Arkadii Mikhailovich Harting replaced Rataev as director of the Foreign Agentura. Could there have been any other choice? Merit combined with political connections made Harting the inevitable selection. As director of the Foreign Agentura Harting proved to be a dynamic, innovative and ambitious leader. It is noteworthy that his tenure in office easily survived his mentor Rachkovskii’s final swan-song in 1906. Ultimately a combination of factors including exhaustion and his exposure in the European press as none other than Landezen, the infamous, long escaped criminal from French justice, induced him to retire in 1908.

When Harting took command of the Paris Office, it was still small with almost no administrative staff. A single secretary and a typist did the paper work. The Foreign Agentura employed four detectives in Paris, only two of whom were still really useful. The third man, too old for field work, only compiled spravki and the fourth, Henri Bint, although still listed on the personnel role as a detective had of late served as Rataev’s administrative assistant. In Geneva there were six people employed as detectives by the Foreign Agentura; one of them was no longer fit for service and the others also served in the Geneva police force. Harting noted that such a skimpy number of detectives in Switzerland and France could not cope with increasing revolutionary activity abroad. The newly appointed chief of the Paris Office argued that detectives were needed in Great Britain and in the major ports of Europe in order to halt the flow of revolutionary contraband into Russia. To make matters worse, the calibre of the detectives employed by the Foreign Agentura reached a comically low level. Harting attacked this problem at once, hiring several competent detectives whom he assigned as follows: two in Paris, one in rural France, one in Antwerp, two in London, one in Geneva, and three in Berlin. The Foreign Agentura also began to hire people in lesser investigative capacities to report overheard gossip or aid in the perlustration of the mails. Harting also bragged that after helping the Danish
secret police in one of their investigations its chief gratefully reciprocated by creating a special bureau to work exclusively on requests received from the Foreign Agentura.3

Of course, the hard information required by Fontanka was provided largely by the undercover agents. Here, Harting applied his special talent for the recruitment of sotrudniki. The people he acquired were so effective and sufficiently numerous to allow the Foreign Agentura to attain a long-dreamt of goal: the thorough penetration of every segment of the Russian revolutionary emigration.4

Harting also knew how to use these forces effectively. Unlike his predecessors, this director took the initiative in developing a systematic campaign against the emigration. He told Fontanka that he hoped to carry out the following programme:

1. To maintain surveillance over those émigrés that remained abroad after the amnesty (issued by the tsarist government during the 1905 Revolution).
2. To maintain surveillance on persons who were travelling through Europe to Russia for revolutionary purposes.
3. To maintain surveillance on the centres of revolutionary activity of the various subversive organisations and to maintain surveillance on the leaders of the revolutionary movement.
4. To maintain surveillance on the editorial, printing offices, and typographies of the revolutionary movement that printed forged passport blanks and other documents necessary for revolutionary activity.
5. To maintain surveillance on persons who were occupied with the preparation of bombs and those who taught the craft of bomb-making to others.
6. To watch individuals who were undertaking the smuggling of munitions into Russia.
7. To place under surveillance all (Russian) persons travelling abroad or Russians living abroad who have connections with representatives of European socialism or the Anarchist Party.
8. To uncover the plans of Russian émigrés and anarchists during visits and stays abroad by the Imperial Family.5

The Foreign Agentura conscientiously tried to fulfil the tenets of Harting’s programme, but the desperate situation in the homeland by mid-1905 drove the Foreign Agentura into emphasising one duty above others, number six: disrupting the smuggling of munitions into Russia. The director of the Foreign Agentura became obsessed with the endless ‘cat-and-mouse’ game with the revolutionary smugglers.

Harting’s interest in the prevention of smuggling had begun a few years earlier when, as chief of the Berlin Agentura, he noted the ease with which Russian émigré contrabandists smuggled subversive literature, weapons, and