

# The Soviet Intellectual in Vlasov's Movement: the Cases of Zykov, Samygin, and Glinka

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## **Abstract**

The paper examines the fates of three Soviet collaborationists: Miletii Zykov, one of the ideologists of General Andrei Vlasov's so-called movement, and Mikhail Samygin and Gleb Glinka - the creators of Vlasov's media. The author analyzes their publications, trying to determine their ideologies and approach towards Vlasov's movement and Nazi Germany, as well as to point out the differences between their views, which he further explains as the consequence of dissimilar social backgrounds, differing experiences of Soviet life, disparate psychological types of personality, and the divergent philosophical concepts which influenced them. The impact of the abovementioned factors on the fates of the three collaborationists is also considered.

The fates of three Soviet collaborationists will be considered: of Meleti Zykov, one of the ideologists of the so-called “movement” headed by General Andrei Vlasov, of Mikhail Samygin, and of Gleb Glinka. The last two were the authors of Vlasov’s media. After the War, Glinka became a rather prominent poet of the Russian emigration.

General Andrei Vlasov’s grouping, which was both anti-Stalinist and anti-Soviet in nature, was organized with the support of the Germans. In 1941 Vlasov, at the time a Soviet general, had been in command of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Shock Army. He was taken prisoner in July 1942 and became a collaborationist. His movement included the so-called Russian Liberation Army (ROA), which however was allowed by the Germans to form a limited number of combat divisions only in July 1944, and a political body – the Committee for the Liberation of the Peoples of Russia, which was constituted in November 1944 in Prague. Up to July 1944, Vlasov’s grouping was mainly a German propagandistic action. The ROA was formed from both Soviet POWs and Russian émigrés.

I have given Zykov, Samygin and Glinka as examples because these Soviet intellectuals allow a very legible portrayal of the different levels of Vlasov’s movement: Meleti Zykov was its primary ideologist, while Mikhail Samygin and Gleb Glinka were run-of-the-mill collaborators, and worked for its media. At the same time, the three represented distinct segments of the Soviet intelligentsia. Namely, Zykov was a professional journalist and a former member of the Communist Party; Glinka – an accomplished philologist and poet, while Samygin a physicist. Samygin and Glinka had never been members of the Communist Party. Zykov, a Jew, stood very little chance of coming through the War alive – even if he was the main ideologist of Vlasov’s movement, his eventual execution by the Gestapo (or the НКВД, if caught by the Allies) was practically inevitable. Both Samygin and Glinka, however, survived, albeit utilizing different avenues of salvation. Thus, a comparison of these men’s fates and the means which they employed to save themselves (with greater or lesser success) will form the final element of the paper.

The main focus will be on an analysis of their publications in Vlasov’s media. Additionally, I will present their respective ideologies and approaches to both Vlasov’s grouping and Nazi Germany, and also highlight the differences between their views. I shall further attempt to explain these differences as the consequence of dissimilar social backgrounds, differing experiences of Soviet life, disparate psychological types of personality, and the divergent philosophical concepts which influenced Zykov, Samygin and Glinka. Finally, I will try to ascertain the influence of the abovenamed factors on the fates of the three.

Meleti Zykov was a Soviet journalist, however his career was not very successful. He worked mainly in the provincial media, and on several occasions he was forced to leave the newspapers which employed him because of scandals. The son of a tradesman, Zykov had to hide his ideologically unsuitable social background. In 1936, he was accused of Trotskyism, but it is very doubtful whether this allegation had any substance in fact. In 1930, Zykov had

been criticized for having a “kulak bias”. In reality, however, he supported neither Leon Trotsky nor Nikolai Bukharin. Zykov’s articles published in the Soviet press were strictly in adherence with the Party’s general line. In 1930, he even accompanied Mikhail Kalinin, the formal head of the Soviet state, on his visit to collective farms in the Central Chernosem region (Zykov, 1930). So Zykov was not an ideological opponent of either Soviet power or Stalin. In 1923, he was expelled from the Communist Party for his “bourgeois origins” and the concealment of previous service in the White Army. But it should be noted that Zykov fought in the White Army for only a very short time: he soon contacted the Communist underground in the Crimea, was arrested, and thereafter sentenced by a White Court-Martial to 8 years of imprisonment. He was freed by the Red Army after the Whites evacuated the Crimea. Furthermore, it is not known for certain whether Zykov was repressed in the second half of the 1930s, and actually deported to a labor camp or exiled. But the possible fact of his repression seems very doubtful, because in 1942 he was conscripted into the Red Army from Moscow – and it would have been practically impossible for anyone to return to Moscow following any form of exile or imprisonment. Zykov was born Emil Jarkho and became Meleti Zykov only in 1910, after baptizing into Orthodoxy. Thus, Zykov was a Jew and had to conceal this fact after being taken prisoner by the Germans at the end of July 1942 while a private and a politruk’s assistant; at the time, however, he declared that he was a battalion commissar.<sup>1</sup> I therefore suppose that the chief reason for Zykov’s participation in the so-called Vlasov movement was his desire to survive. The importance of this grouping was mainly propagandistic. Thus, Zykov tried to prove his value to the Germans as an experienced propagandist who had an excellent understanding of the psychology of the Soviet people. Samygin cited Joseph Goebbels’ reported remark about Zykov: “Let me know if he is a Jew or not; [but whatever the case may be,] he is necessary for me and he will work” (Kitaev, 1970, p. 33). Zykov’s German commanders, as well as his comrades in Vlasov’s movement, indeed suspected that he was a Jew. But from the point of view of the former, he was a useful Jew. Interestingly, some of his articles published in the collaborationist press were strongly anti-Semitic. For example, in the essay entitled *Leiba Mekhlis – General*, Zykov stated thus: “This is a great shame – Leiba Mekhlis is a lame, bowlegged Jew – and now a Lieutenant-General!” (Rom, 1943b). Mekhlis was considered by Zykov as Stalin’s supervisor of the Soviet war leaders. Zykov also parodied the alliance of the Bolshevik state with the Orthodox Church, correctly predicting the restoration of the patriarchate and the Church’s legalization (Rom, 1943a).

Zykov was a Marxist, but for obvious reasons he could not disseminate such views directly through Vlasov’s media. However, his critique of

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1 Zykov’s biography before his capture by the Germans was reconstructed by Ella Maksimova, Igor Petrov and Gabriel Superfin (Maksimova, 1997; Petrov, 2015).

the introduction of epaulettes in the Red Army may have been a reflection of his genuine feelings, for during the Russian Civil War he fought against the Whites, who wore gold epaulettes (Rom, 1943c).

Mikhail Samygin stated that Zykov was Vlasov's speechwriter and the main ideologist of the movement as such (Petrov, 2011). Samygin was of the opinion that Zykov had managed to transform the Russian Liberation Movement "from a propagandistic trick to an actual political organization" (Kitaev, 1970, p. 31). I think that here Samygin was strongly idealizing both Zykov and Vlasov's grouping. For Zykov himself, this movement was a means of survival, and its political importance was negligible even after the establishment of two Russian Liberation Army divisions following Zykov's disappearance.

In his cycle of diaristic articles entitled *Po ukhabam sovetskoï kultury* [Through the Wilderness of Soviet Culture], published in September – October 1942 in the old Russian émigré newspaper "Novoe slovo", Zykov stated that Soviet journalism was based on the principle of lack of talent and elementary literacy (Moskvich, 1942).<sup>2</sup>

It should be stressed that Zykov began working as a propagandist in Vlasov's media in January 1943, when following the Stalingrad encirclement and the German's reverse in the Battle of El-Alamein the defeat of the Third Reich in the Second World War became inevitable, and this perspective was becoming more and more obvious both to Soviet prisoners of war and the population of the occupied Soviet territories. Furthermore, from the beginning of 1943 the number of Soviet POWs captured on the front decreased greatly, for by then the Red Army was mainly on the offensive, while the Wehrmacht was primarily on the defensive. As Samygin recalled, the most important single factor that led Soviet soldiers to capitulate en masse in the years 1941–1942 was the hopelessness of the military situation and the futility of continuing the fight – not their hostility to Soviet power. He further stressed that, likewise, the mass surrenders of German troops towards the end of the War were brought about by the deteriorating strategic position of the Third Reich, and not their opposition to the Nazi regime (Petrov, 2013b).

Thus, the main audience for Zykov's propaganda were perforce the inhabitants of occupied territories, Soviet POWs, the *Ostarbeiters*, and the soldiers and officers of the collaborationist units, not – however – the soldiers and officers of the Red Army. It is difficult to determine if Zykov really believed in German victory. But he could have believed that he would be able to successfully escape to the Western Allies once the War came to a close.

Towards the end of June 1944, however, Zykov was kidnapped by agents of the Gestapo in the village of Rangsdorf near Berlin – even though just two weeks earlier his participation in propaganda activities aimed against the Red

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<sup>2</sup> The pseudonym Nikolai Moskvich was associated with Zykov by Igor Petrov (Petrov, 2013c).

Army had been approved by Heinrich Himmler himself. Whatever the case might have been, such actions stood no realistic chance of success, especially following the Allied landings in Normandy and the great Soviet offensive in Belorussia. Zykov's fate remains unclear. The most probable version is that he was executed by the Gestapo shortly after being kidnapped. Possible reasons for his liquidation include his Jewish descent and his potentially dangerous – at least in the eyes of the Gestapo – Marxist influence on Vlasov's movement (Steenberg, 1974, pp. 144–151, as cited in Petrov, 2013a).<sup>3</sup>

Mikhail Samygin was the son of a well-known Russian writer, Mikhail Vladimirovich Samygin, who wrote under the pseudonym Mark Krinitsky. In the 1930s, ferocious censorship and vociferous attacks launched by ideological critics practically halted the publication of his father's works. In fact, Krinitsky lived in a state of internal emigration, even though in the 1920s he had tried to accept the October Revolution of 1917 and authored some pro-Soviet writings. He subsequently fell into severe depression. Mark Krinitsky was arrested in 1949 for sending letters to Stalin, and died in a psycho-neurological hospital of the Ministry of the Interior in Gorky on 23 February 1952 (Mezentseva, 2002).

Mikhail Samygin was born in 1915. He was captured by the Germans in August 1941, while serving as a Junior Lieutenant or an Army Engineer, Third Class (the equivalent of Captain). His first wife was a Jewess, Deborah Moiseevna Levina, so one could surmise that he was not an anti-Semite.<sup>4</sup> But, as we shall see, he went on to publish anti-Semitic articles in Vlasov's media. His scientific career in the USSR had been rather successful, while his father – who had not enjoyed much fortune as a writer after the Revolution – suffered repressions only towards the end of the 1940s. Thus, Samygin had no obvious reason to engage in an armed struggle against Soviet authority. It is quite possible that his participation in Vlasov's movement, as well as his earlier cooperation with the Germans, were just means to help him survive captivity. He became an officer of the OKW Propaganda Department (which conducted active propaganda in the East). In the autumn of 1942, he joined Vlasov's grouping and went on to publish numerous articles in the newspapers "Zarya" and "Dobrovolets"; in July 1944, however, he left and took up employment with the Germans as a chemist. Samygin was by all accounts a very talented chemist – before the War he had been a researcher at the Moscow Institute of Physical Chemistry of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, authoring some 10 scientific articles in the years 1937–1941.

One of Samygin's most interesting essays, which was devoted to the prominent Ukrainian female poet Lesya Ukrainka and in many ways

<sup>3</sup> The Russian translation of Himmler's letter to Standartenführer Guenter d'Alquen of 14 June 1944, in which the Reichsführer SS approved Zykov's participation in the large-scale propaganda action on the Eastern Front.

<sup>4</sup> See: [www.obd-memorial.ru](http://www.obd-memorial.ru).

continues to be current today, was published in *Zarya*. It ends with the following conclusion:

Lesya Ukrainka always associated the national liberation of her people with social justice. There is nothing to divide the Russian people from the Ukrainian people. We go to the common fight together with them, as if they were our brothers. We sing about their heroes as they sing about ours – common military songs (Chaikin, 1943).

In actual fact, Samygin was not an ideologist of Vlasov's movement. He worked as a journalist for Vlasov's media, however most of his articles were educational in nature. Those which he wrote under the pseudonym of "Afanasy I. Chaikin" were in the main biographies of persons who had achieved renown in science, culture, or military service. In addition to Lesya Ukrainka, mentioned above, Samygin's heroes included "the father of Russian aviation", Nikolai Zhukovsky; the German writer, Ernst Theodor Wilhelm Hoffmann; the Russian writer and revolutionary, Alexander Gertsen (the fact that his mother had been a German strongly influenced Samygin's selection); the Russian composer, conductor and pianist, Sergei Rakhmaninov; the famous Russian military commander from the period of the Patriotic War (1812), Mikhail Kutuzov; the German composer, Johannes Brahms; the Russian composer, Petr Tchaikovsky; the Russian writer, Ivan Goncharov; and the German military theoretician, Carl Philipp Gottlieb von Clausewitz. Besides these biographical essays, Samygin also wrote a memoir entitled *Annabel Lee*, in which he mentioned (but no more than mentioned) the problem of unsuitable social origin and Soviet political repressions.

Samygin's sole political article that is known to the present day is *Russkaya intelligentsyia* [The Russian Intelligentsia], which although academic in nature was nevertheless strongly anti-Semitic. Samygin criticized the collection of articles entitled *Vekhi* for their negative presentation of the intelligentsia, and connected this with the Jewish origins of their authors:

It is difficult to believe that a Russian could write such a text. And were those people, the authors of the *Vekhi*, Russians? Among the four authors of the collection of articles only Berdyaev, married to a Jewess, has a Russian name. The rest of them, the Franks and the Gershensons, are not credible for us due to their names (Muromtsev, 1943a).

Samygin went on to state:

Russia has always had a progressive, healthy and creative intelligentsia. It could not have been otherwise among healthy, young and capable people. However, the dark forces of the court aristocracy, corrupt and alien to the interests of the people, considered the intelligentsia as the enemy of their parasitic existence and tried to turn its attention away from the people. The dark forces of Jewry were interested in dividing the Russian people. They used all the political parties to discredit the intelligentsia. Bolshevism, which gave intellectuals a disparaging and shameful definition, proceeded to dominate the intelligentsia mentally and destroy it physically, however it – just like tsarism and capitalism – could not do without the intelligentsia (Muromtsev, 1943a).

Samygin also stressed the role of the Russian intelligentsia in developing cooperation with Germany on an equal footing:

We know for a fact that Russian engineers enjoy a very good reputation in German industry. A significant number now work in the aviation industry, in electrometallurgy, and in various fields of geology. Russian doctors at the front and in rear-echelon areas are considered as highly qualified surgeons, and have been given high praise by their German counterparts, while many Russian scientists have received degrees from German universities and excel as laboratory managers (Muromtsev, 1943a).

In his memoirs, which were written in 1947 and published posthumously, Samygin stated thus: “The history of the Russian people in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is the history of their struggle against the totalitarian regime and of their demands for democratic freedoms” (Kitaev, 1970, p. 14). Here he also criticized the anti-Semitism of the German propaganda leaflets (Kitaev, 1970, p. 24).

According to the editorial preface to his book entitled *Russkoe osvoboditelnoe dvizhenie* [The Russian Liberation Movement], from mid-1944 Samygin worked in Halle, Germany, as a laboratory researcher, having first resigned from the ROA (Kitaev, 1970, pp. 7–8). In one version of his memoirs Samygin stated that in July 1944, immediately after the liberation of Lvov by the Red Army, he found employment as an Associate Professor of Physical Chemistry at the University of Halle (Petrov, 2017). And in 1949 – according to information contained in his letter to “Novyi Zhurnal” – Samygin was a Professor of Physical Chemistry at the University of Munich (Petrov, 2013b).



Samygin's only propaganda article that has survived to the present day is *Ulovka vraga* [A Trick of the Enemy] (Muromtsev, 1943b), in which he wrote thus:

By now, the Bolsheviks not only know of the existence of the Russian Liberation Army and have been made aware of the growth of the Russian Liberation Movement, but have also started to feel its power. They clearly see that despite the concomitant difficulties, our ideas penetrate through the frontline and turn the Red Army and, indeed, the Soviet population into a most volatile material. Having become aware of the danger which it poses them, they [the Soviets] are making attempts to suppress it. And in this struggle they now send well-trained agents, in the guise of prisoners of war, to conduct Bolshevik propaganda.

Samygin stressed that such propaganda was primarily anti-German. He was convinced that "the only way in which the Russian people can bring about the fulfilment of their aspirations and thus complete the people's revolution that began in 1917 is by destroying Bolshevism and strengthening the trusted alliance with Germany, which is based on the historical friendship of the two peoples". We may infer that Samygin was a supporter of the democratic, non-Marxist ideas of the February Revolution. After all, in his memoirs he strongly criticized both the monarchists and the various Communist fractions, such as the Trotskyists, that were in opposition to Stalin (Kitaev, 1970, pp. 14–15). Samygin also stressed the artificialness of the Russian Liberation Movement (i.e. of Vlasov's grouping), for there was no denying that it had been created by the Germans (Kitaev, 1970, pp. 18–19).

After the War, Samygin lived for some time in Munich. Towards the end of the 1940s he emigrated to Indonesia, where he was appointed Professor of Chemistry at Bandung University. He died in 1964 (Petrov, 2018). Looking back, one cannot but observe that his chosen profession – the study of chemistry – in all probability saved him from a much grimmer fate.

Gleb Alexandrovich Glinka (1903–1989) was a poet and a philologist. He was a member of the *Pereval* [*The Pass*] literary circle, which was closed down by the authorities in 1932. Glinka originated from an old Russian noble family. In 1941, his wife was deported from Moscow due to the fact that she had German relatives. Following the commencement of the Great Patriotic War, Glinka volunteered for the Moscow militia. In the autumn of 1941, however, his 8<sup>th</sup> People's Militia Division was destroyed near Vyazma, and he was taken prisoner by the Germans.

Glinka proceeded to publish a number of articles and poems in "Klich", a Russian-language newspaper for POWs. Namely, during the period May – September 1942 he wrote the poems *K proshlomu net vozvrata* and



*Na Elbruse*, as well as an article entitled *O russkom folklore*.<sup>5</sup> The first and third of these are strongly anti-Semitic; in the poem, Glinka wrote thus: “And now the sons of the Great Germany have begun the Crusade against the Jewish clique which has enslaved our people”. In the article, in turn, which is devoted to Soviet political anecdotes, he ironically mentioned “Israel Moiseevich Katsman, a researcher – or so I presume”. *Na Elbruse*, finally, extends a greeting to the group of German mountain troops who hoisted Nazi flags atop Mount Elbrus: “And now the German flag flies proudly among the snows and winds, having overcome the darkness of gorges”. It may have been that Glinka was actually a supporter of Germany.

The end of the War found Glinka in Belgium. There he married a Polish woman who had been displaced from her homeland during the conflict, and soon after moved to France; in 1952 he traveled to the United States, where he lived until his death in 1989 (*Rossiyskoe zarubezh'e*, 2008, p. 375). His son, also Gleb, married a prominent Russian philanthropist, Elizaveta Glinka, who was known among the émigré community as *Doctor Liza*.

In terms of ensuring their survival, participation in Vlasov's movement proved a successful tack for Samygin and Glinka, however not for Zykov. The latter's Jewish descent and – possibly – his advocacy of Marxism were a fatal combination. But even if he had lived through to the end of the conflict as a member of the RLA, his role was too prominent for him to have had any chance of avoiding extradition to the Soviet Union and certain death. Thus, his situation differed greatly from that of Samygin and Glinka, who were ordinary journalists of the collaborationist press, publishing their articles under pseudonyms and known by name only to a few.

For all three, a display of anti-Semitism had been necessary to prove their loyalty as quislings to Nazi Germany. So, it is impossible to determine with any degree of certainty whether the anti-Semitic essays authored by Zykov, Samygin and Glinka were in fact genuine.

Neither Zykov nor Samygin were supporters of Germany. Indeed, the latter strongly criticized Germany and the Germans in his book, while at the same time emphasizing certain positive features of Russian culture. Specifically, Samygin considered that Soviet (Russian) natural science textbooks for schools were better than their German equivalents (Kitaev, 1970, p. 22). Samygin also stressed that Zykov did not want to learn German on principle (Kitaev, 1970, p. 35). But Glinka, whose pro-German emotions were laid bare in his poems, could have possibly been a genuine advocate of Germany.

Both Samygin and Glinka came from the “former people”, i.e. those with “non-proletarian” and “non-peasant” backgrounds. They did not

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5 The scans of these texts were published by Igor Petrov, who convincingly attributed them – signed as “PoW G.G., offlag 57” or only “G.G.” – to Gleb Glinka (Petrov, 2012). Boris Ravdin wrote about Glinka's period of work for the *Zarya* newspaper (Ravdin, 2012, pp. 294–318).

attempt to make careers for themselves in the Communist Party or in the state administration – in fact, they were “internal emigrants”. Thus, they could have been genuine enemies of Soviet power. Zykov was their opposite, for despite his somewhat inappropriate social background, he had tried to become a respected Soviet journalist and ideologist. He wanted to be a part of the Soviet nomenklatura and was ideologically unscrupulous, while his involvement in the Russian armed opposition to the USSR was no more than a ploy aimed at ensuring his survival.

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