were groups of people who fought not so much for a clearly defined version of the future, but for a return to the “good old days.” With this lens of many mentalities fighting, Europe’s history is not a one-way street to democracy and the stable Internet connection, but rather a scary multi-level crossroads that humanity *did not take*.

In a more concrete case, the social chaos, erupting after WW1, created an incredibly volatile mixture, bringing together the Imperial patriotism *à la russe* and anti-Slavic scripture of Mein Kampf. Without the revolution, the “Schalburgs” of Russia would have aptly served the Russian throne, just as tenaciously as they had tried later on to obtain the Russian crown in the shadow of Hitler’s war. In the decade of the 1940s the émigré loyalty to the throne was distorted to embody blind vengeance, and the practice of such loyalty shrivelled down to the collaboration with the Axis. The alternative route was to keep neutrality, and that meant remaining inactive — in the end, either path led to the ultimate defeat of the Russians in exile. In this sense, Schalburg’s life is not so much about Denmark or the

erroneous choice of one of its prominent officers. It also embodies the Russian emigration — the one that stood at the crossroads.

In 1945 the red banner flew over Reichstag. The Bolshevik state emerged victorious, and for the whole world it had outweighed the empire of the old, eclipsing the tsars and their serfs. While the Allies cracked open champagne bottles, the refugees and displaced persons ran chaotically across the continent. Among them were many thousands of Russian exiles — again on the run, and again on the losing side. No one cared for their sorrows, just like no one cared for them. There was no country they could be represented by: the one that did, had ceased to exist almost 30 years prior.

Schalburg never saw this. Already in summer 1942 his life was “crowned” with a Soviet mortar shell from an unknown unit that was part of the 391<sup>st</sup> Rifle Division, near the river of Sutoka. The surname became synonymous with high treason and the killing of innocents in reprisal actions. His family was yet to reap what their father and husband had sown.

The identities forged by the chaos of dynastic collapse, the ones that brought their owners on the side of the German invaders, were doomed for oblivion. In the world born in May 1945 there was no place reserved for the shards of empires.



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