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'You Still Live Far from the Motherland, but You Are Her Son, Her Daughter.' War Memory and Soviet Mental Space (1945–2011)

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Before our eyes we have the image of an uncomplicated Soviet person neglected abroad, soaking up the idea of brotherhood and solidarity, a patriot, left behind, wherever he was, in the battle for truth, freedom or peace (...) You still live far from the Motherland, but you are her son, her daughter!

In its November 1958 issue, the bulletin *Za Vozvrashchenie na Rodinu!* (For the Return to the Motherland!) encouraged former Soviet inhabitants who had settled in the Atlantic World after the Second World War to move back or visit their birthplaces.¹ The bulletin belonged to The Committee for Return to the Motherland (*Komitet za Vozvrashchenie na Rodinu* – the KVR), an organization set up by Soviet authorities during the Thaw. Since Soviet people living abroad had been perceived as clear enemies of the state by the Stalin regime, official contacts had been broken off. The softening of the regime facilitated contact making and enhanced traveling. The KVR was designed to play a pivotal role in the Soviet attempt to influence the minds of Soviet people abroad, in this sense creating a transnational mental space *avant la lettre*.

This chapter shows that immigrants from the Soviet Union who settled in Belgium after the Second World War were influenced by the way organizations such as the KVR represented what had happened during the war while constructing their narratives of war memory. Despite the Cold War context, that construction took place in a transnational way, that is, in constant negotiation with agencies of war memory articulation on both sides of the Iron Curtain. Traditional Cold War

historiography focuses on high politics being locked in conflict and confrontation, whereas newer research concentrates on practices of connection and interaction between members of societies in the East and West (Mitter and Major, 2004, p. 3; Autio-Sarasmo and Humphreys, 2010, p. 17). By applying this new perspective to research conducted on Soviet war memory, this chapter widens the frontiers of the geographical space scholars assume to have been affected by this war memory and by its reshuffling after the collapse of Communism.²

During the war, the Stalin doctrine had propagated a discourse of loyalty toward what it called the Motherland, and incited Soviet people to combat the real enemy of socialism: Fascism. Afterwards, the Soviets' victory over Germany served as the ultimate legitimacy of the Russian Revolution and the installation of the Soviet system. However, the Second World War had also caused spontaneous destalinization, since the Communist Party had not been able to control social life and had been forced to offer people more freedom of initiative.

In the post-war period, both in Western and Eastern Europe, official narratives reinterpreted the events of the Second World War through the perspective of the ongoing geopolitical crisis. The Western world was eager to equate Communism with Nazism and set itself the duty to contend with this new but similar form of totalitarianism, whereas in the Soviet Union, the Communist Party was afraid that the remembrance of war freedom would destabilize political life. It therefore silenced the war experiences of many individuals, including those citizens who had experienced (part of) their war outside of the Soviet Union. It also changed the meaning of Soviet propaganda concepts, stressing that the Soviets' continuous concern for peace in the world, brilliantly displayed through the Soviet Union's participation in the defeat of the Fascist Nazi regime, had been forgotten by Great Britain and the USA. The homogenizing societies from the Cold War period froze the diversity of narratives on Second World War memory. Standardized, top-down articulations of what the war had been like prevailed in societies for almost half a century. The end of this societal model re-awakened diverse narratives on Second World War memory, unheard or interpreted differently during the Cold War (Judt, 2002; Diner, 2007).

Since the 1990s, in the countries formerly described as being 'behind the Iron Curtain', repressed memories of many survivors of the Second World War have come to the fore. Researchers have started to interview war survivors, now that they are willing to speak about their past. Due to the weakened or even absent civil society, recent studies on the memory of the Second World War have tended to focus on the individual

(Grinchenko, 2004; Kis', 2007). Until now, scholars have considered the reshuffling of Soviet war memory to be a matter solely related to the physical space of the former Soviet Union and its satellite states.

I argue that we should broaden our mental map, thereby including Soviet inhabitants who experienced (part of) the Second World War outside of the Soviet Union and who settled in the West after the war. Existing literature on Communism casts serious doubts about the existence, in the Soviet Union, of any civil organizations whose function would have been to unite people holding the war memories that were put aside in the official Soviet narrative of the conflict (Fürst, 2004, p. 314; Kuromiya, 2004). For that reason, researching group formation process and group memory activities of such people in the Atlantic World is particularly important. Soviet authorities prevented voices from contradicting the official narrative on war memory and succeeded to a great extent within the Soviet Union. Understandably, the activities of Soviet citizens settled in the Atlantic World could pose a danger for Soviet authorities. Because they were living abroad, the construction of their own narratives on war memory was more difficult to obviate, while their travels to the Soviet Union made it possible for this counter narrative to be diffused within Soviet society.

It is therefore interesting to see to what extent a specific group of Soviet citizens in post-war Belgium, former *Ostarbeiterinnen*, gathered in immigrant organizations and constructed narratives on war memories within these organizations. How did they react to Soviet attempts to bring their narrative on war memory in line with the official Soviet one, and what initiatives did they take after the collapse of Communism? Based on archival research conducted at the former KVR in Moscow, on interviews with former *Ostarbeiterinnen* in Belgium, and on participant observation in their organization, this contribution displays the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion which led the former *Ostarbeiterinnen* to be marginalized within Belgian and Soviet narratives on war memory during Communism. It also explains why Soviet authorities nevertheless had a special interest in maintaining contact with them, and how these women reacted to the geopolitical change of the early 1990s.

Former *Ostarbeiterinnen*: Soviet citizens living abroad

Ostarbeiterinnen were young women who were deported to Nazi Germany to do forced labor after the German invasion on 22 June 1941. They were mainly from what we today call Ukraine, although some were from the territory of the current Russian Federation or from what is now

Belarus. At the time, they counted for the largest group among the total of 2.5 million Soviet workers standing near the bottom rung of the Nazi racial ladder. Not only were *Ostarbeiterinnen* compelled to perform labor-intensive work, they also received limited amounts of food, had almost no access to health service and were discriminated against verbally. While at work, the young women met Western European deported workers, volunteers and prisoners of war. Although off duty contact between the groups was forbidden, love affairs flourished. After the end of the war, *Ostarbeiterinnen* were considered displaced persons and, following the Agreement of Yalta, were supposed to be repatriated (Ulrich, 1986; Poljan, 2002). About 4000 *Ostarbeiterinnen*, however, chose to travel with their Belgian partners to Belgium rather than be repatriated to the Soviet Union, where they feared being suspected of collaboration. A few couples married in Germany, but most were wed in Belgium, and all settled there.

I analyzed elsewhere how former *Ostarbeiterinnen*, when they married Belgian citizens, were required by Belgian citizenship law to exchange their original citizenship for that of their husbands. Marriage was a necessary condition to be allowed to stay in Belgium, although there were initially exceptions for women who were at least five months pregnant and for women whose children were under 18 months of age or were in a poor state of health. The former *Ostarbeiterinnen* became Belgian citizens because of marriage, but the Soviet Union did not permit Soviet citizens to change their citizenship. Contrary to Belgian citizenship law, Soviet citizenship law was not based on the idea of unity of citizenship in the family. Proclaiming the equality of men and women, it did not allow a mixed marriage that would make a Soviet woman dependent on her husband, and simply forbade all mixed marriages. Women born in the Soviet Union were lifelong Soviet citizens who were not able to renounce their initial citizenship. As a result, the *Ostarbeiterinnen* wives in Belgium were still considered Soviet citizens by Soviet diplomats in Belgium. In order to ensure good diplomatic relations, the Belgian state did not intervene when these diplomats became occasionally involved in the illegal repatriation of former *Ostarbeiterinnen* (Venken, 2010a).

As newcomers, former *Ostarbeiterinnen* initially held a position at the fringe of Belgian society. That invisible and marginal position would not change over the course of the Cold War for various reasons. First, the war experiences of these former *Ostarbeiterinnen* did not fit with the way in which official narratives on war memories were constructed, both in the Soviet Union and in Belgium. The official Soviet narrative on war memory presented Communist wartime activities as exemplary for the

virtuous patriotic nature of Soviet citizens, and war experiences deviating from this image were marginalized. It would, for example, keep silent about the deaths caused by Stalin's rule and would gag the people who had experienced atrocities from within the Third Reich (Tumarkin, 1994; Merridale, 2000; Sherlock, 2007). Belgium in its turn faced enormous internal divisions, which were only partially addressed in its post-war national narrative. Contrary to the situation in the First World War, Belgians had hardly fought on Belgian territory and resistance fighters were fewer in number than people supporting Nazi occupation. Moreover, cooperation with the Nazi regime differed in Flanders and Wallonia, given the common 'ethnic' Germanic background of Flemish and Germans appealed to during wartime, and the exclusive privileges granted to the Flemish. Nevertheless, in order to stimulate national collective identification, the narrative on war memory of the Belgian nation-state initially made Belgians believe that the whole nation had resisted the Nazi regime (Lagrou, 1999).

Second, official narratives on war memory paid little attention to the war experiences of women. Second-wave feminism in the Atlantic World already indicated many years ago the solely male representation in war memory, revealing that the suffering of men could be integrated more easily into national war memories than the suffering of women, because the former were related to virtuousness and honor for the nation-state, whereas the latter were often associated with shame. Feminist scholars analyzed how the war had shattered the stabilized pre-war gender order within society, and how official normative war memories aimed to re-install this order. Consequently, official war memories concentrated foremost on male virtuousness, that is, the identification of men with the (successful) defense of the nation. Women were less often portrayed. If they were, it was either as mothers and housewives, who were taking care of the homestead while their husbands were at the front, or as female dissidents who had made a mockery of the pre-war social norms of sexuality and had to be punished in order to purify the nation. Although women did play active roles during the war, in official war memories they were often omitted (Lenz, 2003; Diederichs, 2006).

Third, having grown up in the Soviet Union, many former *Ostarbeiterinnen* were ideological Communists, and Belgians with similar political convictions were few in number. The role of the Communist Party in Belgian politics was played out in 1947, when an electoral decline set in and the party became an innocuous onlooker in politics. Therefore, the 'Communists' in Belgium no longer needed to be combated, unlike in France for instance, where they played an important

role for a considerable period of time. Those inspired by Communism became marginalized and gathered in what I would call a partially developed 'fourth' pillar of the pillarized Belgian society, functioning largely beyond the three large (Catholic, Socialist and Liberal) pillars' field of action.³ Within this pillar, organizations were developed with the help of the Soviet Union, such as the Belgian-Soviet Friendship Association for people born in Belgium, and the Association for Soviet Patriots – later Soviet Citizens (*Soiuz Sovetskikh Patriotov*, or SSP, later *Sovetskikh Grazhdan*, or SSG) for former *Ostarbeiterinnen*, organizations that were perceived by Belgians as harmless fringe phenomena.

When the SSP was established in 1946, it gathered interwar Soviet immigrants who were used by the Soviet Embassy to inspire others with Soviet ideology.⁴ In 1947, a special women's department (*Zhenotdel*) was established that gathered former *Ostarbeiterinnen*.⁵ Given the risk of repatriation that former *Ostarbeiterinnen* faced due to their dual citizenship, eyebrows might be raised at such organizational engagement. However, one should keep in mind that initially only about 15 former *Ostarbeiterinnen* gathered in the *Zhenotdels*, and that their names were never mentioned in the organization's bulletin *Sovetskiy Patriot*.⁶

Because of the lack of support from Belgian agencies of war memory and the popularity of Communist ideology among former *Ostarbeiterinnen*, their successful mobilization by the Soviet Union after the Thaw does not come as a surprise. When Khrushchëv opened official Soviet war memory to the war experiences of some other war survivors than Red Army soldiers, he also foresaw contact being established with former *Ostarbeiterinnen* living abroad. A crucial issue in this respect was their new right to travel to the Soviet Union. They could visit their relatives after the Soviet Embassy had approved their visa application. Interestingly, only former *Ostarbeiterinnen* involved in the SSG received a visa. Although membership was not a criterion mentioned on the visa form for completion, embassy personnel asked each individual for it.⁷ Not surprisingly, the SSG's membership roll started to grow. In Ghent for instance, the SSG counted 20 members in 1955 and 80 in 1957.⁸ By the early 1960s, the SSG counted more than 1000 members and had 13 regional departments.⁹

During a SSG Antwerp meeting I attended in January 2006, a member told me how her friend had become a member in those years. Becky's friend was from Herentals, a town one hour's train ride from Antwerp. They had worked together in Germany and had stayed in touch after settling in Belgium. Becky considered that her friend lived too far away to come to SSG gatherings. When she saw how her friend

had left the consul's office in tears after her visa had been refused, she decided to arrange a meeting between the consul and her friend at an evening party of the SSG. There, the consul had asked Becky if he should give her friend a visa. After Becky had approved this idea, her friend was allowed to go on holidays.¹⁰

It was not only the Soviet Embassy, but also the newly established KVR, which later changed its name to the 'Motherland Organization', that played an important role.¹¹ When a former *Ostarbeiterin* was denied the right to travel independently to the Soviet Union, she could still try to be invited by the Motherland Organization on an organized holiday.¹² Every year, the Motherland Organization invited about ten loyal SSG board members to the Soviet Union for free. On these holidays, board members learned how to proliferate the Soviet narrative on war memory among their members by means of Soviet propaganda songs, articles glorifying Soviet victory and commemoration services for the Soviet army.¹³ Directors of the regional SSG choirs received musical instruction and members writing for the SSG's bulletin received training in journalism. The talks that the committee held with participants functioned as a source of control and policy adjustment. In 1973 for instance, a president explained that members immediately left the SSG when they were refused a visa, after which the Motherland Organization also started to invite non-board members.¹⁴

The Soviet Embassy engaged the SSG choirs on various occasions and always decided which songs should be sung. Therefore, their repertoire contained mainly Soviet propaganda songs, very often depicting the Soviets' Second World War victory. It created a situation in which the formation of a democratic organizational landscape as well as the construction of a specific group narrative on war memory among former *Ostarbeiterinnen* seemed to have been nipped in the bud. The narrative that the SSG articulated in the public sphere therefore aligned with the official Soviet narrative on war memory, although the individual war experiences of members were absent from it. SSG choir members articulated that narrative above all for fellow members, and occasionally during their concerts, for other Belgians.

Due to the cooperation between the SSG, the Motherland Organization and the Soviet Embassy in Belgium, it was in the interest of former *Ostarbeiterinnen* to behave as loyal members and not be too critical. Surprisingly, however, the members used the podium set up for them by the SSG, in cooperation with the Motherland Organization and the Soviet Embassy, to articulate their own war memories. I analyzed elsewhere how performing enabled the singers to transcend the linguistic

and cultural barriers of the lyrics that impeded them from enunciating their own narrative on war memory. In wartime Germany, some Soviet propaganda songs had been given alternative lyrics expressing hunger, homesickness and resistance. In the post-war period, the choir sang the original version of such songs, thereby silencing but not forgetting the accompanying second layers of meaning (Venken, 2010b).

Leonid Brezhnev took charge of the Soviet Union in 1964 and, by making the commemoration of the Second World War omnipresent, even increased its role for the legitimization of the Soviet regime. From 1985 onwards, Mikhail Gorbachëv, with his policy of openness and transparency, allowed citizens in the Soviet Union to form civil society movements that started to criticize Soviet historiography. Movements like 'Memorial' first concentrated on Stalin's victims in the post-war period, and later on the war experiences of forgotten war survivors, such as the *Ostarbeiterinnen*.

Former *Ostarbeiterinnen* in Belgium: Soviet citizens without a Soviet Union?

After the eclipse of Communism, the group of former *Ostarbeiterinnen* stayed intact. They did not dissolve their organization, did not even rename it and their membership did not fall significantly. To this day, there is still an Association for Soviet Citizens in Belgium. It is all the more strange that all members lost their Soviet citizenship and opted to keep their Belgian citizenship when they were offered the choice between a Belgian or a Russian/Ukrainian/Byelorussian passport in the early 1990s, because holding dual citizenship was no longer possible. In the end, it appears that only the outdated concept of Soviet citizenship enables the members to define themselves as a group.

At the end of the 1990s, an international gathering of war survivors, having done forced labor during the Second World War, won a US court settlement, which resulted in the German government and German industries paying a war pension to (among others) former Soviet prisoners of war and former *Ostarbeiterinnen*. With the help of the Heinrich Böll Foundation and Memorial, possible candidates for disbursement were sought out and informed. Disbursement issues also aroused academic interest in the war experiences of these people. In these studies, all foreign laborers are collectively referred to as *Zwangarbeiter*, a concept often translated into English as 'forced' or even 'slave' laborers. Such a categorization created the impression that a homogeneous group of foreign laborers with similar war experiences existed, who could claim

victimhood similar to that of Holocaust survivors. In addition, touching on slavery, this narrative makes a decontextualized link with people of a totally different time period, who lived in a very different place. Despite the inaccuracy with which various people treated differently by the Nazi regime are nowadays grouped together, *Zwangarbeiter* became an officially institutionalized concept in German and Austrian politics (Herbert, 2001). This was echoed in the former Soviet Union, where the uncovering of formerly silenced war memories stimulated research and was used to push for a higher visibility and recognition of *Zwangarbeiter*. Since Putin came to power, such a liberal narrative of war memory has, however, become less frequent. The situation in contemporary Belarus is comparable to the one in the Russian Federation, but the Ukrainian state keeps on heavily investing in the gathering of oral testimonies of former *Ostarbeiterinnen* on its territory (Karner and Knat'ko, 2003; Timofeyeva, 2008).

Former *Ostarbeiterinnen* in Belgium received a war pension, which seems to have given them the self-confidence to speak up. In the wake of remembering the omnipresent Holocaust experience, the silenced war experiences of former *Ostarbeiterinnen* in Belgium are now beginning to be heard. The organizational activities of former *Ostarbeiterinnen* in Belgium have become a topic of interest for the Belgian local press, which narrates them as victims of the Nazi system.¹⁵ In addition, the choir of the SSG is still performing. The performances at the Embassy of the Russian Federation are diminishing, but the choir members receive invitations from organizers of ethnic multicultural festivals in Brussels, Antwerp and Ghent. In Antwerp, for instance, they became known as the 'Russian Buena Vista Social Club'. Contrary to the continuation of their organizational structure, their narrative on war memory changed under the influence of the geopolitical upheaval.

I joined them at the Christmas Market in the Zurenborg neighborhood in Antwerp on 17 December 2007 and saw how the organization echoed that ethnified representation. That day, the choir conductor's grandson addressed the audience as follows:

I just briefly want to say who we are. What we are is not necessary. That is already clear: Cossack yelling from the ex-Soviet Union! Here you hear the Russian variant of the Buena Vista Social Club, but instead of Cuban men over 80, you hear Russian and Ukrainian women over 80, and the Havana cigar has here been replaced by vodka. Cossack songs, songs from home, songs from the ex-Soviet Union, Russian songs, love songs, these and many more you will hear as long as the cold and our voices permit us to continue.¹⁶

The grandson gave a romanticized ethnic interpretation of 'who we are' by referring to 'Cossacks', 'The Buena Vista Social Club' and 'vodka'. The Buena Vista Social Club formed at the end of the 1990s, consisting of a group of old Cuban musicians and two younger American musicians who performed Cuban folk music and soon gained success thanks to their international concert tours. In addition, the grandson made a distinction between 'Russian' and 'Ukrainian' women, something choir members did not do during the Cold War era. The SSG presented themselves first as 'Soviets', and when they did not want to focus on the political connotation this entailed, they simplified it to 'Russians'; 'Ukrainian' was never used as a separate identifier. Last, the grandson blurred the word 'ex-Soviet Union' by only mentioning it after 'Cossack yelling' in the first case and sandwiching it between 'songs from home' and 'Russian songs' the second time. Not only was the presentation radically different from what the choir had performed during the Cold War, but also the repertoire differed, consisting mostly of Russian and – for the first time – Ukrainian folklore songs, together with a few Soviet propaganda songs.¹⁷ All these songs received a musical restyling.

Three musicians accompanied the choir, as was the case during the Cold War era. While the musician had meticulously followed the scores during Communism, the three freely improvised on the spot after the end of the Cold War.¹⁸ One of them is actually a Roma musician who frequently performs in Belgium and abroad. Although the combination of Russian and Ukrainian folk music, but especially of Soviet propaganda songs, with Roma music sounded strange, it was remarkably successful. After the concert, the choir received a warm round of applause and more than ten people came to ask me, recording the performance, whether they could buy a CD. 'It sounds so Romanian,' said a woman admiringly, and 'I did not know we also had our Buena Vista Social Club,' another commented enthusiastically. The music impressed the audience and nobody cared about the contents of the songs. They hardly seemed to react to words like 'comrade Voroshilov', referring to the army officer and later intimate friend of Stalin Kliment Efremovich Voroshilov, or phrases like 'the fame of those days shall never dim' recalling the victory of Bolshevik partisans over the White Guard, as the words were cloaked in Roma motifs. In fact, choir members were using here the same technique as during the Cold War: through performing, they added a layer of meaning to the propaganda lyrics that could attract the audience.

Similarly, by switching the repertoire to Russian and Ukrainian folk music and referring to media-popular Roma and Cuban folk music, the

grandson led the choir to its biggest success ever. Belgians embrace the vodka-drinking babushkas and exoticize them as 'our Buena Vista Social Club', and no longer focus on their politicized articulation of war experiences. In this way, the choir has become easily integrated in a post-Cold War narrative of ethnic transnationalism. Choir members themselves do not understand why 'all of a sudden' they are receiving so many invitations to perform. However, they are eager to continue, despite their advanced years. Being offered a podium to sing has certainly led to a higher visibility of the former *Ostarbeiterinnen* in the public sphere, although their war experiences are seldom brought up for discussion.

Conclusion

This chapter is not primarily about forgetfulness, or about giving the marginalized a voice and bringing them from the shadow into the light, which is the purpose of many oral history projects on forgotten war survivors. What I would like to offer in the first place is an understanding of the various processes through which former *Ostarbeiterinnen* in Belgium remembered their war experiences over the years during and after the Cold War. The Soviet Union appeared to have been very influential in the former *Ostarbeiterinnen*'s articulation of war memories. Therefore, this contribution widens the frontiers of that geographical space scholars assume to have been affected by Soviet war memory and its reshuffling since the 1990s.

During the Thaw, the Soviet Union started to concentrate, among other things, on influencing the minds of its Soviet citizens living abroad. Among former *Ostarbeiterinnen* settled in Belgium, that strategy appeared to be successful, because active participation in a Soviet-controlled organization, the Association of Soviet Citizens, was the only way of securing a visa to travel home. For this reason, they seem to have been dominated by official Soviet agencies of war memory, and did not seem to have had the opportunity to enunciate their own narrative of war memory. Since Communist ideology was not popular in Belgium, Belgians were not particularly supportive either. Despite the high level of control from Soviet authorities, however, the former *Ostarbeiterinnen* always found room (no matter how limited it was) for counter-narration. They managed, for instance, to use a podium set up for the proliferation of Soviet propaganda songs in order to turn upside down the literary meanings of lyrics through 'deviant' performative techniques.

Post-Communist Europe exchanged politically inspired narratives for those centered on ethnicity and victimhood. In such a context,

formerly invisible and marginalized *Ostarbeiterinnen* have come to the fore. Ethnified as singing babushkas, the former *Ostarbeiterinnen* settled in Belgium are nowadays more popular than ever before. Through their collaboration with a Roma musician, they can use the same deviant performative techniques as before to make the audience listen to old-fashioned Soviet propaganda songs expressing their war memories.

Notes

1. *Za Vozvrashchenie na Rodinu! (For the Return to the Motherland!) 4/86 (277) (11.1958)* 1.
2. The research for this chapter was financed by the Flemish Fund for Scientific Research, and resulted in my published PhD study (Venken, 2011a). A short overview of this study can be found in (Venken, 2011b).
3. Pillarization refers to the vertical segregation of Belgian society into three large pillars according to political conviction. The pillars consisted not only of political parties, but also of various social institutions such as trade unions, universities, sport clubs, in this way making themselves self-sustainable. Once part of a pillar, contact with people from 'outside' was often limited.
4. *Sovetskiy Patriot* 3/12-13 (11.1947) 5.
5. *Sovetskiy Patriot* 3/12-13 (11.1947) 9; Interview with Wendy on 6 November 2066. All the interviewees have been given fictitious names. The interviews are archived in the Centre for Historical Research and Documentation on War and Contemporary Society in Brussels (further Ceges-Soma).
6. *Sovetskiy Patriot* 3/12-13 (11.1947) 9; Private archive of the SSG Ghent choir conductor, Hospitaalstraat 3, Ghent, report 'Soiuz Sovetskikh Grazhdan v Bel'gii', s.d., 3 p. In 1980, *Sovetskiy Patriot* would change to simply *Patriot*.
7. See for instance the interview with Maddy on 22 September 2005.
8. Archive the Ghent choir conductor, report 'Soiuz Sovetskikh Grazhdan v Bel'gii', s.d., p. 3.
9. *Sovetskiy Patriot* 19/13 (367) (1964) 13.
10. Participant Observation on 22 January 2007.
11. In 1959, KVR would change into The Committee for Return to the Motherland and the development of cultural ties with countrymen living abroad (Komitet za Vozvrashchenie na Rodinu i razvitiye kul'turnykh sviazej s sootechestvennikami za Rubezhom – further KVRRKSSR). In 1963, KVRRKSSR would become The Soviet Committee for cultural ties with countrymen living abroad (Sovetskiy Komitet po kul'turnykh sviaziam s sootechestvennikami za Rubezhom – further SKKSSR). In 1975, SKKSSR would change into The Soviet Organisation for cultural ties with countrymen living abroad – Organisation 'The Motherland' (Sovetskoe Obshchestvo po kul'turnykh sviaziam s sootechestvennikami za Rubezhom – Obshchestvo 'Rodina' – further the Motherland Organisation). In 1992, the Motherland Organisation would turn into the Association for ties with countrymen living abroad – Association 'The Motherland' (Assotsiatsiya po sviaziam s sootechestvennikami za Rubezhom – Assotsiatsiya 'Rodina' – further the

11. Motherland Association (Archive the Motherland Association, Moscow, 50 Let Sluzhenia Rodine 3, 5, 6).
12. Archive The Motherland Association, Map D-053 Bel'giiia SSG – Spravki i kharakteristiki na otdel'nych lits, Spravka na SSG gor. Booma 13.9.1965.
13. Interview with Debby on 20 July 2006; Archive The Motherland Association, Map Bel'giiia SSG. Perepiska s ts. P. SST, Spravka o besede s Pigarevoi M. F. i Ventsel' 4.8.1965 g.; Sovetskiy Patriot 26/516 (4.1971) 13.
14. Archive The Motherland Association, D-053 Bel'giiia SSG – Spravki i kharakteristiki na otdel'nych lits, Spravka Chentsovoi E.N. (1973) 3.
15. *Gazet van Zurenborg* 2 (3.2006) 4-5, 'Elke week een stukje Rusland in Zurenborg'; *Gazet van Zurenborg* 3 (7-8.2006) 6, 'Russische vrouwen bedanken met kaviaar en vodka'; *Gazet van Antwerpen* 3.4.2006 (Metropool 13), 'Atlasgebouw feestelijk geopend'; *De Zondag, Regionaal Nieuws Antwerpen* 2.4.2006 (7), 'Massa volk en veel sfeer voor multicultureel feest bij opening'.
16. Sound recording on 17 December 2006. Sound recordings are also archived at CegeS-Soma.
17. Sound recordings: *Oh, on the Mountain the Mowers Mow, The Wind Bents a shoot, Across the Steppes, Slender Rowan Tree, On the Mountain Stands a Guelder Rose, A Long Way, Through Valleys and Over Hills, Hawkers, Farmers, Hitch the Horses, While Fishing.*
18. Interview with Debby on 20 July 2006.

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