

**Self and Mission in Russia Abroad: How Russian Intellectuals Created  
Existential Meaning in Exile, 1919-1939**

By

Daniela Munteanu

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Supervisor: Professor Karl Hall

Second Reader: Professor Marsha Siefert

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## Abstract

In the aftermath of the October Revolution and Civil War, the White Army, accompanied by politicians, intellectuals, civilian staff and their families, left Russia. The Russians settled across Europe, the Balkans, Asia and Latin America to form an émigré community that lasted from 1919 to 1939 and has since been known as Russia Abroad. When, by the mid-1920s, it became clear that the Bolsheviks were stronger than anticipated and that the emigration might linger longer than expected, the Russian emigrants committed to conserve Russianness and promote Russian culture while in exile. They managed to create a sense of belonging and common identity across the whole world through their publishing projects. They created and published hundreds of newspapers, journals and books that crossed political and geographical borders to form an “imagined community” stretching across dozens of cities in the world.

The Russian emigrants conserved their Russianness and the Russian national culture within a certain conceptual framework that informed their opinions, arguments and judgement. In this thesis I reconstruct this conceptual framework within which the Russians made sense of Russia’s recent past and their new circumstances, created their identities and looked for existential meaning. This framework was itself formed of concepts and in this thesis I research three of them in particular: *lichnost’* (individuality), *tvorchestvo* (creativity) and *missiâ* (mission) – concepts central to Russian intellectual thought.

Drawing on past meanings, *lichnost’*, *tvorchestvo* and *missiâ* were reconceptualised in unprecedented circumstances, when the Russians had no country or citizenship, no political agency or valuable belongings, no recognized profession or glorious reputation to count on. It was on the pages on those multiple journals and during those long evenings on Montparnasse that the Russian intellectuals had to revise their *lichnosti*, create existential meaning and find a way to serve Russia even from abroad. It was on these pages and during these evenings that

the Russians created that conceptual framework within which they then thought, dreamt and wrote.

In emigration, *lichnost'* was the creative subject-agent of history, the site of struggle against Bolshevism and conservation of Russianness. *Tvorchestvo* was the activity, the creation and creativity of Russian emigrants as Russian by soul and culture in the name of Russia. It was in *tvorchestvo* that they maintained their Russianness and promoted Russian culture. This was, in fact, the essence of their *missiia* – to serve Russia while in exile by engaging in literary and philosophical production. One day these works, imbued with freedom that the Russian emigrants had learnt while in exile in the West, were supposed to enter Russia and accompany its revival. By the late 1980s, works published in emigration started to make their way into USSR to inform the intellectual thought there. In this thesis I research the conceptual framework within which the émigré thoughts and ideas were created, a framework that also suggests a reading key of the Russian émigré thought.

## In Lieu of Acknowledgements

There were many people along the way who believed, encouraged and cheered me up. I say “thank you” to all those who made this thesis and year possible: to Aniko, who held our hands and made the impossible real; to Robin for his patience in making sense of my long paragraphs; to Prof. Matthias Riedl for listening to us all, for his empathy and help; to Prof. Tolga Esmer for encouraging my shy but daring prose; to Prof. Laszlo Kontler, for directing me towards a methodology that unveiled questions and answers, and then more questions again; to Prof. Marsha Siefert for kindly agreeing to be my second reader; and to my supervisor Prof. Karl Hall for his patience and guidance, and for his help in dissecting the intricate Russian thought; to Oana, Oleksii, Samira and Maria for the wine testing and the jokes; to Simona for teaching me to see the good, toss the evil and embrace love; to Luciana for teaching by example to follow the dream, for helping me pack, unpack and pack again books, shoes and memories; to Arianna and her family for making this transition to Vienna smooth and fun; to Valeria and Arianna again for the weekends away, the late night talks, and for being always there to cheer me up; to Natalie, Annette and Nadine, my rock in the past ten years, who shared my fears and joys, and did me justice against all, real or imaginary, evils; and finally to my family: to my brother Mihai, who enjoys listening to his sister talking, whatever she is talking about, so fast and with such enthusiasm, that sometimes he is afraid she is going to choke; and to my loving parents, Ecaterina and Gheorghe, who, through ups and downs, made space and time for me to dream high, who taught me respect for the human being, its dignity and diversity, tenets to which this thesis is a tribute. To you all and many others I say “thank you.”

Had I written this thesis in a city other than Vienna, this would have been a different research with a different beginning and a different ending. But I thought these thoughts and wrote these words on a multicultural Viennese street, noisy by day and quite by night (those lockdown nights) by a window with a view on the hills. And I am grateful.

## **Dedication**

To all those who left or had to leave, who roam and look for meaning, and only find it  
in that constant motion, without ever ceasing to yearn for belonging.

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“I was part of Russia Abroad, that Russia that was praying, toiling, studying, quarrelling, singing, dancing and ... writing.” *Reflections*, Zinaida Shakhovskaia

“For we all know how dirty we are, how petty and weak we are when we’re on a bender, but we are the same Russia, virgin Russia, youthful Russia, springtime Russia. We are the ones who shall remain, we are the ones who shall return, we, the poor, the young, the good-natured.” *Apollo the Abominable*, Boris Poplavskii<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I am very much indebted to professor Karl Hall for helping me translate Boris Poplavskii’s poetic prose.

# Chapter 1

## 1 Introduction

The first wave of Russian emigration, known also as Russia Abroad as the Russian emigrants themselves preferred to be referred to, lasted from approximately 1919, when during the Civil War politicians, intellectuals, their families and eventually the White Army, defeated by the Red, left Russia, to 1940, when World War II forced the Russians into a new emigration, mostly to the USA. Convinced that this emigration was temporary, the Russians left in a hurry with only a handful of belongings. At the beginning, the Russian refugees refused to unpack and waited for news from home, when would it be safe to return. While the White Army military leaders lobbied European governments for military intervention, ex Duma deputies and ministries of the Provisional Government tried to make their case against the Bolsheviks at the Peace Conference, to no avail. After the Treaty of Rapallo in 1922, when Germany established economic relations with the USSR, followed by the French recognition in 1924, as well as given the success of Lenin's New Economic Policy at home followed by the more successful Stalin's first five-year plan, the Russian emigrants began to acknowledge that the Bolsheviks were stronger than anticipated, and that their emigration would be longer than expected. And they started to settle in their new countries and build a routine, establishing schools and universities for their young people and founding printing houses and journals to keep alive the Russian word, creating thus what is today known as Russia Abroad or *Zarubezhnaia Rossiia*.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Russia Abroad or *Zarubezhnaia Rossiia* was a name that the Russian emigrants themselves came up with. It designated a second, for some the true, Russia, only temporarily quartered abroad. The Soviet authorities, on the other hand, referred to the emigration as the Russian Abroad or *Russkoe Zarubezh'e*, that is, denying it the status of being a true or alternative Russia.

Russia Abroad, consisting of up to 2 million or more at the beginning,<sup>3</sup> stretched across Europe, the Balkans, East Asia and later Latin America. What kept together this “imagined community” and gave it a sense of belonging was the array of journals, newspapers and printing houses that the Russians set up to keep fighting against the Bolsheviks and conserve Russian culture in exile. Devoid of any political agency and faced with daily hardships about employment and accommodation, the Russians committed to maintain their Russian identity in emigration and conserve Russian national culture. The Russians argued they brought true original Russia with them in emigration and had the duty to keep and guard it for future generations when Russian would be free again.

Russia Abroad has been the subject of several historical researches in the past thirty years. There is the cultural history of Marc Raeff, *Russia Abroad*, which is a classic in historiography with a detailed overview of the Russian first-wave emigration. Elena Chinyeva in *Russians outside Russia* and Catherine Andreyev and Ivan Savický in *Russia abroad: Prague and the Russian Diaspora* cover both the social and cultural histories of the Russian emigrants in Prague. The same do Robert Johnston in *New Mecca, New Babylon* and Robert Williams in *Culture in Exile* for the other two cultural and political centres of the emigration – Paris and Berlin, respectively. Russia Abroad is also the subject of literary studies. Maria Rubins in *Russian Montparnasse* researches the “translingual literature” and “bicultural identity” of the young Russian emigrants.

What these histories have in common is the acknowledgment of the importance and legacy of the Russian emigrants’ cultural production in exile. All cite their publishing projects as sites where the Russians conserved their identity and promoted Russian culture. The array of journals, newspapers and published books created a cultural worldview, a conceptual

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<sup>3</sup> Elena Chinyeva, *Russians Outside Russia* (München: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 2001); Marc Raeff, *Russia Abroad: A Cultural History of the Russian Emigration, 1919-1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

framework within which the Russian emigrants lived their lives and wrote their stories. It was within a certain conceptual framework that the Russians interpreted the recent past, read their present and envisioned a future. While these histories refer to tropes of Russianness that worked as pillars to the “imagined community” Russia Abroad, there is no conceptual and intellectual research of the literary and cultural cosmos the Russians created to then formulate within it their identity and mission as Russian intellectuals in exile.

In this thesis I research the conceptual framework within which the Russian emigrants wrote about Russia’s past and present, and imagined its future, and within which they made sense of their new historical conditions and looked for existential meaning. It was within this framework that the Russians conserved their Russianness, wrote their prose and poetry and published their histories and philosophies, and, most importantly, came up with the mission they were supposed to accomplish while in exile. This framework was itself formed by concepts, and for this thesis I individuated three in particular as the most defining – *lichnost’* (individuality), *tvorchestvo* (creativity) and *missiia* (mission). Central to Russian intellectual thought, these three were reconceptualised in emigration to acquire new meanings and convey new intentions. *Lichnost’*, *tvorchestvo* and *missiia* formed the framework within which Russian intellectuals thought and wrote about their identity, creativity and mission. These three concepts informed the writing, the discussions and the imagination of the émigré Russians for over twenty years.

Central to Russian intellectual thought, every concept has a history of its own and an array of meanings on which Russian emigrants relied for their own reconceptualization. For each of them I give in the following chapters a short comprehensive historical excursus to outline the main circumstances of their use and conceptualisation along with their several meanings. In emigration, *lichnost’*, *tvorchestvo* and *missiia* were reconceptualised in new and unexpected historical circumstances. The Russians were refugees without a country and a

citizenship, Russia was no longer the country they left, and their identity and mission as Russian intellectuals in service to their motherland had to be revised. As many other “Russian questions,” *lichnost'*, *tvorchestvo* and *missiia* in emigration were conceptualised within several ideological, intellectual and political debates and, most importantly and unsurprisingly, within the intergenerational conflict. In this thesis I point to all the debates but I frame the research principally around the latter one.

In emigration, *lichnost'*, *tvorchestvo* and *missiia* were reconceptualised in an atmosphere of utter impotence, existential despair and disillusion. The *lichnost'* (individuality) in the émigré thought, I argue, was not any anti-Bolshevik Russian or much less any intellectual in inter-war Europe. Rather, this *lichnost'* was specifically the Russian intellectual émigré, powerless and uprooted, whose predicament was to maintain the Russian essence in emigration. *Lichnost'* in Russian émigré thought was the creative agent-subject of history, the one that through its creative agency was supposed to conserve Russian culture in exile and in this way serve Russia. With the Russian émigré community scattered across the world, left without a citizenship and refusing naturalisation in the new countries of residence, the only form of identity left for the Russians was that of a “refugee.” Without a distinguished social status, a recognised profession or a glorious reputation, the Russians could only rely on their *lichnost'*, on their personality, which, self-perfected under the new conditions of exile, would become the site of struggle against Bolshevism and conservation of Russianness. While the old generation was shaping and preparing a *lichnost'* ready to serve Russia from abroad, the young was searching for their *lichnost'* and its existential meaning in an inter-war Europe among despair and disillusion.

*Lichnost'* was the site of *tvorchestvo*, the creation and creativity and the activity in the name of Russia. In Russian émigré thought, *tvorchestvo* was the activity of Russian emigrants as Russian by soul and culture. *Tvorchestvo* was what made Russian emigrants active agents

of history. Through *tvorchestvo* they could define themselves and maintain an identity, lead a meaningful life and serve Russia. Because the Russian emigrants in exile had freedom but were devoid of any civil and political agency, *tvorchestvo* was the only outlet for their historical agency. Whether this *tvorchestvo* entailed – organisation and participation of political and literary meetings, setting up publishing houses and issuing journals, writing poetry and novels – all these activities were *tvorchestvo* accomplished as Russians for the sake of Russia of tomorrow. Literature, in particular, was the site where Russian emigrants asserted and defended their Russianness and conserved Russian culture. While for the old generation *tvorchestvo* was the essence of their mission in exile, for the young *tvorchestvo* was the essence of their existence and the site for personal self-searching.

*Missiia* was the task the emigration set for themselves in their service to Russia: to conserve Russianness and Russian culture for the future of a liberated Russia. There were as many missions in emigration as there were political and ideological movements dedicated to serve Russia. Because *tvorchestvo* was the only variety of historical agency available to Russian emigrants, the only viable *missiia* in emigration was likewise conceptualised around *tvorchestvo*. Unlike *messianism*, an ideology going back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century in which Russia is saving the world, in *missionism* it is no longer Russia anointed by God doing the saving, it is Russia being saved by Russian émigré *lichnost'*. At the same time, this mission gave Russian intellectuals a sense of meaning as Russian emigrants in exile. This mission, writing about it, creating and promoting it, was the site of their identity – they kept being Russians inasmuch as they had a mission and served Russia. For the older generation, the mission consisted in conserving Russianness in their *tvorchestvo* and thus serve Russia. The young, on the other hand, felt no allegiance to Russia and no obligation to serve it. If they committed to a mission at all, it was to survive in interwar Europe as emigrants and create themselves as *lichnosti* through their own *tvorchestvo*.

In order to give a proper historical context within which this conceptual framework was built, I set every concept in a city of Russia Abroad – Paris, Berlin and Prague. Of the dozen cities of the first-wave emigration these three are respectively the cultural, political, and academic centres of Russia Abroad. I set *lichnost'* in Paris, *tvorchestvo* in Berlin and *missiia* in Prague not because these cities were the exclusive sites of their respective concepts. Rather, what was murmured, thought, said and written, for instance, on Montparnasse, resonated across all of the émigré community, as far away as Harbin in the Far East. However, within the scope of this thesis, I decided to link *lichnost'* to Paris because it was there that the debate around *lichnost'* was the most exciting between the “young” and the “old”. Also, I set *tvorchestvo* in Berlin, because it was in Berlin that Russian pre- and revolutionary *tvorchestvo* was very much appreciated, and because it was in Berlin that the Russian philosopher of *tvorchestvo*, Nikolai Berdiaev started his émigré intellectual activity. Finally, I link *missiia* to Prague because it was in this city that most Russian schools and higher education institutions were founded with the hope to prepare specialists for the imminent return to Russia and because Eurasianism, one of the first émigré intellectual movements to conceptualise *missiia* in emigration, had one of its main centres in Prague. All three concepts were inherent to all Russian communities across the world where there was writing, publishing and creative thinking and work. Eventually, by the end of 1930s all intellectual discussions moved to and concentrated in Paris, making of it the capital of Russia Abroad. From Paris the thoughts, the writing and the ideas of the Russian emigrants crossed geographical and political borders to form the “imagined community” of Russia Abroad.

## 1.1 Literature Review

With the Russian Historical Archive Abroad set in Prague and several memoirs started during the 1919-1940 period, the Russian emigrants commenced writing the history of their

exile during their lifetime. They also knew there was going to be a historian who was going to do them justice. However, writing a comprehensive history of Russia Abroad or at least of the single émigré centres was challenging for the nature and location of the archives. These, as the emigration itself, are scattered across the world: the USA, Czechoslovakia, France, Germany, Switzerland, to name a few, and of course the ones recently opened in Russia to which a large part of the Russian Historical Archive Abroad in Prague was moved and distributed across the whole country. A Russian intellectual settled in Paris would have had an intellectual life spanning several countries and time zones through exchange of letters, contributions to journals and visiting professorships. Also, Russian emigrants travelled across Russia Abroad searching for jobs and a better life, and often left without being able to take care of their personal archives. Hence their distribution across the world. Sometimes, in order to follow even one strand of émigré thought one has to cross-reference several archives and libraries.

A classic in the historiography of Russian first-wave emigration is Marc Raeff's *Russia Abroad*. This is a history of the cultural life of a "society in exile" with language and literature as its pinnacles. Raeff gives a very detailed description of the émigré cultural life as built and maintained in several émigré capitals around education institutions and cultural programmes, printing houses and journals, churches, religion and religious thought. Raeff, a Russian émigré himself in his youth in Paris, completes this rich in archival research book with sympathy and understanding with a dedication to the "bittersweet remembrance of ... [his] residence in Russia Abroad." There are also researches focusing on single émigré centres. Robert Johnston's *New Mecca, New Babylon* researches the Russian émigré community in Paris. The book provides an insightful account of the relationship between the Russian emigrants and the host society, their hardships in building a routine and dealing with bureaucracy. Chronologically, the research comprises the life of the Russians during the Nazi occupation and extends to 1945 when the Soviet authorities tried to coerce the emigration into their influence.



In *Culture in Exile* Robert Williams studies the Russian emigration in Berlin. The research starts much earlier, in the 1880s and follows the emigration of the Russian Germans from the Baltic provinces to continue with the post-1917 emigration. Along the cultural projects Williams focuses also on the political programmes of the Russians: how they tried and failed to lobby the German political establishment into their anti-Bolshevik fight. There are two books in particular dedicated to the Russian colony in Prague: Elena Chinyaeva's *Russians outside Russia. The Émigré Community in Czechoslovakia* and Catherine Andreyev and Ivan Savický's *Russia Abroad. Prague and the Russian Diaspora*. Both focus on the Russians and their institutions and cultural programmes in Prague. Prague is singled out among other émigré centres for its financial help under the *Russian Action* and for it becoming the academic centre for Slavic Studies in Europe.<sup>4</sup> The authors describe both the relationship of the Russians among themselves as well as their relationship with the host society.

Russia Abroad is also the subject of literary studies with a special focus on the so-called Russian Montparnasse. Maria Rubins's *Russian Montparnasse Transnational Writing in Interwar Paris* is a study of the young Russian literature. Under the spell of interwar modernism and in opposition to the old generation, the young Russians developed a "translingual literature" and a "bicultural identity." Preferring the human document against imagination, the Russian poets and novelists created a "Russian Montparnasse brand of existentialism" fuelled by their traumas of war and exile. There are many studies on the single Russian intellectuals who emigrated and on their work both home and abroad. There is one book in particular that treats historiography in Russia Abroad – Kåre Johan Mjør's *The Cultural and Intellectual Historiography of Russian First-Wave Émigré Writers*. In it Mjør studies the

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<sup>4</sup> *Russian Action* was a comprehensive programme of assistance for Russian refugees launched and financed by Czechoslovakia. *Russian Action* financed schools, universities, publishing houses and pensions for Russian intellectuals in dire conditions. The mastermind behind the project was the president Tomas Masaryk, who many times helped Russian intellectuals in need from his own personal fund. The rationale behind *Russian Action* was to train professionals for the future Russia when Bolsheviks would fall, which, it was the hope, would happen soon.

history works of four émigré intellectuals and argues that they created a “new genre in Russian historiography, devoted to Russian cultural and intellectual history.”<sup>5</sup> This is a research of how the Russian emigrants conceptualised the past in order to make sense of their present and offer a solution for the future.<sup>6</sup>

## 1.2 Methodology

I treat *lichnost'*, *tvorchestvo* and *missiia* as concepts of *Begriffsgeschichte* to trace the meanings these acquired in the Russian émigré thought.<sup>7</sup> I trace the several meanings the concepts acquire in different ideological and intellectual contexts, as well as and especially when used together with other concepts. I look into how these concepts responded to structural changes, and how they triggered these structural changes as well as how they accompanied them. Also, I treat the audience as an active player in this analysis: how it directs the conceptualisation of the terms and is influenced by them in return. The Russian emigrants used *lichnost'*, *tvorchestvo* and *missiia* to create a conceptual framework within which they maintained their Russian identity, made sense of their existence and set the task to serve Russia. Hence the meanings they loaded these concepts with had to a certain extent an existential function.

Following the Cambridge school, and in particular Quentin Skinner, I trace the intentionality behind the (re)conceptualisation and usage of *lichnost'*, *tvorchestvo* and *missiia*,

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<sup>5</sup> Kåre Johan Mjør, *Reformulating Russia. The Cultural and Intellectual Historiography of Russian First-Wave Emigre Writers* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 55

<sup>6</sup> Raeff, *Russia Abroad*; Robert H Johnston, *New Mecca, New Babylon: Paris and the Russian Exiles, 1920- 1945* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988); Robert Chadwell Williams, *Culture in Exile: Russian Émigrés in Germany, 1881-1941* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1972); Chinyaeva; Catherine Andreyev and Ivan Savický, *Russia Abroad: Prague and the Russian Diaspora, 1918-1938*, 1st ed (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); Maria Rubins, *Russian Montparnasse: Transnational Writing in Interwar Paris*, Palgrave Studies in Modern European Literature (Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2015); Mjør, *Reformulating Russia*.

<sup>7</sup> Reinhart Koselleck, 'Social History and Conceptual History', in *The Practice of Conceptual History. Timing History, Spacing Concepts*, trans. Todd Samuel Presner (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002); Melvin Richter, *The History of Political and Social Concepts. A Critical Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

that is, what the intentions of the individuals were that used these concepts in their writings.<sup>8</sup> Different intentions in Russia Abroad account for different meanings and different usages of each of the concept. The intentions, in turn, depend on the motives behind the usage of the concept, and these too were several in the émigré community. *Lichnost'*, *tvorchestvo* and *missiia* had different meanings and manifestations depending on who was writing and for whom, out of what motives and with what intentions.

For the scope of this thesis I do not analyse the shift in meanings for every concept in the writing of every author that engaged in the debate. Rather, I analyse each of these concepts within the larger debate, that is, as if the concept was entangled in a web of opinions, treatises and articles, its meaning changing at every crossing of threads. I trace the several interrelations of the different meanings of these three concepts in building and maintaining a sense of Russianness in the “imagined community” of Russia Abroad.

*Lichnost'*, *tvorchestvo* and *missiia* were conceptualised, like many other “émigré questions,” within conflicting intellectual, ideological and political debates, to which I refer in every chapter. Most importantly though, these three concepts were created and discussed, unsurprisingly, within the intergenerational debate. I organised my research following the broad lines of this debate. “Cohort thinking” and generational self-consciousness among Russian intelligentsia had been developing in Russia since the 1850s.<sup>9</sup> In fact, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century much of the Russian intellectual thought was formed within an intergenerational debate. In emigration this acquired a new dimension: while in the 1850s the “fathers and sons” debated on a better course for Russia, in emigration the children turned their back on Russia. Following Karl Mannheim, I treat here generation as the group united by “participation in the same historical and social circumstances.” What makes generation an

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<sup>8</sup> Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics. Regarding Method*, vol. I (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

<sup>9</sup> Stephen Lovell, ‘From Genealogy to Generation: The Birth of Cohort Thinking in Russia’, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 9, no. 3 (2008): 567–94, <https://doi.org/10.1353/kri.0.0016>.

actuality is the “concrete bond ... created between members of a generation by their being exposed to the social and intellectual symptoms of a process of dynamic de-stabilisation.”<sup>10</sup> In the case of the Russian emigrants, these crucial historical and social events were the Revolution and the Civil War. While both generation cohorts in Russia experienced the same events, what differs is the age at which they experienced them. The old generation experienced the revolution and the war as already accomplished individualities (*lichnosti*) with a glorious and memorable past they could rely on in emigration. For the young generation, on the other hand, the revolution, the war and the exile were the main formative events. They carried these traumas into their identity (*lichnost'*) formation as well as into their *tvorchestvo*. Aware that there are several “generation units” within the same actual generation cohort with several and even conflicting ideological positions, I study *lichnost'*, *tvorchestvo* and *missiia* as conceptualised by the “actual young generation” and the “actual old generation,” pointing to differences within the same generation cohort when fundamentally necessary.

I study the conceptualisation and reconceptualization of *lichnost'*, *tvorchestvo* and *missiia* in the historical context within which the (re)conceptualisation occurred, keeping in mind that the concepts themselves influenced this very context. For this I reconstruct the circumstances within which these were created, recreated, listened to and debated by consulting memoirs, diaries and autobiographies as well as secondary literature. Because these concepts are never “too new not to have existed virtually as a seed,” I give a concise historical overview of every concept in Russian thought in order to offer a glimpse of the meanings and historical and linguistic contexts Russian émigré intellectuals relied on in reconceptualising their own *lichnost'*, *tvorchestvo* and *missiia*.<sup>11</sup> Since in translation meanings are either lost or changed, I

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<sup>10</sup> Karl Mannheim, ‘The Problem of Generations’, in *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, ed. Paul Kecskemeti (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952), 298-303.

<sup>11</sup> Koselleck.

decided to use the concepts in their original Russian form throughout the whole thesis, hoping to convey their meanings and performativity on their own terms.

All the sources I use in this research are published sources. For the historical context I consulted, besides secondary literature, diaries, memoirs, biographies and autobiographies, written during the period of Russia Abroad or after, in the new emigration or when back in the USSR. For the analysis of the concepts I researched articles, monographs and speeches published in several “thick journals.” I cover these journals in the next chapter where, set in the historical circumstances of their creation, I draw their importance and role in the creation of the émigré conceptual framework. In addition, because literature was always the site and means through which the Russians solved their most pressing ontological and metaphysical questions, I cite several “young” novels. The “young” Russian emigrants despised political and public debates, preferring to put their thoughts and ideas into prose or verse.

In Chapter 2 I briefly introduce Russia Abroad with its everyday life practices, places of encounter and cultural activities, as well as the heroes of this research and the journals where they published their writing. In Chapters 3, 4 and 5 I analyse *lichnost'* and Paris, *tvorchestvo* and Berlin, *missiia* and Prague, respectively. All three chapters are organised in a similar manner: first I give an overview of the city and the life of the Russian colony there, then I proceed with a historical account of the concept in Russian intellectual thought to then focus on the concept itself in the émigré thought.

## Chapter 2

### 2 The “imagined community” of Russia Abroad

“Russia, brazen and amiable, kind and fierce, dashing Russia, taxi-driving Russia, Russia Abroad. Liberté, fraternité, carte d’identité. Citroen Russia, invincible Russia, Russia of the lower ranks, anarchic and religious Russia ... Parisian Russia.” *Apollo the Abominable*,

Boris Poplavskiĭ<sup>12</sup>

In the aftermath of the October Revolution, during and after the Civil War in which the Red Army won in 1921, the White Army, accompanied by politicians, intellectuals, civilian staff and their families, left Russia from the north through Finland, from the south through the ports of Sebastopol and Odessa, and from the Far East to the Manchurian town of Harbin. The most memorable though for many were the evacuations from Crimea and Odessa on the French cruisers to Gallipoli and Constantinople. The majority of the refugees were soldiers of the Generals Pëtr Wrangel and Anton Denikin’s armies. They remembered the chill winter nights, the hunger, the rugged boots, the bugs, the confusion and the despair. The White military leadership still hoped in a revanche and tried to keep up the morale of the soldiers. Many however, tired, starved and disillusioned, continued their journey to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (later Yugoslavia), Bulgaria and Greece, countries that offered employment. The romantics tried their fate in Paris and Berlin. Several hundred students moved to Prague to study in the schools and universities established under the Czechoslovak sponsored

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<sup>12</sup> Boris Poplavskiĭ, *Apollon Bezobrazov {Apollo, The Abominable}*, vol. Sobranie Sochineniĭ {Collected Works}, 2 (Moscow: Soglasie, 2000).

*Russian Action*. Many returned to Russia on their own initiative: according to the League of Nations data, in the spring of 1921 approximately 5,000 Cossacks returned home. By 1922, the Turkish authorities informed the League of Nations that it would vacate the refugee camps in Constantinople and Gallipoli, hosting about 130,000 people. By 1923, around 6,000 Russian refugees were repatriated under the leadership of the League of Nations, who negotiated with Moscow guarantees for their security.<sup>13</sup> Those who stayed, embarked on a long and tiresome journey of hardships, hunger, unemployment and xenophobia, but also of intensive literary and cultural creativity, a journey known since as Russia Abroad.

The political and military leadership of the White Army and Provisional Government were convinced that the emigration was temporary. They engaged in lobbying for European military intervention against the Bolsheviks, and for making their voice heard at the Peace Conference. However, after the Anglo-Soviet commercial accord in 1921, the Treaty of Rapallo in 1922 when Germany engaged in economic relations with USSR and the following French recognition in 1924, the defeat of the Bolsheviks and the imminent return withered away. Russian refugees turned their energies towards building a dignified routine in emigration. They settled in cities across the whole world: Paris, Berlin, Prague, Belgrade, Sofia, Harbin, San Francisco and later South America. Where they settled they set up journals, newspapers and publishing houses to leave a rich account of their cultural life there. Just as their thoughts and ideas moved across all of Russia Abroad through books, articles and letters, so did the Russians move across countries in search for employment and better accommodation. The Russians emigrants were literary and culturally prolific in any of the émigré centres, but three in particular became the capitals of Russia Abroad for their printing,

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<sup>13</sup> Raeff, *Russia Abroad*; Johnston, *New Mecca, New Babylon*; Martyn Housden, 'White Russians Crossing the Black Sea: Fridtjof Nansen, Constantinople and the First Modern Repatriation of the Refugees Displaced by the Civil Conflict, 1922-23', *The Slavonic and East European Review* 88, no. 3 (2010): 495–524; Andreyev and Savický.

political, cultural and academic activities: Paris, Berlin and Prague. I treat each city in particular in the following chapters in the thesis.

The main concern for the Russian emigrants was survival. They received financial and material help from several humanitarian organisations like the International Red Cross as well as the American and Russian ones, the American Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) and the World Christian Student Movement, and the Russian *Zemgor* (the Union of Zemstvos and Towns), recreated in emigration. Also, the Russians formed voluntary organizations, hospitals, nurseries, homes for invalid military personnel and orphanages to assist women, children, and the sick. The funds came from the assets of Russian embassies abroad and distributed among several émigré centres. Along with accommodation, securing a job was not easy for the Russians who had to learn new languages and skills, obtain documents and integrate into new societies. Marc Raeff calculates that among the adult refugee community approximately two-thirds had “some secondary education, practically all had received basic elementary education, and one-seventh had earned a university diploma.”<sup>14</sup> Countries like Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, in need of professional cadres after the war, offered employment to the Russians. France too offered jobs for the reconstruction of the country. There the Russian emigrants were employed in the automobile sector and in farms across the country; the lucky one secured taxi driving licences. Lawyers, doctors and teachers had to first obtain French diplomas and later also citizenship to be able to exercise their profession. Russian women worked as seamstresses and domestic workers or by doing handicrafts. Russian professors in history, philosophy and jurisprudence were offered posts at universities and schools in Czechoslovakia. They also founded and worked for the Slavonic Library and the Russian Historical Archive Abroad in Prague. However, those who wanted to continue their intellectual activities had to integrate it with menial jobs such as taxi drivers, dock loader and concierges

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<sup>14</sup> Raeff, *Russia Abroad*, 26;



or to rely on the pension of, for instance, the good-willed Czech politicians.<sup>15</sup> Very few managed to live by their writing only. It was more dire for the young poets and novelists, who, while trying hard to gain the acknowledgment of their literary talent, had to also work as “newspaper boy[s], soda jerk[s], monk[s], wrestler[s], forem[e]n in ... steel mill[s], bus driver[s] and so on.”<sup>16</sup>

Many of the young emigrants, who arrived as soldiers of the White Army, did not finish their secondary or higher education. Concerned to give them a proper Russian education, the old generation founded Russian primary and secondary schools and Russian universities and faculties.<sup>17</sup> At the beginning, the courses and programmes were supposed to prepare young professionals to reconstruct Russia after the strife of the revolutions and Civil War, and give professors and academicians a place to pursue their intellectual work. Many students, in fact, enrolled hoping to graduate in Russia. When however, it became clearer that a return was not imminent, education was directed towards maintaining a Russian identity in emigration and conserve Russian culture and values. To make their diplomas legally acceptable by French institutions and give the Russian young an opportunity to continue their studies, Russian schools became bilingual. There were also technical courses and programmes in agriculture, railway and automobile construction. By the end of the 1920s, young Russian emigrants concentrated on acquiring professional skills and securing paying jobs. By the 1930s, the majority of Russian children attended local schools, taking however additional courses on Russian subjects. Few scholars managed to enter the academic environment of their host countries. The majority worked for Russia Abroad, writing and publishing for the émigré community in service of a future liberated Russia.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Raeff, *Russia Abroad*; Andreyev and Savický.

<sup>16</sup> Vladimir Nabokov, *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited* (New York: Vintage, 1989), 67.

<sup>17</sup> “In 1924 there were ninety secondary schools with 8,835 day pupils and 4,954 boarders.” Raeff, *Russia Abroad*, 49.

<sup>18</sup> There were some exceptions though. Prince Nikolaï Trubet’skoï was offered a position at the University of Vienna. Roman ĭakobson emigrated to the USA where he had a distinguished academic career. Nikolaï Loskiĭ

In order to secure a job, one had to have their documents in order. For instance, in France, the employer required a work permit which was difficult for the Russians to secure with their Nansen passports. The latter was named after Fridtjof Nansen, the polar explorer, appointed as High Commissioner for Russian Affairs under the League of Nations. The passport was granted to all Russian refugees across the world starting in 1922.<sup>19</sup> A Soviet decree of 1921, repeated and reinforced in 1924, deprived the Russian emigrants of their citizenship leaving them stateless persons. The Nansen Passport allowed them to apply for visas and residence and work permits – it legally identified the Russian refugee or “exile” or “emigrant,” as the Russians preferred to be referred to (in line with the nineteenth-century Russian exiles and other historical émigré communities, such as for instance the French Protestants). The Russians, in fact, preferred the Nansen passport to naturalisation in any of the host countries, as a sign of loyalty to their Russianness, or to avoid military service as did the insurance agent Alekseï Georgievich Astashev in Nina Berberova’s Paris-set novella *Oblegchenie Uchasti (Relief of Fate)*.<sup>20</sup> The old generation, in particular, rejected the idea of acquiring a new citizenship that would mean betrayal of Russia and their Russian identity, and even used the Nansen passport to emigrate to the USA in late 1939. The young, on the other hand, acquired citizenships in their new countries with less remorse. It allowed them to secure better jobs, integrate into the host societies and acquire a sense of belonging that was not coming with pain, disillusion and broken dreams.

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obtained tenure in Prague and visiting professorship across Europe and the USA. Nikolaï Berdiaev in Paris too managed to work and acquire fame. Raeff, *Russia Abroad*; Andreyev and Savický.

<sup>19</sup> The Nansen Passport was recognised by 54 governments, who took the obligation to offer residence and work permits to Nansen passport holders. Chinyaeva.

<sup>20</sup> Nina Berberova, *Relief of Fate* (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1949).

## 2.1 Imagined Community

What made Russian first-wave emigration a “society in exile,” according to Marc Raeff, is the fact that most social classes were represented in emigration, along with several ethnic and religious groups. There were members of the aristocracy, intelligentsia and of the urban bourgeoisie, small landowners, skilled workers, peasants (especially the Cossacks) with “men outnumber(ing)women by more than two to one.”<sup>21</sup> Also, there were in emigration several political and ideological groups, that either arrived already formed in Russia or were created while in exile: monarchists, Kadety, liberals, Social Revolutionaries, national-maximalists, to cite just a few. All groups had their mouthpieces, from nationalists to Caucasian highlanders, in which they continued or started new discussions and debates.<sup>22</sup> There were many issues that divided the emigration, but one in particular was the watershed that decided whether a person was worthy of a handshake – the Revolution.

The Russian intelligentsia started to evaluate the Revolution, both February and October, and their meaning for Russian history, already during the revolutions and right in their aftermath, and continued in exile. Making sense of the Revolution was part of assessing their service and legacy, as well as part of writing Russian history. Jane Burbank in her book *Intelligentsia and Revolution* gives a rich account of the evolution of this intricate debate.<sup>23</sup> Anyone with an opinion on the issue provided such an individualised and sophisticated argument that it is difficult to divide the debate itself in clear-cut groups with their relative positions. However, the emigration was divided between those who accepted October as a revolution, like the philosopher Nikolaï Berdiaev and the historian and Kadet politician Pavel Miliukov, though metaphysically each interpreted the Revolution differently, and those who

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<sup>21</sup> Andreyev and Savický, xi; Raeff, *Russia Abroad*.

<sup>22</sup> Johnston, *New Mecca, New Babylon*, 40.

<sup>23</sup> Jane Burbank, *Intelligentsia and Revolution. Russian Views of Bolshevism 1917-1922* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

rejected October, considering it a coup and stayed faithful to the values of the one and true revolution – the February, like the Socialist Revolutionary and publicist Mark Vishniak. With time passing, more and more emigrants accepted the October Revolution as an event that divided Russian history in “before” and “after.” These people formed an umbrella movement – the so-called post-revolutionary movement of which several ideological and political groups made part. What generally united them was the acceptance of the October Revolution, the acknowledgment that it unveiled to Russia and the world a “new truth,” and that Russia’s reconstruction should occur following the new Soviet society but necessarily within a religious worldview. By the late 1930s these post-revolutionary movements as well as their opponents competed for the education of the young emigrants in exile as well as for the formulation of the mission in exile.

One thing the representatives of the old generation agreed on, their political and ideological divergences notwithstanding, was the urgency to educate the young generation in the Russian national culture and not lose it to denationalisation and fascism. The intergenerational conflict was central to the Russian émigré thought. Both cohorts consciously framed their arguments and positions around the generation gap. While the “old” resented the “young” drifting away from all Russian, preferring instead integration into new societies, the latter accused the parents of living in the past and ignoring the present. There were many bones of contention between the two, but, most importantly, they argued over identity, over literature (the old rejected for a long time the decadent poetry and prose of the young) and over the mission or the service the “old” believed all Russians in exile were supposed to accomplish as Russian by soul and culture. The parents relied on an identity formed around the mission to serve Russia, and in emigration this meant conserving Russianness in writing for the future. The children, on the other hand, had to build an identity, do that in exile, in a time stricken by

depression and disillusion, and form this identity, according to the old, around a country that did not exist anymore and in the name of its ephemeral future.

Devoid of any political agency, far away from their motherland and driven by a sense of service to Russia, the Russian intellectuals in emigration committed to conserve Russian culture and Russianness. According to Raeff, it was the “Russian language that tied the emigres to their past and that helped them to transcend their dispersion.”<sup>24</sup> They thought, debated, wrote and published multiple journals, newspaper and books that circulated across the whole Russia Abroad, creating an “imagined community,” whose sense of belonging was given by the Russian word. For this thesis I consulted only a handful of these publications, the ones that, in my opinion, reflected the most this conceptual framework and intergenerational conflict within which the Russian émigré intellectuals made sense of Russia’s history, conserved their Russianness and looked for existential meaning.

*Sovremennye Zapiski (Contemporary Annals)* was Russia Abroad’s most circulated and famous thick journal. Created in 1919 in Paris by five Socialist Revolutionaries, it committed to uphold the values of the February Revolution and to conserve Russian culture in emigration. It circulated for seventy issues until 1939, when the Nazis occupied Paris.<sup>25</sup> Being published in *Sovremennye Zapiski* guaranteed a wide readership, as well as meant recognition of the literary talent. In 1931, one of the journal’s editors, Il’ia Fondaminskii, searching for a space to develop his “holistic worldview,” formed together with the philosophers Georgii Fedotov and

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<sup>24</sup> Raeff, *Russia Abroad*, 109.

<sup>25</sup> *Contemporary Annals* continued the tradition of nineteenth-century Russian thick journals, only this time without state censorship and Aesopian language. The journal’s title was a blend of the titles of the two most prominent thick journals in Imperial Russia in the 19th century – *Sovremennik (The Contemporary)* and *Otechestvennye Zapiski (Annals of the Fatherland)*. *The Contemporary* was first founded by the poet Aleksandr Pushkin in 1836, to be later bought by Nikolai Nekrasov. Besides literature the journal was sensitive to social and political changes of the 1860s, publishing articles critical of Russian authoritarianism. By the same token, *Annals of the Fatherland*, founded in 1818, combined literature and social and political criticism. Both journals were closed by the authorities in view of their political involvement in 1866 and 1884 respectively. The journal was funded with Czechoslovak money outside the Russian Action programme. The financial help continued until the Munich Agreement in 1938.

Fëdor Stepun the journal *Novyi Grad* (*The New City*).<sup>26</sup> The journal was to be a post-revolutionary platform where young and old would gather together to create the “new image” (*obraz*) of future Russia and define the émigré mission. The same year, another post-revolutionary journal *Utverzhdeniia* (*Affirmations*) was created with the mission “to formulate the Russian historical Idea.” It only ran for three issues, but discussed issues central to the émigré thought – *lichnost'*, messianism and missionism, as well as the meaning of the Revolution. In 1930, the young generation of poets and novelists created their journal *Chisla* (*Numbers*). In it they committed to literature against politics, and to explore “life and the meaning of death.” It only lasted for four years due to financial problems. Before *Chisla*, the young published among other places in the journal *Novyi Korabl'* (*The New Ship*), created in 1927 by the poets Zinaida Gippius and Dmitrii Merezhkovskii. Together with the prose and poetry of the young, *Novyi Korabl'* also published the insightful discussions of the *Zelenaia Lampa* (*The Green Lamp*), a literary-religious circle in Paris.

Along these journals I also consulted several publications of the historiosophical movement – Eurasianism, that, born in Sofia, then followed its various adherents across Russia Abroad. Eurasianism propagated the idea of Russia-Eurasia as a unique civilisation, a mixture of Slavic and Turanic cultures. Eurasianism rejected both Western civilisation and Bolshevism, proposing a Third Way, that is, a demotic ideocracy with a planned economy tolerant of private initiative. Eurasianism was one of the first intellectual groups in emigration to accept the October Revolution as an accomplished historical event that saw the rebellion of the Russian *narod* against Romano-Germanic civilisation and that brought about a spiritual change in Russia. In this thesis I refer to Eurasianism as if it were a comprehensive ideological movement, fully aware that Eurasianism was a versatile and flexible movement. The people who initiated

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<sup>26</sup> Il'ia Fondaminskii to Mark Vishniak, January 12, 1931, in *Sovremennye Zapiski. Parizh (1920-1940). Iz Arkhiva Redaktsii {Contemporary Annals. Paris (1920-1940). Editorial Archives}*, Ed. Oleg Korostelev and Manfred Shrubia (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2011).

it left it at a certain point, while others joined, bringing their own ideologies. Eurasianism evolved and changed with every new event, political or social, with every news from home. Eurasianism was and is extensively researched, especially since its revival in Russian in the 1990s, with still much left to be studied.<sup>27</sup> I hope in this thesis to have researched Eurasianism from a different perspective, as one of the central builders of the émigré conceptual framework.

For reasons of time, space and access, I did not consult for this research dozens of others publications, including Nikolaï Berdiaev's religious journal *Put'*, although I quote extensively Berdiaev in other publications. Also, I did not consult the most widely-read émigré liberal newspaper *Poslednie Novosti*, nor its conservative opponent *Vozrozhdenie*. These and many other publications would integrate this research, one day. For this thesis however, I believe and hope that the selection of journals I made, together with the diaries, the memoirs and émigré literature, were enough to reconstruct the conceptual framework of the “imagined community” Russia Abroad.

## 2.2 The Heroes

The Russian emigrants left a rich account of their life and thought in emigration in their articles letters diaries and memoirs. I only consulted some of them. Two of the *Sovremennye Zapiski* editors, Il'ia Fondaminskiĭ and Mark Vishniak, both Muscovite Jews, met and befriended each other when still young children. After graduation both joined the SR, and participated actively in the party work. After the October Revolution both tried to join the Volunteer Army in the south, risking arrest and execution. Eventually Fondaminskiĭ through Odessa and Vishniak through Crimea left Russia and met in Paris. When the Nazis entered Paris, Vishniak together with other Russian emigrants left for the USA, settled in New York

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<sup>27</sup> Mark Bassin, Sergei Glebov, and Marlene Laruelle, eds., *Between Europe and Asia: The Origins, Theories, and Legacies of Russian Eurasianism* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015).

and lived a long and prolific life. Fondaminskiĭ did not take the cruise across the Atlantic. He returned instead to an occupied Paris where he was arrested and sent to the Compiègne concentration camp, then moved to Auschwitz, where he died in September 1942.<sup>28</sup> Remembered by the “young” writer Vladimir Nabokov (Sirin) as a “saintly and heroic soul,” Fondaminskiĭ was one of the few of the old generation who could engage the young writers in meaningful discussions. The “young” remembered his big library and the sweet cakes served with tea during the evenings of the philosophical circle *Krug* (*Circle*). With his organisational talent Fondaminskiĭ organised countless fundraising evenings, publishing enterprises and selling events to help raise money for Russian culture abroad.

The philosopher Fëdor Stepun, with whom Fondaminskiĭ created a journal and devised a mission for the emigration, was of Baltic German descent. Following the October Revolution Stepun made ends meet in Bolshevik Moscow as a culture consultant and theatre director in Anatoliĭ Lunacharskiĭ’s Bolshevik cultural programme. Stepun eventually referred with warmth to these Bolshevik years in his émigré writings creating consternation in the community. Expelled by Lenin in 1922 on the “Philosophy Steamer,” he settled in Dresden where he taught sociology and gave lectures on Russia across Germany, as well as working as a literature consultant for *Contemporary Annals*. After World War II, Stepun was offered tenure at the Munich University where he lectured on Russian culture.<sup>29</sup>

Another philosopher expelled on the “Philosophy Steamer” was Nikolaĭ Berdiaev. He made a name for himself before the Revolution, with, among other things, his *The Meaning of Creativity* and participation in the collection of essays *Vekhi* (*Landmarks*), which marked his

<sup>28</sup> Mark Vishniak, *Sovremennye Zapiski. Vospominaniia Redaktora {Contemporary Annals. The Memoirs of the Editor}* (Indiana University Publications, 1957); Manfred Shrub, ‘Istoriia zhurnala ‘Sovremennye zapiski’ v svete redaktsionnoi perepiski {The History of the Journal ‘Contemporary Annals’ in the editorial correspondence}’, in *Sovremennye Zapiski. Parizh (1920-1940). Iz Arkhiva Redaktsii {Contemporary Annals. Paris (1920-1940). Editorial Archives}*, ed. Oleg Korostelev and Manfred Shrub (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2011).

<sup>29</sup> Vishniak, *Contemporary Annals. The Memoirs of the Editor*; Korostelev and Shrub, *The History of the Journal ‘Contemporary Annals’*.



transition from Marxism to idealism. In emigration, Berdīaev was one of the first to accept and acknowledge the October Revolution, which brought about a spiritual change in the Russian *narod*. Berdīaev was a staunch defender of the human *lichnost'* and its freedom within the Orthodox religion. Despite his controversial influence on the spiritual and ideological education of the “young,” many remembered him warmly in their memoirs. Sharing an interest in idealism were the poets Zinaida Gippius and Dmitrii Merezhkovskiĭ, wife and husband. The Merezhkovskie, as the couple was known in emigration, gained prominence in fin-de-siècle Saint-Petersburg as active participants of the Silver Age. In emigration they resided in their pre-revolutionary apartment in Paris, where, starting the late 1920s, they hosted their literary-religious circle *Zelenaĭa Lampa* (*The Green Lamp*). Both Gippius and Merezhkovskiĭ took the side of Nazism in World War II, which left them isolated in the Russian colony in Paris.<sup>30</sup>

*The Green Lamp* circle was organised specifically to meet the young novelists and poets. Gippius was sympathetic to the plight of the young, forced to take menial jobs for the sake of survival with no time or energies left for literary creation. She was quoted by the poet Iurii Terapiano to be saying “[In Imperial Russia] writers died, certainly, but that a whole literature generation died – this was out of question.”<sup>31</sup> Terapiano, a member of the young generation, was slightly older than the others and was known to play patron to his younger fellow poets. In emigration he spoke out in defence of an “émigré literature” and the urgency it reflect Russian life in exile. He lived a long life and published memoirs with accounts of literary life in Paris. This life was occurring on Montparnasse, in the smoky cafés, over coffee and second-rate liquors, during conversations until dawn.

The chronicler of the young “unnoticed generation,” Vladimir Varshavskiĭ, left a cosy life in Russia, went through the Constantinople refugee camp, enrolled in the Russia Law

<sup>30</sup> Nina Berberova, *Kursiv moĭ. Avtobiografiia* [*The Italics are Mine. Autobiography*] (New York: New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1966).

<sup>31</sup> Iurii Terapiano, *Literaturnaĭa Zhizn' Russkogo Parizha za Polveka 1924-1974* [*Half-a-Century of the Literary Life of Russian Paris 1924-1974*] (Paris - New York: Al'batros - Tret'ia Volna, 1986).

Faculty in Prague to then leave it and move to Montparnasse, to write. Enrolled in the French Army, Varshavskii fought in World War II and earned medals for his courage and service. In the 1951, Varshavskii emigrated to the USA to continue writing and work for *Radio Svoboda* (*Radio Freedom*).<sup>32</sup> There were many Russian emigrants who either enrolled in the French Army or participated in the Resistance. Boris Vil'de left Russia when he was nine. After he spent his childhood and adolescence in the Baltics and Berlin, he moved to Paris where he enrolled in the Sorbonne, graduated and secured a job as an ethologist at the Muse de l'Homme. In his prison diary, months before his execution, he reflected a lot about love, death and meaning but never resented his choice.<sup>33</sup> Another hero of the Resistance was Elizaveta Skobtsova, poet and Social Revolutionary. While in emigration, she took the vow and became Mother Maria. The indefatigable nun made of her house a place where Russian emigrants in need could always come. She travelled across France to check on Russian colonies and reported on their unemployment, poverty and misery for Miliukov's *Poslednie Novosti*. In occupied Paris Mother Maria helped the Jews for which she was arrested and died in a concentration camp.<sup>34</sup>

The hope and pride of Montparnasse, Boris Poplavskii, artist and poet, was remembered by all as the most unconventional, smartest of the young Russians: "Poplavskii was the main representative of the 'Montparnasse' worldview. He was our Montparnasse."<sup>35</sup> Poplavskii lived a short but intense life. On Montparnasse, with his black glasses on, he was always ahead of time with his philosophical digressions. Deeply spiritual, Poplavskii dreamt of fame and

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<sup>32</sup> Tat'iana Krasavchenko and Vladimir Varshavskii, 'Pod Pokrovom Izgnaniia {Under the Cover of Exile}', in *Ozhidanie. Proza. Ėsse. Literaturnaia Kritika {Expectation. Prose. Essays. Literary Critic}* (Moscow: Dom Russkogo Zarubezh'ia Imeni Aleksandra Solzhenitsyna, 2016).

<sup>33</sup> Boris Vil'de, *Dnevnik i Pis'ma iz Tiur'my 1941-1942 {Diary and Letters from the Prison 1941-1942}* (Moscow: Russkii Put', 2005).

<sup>34</sup> Vasilii Ianovskii, *Polia Eliseiskie Kniga Pamiati {Champs-Élysées. The Book of Memory}* (Moscow: Gud'ial-Press, 2000).

<sup>35</sup> Vladimir Varshavskii, 'Monparnasskie Razgovory {Montparnasse Conversations}', in *Ozhidanie. Proza. Ėsse. Literaturnaia Kritika {Expectation. Prose. Essays. Literary Critic}* (Moscow: Dom Russkogo Zarubezh'ia Imeni Aleksandra Solzhenitsyna, 2016).

recognition. After his death due to cocaine overdose, his friend Nikolaï Tatishchev, published his works including his diary. This is how Russia Abroad met the young “human being of the 1930s” in exile; them and their thoughts and dreams, hopes and aspirations, fears and ideas. Berdiaev called this diary a “document of the contemporary soul, of the young Russian soul in emigration.”<sup>36</sup> A partner of Poplavskii’s Parisian night adventures was Vasilii Īanovskii. Īanovskii left Russia as a fourteen-year-old boy. After a short period in Poland, he moved to Montparnasse, enrolled in the medicine faculty at the Sorbonne, and joined the Parisian literary and philosophical circles. During World War II Īanovskii fled Europe and settled in the USA where he continued both his medical and literary careers.<sup>37</sup> Slightly older, Gaïto Gazdanov left Russia at sixteen as a White Army soldier. Gazdanov was an Ossetian who could not imagine writing in a “language other than Russian.” In emigration Gazdanov graduated from a gymnasium in Bulgaria and the Sorbonne, worked as a loader on the docks and at the Renault factory, as well as a taxi driver for 25 years, all this while writing. Maxim Gorkii praised his first novel, *Večer u Klér* (*Evening at Claire’s*). He even tried to help Gazdanov publish it in the USSR, to no avail. Life was so unbearable to Gazdanov, who was alone, without family, that he contemplated returning to the USSR, where his mother lived. He asked Gorkii, with whom he corresponded, to help him with the documentation. In a letter to a friend, Gazdanov wrote that he was so tired that, if joining the Bolsheviks would mean not to work, he would join them.<sup>38</sup> Gazdanov never returned to Russia but lived a dignified life in Paris as an Ossetian and a Russian by language and culture.

A difficult, penniless existence in Paris was also the predicament of Nina Berberova, poet and novelist. Berberova left Russia in 1921 together with her husband, the poet Vladislav

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<sup>36</sup> Nikolaï Berdiaev, ‘Po Povodu “Dnevnikov” B. Poplavskogo {About the “Diaries” of B. Poplavskii}’, *Sovremennye Zapiski {Contemporary Annals}*, no. 68 (1939).

<sup>37</sup> Īanovskii, *Champs-Élysées. The Book of Memory*.

<sup>38</sup> Gaïto Gazdanov, ‘Pis’mo (Letters)’, in *Sobranie Sochinenii {Collected Works}*, vol. 5 (Moscow: Ellis Lak, 2009), 3–58.

Khodasevich, just months before the “Philosophy Steamer” left, on which Lenin planned to expel Khodasevich too. Berberova had to take care of herself and the sick husband. She worked as a seamstress and as a typist for Miliukov’s *Poslednie Novosti*. She used to daydream in front of shop windows displaying delicious sandwiches on her strolls on Champs-Élysées. And nothing could match the joy when her friend, the poet Dovid Knut, a Jew from Chisinau, gave her a piece of cloth she turned into a dress, in which she shone at the *Sovremennye Zapiski* anniversary party. In the 1950s, Berberova emigrated to the USA, where she taught Russian literature at Yale and Princeton. Her memoirs *The Italics are Mine* paints a rich picture of the life on Montparnasse and around it.<sup>39</sup> These hardships and privations notwithstanding, the “young” loved Paris and its air of freedom, and would not exchange “cold and hungry Paris” for food and comfort anywhere else in the world.

Russians settled elsewhere in Russia Abroad enjoyed their trips to Paris to reading events and evenings on Montparnasse. Zinaida Shakhovskaia was a young poet based in Brussels. From a distinguished aristocratic Russian family, she left Russia together with her family. In Brussels, together with her brother, she was a point of reference for Russian emigrants who wanted to read their work to the Russian community there.<sup>40</sup> The young novelist Vladimir Nabokov, writing under the pseudonym Sirin, was based in Berlin, but enjoyed his occasional trips to Paris, where his praises were sung. Nabokov-Sirin was one of the first among the “young” to be acknowledged by the “old” and published in *Sovremennye Zapiski*. He was the adored first born of the prominent politician and Kadet Duma member Dmitrii Nabokov, assassinated in emigration by a rightist radical. Nabokov-Sirin received a distinguished education in English, Russian and French (in that order, according to his biographers).<sup>41</sup> Freshly graduated from Cambridge, he settled in the much hated Berlin, where he made ends

<sup>39</sup> Berberova, *The Italics are Mine. Autobiography*.

<sup>40</sup> Zinaida Shakhovskaia, *Otrazheniia {Reflections}* (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1975).

<sup>41</sup> Brian Boyd, ‘Nabokov’s Life in Context I. Russia and Emigration’, in *Vladimir Nabokov in Context*, ed. David M. Bethea and Siggy Frank (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

meet by giving English and tennis classes. With the rise of Hitler, Nabokov-Sirin left Berlin to protect his Jewish wife, Vera, and their new born. They first moved to France and then emigrated to the USA where Nabokov had a prolific career as a writer and professor.

Iosif Gessen, lawyer and Kadet Duma deputy was a friend and colleague of Nabokov senior. Together they created and edited the Berlin-based newspaper *Rul'* (*Rudder*). Gessen worked in the publishing business and had a small office in Berlin where he helped fellow emigrants in need of assistance. His *gostinnaia* (living room) was a point of reference for the Russians in Berlin and for those just passing through. Watching his compatriots trying to make ends meet while maintaining their human dignity, Gessen noticed in his memoirs the ideational and political metamorphoses and the “metamorphoses in everyday life” one needed to accomplish in order to survive in emigration.<sup>42</sup>

Last but not least there were the intellectuals who created Eurasianism. Prince Nikolaï Trubetskoi came from a distinguished aristocratic family. He started his academic career in Moscow to continue in emigration as a linguist. Together with his colleague and friend Roman Iakobson, Trubetskoi contributed to the development of structuralism. In 1921 Trubetskoi published *Europe and Mankind*, a critique of the Romano-Germanic civilisation and its encroachment upon the world. Ideas expressed in this book formed the ideological basis of Eurasianism, that was launched the following year with the collection of essays *Exodus to the East*, edited by Trubetskoi and three other intellectuals. In 1922 Trubetskoi was offered a post at the University of Vienna where he moved and died in 1938 after Gestapo searched his apartment. In 1929 Trubetskoi left the Eurasianist movement.<sup>43</sup> Pëtr Savitskii, another leader

<sup>42</sup> Iosif Gessen, *Gody Izgnaniia {Years of Exile}* (Paris: YMCA-PRESS, 1979).

<sup>43</sup> By 1929 certain factions within the movement was leaning towards Bolshevism. By 1932 Eurasianism is known to have searched contacts with the German Conservative Revolutionaries. Marlène Laruelle, ‘The “Third Continent” Meets the “Third Way”: Eurasianism’s Reading of Fascism’, in *Entangled Far-Rights. A Russian-European Intellectual Romance in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Marlène Laruelle (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2018); Martin Beisswenger, ‘A Failed Alliance: The Eurasianist Movement and the German Conservative Revolution in the Early 1930s’, in *Entangled Far-Rights. A Russian-European Intellectual Romance in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Marlène Laruelle (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2018).

of the movement, remained in the movement until his death. Savitskiĭ was an economist and geographer and a student of Pëtr Struve. By the end of the 1920s Savitskiĭ moved to politicise Eurasianism and grew more tolerant of the Soviets. In Prague he worked as headmaster of a Russian secondary school until 1944 when he “sabotaged the conscription of his pupils into the army of General Andrei Vlasov.”<sup>44</sup> Savitskiĭ spent eleven years in concentration camps in USSR where he managed to disseminate Eurasianist ideas. He returned to Prague in early 1960s to earn his existence as a translator until his death in 1968. There were also Pëtr Suvchinskiĭ, a musicologist who moved eventually to Paris. By the 1920s Suvchinskiĭ embraced Bolshevism. Georgii Florovskiĭ was a historian who later moved to Paris, where he was ordained priest of the Orthodox Church and taught patristics at the St. Serge Institute of Orthodox Theology in Paris. By mid 1920s Florovskiĭ left the movement. After World War II Florovskiĭ moved to the USA where he continued his teaching career at Saint Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary in New York.

These and many others I quote in my research. This is not nearly an exhaustive list of the Russian emigrants who lived and created in emigration. These are just some of the most bright representatives of Russia Abroad. They came from different social and cultural backgrounds. Some emigrated on their own initiative, others were expelled, and even more found themselves in emigration chased by the Red Army. They all had conflicting images of past Russia, Russia in the present and the future Russia they dreamt to return to. What they had all in common was the Russian word, that some used to convey their thoughts and feelings, some to conserve Russian culture and even more to read and feel a sense of belonging to something meaningful.

In this chapter I provided a short and hopefully comprehensive overview of Russia Abroad. I traced the historical circumstances in which the Russian emigrants conserved their

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<sup>44</sup> Chinyaeva, 235; Andreyev and Savický.

Russianness, built churches and schools, and published their writing. Even scattered across the world, Russia Abroad created and maintained a sense of community through its journals, newspapers and printing houses. In the next chapter I analyse the first concept – *lichnost'* and set it in Paris.

## Chapter 3

### 3 *Lichnost'* in Paris

“... the degree of freedom we had in Paris in those years... and the fear of losing  
hungry, cold Paris.” Vasilii Īanovskii<sup>45</sup>

“Soon it will become clear to everyone that the capital of Russian literature is Paris  
and not Moscow.” Dovid Knut<sup>46</sup>

“All writers were under the spell of *lichnost'*, all were interested in *lichnost'*.” Vasilii  
Īanovskii<sup>47</sup>

“‘I alone’ am the only theme of my poems.” Boris Poplavskii<sup>48</sup>

The Russian émigré community was committed to preserving their Russian identity at all costs for the duration of the exile. They strongly believed that they had born away true Russianness with them into exile, and that they were responsible for maintaining and enriching it for future generations and for, most importantly, a Bolshevik-free Russia of tomorrow. This Russianness in emigration was discussed, created, re-created and maintained within a conceptual framework, itself formed by three concepts central to Russian thought: *lichnost'* (personality), *tvorchestvo* (creativity) and *missiia* (mission). In this chapter I focus on the concept of *lichnost'* before moving to *tvorchestvo* and *missiia* in the subsequent chapters.

<sup>45</sup> Īanovskii, *Champs-Élysées. The Book of Memory*.

<sup>46</sup> Dovid Knut, Conversation no. 3 in *Novyi Korabl'* {*The New Ship*} 2 (1927).

<sup>47</sup> Īanovskii, *Champs-Élysées. The Book of Memory*.

<sup>48</sup> Boris Poplavskii, ‘Vokrug “Chisel”’ {Around “Chisla”}, *Chisla* {*Numbers*}, no. 10 (1934).



*Lichnost'* is a purely Russian concept, that can be translated as selfhood, individuality, personhood or personality. Derek Offord and Oleg Kharkhordin point to two major meanings of *lichnost'* in the Russian language. On the one hand *lichnost'* is a personality as a distinct and unique self, and on the other, *lichnost'* is an individual member of society, "an abstract subject of action and individual rights," that as such engages in relationships with certain collectives like the family, the church and the state.<sup>49</sup> *Lichnost'* as a distinct and unique human being endowed with dignity and creative agency entered Russian thought at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century through Renaissance philosophy and German Idealism. Throughout its history and its several meanings in different contexts *lichnost'* was employed to either create one's *self*, to advocate for the perfect human being, or to prepare the *intelligentsia order* that would save Russia from despotism and autocracy. *Lichnost'* in emigration was the Russian émigré intellectual, the historical subject-agent, that was bound to fulfil the *missiia* (mission) of serving Russia through their *tvorchestvo* (creativity). *Lichnost'* was a central theme in Russian émigré thought: in history articles, in philosophical essays and in literature. In particular, the search for and the creation of the *self* was the predicament of the young generation – the majority of which was based in Paris – who put these personal vagaries into verses or prose. In my thesis I set the debate around *lichnost'* on Parisian Montparnasse. I chose to link Paris to *lichnost'* not because the discussion was exclusive to the French capital. Rather, as I will argue throughout the thesis, ideas, thoughts and words travelled across the whole Russia Abroad, crossing political and geographical borders. What was uttered, thought and written in Paris would resonate in Berlin and Prague, Belgrade and Harbin. However, it was in Paris that the debate around *lichnost'* was the most prolific. *Lichnost'* was a bone of contention in the intergenerational debate and nowhere was this debate more acrimonious than on Russian

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<sup>49</sup> Oleg Kharkhordin, *The Collective and the Individual in Russia: A Study of Practices*, Studies on the History of Society and Culture (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999); Derek Offord, 'Lichnost': Notions of Individual Identity', in *Constructing Russian Culture in the Age of Revolution: 1881-1940*, ed. Catriona Kelly and David Shepherd (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

Montparnasse. I start with a brief description of Russian Montparnasse and the everyday life practices of Russians in Paris – the cultural capital of Russia Abroad. I then continue with a short historical excursus of *lichnost'* in Russian intellectual thought to then focus on *lichnost'* in emigration.

### 3.1 Russian Paris

Post-war Paris was a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic European capital. Eager to recruit workers for the post-war reconstruction of the country, the French government welcomed refugees from all over the world, making of France the country with the most post-war refugee emigrants per capita.<sup>50</sup> In search of employment, Russian emigrants settled across the whole country, mostly in Lyons, Marseilles, Bordeaux and Lille.<sup>51</sup> Nice too was a favourite destination for Russian exiles since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but it was Paris that became the capital of Russia Abroad. There were several reasons why Russian emigrants preferred Paris to any other city: possibilities of employment, relatively low costs of living (as for instance compared to Berlin after 1923), a rather welcoming government, and most importantly, an established political and cultural émigré community from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Also, revolutionary politicians were allured by the Peace Conference held in Paris hoping to influence international opinion and turn their attention towards the “Russian Question.”<sup>52</sup> Though it is difficult to know for sure how many Russians resided in France and specifically in Paris, Robert Johnston estimates there were 120,000 Russians by the early 1930s in France, while Maria Rubins

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<sup>50</sup> Johnston, 21.

<sup>51</sup> Outside Paris Russian emigrants were employed in factories and farms. The emigrants were facing unemployment, poverty, and discrimination and many succumbed to depression and suicide. The poet and revolutionary Elizaveta Skobtsova, later Mother Maria, travelled in the 1930s across France to research the condition of Russian emigrants and documented it for the newspaper *Poslednie Novosti*. Johnston; Īanovskiĭ, *Champs-Élysées. The Book of Memory*.

<sup>52</sup> Johnston, 20; Vishniak, *Contemporary Annals. The Memoirs of the Editor*.

counted 45,000 Russians in Paris.<sup>53</sup> Russians moved to Paris from Berlin (the first émigré destination for many) after the devaluation of the German mark in 1923, from Prague, Belgrade and Constantinople. Those arriving were White Army military officers and soldiers, students, “petty and middle rank bureaucrats, traders, commercial and industrial figures,”<sup>54</sup> as well as revolutionaries, politicians, journalists, poets, writers, philosophers and historians, which constituted the “émigré intellectual elite.” By the mid-1920s Paris became the capital of Russia Abroad.

In Russia Abroad there were Russians of all social classes – from peasants to Romanov princes. Johnston distinguishes between an “active” emigration, that is, the intellectuals, who were committed to maintaining Russian identity and promoting Russian culture through their writing, and the “passive” emigration, “men and women without prominence, political past, important social contacts, or literary gifts.”<sup>55</sup> All Russian emigrants, irrespective of their social background, family tree, ethnic group or religious confession were concerned with survival and creation of a dignified routine. This included finding accommodation and employment, securing a residence and work permit. While some among the “active” group managed to earn money by combining both menial work with writing and even fewer managed to live by their writing and intellectual work, the majority was employed in the factories Renault, Citroen and Peugeot, in agriculture and cattle farms around Paris, as guards and cleaning staff, or as cab drivers – the dream job of the emigrant.<sup>56</sup> Although the French government was happy to

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<sup>53</sup> Johnston, 6; Rubins, 2. There is conflicting data as to how many Russian emigrants resided in France. The data was provided by several offices like the Nansen Office, the French Government, and Russian relief organisations such as the Russian Red Cross and the Union of Zemstvos and Towns, all using different criteria. It was never clear who was to be considered a Russian: only the ethnic Russians or also the non-Russian subjects of the Russian Empire? It became more complicated after 1926, when the French census asked about the national origin. Also, it was not clear whether a naturalised Russian citizen was still considered Russian or already French. Moreover, in search of employment Russian emigrants travelled within France but also across Europe and the world, and sometimes returning, making it difficult to keep track of their numbers.

<sup>54</sup> Johnston, 26.

<sup>55</sup> Johnston, 22.

<sup>56</sup> Inter-war France was familiar with the cliché of the Russian cab driver, who was in the past a rich landowner or a prince of a distinguished family. Driving a cab was the highest achievement in the émigré work carrier. It offered a certain degree of freedom and dignity. Russian cab drivers even organised themselves in the

employ *émigré* workers for the reconstruction of the country, Russian emigrants were facing lots of hardships. In order to work one had to secure a work permit, which was difficult to achieve with the Nansen Passport.<sup>57</sup> Lawyers, teachers and physicians had to have French state diplomas and, after 1933, French nationality as well. Many eventually ended up taking “degrading, exhausting employment.” Russians were usually unskilled workers, did not speak French and found it difficult to integrate. They tended to live in Russian colonies, keeping apart from the French society. There was also a high incidence of xenophobia and discrimination towards the Russians, especially after a Kuban Cossack killed the French President Paul Doumer in 1932, and two prominent Russian emigrants were abducted most probably by Soviet agents in 1930 and 1937.<sup>58</sup> The young writer and a student of medicine at the Sorbonne in the 1930s Vasiliĭ Īanovskiĭ summarised the fears of *émigré* life in those years: “the fear of the police, uncertainty about one’s rights, expired documents, concerns about residence and work permits.”<sup>59</sup>

The Russian colony set up their everyday life around several places in Paris. Russian emigrants rented mostly around the Seine Department and Seine-et-Oise, on rue Vaugirard and avenue des Ternes. On rue Pierre-le-Grand and rue de-la-Neva the Russians set up teashops and taverns. A point of encounter, especially for monarchists and rightists was the Orthodox cathedral of Saint Aleksandr Nevskiĭ on the rue Dam. Also populated by Russians were the

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*Union of Russian Drivers (Union des chauffeurs russes)*, that in 1937 counted 2,000 members. The young writer Gaĭto Gazdanov worked as a cab driver for 25 years while writing acclaimed prose. Johnston, 145.

<sup>57</sup> The passport was named after the Arctic explorer Fridjof Nansen, who was appointed High Commissioner for Russian Affairs by the League of Nations. Nansen was sympathetic to the Russian cause and tried to help with famine relief in Russia in the aftermath of Civil War. The Nansen Passport allowed Russian emigrants to apply for visas and residence and work permits. It was recognised by 54 governments, who took the obligation to offer residence and work permits to Nansen passport holders. In 1939 many Russians emigrated to the USA with the Nansen Passports.

<sup>58</sup> Johnston. The assassination of the French president and the abduction of the two Russians, Generals A. Kutepov and E. K. Miller, by foreign agents created huge scandal in France, with the French public resenting that the Russians were putting their peace and wellbeing under risk. However, because the majority of the Russian emigrants were condemning the assassination of the president and blamed the abduction on the Soviets, there were in France voices that supported the community.

<sup>59</sup> Īanovskiĭ, *Champs-Élysées. The Book of Memory*.

suburbs Issy-les Moulineaux and Boulogne-Billancourt nearby the automobile plant Renault, where many Russians were employed.<sup>60</sup> Russian cultural life was organised around the Church, the St. Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute, founded in 1925, around the Russian Popular University, founded 1921 and the Turgenev Library, or “Turgenevka” founded in 1875 by the writer Ivan Turgenev himself and counting 30,000 volumes in 1925 and 100,000 in 1937.<sup>61</sup> There were also hundreds of relief organisations, literary clubs, study groups, concerts and reading evenings hosted in the rooms of the Geographic Society, newspapers and journals, publishing houses, in total around 800 Russian cultural bodies closed down by the Nazis in 1940.<sup>62</sup>

The “active” emigration was committed to conserve Russianness abroad and promote Russian values and culture. Most importantly, the old generation of writers and philosophers were concerned with the young’s denationalisation and focused on educating them in Russian cultural and spiritual traditions. By the end of the 1920s the majority of Russian intellectuals moved to Paris, where they concentrated their émigré intellectual careers<sup>63</sup> and created what the literary scholar Maria Rubins calls a Russian “cultural microcosm.”<sup>64</sup> Inter-war Paris was home to Pavel Miliukov’s democratic *Poslednie Novosti* (*The Latest News*), founded in 1920 and circulated until 1940, to Peter Struve’s conservative *Vozrozhdenie* (Resurrection) founded in 1925, to the Christian philosopher Nikolaï Berdiaev’s religious-philosophical journal *Put’*

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<sup>60</sup> Johnston, 25-30.

<sup>61</sup> The main aim of the University, organised in imitation to the Petrograd original, was to educate the Russian youth in Russian cultural traditions. However the professors tried to promote Russian history and literature courses, the most popular ones were the technical course with auto-mechanics the leader among all. This is another instance of intergenerational gap in emigration. While the old generation was anxious to preserve the Russian national culture, the young ones were busy with earning an existence. Johnston. The Turgenev Library was closed and the books abducted by the Nazis, when they entered Paris in 1940. The poet Nina Berberova witnessed how the Nazi took the books and closed the library. It is now functioning in Paris on 11 Rue de Valence. It contains books and journals published in Russia Abroad. Nina Berberova and Craig A. Wilson, ‘The End of the Turgenev Library’, *The Journal of Library History* (1974-1987) 16, no. 3 (1981): 509–16; Rubins.

<sup>62</sup> Johnston; Īanovskiĭ, *Champs-Élysées. The Book of Memory*.

<sup>63</sup> Those who managed to secure employment rested in Germany or Czech Republic, as for instance the philosophers Fëdor Stepun and Nikolaï Losskiĭ, who received tenures in Dresden and Prague, respectively.

<sup>64</sup> Rubins, 2.

(*The Path*), circulating between 1925 and 1940 and finally to *Sovremennye Zapiski* (*Contemporary Annals*), the most famous and long-lived thick journal of the Russian first-wave emigration, that circulated for 19 years starting 1920 throughout the whole Russia Abroad and into USSR too.<sup>65</sup> Also based in Paris were the short-lived but influential journals *Utverzheniia* (*Affirmations*) and *Novyi Grad* (*The New City*), that promoted the so-called post-revolutionary worldview,<sup>66</sup> as well as the young journal *Chisla* (*Numbers*), that only published the young generation's poetry, prose and philosophical digressions. In sum, the Russian-language periodicals in inter-war Paris amounted to 70, representing all social, ideological and political groups, from War veterans to Caucasian highlanders. There was also the American financed YMCA-Press, that published around "200 Russian titles in history, philosophy, theology, and belles-lettres."<sup>67</sup>

Most importantly, Paris was home to several literary and philosophical groups that organised reading evenings and discussions of poetry and prose, religion and philosophy, with the main focus on Russia – past, present and future. In their first editorial in 1931, the journal *Novyi Grad* wrote: "At the centre of our thoughts is Russia."<sup>68</sup> In 1927 the poets Zinaida Gippius and Dmitrii Merezhkovskii organised the group *Zelenaia Lampa* (*The Green Lamp*), or the "incubator of ideas," as the poet Iurii Terapiano would refer to it in his memoirs,<sup>69</sup> where on Sundays starting nine in the evening on rue Colonel Bonnet the young poets where

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<sup>65</sup> According to Mark Vishniak, one of the editors, Moscow bought the journal for all 19 years, sometimes up to 25 copies. Vishniak, *Contemporary Annals. The Memoirs of the Editor*.

<sup>66</sup> The post-revolutionary worldview is a worldview developed in emigration in the 1920s. The adherents accepted and acknowledged both the revolutions – the February and the October, with some only the last one. They believed the October Revolution brought the spiritual change necessary for the renewal of Russia. The post-revolutionaries repudiated the Bolsheviks, but welcome some of their policies, for instance those in education and economy. Several post-revolutionary policies envisioned a Russia without Bolshevism but maintain the soviet administrative system, with Orthodox religion and a well-defined Idea at the forefront of the government.

<sup>67</sup> Johnston, 54; Rubins.

<sup>68</sup> 'Editorial', *Novyi Grad* {*The New City*}, no. 1 (1931).

<sup>69</sup> The Green Lamp circle existed from 1927 to 1939. At the opening evening the poet Vladislav Khodasevich linked the circle to the Green Lamp circle that the poet Aleksandr Pushkin and his friends organised in 1820s, insisting on the literary tradition being kept in emigration too. Conversation no. 1 in *Novyi Korabl'* {*The New Ship*} no. 1 (1927); Terapiano, *Half-a-Century of the Literary Life of Russian Paris*.

encouraged to present their creation. The only condition for entrance was anti-Bolshevism.<sup>70</sup> Later, in 1935 the Social Revolutionary and one of the five editors of *Contemporary Annals*, Il'ia Fondaminskiĭ created in his apartment on 130 rue des Versailles the *Krug* (*The Circle*), where every second Monday of the month, over tea and cakes in abundance, he engaged the young generation in religious and philosophical themes, trying to “promote Russian humanism, democracy and the intelligentsia order.” The writer Īanovskiĭ referred to *Krug* in his memoirs as the “place of encounter of fathers and sons.”<sup>71</sup> Also, in early 1930s the young writers gathered at the *Chisla* (*Numbers*) evenings, where they defiantly set the agenda and talked about what they cared most – the self, death and spiritual renewal.<sup>72</sup> These evenings where the young would read their creation, and all would engage in debates about Russia and the eternal were attended by Russians visiting Paris from all over Russia Abroad. The lawyer and Kadet Iosif Gessen and the young novelist Vladimir Nabokov (Sirin) from Berlin, the young journalist Dmitriĭ Meĭsner from Prague and the young poet Zinaida Shakhovskaĭa from Brussels – all warmly remembered their trips to Paris and the atmosphere of warmth and camaraderie.<sup>73</sup> It was during these evenings and on the pages of the several journals and newspapers that the Russian emigrants tried to understand what happened to Russia, made sense of their existence and position in the world and history, and where they created that Russianness they then committed to defend and promote. It was on these pages and during these evenings that the Russians created that conceptual framework within which the *lichnost'* was finally carved out as the creative subject-agent of history that through their *tvorchestvo* would accomplish what every self-respecting and self-perfected *lichnost'* recognize as their *missiia* – to serve Russia.

<sup>70</sup> Īuriĭ Fel'zen, ‘Stat'i i Doklady po Literature i Iskusstvu {Articles and Reports on Literature and Art}’, in *Sobranie Sochineniĭ {Collected Works}*, vol. 2, 2012, 181–268.

<sup>71</sup> Īanovskiĭ, *Champs-Élysées. The Book of Memory*.

<sup>72</sup> These evenings and groups are remembered in their memoirs and autobiographies by the young generation writers such as Vladimir Varshavskiĭ, Vasilĭ Īanovskiĭ, Īuriĭ Terapiĭano, Nina Berberova, and Zinaida Shakhovskaĭa.

<sup>73</sup> Shakhovskaĭa, *Reflections*; Nabokov, *Speak, Memory*; Dmitriĭ Meĭsner, *Mirazhi i Deĭstvitel'nost'. Zapiski Ėmigranta {Mirages and Reality. Notes of the Emigrant}* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Agenstva Pechati Novosti, 1966).

### 3.2 Russian Montparnasse

There was a place in Paris where the Russians used to gather to share their sorrow, talk about Russia and try to make sense of their existence. This was Montparnasse, or Russian Montparnasse as it is called in historiography and literary studies. In the inter-war period Montparnasse was the gathering place of the new literary and art movements, of the bohemia, the place of encounter of Ernst Hemingway, Picasso and Gertrude Stein, the place where emigrants from all over the world would come to look for a sense of belonging in that international and rootless atmosphere, where there was no judgment and only acceptance. On Montparnasse the Russians were the bohemians par excellence, in their worn out suits bought on Marche aux Puces (wealth on Montparnasse was despised), overwhelmed by the fears and worries of everyday life, but proud in their poverty and “full of youth enthusiasm searching for the ideal embodiment of feat and sin.”<sup>74</sup> The Brussels-based young poet Zinaida Shakhovskaia remembered how on Montparnasse “we talked about art, literature styles, about Proust, about the last Sunday at Merezhkovskie, about St. Augustine and Berdiaev.”<sup>75</sup> In the 1930s, the Russian poetry reading evening from the Latin Quarter, specifically from the café *La Bolleé*, visited in in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Oscar Wilde and Paul Verlaine, where Saturday evenings in the badly aired underground the young, “underdressed and hungry,” would read their poetry, moved to Montparnasse, to the cafes *Select*, *Napoli* and *Rotonda*, eventually “the headquarters of the Russians.”<sup>76</sup> Russian Montparnasse was the place, where on Thursdays and Saturdays evening after graveyard shifts at Renault factory or lectures at the Sorbonne, poets and writers, young and old, famous and yet unknown, would meet around coffee and second-rate liquor to

<sup>74</sup> Ianovskiĭ, *Champs-Élysées. The Book of Memory*, 205.

<sup>75</sup> Shakhovskaia, 40-50.

<sup>76</sup> Shakhovskaia; Terapiano, *Half-a-Century of the Literary Life of Russian Paris*; Ianovskiĭ, *Champs-Élysées. The Book of Memory*; Berberova, *The Italics are Mine*; Iurii Terapiano, *Vstrechi {Encounters}* (New York: Chekhov Publishing House, 1953).



discuss prose and poetry, mysticism and miserable reality, solitude and craved fame.<sup>77</sup> The poet Zinaida Shakhovskaia referred to Montparnasse as “the jungles,” while the writer Vasiliĭ Īanovskiĭ worshiped the air of freedom Montparnasse provided. As the poet Terapiano recounts, after a hard work day as painters, cleaning staff and factory workers, the Russians “would change and turn into poets and writers, into free and independent human beings.”<sup>78</sup> Montparnasse was the only locus where the Russians could acquire any sense of belonging. At any time of the day entering a café on Montparnasse one would find a “kindred spirit” (*rodstennuiu dushu*) to whom to talk and share one’s sorrows, with whom to remember Russia and look for a meaning to it all. Without Montparnasse and its smoky cafes there would be no “young” Russian émigré literature, there would be no new *lichnost’* – “the human being of the 1930s.” In his memoirs the writer Īanovskiĭ wrote that in those years “all writers were under the spell of *lichnost’*, all were interested in *lichnost’*.”<sup>79</sup> The literary scholar Maria Rubins refers to Russian Montparnasse as “a hybrid cultural locus,” where the young created a “transnational and translingual” literature.<sup>80</sup> This was a literature nourished by the inter-war decadence and the traumas of revolution and war, a literature that tried to answer the existential questions of the “new human being,” of the *lichnost’*, that had to create itself in an alien, unfriendly environment, a *lichnost’* torn between finding the self and serving a Russia, unknown and far away, but the source of all those sorrows and questions of “whence, whereto and why.”

### 3.3 *Lichnost’* in Russian Intellectual Thought

*Lichnost’* as a concept appeared in Russian intellectual thought in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, when intellectuals, in the words of Martin Malia, “developed the attitudes of free men, a sense

<sup>77</sup> These Montparnasse evenings are warmly remembered in their memoirs by the writers and poets of young generation such as Vladimir Varshavskii, Vasiliĭ Īanovskiĭ, Īuriĭ Terapiĭano and Nina Berberova.

<sup>78</sup> Terapiano, *Encounters*.

<sup>79</sup> Īanovskiĭ, *Champs-Élysées. The Book of Memory*.

<sup>80</sup> Rubins.

of personal dignity, of pride, even a touchy independence – in a word, all those endowments modern humanism claims for man.”<sup>81</sup> *Lichnost’* by the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century “signified a unique set of present features that made up this or that specific individual.”<sup>82</sup> This transition from *lichnost’* as *litso* (the root of *lich-nost’*), that is, *face* as *juridical person* occurred during the so-called Russian Enlightenment. Oleg Kharkhordin notices that it was Aleksandr Radishchev to first use *lichnost’* in a literary text, namely in the essay *O Cheloveke, Ego Smertnosti i Bessmertii* (*About the Human Being, its Mortality and Immortality*), written in late 1790s while in exile in Siberia. In it, Radishchev asks the mortal human being whether he is aware of “your uniqueness, your *lichnost’*, that you are you (*chto ty est’ ty*).” Also, Radishchev refers later in the essay to “*lichnost’*, his very unique ‘I’.”<sup>83</sup> The historian Nikolaï Karamzin in a 1789 piece translated the French *personnalité* with the word *lichnost’* meaning “individuality (*individual’nost’*), that is, the distinguishing and unique traits of the human being.”<sup>84</sup> The concept of *lichnost’* thus entered Russian thought on the one hand under the influence of German philosophy, though often through French translations<sup>85</sup>, and on the other – from Renaissance humanism through Greek patristic theology.<sup>86</sup> *Lichnost’*’s “singularity and uniqueness” entered Russian thought especially from German translation of the Romantics and idealist philosophers, when *Selbstheit* and *Persönlichkeit* were translated with *lichnost’* among other concepts.<sup>87</sup> In the 1840s the literary critic Vissarion Belinskii raised *lichnost’* to an ideal: “before all else a man is a particularity (*osobennost’*), a person (*lichnost’*), an individual

<sup>81</sup> Martin Malia, ‘What Is Intelligentsia’, in *The Russian Intelligentsia*, ed. Richard Pipes (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 4.

<sup>82</sup> Kharkhordin, 186.

<sup>83</sup> Aleksandr Radishchev, *O Cheloveke, o Ego Smertnost' i Bessmertii* {*About the Human Being, Their Mortality and Immortality*} ([https://rvb.ru/18vek/radishchev/01text/vol\\_2/01text/026.htm](https://rvb.ru/18vek/radishchev/01text/vol_2/01text/026.htm), n.d.).

<sup>84</sup> Nikolaï Plotnikov, “‘Ot ‘individual’nosti’ k ‘identichnosti’” {From ‘individuality’ to Identity’}, *NLO* 3 (2008), <https://magazines.gorky.media/nlo/2008/3/ot-individualnosti-k-identichnosti.html>.

<sup>85</sup> Plotnikov.

<sup>86</sup> Gary M. Hamburg and Randall A. Poole, ‘Introduction: The Humanist Tradition in Russian Philosophy’, in *A History of Russian Philosophy 1830–1930: Faith, Reason, and the Defense of Human Dignity*, ed. Gary M. Hamburg and Randall A. Poole (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 1–26.

<sup>87</sup> The other concepts used to translate *Selbstheit* were *sebiuliubie* (self-love) and *samoliubie* (self-esteem). Kharkhordin, 187.

(*individual'nost'*),” intending by *lichnost'* what the French intended by *personnalité*.<sup>88</sup> *Lichnost'* became for Belinskiĭ, after his short and unfortunate Hegelian period, “the highest value, ‘higher than history, higher than society, higher than humanity’.”<sup>89</sup> According to Nikolai Plotnikov, for Belinskiĭ and the 1840s generation of intelligentsia, *lichnost'*, as individuality and personality, was something one had to become in order to be able to discuss *lichnost'* itself. In Belinskiĭ *lichnost'* acquires “the unrepeatable uniqueness and originality” through “creative differentiation” (*tvorcheskoe razlichie*).<sup>90</sup> In fact, for Belinskiĭ *tvorchestvo* (creation and creativity) and *lichnost'* are tightly linked. I discuss *tvorchestvo* in more detail in the next chapter, but it is worth mentioning that the creative *lichnosti*, that is, the writers in Belinskiĭ’s case, perceive and (re)create reality through their *tvorchestvo* in their writing, becoming in this way, through their *tvorchestvo*, historical personalities. Progress, in Belinskiĭ, “was enabled by literary innovation and originality,” and hence by the *lichnosti* that were producing this literary *tvorchestvo*.<sup>91</sup> *Lichnost'* was also at the centre of the intellectual debate between the Westernisers and the Slavophiles. The former, drawing on Western tradition, conceptualised *lichnost'* as a “free, rational, conscious person.” The latter, on the other hand, built their notion of *lichnost'* relying on Russian peasant community and *sobornost'* (conciliarity), that is, “a unique kind of unity” in which unity and freedom are compatible and presuppose one another. The Slavophile *lichnost'* fulfilled its essence not as an independent individual pursuing their interests, but only as part of and in service to the community, the Russian *narod*.<sup>92</sup>

A generation later, in the thought of the 1860s intelligentsia, *lichnost'* maintained its status as an ideal, in a slightly reconceptualised meaning. For the “sons,” as Nikolai

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<sup>88</sup> Kharkhordin, 188.

<sup>89</sup> Offord.

<sup>90</sup> Plotnikov.

<sup>91</sup> Kåre Johan Mjør, ‘Metaphysics, Aesthetics, or Epistemology?: The Conceptual History of *Tvorchestvo* in Nineteenth-Century Russian Thought’, *Slavic and East European Journal* 62, no. 1 (2018): 4–25.

<sup>92</sup> Sergey Horujy, ‘Slavophiles, Westernizers, and the Birth of Russian Philosophical Humanism’, in *A History of Russian Philosophy 1830–1930: Faith, Reason, and the Defense of Human Dignity*, ed. Gary M. Hamburg and Randall A. Poole, trans. Lally Michelson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 27–51.

Chernyshevskii and Nikolai Dobroliubov and others have been referred to back then and known in historiography since, *lichnost'* was supposed to be a moral and thinking individual turned towards constant self-improvement and service to the greater good.<sup>93</sup> The diaries of the 1860s seminarians who left the Church to join the fight against despotism and autocracy either through writing, teaching or terrorism, reveal both the search and the creation of the *self* following rigorous discipline, self-control and privations.<sup>94</sup> It was this self-created *lichnost'* that would serve Russian people towards liberation and prosperity. This process of self-creation culminated in Chernyshevskii's novel *Chto Delat'* (*What is to Be Done*), where the heroes were educating in themselves the "new people." The novel became for the 1860s-1880s generation the playbook by which the young self-fashioned themselves and organised their education, work, co-habitation and planned their sacrificial work in the name of the Russian *narod*.

A central element to *lichnost'* developed in 1860s was "human dignity" – the innate and intrinsic property of the individual. *Lichnost'* calls for awareness of one's own dignity and respect for the dignity of the other.<sup>95</sup> The philosopher and sociologist Petr Lavrov identified personal human dignity with the self itself, that is, human dignity is what makes the *lichnost'* a *lichnost'*. The process of self-consciousness whence the human being acquires awareness of itself as a *lichnost'* goes hand in hand with the recognition and acknowledgment of dignity to other human beings. What makes individuals – *lichnosti* – historical agents is their inherent morality. Free will, but most importantly, the individual's moral sense drives the course of action, that is, history. Because "morality is rooted in our nature as social beings," individuals

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<sup>93</sup> Victoria S. Frede, 'Materialism and the Radical Intelligentsia: The 1860s', in *A History of Russian Philosophy 1830–1930: Faith, Reason, and the Defense of Human Dignity*, ed. Gary M. Hamburg and Randall A. Poole (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 69–89.

<sup>94</sup> Laurie Manchester, *Holy Fathers, Secular Sons: Clergy, Intelligentsia, and the Modern Self in Revolutionary Russia*, (DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 2008); E. Lampert, *Sons Against Fathers: Studies In Russian Radicalism and Revolution* (Oxford University Press, 1965).

<sup>95</sup> Frede; Thomas Nemeth, 'Russian Ethical Humanism: From Populism to Neo-Idealism', in *A History of Russian Philosophy 1830–1930: Faith, Reason, and the Defense of Human Dignity*, ed. Gary M. Hamburg and Randall A. Poole (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 90–110.

are in essence historical actors.<sup>96</sup> Another defender of *lichnost'*'s dignity and freedom against capitalism and the degrading division of labor was Nikolaï Mikhaïlovskii. Mikhaïlovskii defended an organically developed multi-faceted *lichnost'* against the alienating tendency of industrialism.<sup>97</sup>

Gary Hamburg and Randall Poole argue that during the nineteenth-century humanist philosophy *lichnost'* entailed “the absolute value and dignity that make human beings persons.” Human beings in this humanist tradition were regarded either “as ends-in-themselves, and thus as precious, autonomous beings endowed with inviolable rights or ... as creative beings possessing the capacity to shape the world through the free exercise of will.” According to the authors, the highest philosophical meaning of *lichnost'* is “personhood, a term emphasizing the absolute value and dignity that make human beings persons.”<sup>98</sup> *Lichnost'* was also central to Soviet philosophical and psychological thought as well as a primary concern for the Party that set to create the “new human being.” I cannot discuss *lichnost'* in Soviet thought within the scope of this thesis, but it is important to note for now that *lichnost'*, reconceptualised under Marxism-Leninism, was for the first time “granted to the masses” during the Stalinist epoch.<sup>99</sup>

From the moment it entered the vocabulary of Russian thought until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, *lichnost'* acquired several meanings and changed the meanings of several other concepts it was employed with. As a concept *lichnost'* changed through time in the writings of different authors and their intentions. By the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century *lichnost'* did not just mean a sense of self or individuality. Rather, *lichnost'* was conceptualised as an active and creative subject-agent of history whose *raison d'être* was to serve Russia and the world through Russia. The sense of self was tightly linked to a mission within Russia and Russia's mission in the

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<sup>96</sup> Nemeth, 92.

<sup>97</sup> Nikolaï Mikhaïlovskii, ‘Bor'ba Za Individual'nost' {The Fight for Individuality}', 1875.

<sup>98</sup> Hamburg and Poole, 5.

<sup>99</sup> Kharkhordin, 164-231; Stephen Kotkin, ‘Speaking Bolshevik’, in *Magnetic Mountain. Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

history of mankind. This short historical excursus could not do justice to *lichnost'* in Russian thought. I tried, however, to give a short but comprehensive overview of the contexts in which *lichnost'* acquired several meanings throughout a century, as well as some other concepts that accompanied *lichnost'* in these meanings. Émigré intellectuals relied on this repository of contexts, meanings and concepts for their own reconceptualization of *lichnost'* in totally new historical circumstances. I now turn to Russian *lichnost'* in emigration.

### 3.4 *Lichnost'* in Emigration

In emigration *lichnost'* was reconceptualised in an atmosphere of utter impotence, existential despair and disillusion. The *lichnost'* in the émigré debate, I argue, was not any anti-Bolshevik Russian or much less any intellectual in inter-war Europe. Rather, this *lichnost'* was specifically the Russian intellectual émigré, powerless and uprooted, whose predicament was to maintain the Russian essence in emigration. *Lichnost'* was the site of that *tvorchestvo*, that creation and action in the name of Russia. Left without a citizenship, after the USSR in 1922 annulled it for those refusing to return,<sup>100</sup> refusing naturalisation in the new countries of residence, the only form of identity left for the Russians was that that of a “refugee,” or “emigrant” and “exile” as they preferred to be called. They could not rely anymore on their previous social status, on their professions or much less on their reputation, source of respect and self-regard for many of the old generation. In the new circumstances they were “le Russe” or “der Russe,” looked upon, harassed and mistreated in the factories and emigration offices.

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<sup>100</sup> In 1922 the USSR denied citizenship to the Russian Empire citizens that refused to return. As a rule, the Russian emigrants refused to take the citizenship of the countries of residence, considering it as betrayal to their Russian identity. They preferred instead the Nansen passport that allowed them to apply for residence permits and visas. It made it, however, difficult to obtain a work permit. The “young” eventually applied for citizenship and naturalisation. In France, for instance, several Russians, naturalised French, enrolled in the army or fought in the Resistance, gaining recognition and medals.

They could only rely on their *lichnost'*, on their personality, which, self-perfected under the new conditions of exile, would become the site of struggle against Bolshevism.

The Russian émigré intellectuals “withdrew” into *lichnost'* because of their disillusion with the West helping to topple the Bolshevik regime and with the unrealistic political programmes of some émigré groups.<sup>101</sup> Also, given the dispersed nature of the émigré community stretching across several cities in Europe, the Balkans and Asia (the only sense of belonging was achieved thanks to the prolific publications of journals and newspapers), it was the *lichnost'* rather than the group or the community that became the centre of the struggle against Bolshevism. Because ideologically the émigré community was divided, the only subject-agent that could fulfil the mission was *lichnost'*. The individual *lichnost'* could harbour Russianness and thus serve Russia even if uprooted and estranged from the Russian soil and *narod* (people). For those émigré intellectuals that acknowledged the October Revolution as an accomplished fact, Russia was a new metaphysical entity – the Revolution unveiled a new truth – and only a new reconceptualised *lichnost'* could serve this new country. Also, the individual *lichnost'* was conceptualised in opposition, on the one hand, to the collectivistic sense of *self* that the emigrants argued was being developed in the USSR, and on the other – to the morally decaying *self* in Europe. Even when used together with concepts like “narod,” “symphonic,” and “collective,” *lichnost'* still related to the single individual, who through self-knowledge arrives at an organic and harmonious fusion with the community, be it the emigration community or the *narod* back home. Finally, the survival of Russianness in emigration depended on the production of literary and scholarly work, which, in turn, depended on the creation and creativity of *lichnost'*.

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<sup>101</sup> The Eurasianists, the first to start the debate around *lichnost'*, were critical of the White Movement and their negotiations with Western power regarding military intervention in Soviet Russia.

The reconceptualization of *lichnost'* in emigration occurred, unsurprisingly, within the intergenerational debate. This conflict reached its peak in 1930s, when the “old”, afraid to lose the “young” to denationalisation and fascism, set up literary salons and journals to educate the young *lichnosti* in the Russian cultural tradition. The “old” Russians arrived in emigration already self-formed and accomplished *lichnosti*. Successfully or not, they participated in the major political and literary events in Russia prior to and during the Revolution. They could always rely on the past glory and the fond memories of the good old days. In emigration, when they had to reshape the *lichnost'* and the purpose of their agency, and to accommodate them to the new circumstances, they did that relying on a strong education and existential sense of purpose that they brought from Russia and not in the least on their Russian identity. The young resented this and reproached the old generation for their better-off situation, and for not empathising with theirs: “the old generation had it better, they had glory at home, and now in emigration recognition and pensions,” remembered the medicine student and writer Vasiliĭ Īanovskiĭ decades later in his second emigration in the USA.<sup>102</sup> The poet Nina Berberova at a literature evening observed how the “old” writers were published and acclaimed because they “have brought Russia with them, have memories of Russia,” while the young, because they had little memory and understanding of Russia were being denied literary acknowledgment.<sup>103</sup>

The major formative events of the young, on the other hand, were the Revolution and the war. These traumas influenced their identity formation, their self-searching and their interests. *Lichnost'*, in fact, was one of their central interests. Their *lichnost'* was the centre of the poetry and prose, they discussed about *lichnost'* on Montparnasse and on the pages of their journals. There was in the 1930s a discussion about the “human being of the 1930s” (*chelovek tridtsatykh godov*). This human being of the 1930s was, according to the poet Boris Poplavskiĭ,

<sup>102</sup> Īanovskiĭ, *Champs-Élysées. The Book of Memory*.

<sup>103</sup> Conversation no. 3 in *Novyi Korabl' {The New Ship}* no. 2 (1927).



“a naked human being, existing in emptiness ... away from historical development.”<sup>104</sup> Poplavskii’s hero in the novel with a symptomatic title *Apollon Bezobrazov* (*Apollo the Abominable*), Vasen’ka, introduces himself in the following way: “I only arrived recently [to Paris], and just moved away from my family. I was slouching and my whole appearance expressed a certain transcendental humiliation, that I could not get rid of as it was a disease. ... Dragging my own feet, I moved away from my family; dragging my own thoughts I left God, dignity and freedom; dragging my days I reached my 24<sup>th</sup> birthday.”<sup>105</sup> The hero of Georgii Ivanov’s *Raspad Atoma* (*The Disintegration of the Atom*) is a human being of the 1930s roaming the foreign streets of a foreign city thinking to himself that “every human being on the planet is like an atom enclosed in an impenetrable solitude. ... [And] under that solitude there are an infinite complexity, a terrible explosive power, and hidden dreams, pungent as sulphuric acid.”<sup>106</sup> The *lichnost’* of the 1930s was in constant search for existential meaning, for a meaningful place in the world and history. So, while the “young” were trying to find themselves and assert themselves and gain acknowledgment as creative *lichnosti*, as self-respected emigrants and citizens of a new world, the “old” were busy to shape these *lichnosti* to better serve the Russia of tomorrow. The young, in their philosophical digression about *lichnost’* and spirituality, were very much influenced by Eurasianism and the philosopher Nikolaï Berdiaev, who were the first to put *lichnost’* at the centre of émigré thought.

### 3.5 Eurasianist *Lichnost’*

The Eurasianists declared their commitment to “fight for the *lichnost’*” during their whole existence as a philosophical movement in emigration. Because it was “a dynamic

<sup>104</sup> Boris Poplavskii, ‘Geroi Ėmigrantskoĭ Literatury {The Hero of the Emigre Literature}’, *Chisla {Numbers}* 6 (1932).

<sup>105</sup> Poplavskii, *Apollo, The Abominable*.

<sup>106</sup> Georgii Ivanov, *Raspad Atoma {The Disintegration of the Atom}* (Paris: Dom Knigi, 1938).

ideology that continuously changed in response to social and political events,”<sup>107</sup> this *lichnost’* they were promoting was constantly acquiring new shapes, new meanings and new purposes. As an intellectual movement, Eurasianism was the first in emigration to accept and acknowledge the October Revolution that unleashed new energies in the *narod* and “brought to the surface a new human essence.”<sup>108</sup> The conceptualization of *lichnost’* within Eurasianism followed precisely from their acceptance of the Revolution. The Eurasianists condemned any foreign intervention in Russia and insisted on its Orthodox religious renewal in a soviet-based Russia without Bolshevism, that they deemed a Western ideology alien to Russia-Eurasia culture. The Eurasianists rejected historical teleology – history was a “free and creative improvisation.”<sup>109</sup> There was no such thing as inevitability, and much less a fulfilment of a predetermined plan (here the Eurasianists rejected both Marxism and Marxism-Leninism). Hence, it was the *lichnost’*, the creative subject-agent, that would actively create history through “acts of self-perfection.”<sup>110</sup> The future’s “centre of gravity [wa]s in the depths of *lichnost’*.”<sup>111</sup> The human *lichnost’* (*chelovecheskaia lichnost’*) finally was the “spiritual-material entity ... that realizes the wilful act.”<sup>112</sup>

Already in their first collection of essays *Exodus to the East* in 1921 the Eurasianists declared *lichnost’* an “end in itself” (*lichnost’ kazhdogo v sebii*).<sup>113</sup> It was one of the leaders of Eurasianism, Nikolaï Trubetskoi, a prince by birth and a linguist by training, who wrote

<sup>107</sup> Martin Beisswenger, ‘Eurasianism: Affirming the Person in an “Era of Faith”’, in *A History of Russian Philosophy 1830–1930: Faith, Reason, and the Defense of Human Dignity*, ed. Gary M. Hamburg and Randall A. Poole (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 363–81.

<sup>108</sup> Pëtr Suvchinskii, ‘Vechnyi Ustoi {The Eternal Foundation}’, in *Na Putiakh. Utverzhdenie Evraziitsev. Kniga 2 {On the Tracks. Affirmation of the Eurasians. Book 2}* (Berlin: Gelikon, 1922).

<sup>109</sup> Pëtr Savitskii et al., eds., ‘Editorial’, in *Iskhod k Vostoku. Predchustviia i Sversheniia. Utverzhdenie Evraziitsev {Exodus to the East. Forebodings and Accomplishments. The Affirmation of Eurasians}* (Sofia: Balkan, 1922).

<sup>110</sup> Pëtr Savitskii, ‘Povorot k Vostoku {The Turn to the East}’, in *Exodus to the East*.

<sup>111</sup> Pëtr Savitskii, ‘Migratsiia Kul’tury {The Migration of Culture}’, in *Exodus to the East*.

<sup>112</sup> Pëtr Suvchinskii, ‘Epokha Very {The Epoch of Faith}’, *Exodus to the East*.

<sup>113</sup> Suvchinskii, ‘The Epoch of Faith.’

extensively on the nature of *lichnost'* (*sushchnost' lichnosti*).<sup>114</sup> Before undertaking the road of creative agency, the *lichnost'* had to know itself. For Trubetskoï,<sup>115</sup> “where there (was) a *lichnost'* there could and should be self-knowledge.”<sup>116</sup> Discovering itself, a *lichnost'* “discover(ed) itself also as a representative of a given people,” because a *lichnost'* never started the process of self-knowledge from ground zero. The self-knowledge and self-consciousness of previous *lichnosti* added up as layers to form the basis from which every new *lichnost'* in every new epoch started its own process of self-searching. In this way *lichnost'*, on the one hand, achieved the highest ideal of a human being – self-knowledge, and on the other – uncovered its belonging to a national culture and thus its sense of meaning and mission in history. According to Suvchinskiï, another Eurasian leader and a musicologist, Russian *lichnost'*’s “process of self-searching and self-assertion” started rather late, and because in emigration the Russian *lichnost'* was “confronted with several cultures across the world, it [was] obliged to finally evaluate its own possibilities, its national (*narodnye*) sources.”<sup>117</sup> So, the Russian *lichnost'*, as the only creative agent of history, had to first creatively define itself – the essence of its nature and its cultural belonging – before undertaking its historical mission – serve Russia and assist it in its revival.

It was important for the *lichnost'*, the Russian intellectual in this case, to know itself and improve itself, because the masses (the Russian *narod*) get their qualities directly from the qualities of the intellectual *lichnost'*, which itself partakes of “the Russian essence of greatness

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<sup>114</sup> Later in 1927 in a personal collection of essays *K Probleme Russkogo Samopoznaniia* Nikolai Trubetskoï reasserted the centrality of the concept *lichnost'* to Eurasianism and self-knowledge as “the moral duty of every *lichnost'*.” He proposed the creation of a new science – *personology* (*personologiiia*) – that would study *lichnost'* its various manifestations. Nikolai Trubetskoï, *K Probleme Russkogo Samopoznaniia* {*The Problem of Russian Self-Knowledge*} (Paris: Evraziiskoe Knigoizdatel'stvo, 1927).

<sup>115</sup> Nikolai Trubetskoï was one of the leaders of the movement; heir to one of the most ancient noble families in Russian Empire, he was an ethnographer and linguist by training; together with Roman Jakobson contributed to Structural Linguistics.

<sup>116</sup> Nikolai Trubetskoï, ‘O Istinykh i Lozhnom Natsionalizme {About the True and False Nationalism}’, in *Exodus to the East*, 74.

<sup>117</sup> Petr Suvchinskiï, ‘Sila Slabykh {The Power of the Weak}’, in *Exodus to the East*, 7.

of power (*velikoderzhavie*),” as also both the Russian soul and will (*volia*) do.<sup>118</sup> The historical fight against Bolshevism, that the émigré intellectuals are supposed to lead, had to start with the *lichnost*’. The intelligentsia, that is, the intellectuals, got its strength “from the experience of *lichnost*’.” It was not Russia’s past that would influence its future. Rather, all was decided in the moment of the wilful act, accomplished by the *lichnost*’. It was the *lichnost*’ through its creative act that decided for the future of Russia, it was the only subject-agent of history, the one “realising the will.” *Lichnost*’ was not to be the means through which any unknown force was accomplishing history. It was *lichnost*’ as an end in itself, individual and unique, that made history possible through its wilful creative act.

In the editorial of their seventh collection published in 1931 the Eurasianists proclaimed the task of both the collection and the Eurasian movement: “the fight for the *lichnost*’,” but “not for the selfish (*samosytnyĭ*) secluded *lichnost*’ of the individuals,” but for the “symphonic *lichnost*’” that “participates in the common cause.” The symphonic or *sabornaia* (conciliatory) *lichnost*’ (the Eurasianists often used the two concepts interchangeably) is a *lichnost*’, that, once self-created and self-aware, fuses with the collective, without ever losing its individuality and uniqueness, to serve the common good. Of *sabornaia lichnost*’ the Eurasianists spoke already in 1922, when Suvchinskii wrote of it as the highest achievement a *lichnost*’ is supposed to accomplish – “to grow into a *sabornaia lichnost*’.”<sup>119</sup> During the process of self-knowledge *lichnost*’ relied on the national culture of the collective – the *narod*, and was supposed to eventually fuse with this collective, renouncing egotistic interests, and dedicate itself to *narod*’s prosperity.

The Eurasianists borrowed the concept of *sobornost*’ from the Slavophiles, to which they acknowledged their ideological indebtedness. *Sobornost*’, one of the central religious-

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<sup>118</sup> Suvchinskii, 5.

<sup>119</sup> Suvchinskii, ‘The Eternal Foundation.’

philosophical concepts of Slavophilism, was coined by Alekseĭ Xomiakov as “‘conciliar unity’, a unique kind of unity, in which the fullness of unity and the fullness of freedom are not only compatible, but presuppose one another.” This “freedom in unity” was only possible in the Church, that is, in a community. Hence, following *sobornost’*, the personality, in the words of the Slavophile Konstantin Aksakov, fusing with the commune was not losing its exclusivity but became more purified in its service for the “general concord.”<sup>120</sup> The concept of “symphonic” *lichnost’* was introduced by the philosopher Lev Karsavin, himself a follower of Slavophilism and later member of Eurasianism, “as a means to understand the hierarchical relationship among the individual, the state, culture and the church.”<sup>121</sup> The “symphonic *lichnosti*” are those *lichnosti* that stand between the Church and the individual and ensure the unity of these individual *lichnosti* into a *sobornyi* whole, as for instance the national churches unite the parishioners before their fusion with the ideal Church.<sup>122</sup>

By the 1930s the Eurasianists conceptualised the *lichnost’* as part of a “sobornyi whole,” exclusively “devoted to the service of the common good.”<sup>123</sup> They extended the concepts of *sobornost’* and *symphony* to Russia-Eurasia as a “multitudinous (*mnogochelovecheskaia*) ‘symphonic’ *lichnost’*.”<sup>124</sup> The Eurasian *narod* was a *lichnost’* itself – a symphonic *lichnost’* endowed with a symphonic culture. This Eurasian multinational symphonic *lichnost’* was not the sheer sum of all the cultures inhabiting Russia-Eurasia. It was rather a “higher *sobornoe* unity” encompassing all cultures without supressing any of their original uniqueness.<sup>125</sup> The single individual human *lichnost’*, the single national culture does not dissolve in the collective, in unity or *sobornost’*. Rather, the *lichnost’* unfolds its best

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<sup>120</sup> Horujy, 42.

<sup>121</sup> Beisswenger, 369.

<sup>122</sup> Lev Karsavin, ‘Tserkov’, *Lichnost’ i Gosudarstvo* {The Church, Lichnost’ and the State}, in *Sochineniia* {Works} (Moscow: Raritet, 1993), 403–42.

<sup>123</sup> *Evrastiĭstvo. Deklaratsiia, Formulirovka, Tezisy* {Eurasianism. Declaration, Formulation, Theses} (Prague: Izdanie Evraziĭtsev, 1932).

<sup>124</sup> Trubetskoi, *The Problem of Russian Self-Knowledge*.

<sup>125</sup> ‘Editorial’, in *Tridtsatye Gody. Utverzhleniia Evraziĭtsev Kniga* {The Thirties. The Affirmations of the Eurasians} (Paris: Izdanie Evraziĭtsev, 1931).

qualities and fulfils its mission as part of a *sobornyi* collective and in service to it. This Eurasian symphonic *lichnost'* was to be achieved as part of the political programme the Eurasianists committed to accomplish once Bolshevism would collapse. Until then, the émigré *lichnost'* was supposed to educate itself within a Russian Orthodox tradition and be ready to fuse with the *narod* into a *sabornaia lichnost'*.

*Lichnost'* as conceptualised by the Eurasianists was the site of creative historical agency, but this agency, as the *lichnost'* itself, made sense only as part of a collective and in service to the collective. The émigré *lichnost'* was supposed to maintain its identity in order to be able to serve Russia when the Bolshevik would be defeated. Not by chance were the Eurasianists relying on *sobornost'*. In fact, this *lichnost'* and this service to Russia were conceptualised within a religious Orthodox framework. Russia of tomorrow would be rebuilt on an Orthodox basis. The religious philosopher Nikolaï Berdiaev, though critical of the Eurasianists on many occasions, promoted a creative *lichnost'* within a religious framework too. The freedom that *lichnost'* needs in order to unfold and create was to be found only within the Orthodox Church.<sup>126</sup> Berdiaev was sending this message of spiritual freedom to the young generation. In particular, in one “Open letter to the post-revolutionary youth” in the journal *Utverzhdeniia* (*Affirmations*), Berdiaev said that the “freedom of conscience, thought and creativity,” freedom inherent to *lichnost'* and what makes of it a *lichnost'*, is necessarily a “spiritual freedom,” guaranteed by the Church. Berdiaev explained this appeal to the young *lichnost'* with “the awakening in the Russian émigré youth of creative thought about the future of Russia,”<sup>127</sup> and hence the need to educate and direct this creativity in a religious direction. Indeed, by the late 1920s-early 1930s there appeared in emigration several young ideological movements that either drifted towards fascism or campaigned for a soviet-based monarchy or

<sup>126</sup> Nikolaï Berdiaev, ‘Problema Xristianskogo Gosudarstva {“The Problem of the Christian State”}’, *Sovremennye Zapiski* {*Contemporary Annals*}, no. 31 (1927).

<sup>127</sup> Nikolaï Berdiaev, ‘Otkrytoe Pis'mo k Porevoliutsionnoi Molodezhi {Open Letter to Post-Revolutionary Youth}’, *Utverzhdeniia* {*Affirmations*}, no. 1 (1931).

return to the USSR. While I cover these movements in Chapter 3, I will focus now on the “young” who refused to direct their “creative thought” towards Russia or prepare their *lichnost’* to serve it. They rather focused on their inner selves and their personal existential meaning, which saddened the “old” no less.

### 3.6 The Defiant Young *Lichnost’*

The “young” *lichnost’* in the making was a *self* torn by the trauma of war and revolution, exile, hunger, solitude and despair. They had no bright memories or a glorious past they could rely on in emigration. There was hardly a group, a journal or a circle that answered to their existential questions and yearning to belong. The young directed all the “Hamletian questions” and all the spiritual and philosophical wandering inward, towards the *lichnost’* they were hoping to carve out as a meaningful subject-agent of history. Their *tvorchestvo*, that is, their creation, their literature was a site for self-searching and search for existential meaning. The Montparnasse poet Boris Poplavskii explained and defended the young émigré literature as the “literature [that] turned towards the internal human being ... [that fights] for the human soul, for its freedom [in order] to find and protect human essence.”<sup>128</sup> Poplavskii’s alter ego, *Apollo the Abominable*, narrates that “my soul was seeking someone’s presence, that would finally free me from shame, from hope and from fear ... my weak soul was seeking protection.” And he found it in his alter ego, Apollo the Abominable, with whom Vasen’ka engages in dialectical discussions about metaphysics, the meaning of life and the meaning of love, love that, Apollon says, created the world.<sup>129</sup> The old generation resented this inner turn of the young. The poet Zinaida Gippius lamented this “pure subjectivism” of the “young,” but blamed it on the “negation of *lichnost’* within the circles of the old generation.” This rejection of “commonality”

<sup>128</sup> Poplavskii, ‘The Hero of the Emigre Literature.’

<sup>129</sup> Poplavskii, *Apollo, The Abominable*.

and “ideas” by the young compelled the “old” to set up circles and journals where to engage the young poets in literature, philosophical and religious discussions about the image (*obraz*) of future Russia, and educate in them loyalty to Russian culture and sacrificial work in the name of the Russia of tomorrow. In the 1930s there were several “old” groups that competed for the national education of the “young.” There were the Eurasianist *Kochevie* (*The Nomads*) under the supervision of literary critic Marc Slonim and poet Marina Tsvetaeva, the spiritual anti-Bolshevik *Zelenaia Lampa* (*Green Lamp*) of the poets Zinaida Gippius and Dmitrii Merezhkovskii, and the post-revolutionary religious *Krug* (*Circle*) of Il’ia Fondaminskii, Social Revolutionary and one of the editors of *Sovremennye Zapiski* (*Contemporary Annals*), the most important and read social-literary journal of Russia Abroad.

The post-revolutionary representatives of the old generation around the journal *Novyi Grad* (*The New City*) committed to “defend the eternal truth of *lichnost’* and its freedom” and to create the “new human being of the New City.”<sup>130</sup> In the first issue the Dresden-based philosopher Fëdor Stepun, in arguing for a return to the “religious foundations of the world,” defined the “human being as a supernatural (*sverkhprirodnoe*) spiritual creature.”<sup>131</sup> The editors of the journal set themselves the task to create an outlet “for the spiritual energies” of the young and create the “new human being” that would fight Bolshevism and “build the new Russia.”<sup>132</sup> This new human being was to be a “*sabornaia lichnost’*,” free and creative as part of a whole, and dedicated to the service of the common good, in this case, building of the new Russia. The discussion within the journal was setting up a religious worldview within which to create the image (*obraz*) of future Russia, a Russia the *sabornaia lichnost’* would build once

<sup>130</sup> ‘Editorial’, *Novyi Grad* {*The New City*}, no. 1 (1931); Fëdor Stepun, ‘O Cheloveke “Novogo Grada” {About the Human Being of “The New City”}’, *The New City*, no. 3 (1932).

<sup>131</sup> Fëdor Stepun, ‘Put’ Tvorcheskoï Revoliutsii {The Path of Creative Revolution}’, *Novyi Grad* {*The New City*}, no. 1 (1930).

<sup>132</sup> Editorial, ‘K Molodezhi {To the Youth}’, *Novyi Grad* {*The New City*}, no. 3 (1932); Stepun, ‘About the Human Being of “The New City”.’



the Bolsheviks would fall.<sup>133</sup> It was the philosopher Berdīaev that made the case for *lichnost'* in *Novyi Grad*. He defined *lichnost'* as “the highest value” above state, nation and society. *Lichnost'* was not the part of a whole, but the whole itself, that encompassed other collectives and institutions.<sup>134</sup> In 1937, with Fascism and Nazism growing stronger, Berdīaev reiterated the absolute value of *lichnost'* and it being a “whole,” never a part of a “whole.” *Lichnost'* is the “centre of creative energy,” the agent of history, but *lichnost'* is also “a constant struggle,” struggle against the collective – be it the society, the state or the nation – to maintain and affirm the essence of *lichnost'*: spiritual freedom and creativity.<sup>135</sup> By the same token, the Prague-based philosopher Nikolaï Loskiï defended the absolute value and dignity of *lichnost'*, whose “ultimate aim is the participation in *sobornoe tvorchestvo*.”<sup>136</sup> Since the condition for the *lichnost'* to be able to fuse with the collective and participate in the *sobornoe tvorchestvo* was that *lichnost'* first develop itself as a single individual, the old generation decided to educate the young *lichnost'* in Russian and Orthodox traditions to make sure that when the time would come this *lichnost'* would serve the new Russia.

The young cherished the opportunity of sharing their work with the old and to participate in philosophical discussions, but did not appreciate and even fiercely opposed any attempt by the old to teach them how and about what to write. To the literature of the old the young opposed theirs, the “true literature,” born and created on Montparnasse. In 1930 the young launched their own journal *Chisla* (*Numbers*), where they could write what they worried about – the self, “the metaphysics of “the dark Russian *lichnost'*,”<sup>137</sup> death and everyday life. To the concerns of the “old” that *Chisla* only wrote about death and decadence they defiantly

<sup>133</sup> Fëdor Stepun, ‘O Svobode {About Freedom}’, *Novyi Grad* {*The New City*}, no. 13 (1938).

<sup>134</sup> Nikolaï Berdīaev, ‘O Sotsial’nom Personalizme {About Social Personalism}’, *Novyi Grad* {*The New City*}, no. 7 (1933).

<sup>135</sup> Nikolaï Berdīaev, ‘Chelovecheskaia Lichnost' i Sverkhlichnye Tsennosti {Human Lichnost' and the Superhuman Values}’, *Sovremennye Zapiski* {*Contemporary Annals*}, no. 63 (1937).

<sup>136</sup> Nikolaï Loskiï, ‘Industrializm, Kommunizm i Utrata Lichnosti {Industrialism, Communism and the Loss of Lichnost'}’, *Novyi Grad* {*The New City*}, no. 11 (1936).

<sup>137</sup> Poplavskiï, ‘Around “Chisla”.’

replied: “we write about death in the name of life.”<sup>138</sup> The poet Poplavskiĭ wrote in *Utverzhdeniia*, the journal of the “old” written for the “young,” “I cannot write differently, life is awful ... I cannot write about anything else, this [what I write about] is chasing me, is demanding to become real through me [through my writing].”<sup>139</sup> The literary scholar Maria Rubins argues that the young Russian writers dismissed imagination in their works for the sake of the “human document” as “a convenient framework for a reflection on the most essential questions of human existence.”<sup>140</sup> In his memoir, Īanovskiĭ wrote that on Montparnasse what they most valued was a “honest writer” (*chestnyi pisatelʹ*), that would not lie or embellish their prose, but stick to their inner and personal experience. In his words the “Parisian school” of Russian émigré literature was “based on ‘honest’ literature. What we understood by honesty in literature was no fantasy, invention or ingenuity.”<sup>141</sup> By the same token, the poet Poplavskiĭ wrote in the last issue of *Chisla*: “we are the literature of truth about today. ... There is in our literature more courage, arrogance and stoic austerity.”<sup>142</sup> The same Poplavskiĭ argued that “the new subjective diary literature teaches the human being respect for himself. ... this literature saves the human being from the Russian self-destruction.”<sup>143</sup> Poplavskiĭ was also the author of the so-called *Parisian Note* in literature, that committed to defend “human *lichnostʹ*, freedom, spiritual life, religion and real life.”<sup>144</sup> According to this *Note*, literature was not supposed to turn towards some phantasmal future of Russia, rather, to focus on “the contemporary human being, on their internal condition and their attitude towards external events and spiritual questions.”<sup>145</sup> *Chisla* for the young was precisely that space of “limitless freedom, where the

<sup>138</sup> Nikolaĭ Otsup, ‘Vместо Оtveta {In Lieu of an Answer}’, *Chisla {Numbers}*, no. 4 (1930).

<sup>139</sup> Boris Poplavskiĭ, ‘Sredi Somneniĭ i Ochevidnostei {Around Doubts and Evidence}’, *Utverzhdeniia {Affirmations}*, no. 3 (1932).

<sup>140</sup> Rubins.

<sup>141</sup> Īanovskiĭ, *Champs-Élysées. The Book of Memory*, 374.

<sup>142</sup> Poplavskiĭ, ‘Around “Chisla”.’

<sup>143</sup> Poplavskiĭ.

<sup>144</sup> Terapiano, *Half-a-Century of the Literary Life of Russian Paris*.

<sup>145</sup> Terapiano, *Encounters*.

new human being can breathe,” where the young can write “about the unhappiness of solitary life [in emigration], about the blood that is burning [in our veins] without any use.”<sup>146</sup>

Literature for the young generation was not a means to conserve Russian culture for the Russia of tomorrow. Instead, literature was the site of self-search and affirmation, the site where they looked for existential meaning and tried to make sense of their role in the world and history. The writer Vladimir Veidle in an article for the “old” *Novyi Grad*, wrote that “*lichnost*’ is manifested in the *tvorchestvo*,” in this case, in literature. “The poet,” went on Veidle, “more than any other artist creates not only his poems but himself.”<sup>147</sup> Rubins argues that the Russian Montparnasse engaged in “self-narration for the sake of existential survival.”<sup>148</sup> This act of self-search culminated in the 1930s when during the *Chisla* evenings the young engaged in discussions about “the human being of the 1930s” (*chelovek tridtsatykh godov*) or about the “émigré Hamlet of the 30s” in the words of poet Terapiano. In fact, when writing about the *lichnost*’ of the 1930s the young often invoked Hamlet. So, Īanovskii identified with the “Eastern Hamlet” (*Vostochnyi Gamlet*) while Poplavskii was overwhelmed by Hamletian questions.<sup>149</sup> This human being of the 1930s was naked and filled with emptiness and boredom, “lost faith in himself and the world around.” For the chronicler of the “unnoticed generation,” Vladimir Varshavskii, this was “a naked human being ... removed from history and social life ... whose soul was full of emptiness, boredom and despair ... a human being with a Hamletian soul.”<sup>150</sup> The poet Berberova remembered the young on Montparnasse “rather hungry and oblivious of what would they do tomorrow, how and where to live; they would

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<sup>146</sup> Poplavskii, ‘Around “Chisla”.’

<sup>147</sup> Vladimir Veidle, ‘Odnochestvo Xudozhnika {The Solitude of the Artist}’, *Novyi Grad {The New City}*, no. 8 (1934).

<sup>148</sup> Rubins.

<sup>149</sup> Īanovskii, *Champs-Élysées. The Book of Memory*; Poplavskii, ‘The Hero of the Emigre Literature’; Īurii Terapiano, ‘Chelovek 30kh Godov {The Human Being of the 30s}’, *Chisla {Numbers}*, no. 7–8 (1933); Terapiano, *Half-a-Century of the Literary Life of Russian Paris*.

<sup>150</sup> Vladimir Varshavskii, ‘O “Geroe” Ėmigrantskoĭ Molodoĭ Literature {About the “Hero” of the Young Emigre Literature}’, in *Ozhidanie. Proza. Ėsse. Literaturnaĭa Kritika {Expectation. Prose. Essays. Literary Critic}* (Moscow: Dom Russkogo Zarubezh’ia Imeni Aleksandra Solzhenitsyna, 2016), 343.

mostly sit in a cafe over a cup of coffee; many did not finish their studies, some of them went to war (on whose side nobody knew) and now tried to catch up on what they missed in the post-war Parisian literary and art movements.”<sup>151</sup> This human being “is not a hero, but an ordinary human being (*obyknovennyi chelovek*) “that lost everything ... but has to try to understand, to achieve something, to love, to hate and long for happiness.” Literature for the young was no site of conservation of the Russian values and culture. Literature was the site for self-exploration, the place where they engaged in discussions about the meaning of life and their place in the world and history. While the young were concerned with *lichnost'* of the human being and their existential wellbeing, the old were concerned with the *lichnost'* of the nationally-trained Russian emigrant that would build the new Russia.

### 3.7 Children against Parents

The Eurasianists as well as the intellectuals of the post-revolutionary movements conceptualised the Russian self-affirmed *lichnost'* against the Western atomised individualism and against Communist collectivism, both of which, according to the émigré intellectuals, annihilated the elemental creativeness of *lichnost'*. Within the Western “framework of individualism,” consumerism and materialism *lichnost'* lost its elemental uniqueness (*stikhiinoe nachalo*) and disintegrated losing its wholeness.<sup>152</sup> Berdiaev, too, was very critical of secularism and western democracy: the latter was an “absolutism of society,” that denied *lichnost'* its freedom.<sup>153</sup> Secularism, according to Berdiaev, lead to liberalism and individualism, that in turn “atomized the culture and the human being, destroyed its spiritual unity and emptied the human soul.”<sup>154</sup> In the autonomy of a secular democracy the individuality

<sup>151</sup> Berberova, *The Italics are Mine*, 337.

<sup>152</sup> Suvchinskii, ‘The Eternal Foundation.’

<sup>153</sup> Nikolaï Berdiaev, ‘V Zashchitu Khristianskoï Svobody {In Defense of Christian Freedom}’, *Sovremennye Zapiski {Contemporary Annals}*, no. 24 (1925), 295.

<sup>154</sup> Berdiaev, ‘The Problem of the Christian State.’

affirmed itself but lost its spirituality, its “freedom of spirit,” hence *lichnostʹ* became a slave of this “absolute secularism and autonomy.” Against individualism Berdiaev proposed social personalism, “that recognises the high value of any human *lichnostʹ* and the spiritual freedom of personal consciousness,” and allows *lichnostʹ* to develop.<sup>155</sup> Within personalism the *lichnostʹ*, as opposed to the equalising tendency of democratic individualism, does not lose its originality, its uniqueness.<sup>156</sup> In the western conditions of secularism and individualism *lichnostʹ* could only decay and disintegrate, hence the urgency to educate the young *lichnostʹ* in Russian and Orthodox traditions.

The young writers, on the other hand, cherished the air of freedom they were experiencing in the West, especially on Montparnasse. Īanovskii remembers how not even the hunger and poverty, the solitude and despair could take away the rare Parisian air of freedom, that allowed to “think about anything, say anything.” The poet Nina Berberova remembered decades later that “it [was]s good to be in Paris, to be young and to be poor.”<sup>157</sup> “Here in the West,” wrote Poplavskii, “we learnt self-respect, French self-respect and respect for our own personal life.”<sup>158</sup> Boris Vilʹde, the Sorbonne educated ethnologist, who participated in the Resistance and was shot by the Nazis, wrote in his prison diary months before his death: “... I love France. I love this beautiful country, I love its people.”<sup>159</sup> The young resented that the old generation “did not help us love and assimilate this rare French air” and did not teach them about “the greatness and beauty of every single human being.”<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Berdiaev, ‘About Social Personalism’; Nikolaĭ Berdiaev, ‘O Profeticheskoi Missii Slova i Mysli (K Ponimaniia Svobody) {About the Prophetic Mission of the Word and Thought (Towards the Understanding of Freedom) }’, *Novyi Grad {The New City}*, no. 10 (1935).

<sup>156</sup> It is important to stress out that Berdiaev was against any kind of class inequality, that “would suppress the *lichnostʹ*.” However, he argued democracy, individualism, and equality eliminated the uniqueness of *lichnostʹ*. Instead, because *lichnostʹ* was a spiritual entity, Berdiaev proposed a hierarchical spiritual-aristocratic order. Nikolaĭ Berdiaev, ‘Chelovecheskaia Lichnostʹ i Sverkhlichnye Tsennosti {Human Lichnostʹ and the Superhuman Values}’, *Contemporary Annals*, no. 64 (1937).

<sup>157</sup> Berberova, *The Italics are Mine*.

<sup>158</sup> Poplavskii, ‘Around “Chisla”.’

<sup>159</sup> Vilʹde, *Diary and Letters from the Prison*, 84.

<sup>160</sup> Īanovskii, *Champs-Élysées. The Book of Memory*; Poplavskii, ‘Around “Chisla”.’

As the Eurasianist and the post-revolutionary movements repudiated Western individualism, so they rejected Communist collectivism. In the Communist collectivism, they said, *lichnost'* could not organically develop and gravitate towards the synthesis with the people. Collectivism eradicated *lichnost'* and its spontaneity (*stikhiĭnost'*), leading eventually to a “mass individualism”<sup>161</sup> akin to the one in the West, only of a different ideological nature. Collectivism enserfed the *lichnost'*, subjected it to its “ideological will,” so that the human being, instead of obeying God (what a self-affirmed *lichnost'* does) became a slave of another human being (the Communist). The philosopher Fëdor Stepun wrote that “Bolshevism negates the single human being, its soul and spirituality in the name of happiness for the whole humankind.”<sup>162</sup> By the same token, Berdiaev affirmed that communism “kill[ed] freedom and denie[d] human *lichnost'*.”<sup>163</sup> Against Western atomism and Communist collectivism both Eurasianists and Berdiaev proposed the religious community, the only organic environment where *lichnost'* can unfold its creative sources. The true religiously creative *lichnost'* was the one that through its self-affirmation and wilful act tended towards an organic unity with the whole – the *narod*, becoming thus a *sobornaia* (collective, conciliatory) *lichnost'*. This religious form of collective whole was coming into being through the creative wilful act of the *lichnost'* – the émigré intellectual, which maintained its freedom and creativity within the “whole” to eventually fuse with the *narod* and fulfil the mission that started with the Revolution – unveil the world the “new truth.” Berdiaev saw in the Orthodox Church the resolution of the conflict between the *lichnost'* and society. The *lichnost'* was supposed to maintain its membership with the *sobornyi* “whole” until, when Russia free again, it will fuse with the *narod* to serve its wellbeing. While whether and to what extent were the émigré intellectuals acquainted with the fate of *lichnost'* in the USSR is yet to be researched, *lichnost'* under

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<sup>161</sup> Suvchinskii, ‘The Eternal Foundation.’

<sup>162</sup> Stepun, ‘The Path of Creative Revolution.’

<sup>163</sup> Berdiaev, ‘The Problem of the Christian State.’

Bolshevism was not as dismissed and repudiated as the Russians Abroad believed or tried to make believe. In fact, *lichnost'* entered narod for the first time during the Stalin epoch, although reconceptualised under the Marxism-Leninism ideology.<sup>164</sup>

The only form of collective and belonging the young experienced was the “refugee” status and the emigration, a life, in their own words, of solitude, shame and despair. Eventually many of them became naturalised citizens of their countries of residence, but the Russian soul was always there making it difficult to settle. Rather than identifying with specific groups, the young relied on their *lichnost'*, and cherished that freedom for self-search even if that meant solitude. In 1931, the journal *Vstrechi (Encounters)* organised a questionnaire in which four young writers participated.<sup>165</sup> They answered to the following question: “should we defend *lichnost'*, is *lichnost'* the ultimate value or is the collective in the right to encroach upon it?” *Lichnost'*, the writers replied, as the “image of God” and the “source of life and creativity” should be defended from such collectives as the state, the crowd or the corporations. Without freedom from the collective the creative *lichnost'* would stop creating with dire negative consequences for the whole society.<sup>166</sup> Interestingly, one of the respondents, the poet Iurii Terapiano, one of the oldest of the young cohort and acting as a patron to his fellow poets, believed that *lichnost'* was supposed to serve humankind, hence the collective had priority over the single individual. The creative *lichnost'* that through its *tvorchestvo* was supposed to bring back the emigration their “lost consciousness” had to necessarily be, according to Terapiano, a “*sabornaia lichnost'*,” echoing here the Eurasianist and the post-revolutionary movements.<sup>167</sup>

The “old” generation defended and affirmed a *lichnost'*, that self-aware and educated in the Russian and Orthodox traditions, would be ready to serve Russia one day. The young,

<sup>164</sup> Stephen Kotkin, ‘Speaking Bolshevik’, in *Magnetic Mountain. Stalinism as a Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Kharkhordin, 164-231.

<sup>165</sup> The young writers were Vladimir Varshavskii, Boris Poplavskii, Iurii Terapiano and Iurii Fel'zen.

<sup>166</sup> ‘Lichnost' i Obshchestvo (Anketa) {Lichnost' and Society. (Questionnaire)}’, *Vstrechi (Encounters)*, no. 3 (1934).

<sup>167</sup> Iurii Terapiano, ‘Na Balkanakh {At the Balkans}’, *Chisla {Numbers}*, no. 9 (1933).

on the other hand, searched for their own single individual *lichnost'* that, thrown into exile without cues for survival, was desperate for existential meaning and belonging to a whole that won't ask of it to commit to ideals or sacrificial service. They did not want to serve an imaginary Russia, much less to return to the real one. The poet Īanovskiĭ remembers how in those days of hunger and poverty but filled with poetry, jokes and gossip on Montparnasse, and long walks on Champs-Élysées "one of the worst dreams for us was to wake up in Russia."<sup>168</sup> Russia was being associated with war and revolution, with a past glory they were expected to live up to, with autocracy and censorship. In Gaĭto Gazdanov's novel *Večer u Kl'èr* (*Evening at Claire's*), his alter ego, a sixteen-year old, joins the Whites because the Whites were stationed in his town and because he was curious to find out about the war as about something "new and unknown." He had little understanding what was the Russia the Whites were fighting for, and if the Reds were stationed in his town he "would have probably joined them." Russia lost its image and a clearly-defined meaning for many before they reached emigration. In Georgiĭ Ivanov's novel *The Break-up of the Atom*, the nameless hero roaming the streets alone whispers to himself, "Pushkin's Russia (*Pushkinskaĭa Rossiĭa*), why did you deceive us? Pushkin's Russia, why did you betray us?"<sup>169</sup> The young made their choice – poverty, solitude, obscurity, but freedom: "we loved this air of freedom and thought it made up for all losses and discomforts."<sup>170</sup> They valued freedom and *lichnost'* above all, even above Russia. With news coming from and about the USSR, Russia was becoming less and less real. It was the land of Pushkin and Tolstoy, the cold winters and the birches. One day, they were being said, Russia would be free again, in the meanwhile, they replied, they had "to take care of their own consciousness."<sup>171</sup> Boris Poplavskiĭ, the hope and pride of Montparnasse, wrote not long before

<sup>168</sup> Īanovskiĭ, *Champs-Élysées. The Book of Memory*.

<sup>169</sup> Ivanov, *The Disintegration of the Atom*.

<sup>170</sup> Īanovskiĭ, *Champs-Élysées. The Book of Memory*.

<sup>171</sup> Terapiano, 'The Human Being of the 30s.'



his tragic death in 1935: “if Russia will not accept *lichnost*’ and freedom, we will never return to Russia.”<sup>172</sup>

In emigration, writing in French or in Russian the young were destined to oblivion. With their reading public left in Russia of the past, they were mostly writing for the desk drawer, hoping that one day “Russia will discover its Russian boys who never broke the tie with Europe or the motherland.” They all dreamt of recognition and glory. Poplavskiĭ, in the memoirs of his contemporaries, was often wondering: “Would we ever enter a room full of people as real accomplished and recognised celebrities?”<sup>173</sup> When the young writer Vladimir Nabokov-Sirin finally published one of his novels, *Zashchita Luzhina* (*The Defense of Luzhin*), in the most important thick journal of the emigration, *Sovremennye Zapiski*, the poet Nina Berberova thought that “our existence acquired meaning. My whole generation was finally justified.”<sup>174</sup> When Īanovskiĭ saw in Pavel Miliukov’s *Poslednie Novosti* Poplavskiĭ’s photograph and obituary, “that is when I understood that we were subjects of history.”<sup>175</sup> What they mostly yearned for was recognition from the “old” generation, who continued dismissing their poetry, because they could not understand it. They also yearned for love and happiness. Roaming those streets until dawn, putting that sorrow and solitude into verses, sitting and talking at length over a cup of coffee on Montparnasse – were all desperate attempts, in vain, to find solace: “I again return to the thought that I am a human being, disposed to be happy. I want the most ordinary thing – love.”<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Poplavskiĭ, ‘Around “Chisla”.’

<sup>173</sup> Īanovskiĭ, *Champs-Élysées. The Book of Memory*.

<sup>174</sup> Berberova, *The Italics are Mine*.

<sup>175</sup> Īanovskiĭ, *Champs-Élysées. The Book of Memory*.

<sup>176</sup> Ivanov, *The Disintegration of the Atom*.

### 3.8 Conclusion

I started this chapter with a description of everyday life of the Russians in Paris, their institutions, events and places of encounter. Paris was not the exclusive site of *lichnost'* in Russia Abroad. Rather, as it is the case for all the three concepts, what was said, thought and murmured on Montparnasse resonated across all of the émigré community. I decided to link *lichnost'* to Paris within the scope of this thesis, because it was on Montparnasse of all places that the young and the old talked about *lichnost'*, its role in the world and history, and its existential meaning. *Lichnost'* in Russian émigré thought was the creative agent-subject of history, the one that through its creative agency was either engaged in self-reflection as in the case of the young, or involved in crafting the image of the Russia of tomorrow as in the case of the old.

*Lichnost'* was the site of *tvorchestvo*, that is, of the only possible historical agency of the Russians in emigration, where devoid of any political or civic agency, they could only turn to literature. *Lichnost'* was also the agent behind the *missiia*, that was to be accomplished through *tvorchestvo* – it was in their writings that the Russians could conserve their Russianness for the future generations, for the ones that would return to a free Russia. With the Russian émigré community scattered across the world, *lichnost'* became the only site of struggle against Bolshevism. In this capacity it was up to *lichnost'* to *know itself*, devise the image (*obraz*) of the new Russia and direct its *tvorchestvo* towards the fulfilment of the mission: conserve Russianness, fight Bolshevism and unveil the “new truth.” Devoid of a citizenship and a nation, left with only the status of refugee, it was to *lichnost'* that the Russian exiles turned to (re)construct their dignity, their agency and meaningful existence.

In the next chapter I turn to *tvorchestvo* and I set it in Berlin – the first stop for many Russian emigrants as well as the European capital that appreciated the Russian pre-Revolutionary and Revolutionary *tvorchestvo*. Russian *tvorchestvo* had its roots in Berlin to

than move across all of Russia Abroad. *Tvorchestvo*, like *lichnost'* and *missiia* was conceptualised within the intergenerational conflict. While the old created for Russia, seeing *tvorchestvo* as the essence of their service to Russia, the young created for themselves, seeing *tvorchestvo* as the site for their existential self-searching.

## Chapter 4

### 4 Russian *Tvorchestvo* in Russian Berlin and Beyond

“Post-war Berlin smelled of oranges, chocolate, and good tobacco” Ariadna Ėfron<sup>177</sup>

“I find it strange to recall that freak existence.” Vladimir Nabokov<sup>178</sup>

“Russian Berlin, I did not know any other Berlin. The German Berlin was only a background to all those years...” Nina Berberova<sup>179</sup>

“Russian people, wherever you are, create (*tvorite*)! In the name and glory of Russian culture. It is time to affirm Russian culture as a truly universal (*vselenskaia*) culture.” Pëtr Savitskiĭ<sup>180</sup>

In the previous chapter I analysed the concept of *lichnost'* in Russian émigré thought. In emigration *lichnost'* was the creative subject-agent of history, the site of conservation of Russianness and fight against Bolshevism. *Lichnost'* was also the site of *tvorchestvo*, of creativity. Through *tvorchestvo* *lichnost'* accomplished its historical agency and mission, *missiia*, towards Russia. In this chapter I analyse the concept of *tvorchestvo*.

During the early 1920s Berlin was the European capital of Russian culture and *tvorchestvo* (creativity).<sup>181</sup> Poets, musicians and artists, either exiled, visiting or on tour were

<sup>177</sup> Ariadna Ėfron, *Stranitsy Vospominaniĭ {Pages of Memories}* (Paris: LEV, 1979). Ariadna Ėfron was the daughter of the poet Marina Ėsvetaeva and the writer and later NKVD agent Sergey Ėfron. All three together with the younger son Georgii returned to the USSR in 1939, where Ėfron was killed most probably by the NKVD, Ėsvetaeva committed suicide in 1941 and Georgii died in WWII.

<sup>178</sup> Nabokov, *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited*.

<sup>179</sup> Nina Berberova was a Russian poet and novelist. Together with the husband the poet Vladislav Khodasevich she left Russia in 1922. She lived in Berlin and Prague to then settle in Paris. In 1950 she emigrated to the USA where she continued writing and lectured at Yale and Princeton. Berberova, *The Italics are Mine*.

<sup>180</sup> Pëtr Savitskiĭ, ‘Rossiia i Ėmigratsiia {Russia and Emigration}’, *Novyiĭ Grad {The New City}*, no. 13 (1938).

<sup>181</sup> Williams.

writing and reading their poems, giving performances and sharing their avant-garde notes.<sup>182</sup> Émigré politicians, intellectuals as well as representatives of all social classes enjoyed the Russian theatre and opera while waiting for the Bolshevik regime to topple so that they could return home.<sup>183</sup> The Russian émigré community in Berlin did not last long, but their life and activity there was intense and far-reaching. The Treaty of Rapallo in 1922, high living costs, unemployment, depression and finally the rise of Hitler drove the majority of Russians emigrants to Prague and Paris.<sup>184</sup> By the mid-1930s there remained about 10,000 Russian emigrants in Berlin (from 70,000 at the end of 1919),<sup>185</sup> the majority of whom were Russian Germans from the Baltic provinces affiliated to right-wing movements.<sup>186</sup> In these approximately ten years, the Russian emigration left a long-lasting impression on the Berlin cultural arena and produced *tvorchestvo* that resonated in all of Russia Abroad.

In this chapter I talk about Russian *tvorchestvo*: how it entered the émigré community, what did it mean, how its meanings changed in various contexts and usages. In my thesis I link Russian *tvorchestvo* to Russian Berlin, not because it was the exclusive centre for Russian creativity, but, rather, because of all three émigré capitals *tvorchestvo* seems to have taken root there to then spread across the whole community. It was in Berlin where all political projects, like lobbying for German intervention and proposing a Romanov heir, proved useless. It was in Berlin that the Russian emigrants started to gradually acknowledge that politically they were powerless, and would have to fight Bolshevism by other means. I start with a description of Russian life in Berlin by tracing some of the everyday life practices of the emigrants, their places of encounter, their emotions, their hopes and aspirations. Then I give a brief overview

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<sup>182</sup> The Berlin public were in awe with the intellectual currents coming from Russia – symbolism, decadence and futurism.

<sup>183</sup> Gessen.

<sup>184</sup> The Treaty of Rapallo established economic relations between Germany and the USSR, finalising thus the recognition of the USSR by Germany. More countries followed throughout 1920s.

<sup>185</sup> Williams.

<sup>186</sup> Williams, 293.

of *tvorchestvo* in Russian intellectual thought to move to *tvorchestvo* in emigration. *Tvorchestvo* here was the lot and duty of the creative *lichnost'* and the essence of the Russian emigration's mission. *Tvorchestvo* was what made Russian emigrants active agents of history. In the circumstances of political impotency, only through *tvorchestvo* could they, on the one hand, create their own *lichnost'*, and on the other, act in the world and make a difference. Through *tvorchestvo* they could define themselves and maintain an identity, lead a meaningful life and serve Russia in the future.

#### 4.1 Russian Berlin

The novelist Vladimir Nabokov (writing at the beginning of his career under the pseudonym Sirin) left the richest and most comprehensive account of Russian Berlin. His novels attest to the circumstances in which the Russians had to build a dignified routine and maintain their Russian identity. The Russians in Nabokov's Berlin were different: there were the ones who managed to put to use their entrepreneurial talent and set up successful businesses; the ones who, their rank and social status notwithstanding, had to roll up their sleeves and take jobs in factories and as concierges; there were professors and politicians who managed to lead a very meagre existence out of their intellectual work by editing newspapers and giving lectures; and finally there were those, usually Nabokov's heroes, who, arrived in emigration young but already disillusioned, made ends meet by giving private lessons of French and English, putting money aside to publish at their own expense the poems they would write by night. In their spare time Berlin Russians would visit the salons of Russian ladies, set up following the Russian tradition with tea and cakes, and talks and dreams about Russia – “was Russia still alive?”<sup>187</sup>, or spend the afternoons in the Russian bookstores perusing the

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<sup>187</sup> The lawyer and Kadet Party member Iosif Gessen remembers the evenings organised in their living rooms where Russian emigrants from the whole Russia Abroad would visit. Gessen, 173.

latest arrivals from Soviet Russia. There were also weekly political meetings and seasonal charity balls, where the emigrants would listen to Kadets, Mensheviks or Monarchists and their strategies to overthrow the Bolsheviks, or put on their best dresses to waltz and raise money for the Russian cause abroad.<sup>188</sup> In Berlin the Russians lodged in either large apartments where the housekeeper had a room of her own, with living-rooms decorated with Russian motifs, or in small rooms with boarding rented by Russian friends or suspicious German landladies, or in bug-infested boarding-house rooms that remind of Raskol'nikov's coffin.<sup>189</sup>

Several famous Russian emigrants left accounts of their lives in Berlin, about the places they visited, the cafes they dined in and listened to the latest gossip from home or the concert halls, when in the mid-1920 they could still listen to Fëdor Shaliāpin.<sup>190</sup> All Russian “belles-lettres toilers” upon arrival in Berlin would firstly settle in the boarding house on Prager Platz. There, in the nearby café “Pragerdile,” emigrant poets and writers, as well as visiting ones from the USSR would meet and “‘decide the fate’ of world and native art.”<sup>191</sup> Cafes in Berlin just as in Paris were points of reference for Russian emigrants. These were the very few places where in an estranged city, ripped by inflation and xenophobia, they could randomly enter, sit at a table where they would undoubtedly find a friend in sorrow and pour out their souls (*otvesti dushu*).<sup>192</sup> Iosif Gessen, lawyer, member of the Kadet Party and one of the editors of the Berlin-based newspaper *Rul' (Rudder)*, remembered the cafes on Nollendorfplatz and Nürnberger Strasse, where often Russian meetings, political and literary, would be held at one and the same time, as well as the opera hall where Stanislavskii's Moscow Art Theatre was on tour and giving performances to locals and emigrants. The young poet Nina Berberova remembered her

<sup>188</sup> Vladimir Nabokov, *Dar {The Gift}* (Saint-Petersburg: Simpozium, 2006); Vladimir Nabokov, *Zashchita Luzhina {The Defense of Luzhin}* (Saint-Petersburg: Simpozium, 2009).

<sup>189</sup> In Fëdor Dostoevsky's novel *Crime and Punishment* Rodion Raskol'nikov's mother notices his room is so small that resembles it a coffin. In the novel the room, so small and tight, played a decisive role in Raskol'nikov's Idea formation.

<sup>190</sup> Fëdor Shaliāpin was the icon of Russian opera. He was loved and revered both in the USSR and in emigration. He toured Europe throughout the 1920s and 1930 and died suddenly in Paris in 1938. Gessen; Meisner.

<sup>191</sup> Ėfron, 90.

<sup>192</sup> Gessen.

walks in Charlottenburg and a Russian tavern on Wilmersdorfer Strasse where “they sang Russian songs and criticised contemporary Russian literature,” as well as the Russian restaurant on Genthiner Strasse and the Russian Club in Landgraf Café, where poets read their verses.<sup>193</sup> Russian emigrants would rent accommodation in the *Zoo* district, spend their morning strolls in the *Tiergarten* and sell their belongings to make ends meet on *Tauentzienstrasse*.<sup>194</sup>

Berlin in the 1920s was the European capital of Russian *tvorchestvo*, of Revolutionary Russian culture, recognised and acclaimed across Europe. Post-war Germany was under the spell of cultural Russophilia and the Eurasian and Scythian wishful myths that cultural renaissance would come from the East to save Western society from decay, a decay proclaimed at the time by Oswald Spengler.<sup>195</sup> Exponents of expressionism, futurism, and constructivism either emigrated to Germany or were just visiting their friends. The symbolist poet Andreï Belyĭ and Maksim Gor’kiĭ lived and created in Berlin in the 1920-1930s, with the latter setting up in 1923 the journal *Beseda* (*The Conversation*) to publish Russian authors that would not pass Soviet censorship. Vladimir Maiakovskiĭ and Sergeĭ Esenin visited Berlin in the early 1920s to read poems, criticise the West and praise Bolshevik Russia.

The German public welcomed during the 1920s Konstantin Stanislavskiĭ’s Moscow Art Theatre, the Sergeĭ Diaghilev’s ballet, Aleskandr Tairov’s Moscow Chamber Theatre, Vsevolod Meĭerkhol’d’s company as well as Sergeĭ Ėizenshteĭn’s *Potemkin* and *The Strike*. Vasilĭĭ Kandinskiĭ and Mark Chagall, Sergeĭ Prokof’ev, Igor’ Stravinskiĭ and Sergeĭ Rakhmáninov – all performed in Berlin with concerts and art exhibitions. Many constructivist artists – Naum Gabo, Ėl’ Lisitskiĭ, – decided to stay upon expiration of their visas to contribute extensively to the Bauhaus movement. The German literary journal *Die neue Rundschau* published issues

<sup>193</sup> Berberova, *The Italics are Mine*, 233.

<sup>194</sup> Fëdor Stepun, ‘Mysli o Rossii {Thoughts about Russia}’, *Contemporary Annals*, no. 23 (1925); Berberova, *The Italics are Mine*; Williams.

<sup>195</sup> Scythianism was a political and intellectual movement born in Berlin in early 1920s that propagated spiritual salvation from the East and hence political support for the Bolsheviks. In his book *The Decline of the West* Oswald Spengler preaches the end of the Western civilisation. Williams.



dedicated to Russian émigré artists and writers. Russian *tvorchestvo* resonated with the post-War German public, that was disillusioned with Western decay and looked to the East for renewal.

The Russian émigré *tvorchestvo* in Berlin was built and flourished around The Union of Russian Journalists and Writers and the Russian Scientific Institute, that, financed jointly by the German government and the League of Nations, “studied Russian reality;” around approximately seventy-two publishing houses and in particular around the *Slovo (The Word)* and *Petropolis*; around the democratic, Kadety-founded newspaper *Rul’ (The Rudder)* with a circulation of 20,000 copies; and finally around the Day of Russian Culture, celebrated across the whole Russia Abroad on Pushkin’s birthday – June 6<sup>th</sup>.<sup>196</sup>

A special site of Russian *tvorchestvo* in Berlin, that resonated across the whole Russia Abroad, was Nikolaï Berdiaev’s Religious-Philosophical Academy, founded in November 1922 when Berdiaev left Russia on the “Philosophy Steamer.” Berdiaev was the Russian philosopher who most studied and wrote about *tvorchestvo* – creativity, both before the Revolution when he published in 1916 his *The Meaning of Creativity* and in emigration where he developed his notions of “Christian democracy” and “personalistic philosophy.” During his two-year stay in Berlin he set the foundations of both the Academy and his own *tvorchestvo* in emigration, that is, the foundations of the spiritual revival of Russia and the world: “The Christian spirit around the world must be *creatively* resurrected and renewed”<sup>197</sup> (italics mine).

## 4.2 Russian *Tvorchestvo*

The Russian concept of *tvorchestvo* can be translated as both “creativity” and “creation,” meaning both the process of creation as well as the product of creation, a product

<sup>196</sup> Gessen; Williams; Raeff, *Russia Abroad*.

<sup>197</sup> Williams, 258.

both created anew and originally. *Tvorchestvo* though is different from *tvorenie*, which means both the process and the result of God's creation of the world.<sup>198</sup> Kåre Johan Mjør individuates “three key moments in the history of the concept” of *tvorchestvo* before Berdiaev's *The Meaning of Creativity*: metaphysical, aesthetic and epistemological.<sup>199</sup> The Russian concept of *tvorchestvo* first developed as a metaphysical concept in the Moscow-based circle of “Wisdom Lovers” in the early 1830s as a translation of “Schelling's idea of productivity” of nature.<sup>200</sup> At the same time, Nikolaï Nadezhdin, literary critic and professor of aesthetics, employed *tvorchestvo* to refer to the artistic genius that creatively creates according to their own rules. *Tvorchestvo* became sign and precondition of originality in art and literature and thus the engine for historical development by securing the continual generation of new original creations.<sup>201</sup> By the mid-1830s, Nikolaï Stankevich referred to *tvorchestvo* as both productivity of nature and human productivity, in art and history. With the literary critic Vissarion Belinskii *tvorchestvo* became an extension of the artist's *lichnost'*. It is through *tvorchestvo* that the artist represented reality, the way they saw it.

*Tvorchestvo* was one of the central concept in the philosophy of the Silver Age in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>202</sup> Rooted in religious humanism, *tvorchestvo* was human agency itself: one could create and treat one's own life as a work of art. This was the notion of *life-creation* (*zhiznetvorchestvo*) propagated by the symbolists.<sup>203</sup> In Vladimir Soloviev's philosophy, *tvorchestvo* was, among other things, the “process of intellectual contemplation” by which human beings co-create the ideas through which they eventually perceive the world and “take

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<sup>198</sup> Mjør, ‘Metaphysics, Aesthetics, or Epistemology?’

<sup>199</sup> Mjør.

<sup>200</sup> Mjør, 6.

<sup>201</sup> Mjør, 12-15.

<sup>202</sup> A historical period in Russian intellectual and cultural life stretching approximately from 1890 to 1920. It saw a revival in idealism, religion, mysticism and spiritualism in philosophy, and symbolism in poetry and art.

<sup>203</sup> Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, ‘Religious Humanism in the Russian Silver Age’, in *A History of Russian Philosophy 1830-1930. Faith, Reason and the Defense of Human Dignity*, ed. Gary M. Hamburg and Randall A. Poole (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 227–47.

part in the creation and in the universal divine plan.”<sup>204</sup> *Tvorchestvo*, hence, for Soloviev was the active intellectual process of human minds that allowed for “human participation in the realization of world history as envisioned by God in his divine plan.”<sup>205</sup>

It was Berdiaev who made of *tvorchestvo* the central philosophical topic of one of his works – *The Meaning of Creativity*. In Berdiaev *tvorchestvo* was linked to the idea of human being as the absolute value and to freedom as the inherent characteristic of humans. Because the human being was created in “the image and likeness of God,” they are endowed with a creative role in the cosmos.<sup>206</sup> It is through *tvorchestvo* (creativity) that the human being feels and becomes aware of their likeness to God, that is, *tvorchestvo* is what both God and the human being share in common. Berdiaev’s was a religious understanding of human *tvorchestvo* – creativity is not a privilege, rather a calling that stems from human being’s likeness to the Creator. Human creativity is possible because the human being, “as an end in itself,”<sup>207</sup> is inherently free and hence creates freely. The individual, that is, the *lichnost’* contains “unlimited creative potential,” that can only be fulfilled in conditions of absolute freedom.<sup>208</sup>

### 4.3 *Tvorchestvo* in Emigration

In Russian émigré thought *tvorchestvo* was the activity of Russian emigrants as Russian by soul and culture in the name of Russia. Only through *tvorchestvo* could Russians abroad accomplish their agency as historical actors. The essence of *tvorchestvo* was to serve the Russia of tomorrow. *Tvorchestvo* was the content of the émigré mission and the ordeal of the *lichnost’*. *Tvorchestvo* meant being active, that is, not succumbing to émigré apathy or settle in

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<sup>204</sup> Mjør, 16.

<sup>205</sup> Mjør, 18.

<sup>206</sup> Kåre Johan Mjør, ‘Universalising Idealism: The Cross-Cultural Case of Russian Religious Thought’, *Global Intellectual History*, 2020, 1–19.

<sup>207</sup> Ana Siljak, ‘The Personalism of Nikolaï Berdiaev’, *The Oxford Handbook of Russian Religious Thought*, 4 September 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198796442.013.23>.

<sup>208</sup> Siljak, 8.

emigration leaving Russia behind and only cherish the memory of it. It also entailed being aesthetically creative. Although caring in its meaning strands of the metaphysical, aesthetic and religious nineteenth-century content, *tvorchestvo* in emigration did not only refer to creative and original activity. Rather, it referred to the activity and creativity of the Russian émigré abroad in the name of Russia. Whether this *tvorchestvo* entailed – organisation and participation of political and literary meetings, setting up publishing houses and issuing journals, writing poetry and novels – all these activities were *tvorchestvo* accomplished as Russians for the sake of Russia of tomorrow.

By the mid-1920s most of the émigré intellectuals lost hope that Bolshevism would soon fall or that foreign powers would militarily intervene to overthrow them. Since political activity was useless, the emigrants could take advantage of the freedom abroad and create a *tvorchestvo*, that would never appear under Soviet censorship. *Tvorchestvo* in emigration was discussed mostly in philosophical-literature circles like the *Green Lamp* (*Zelenaïa Lampa*), hosted by the poets Zinaida Gippius and Dmitriï Merezhkovskii and *The Circle* (*Krug*), organised by Il'ia Fondaminskiï. The circles were supposed to guide the young *tvorchestvo* into the right direction – into service to Russia. Because *tvorchestvo* was the only activity available to the emigrants by which they could fight Bolshevism, representatives of the old generation hoped they could instil the young with the Russian national values so that they could, through their *tvorchestvo*, create the new image (*obraz*) of future Russia. What they feared was the young generation's inward turning and their focus on death and decadence in their work.

The first to write about *tvorchestvo* in emigration were the Eurasianists. In their first book in 1921, they declared history to be “a free and creative improvisation,”<sup>209</sup> thus speaking against both the Marxist and Bolshevik historical inevitability: “there is no such thing as

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<sup>209</sup> Savitskiï et al., ‘Editorial,’ in *Exodus to the East*.

inevitability.”<sup>210</sup> They reiterated the same historical-philosophical principles a year later in their second book: “History is not given, history is being created.”<sup>211</sup> The Eurasianists echoed Alexander Herzen,<sup>212</sup> when they said history was endowed with “plasticity” and hence “open to our action.”<sup>213</sup> The content of future Russian life, that the Eurasianists together with other post-revolutionary movements were adamant to reformulate, could not be predetermined by any historical event. Rather, Russia’s future was to be the result of “intensive creativity” (*napriazhennoe tvorchestvo*).<sup>214</sup> Any *tvorchestvo*, action or *sozidanie* (creation, construction) with regard to the new Russia, would only be possible if the meaning of the Russian Revolution is to be understood and acknowledged.<sup>215</sup> The Eurasianists were one of the first émigré movements to accept the Bolshevik Revolution as an accomplished fact contrary to the majority of the emigrants, that only recognised as the true Revolution the February one, dismissing October as a coup.

The Russian Revolution, according to Eurasianism, brought about a new human being in Russia, unleashing a new “creative will” (*tvorcheskaia volia*). “Nowhere as in Russia happened such a radical change of human beings. The revolution brought to the surface a new human essence.”<sup>216</sup> At the same time, the Revolution brought on Russia Bolshevism, a Western-based ideology alien and inimical to Russian Orthodox culture. Russia had to be saved from Bolshevism, and this salvation had to occur within a framework of “religious *tvorchestvo*.” “The new Future Russia we hope will be a Russia of a united *narod*, creatively

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<sup>210</sup> Savitskii, ‘The Turn to the East.’

<sup>211</sup> Pëtr Savitskii, ‘Dva Mira {Two Worlds},’ in *On the Tracks. Affirmation of the Eurasians. Book 2*.

<sup>212</sup> Alexander Herzen was a Russian intellectual, publicist and journalist. Herzen left Russia in 1847 to never return, becoming the Russian intellectual emigrant par excellence. By many considered the father of Russian socialism, Herzen was the hero of all émigré movements in Russia Abroad. Herzen and his works were often cited in émigré writings. Martin Malia, *Alexander Herzen and the Birth of Russian Socialism, 1812-1855*, y First printing edition (New York: Harvard University Press, 1961). Part of Herzen’s Archive was hosted by the Russian Émigré Archive in Prague.

<sup>213</sup> Georgii Florovskii, ‘O Patriotizme Pravednom i Grekhovnom {About Patriotism: the Truthful and Sinful Ones},’ in *On the Tracks. Affirmation of the Eurasians. Book 2*; Beisswenger.

<sup>214</sup> Savitskii, ‘The Turn to the East.’

<sup>215</sup> Florovskii, ‘About Patriotism.’

<sup>216</sup> Suvchinskii, ‘The Eternal Foundation.’

deciding for its being.”<sup>217</sup> Through this new *tvorchestvo*, unleashed by the Revolution and fuelled by freedom and will (*volia*), Russia will create for itself a new national culture and tell the world the new truth, a truth that Russia discovered in the Revolution, and will thus save the world and especially the West from its spiritual decay. *Tvorchestvo* is what makes history possible. This *tvorchestvo*, according to one of the leaders of Eurasianism, Prince Nikolaï Trubetskoi, takes its energy and inspiration from the centuries-old national culture that itself is a result of past *tvorchestvo*. *Tvorchestvo* is also the process by which the *lichnost* – the creative agent-subject of history accomplishing *tvorchestvo* in history – finds its own essence, national belonging and existential purpose. Through “individual self-knowledge [*lichnost*] contributes [through *tvorchestvo*] to the originality of national culture,” that will eventually become the basis of future *tvorchestvo*.<sup>218</sup>

In order to fight Bolshevism the émigré community was supposed to come up with as much as a “creative [ideological] worldview.”<sup>219</sup> They had to create a new national culture, necessarily religious Orthodox, that would guide the fight against Bolshevism. This new worldview, this “idea-ruler” was to be born in the “consciousness and spiritual experience” of the intelligentsia, to be later adopted by the whole *narod*.<sup>220</sup> The site of *tvorchestvo* thus was the *lichnost*, first of the intelligentsia and then of the *narod*. Initially this *tvorchestvo* manifested itself in the “process of self-searching and self-assertion” *lichnost* was bound to accomplish in view of it being a *lichnost*.<sup>221</sup> “The human being should spiritually grow and

<sup>217</sup> Florovskii, ‘About Patriotism.’

<sup>218</sup> Trubetskoi, ‘About the True and False Nationalism’; Nikolaï Trubetskoi, ‘U Dverei (Reaktsiia Revoliutsiia?) {A the Doorstep (Reaction? Revolution?)’, in *Evrasiiskii Vremennik. Kniga 3 {Eurasian Annals. Book 3}*, ed. Pëtr Savitskii, Pëtr Suvchinskii, and Nikolaï Trubetskoi (Berlin: Evraziiskoe Knigoizdatel'stvo, 1923).

<sup>219</sup> Pëtr Suvchinskii, ‘Idei i Metody {Ideas and Methods}’, in *Evrasiiskii Vremennik. Kniga 4 {Eurasian Annals. Book 4}* (Berlin: Evraziiskoe Knigoizdatel'stvo, 1925).

<sup>220</sup> Pëtr Savitskii, ‘Poddanstvo Idei {The Citizenship of Idea}’, in *Evrasiiskii Vremennik. Kniga 3 {Eurasian Annals. Book 3}*, ed. Pëtr Savitskii, Pëtr Suvchinskii, and Nikolaï Trubetskoi (Berlin: Evraziiskoe Knigoizdatel'stvo, 1923).

<sup>221</sup> Trubetskoi, ‘About the True and False Nationalism.’

self-perfect through the moment of personal creativity (*lichnoe tvorchestvo*).<sup>222</sup> As I have shown in the previous chapter, *lichnost'* was the kernel of the Eurasianist movement. In all their published works throughout the 1920s and the early 1930s they committed in one form or another to the value of *lichnost'* and its creative activity: first as a participant in the creation of the idea that would fight Bolshevism, later during the ideation of the Eurasianist political programme, and finally as an active participant in accomplishing this programme when Bolshevism would fall. Once a creatively self-perfected being, *lichnost'* could turn to *tvorchestvo-sozidanie*, that is, to creation-construction, manifested in intellectual work, literature or activism. Eventually *tvorchestvo* is what makes of *lichnost'* an actor of *tvorcheskiĭ*-accomplished historical development.

Devoid of any political agency, *tvorchestvo* in Russian emigration was the only possible manifestation of their agency as well as the essence of the Russian emigration mission with regard to Russia of tomorrow. Manifestations of *tvorchestvo* in emigration ranged from sheer presence at political meetings to participation in literature circles, from poetry writing to agitation to return to the USSR to serve the new communist regime.<sup>223</sup> The site of *tvorchestvo* was *lichnost'* – the creative (*tvorcheskaïa*) *lichnost'*, who through *tvorchestvo* participated in the historical process, when any participation – civic or political – was not available. The *tvorchestvo* of Eurasianism itself as an émigré movement culminated in the late-1920s when they formulated their political programme in service to the unique historical-geographical entity called Russia-Eurasia. According to their political plan, Russia-Eurasia would develop a demotic *ideocracy* on the basis of Soviet federative and national autonomies, without Bolshevism and Western-inspired values, but with religion and a socialism that recognized the

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<sup>222</sup> *Eurasianism. Declaration, Formulation, Theses.*

<sup>223</sup> It was the movement *Smena Vekh* (Change of Signposts) that in emigration agitated for a return to the USSR. The movement had cells and publications in several cities across the émigré community. It was backed by the Soviet state until late 1920s when it lost interest in its meek success. Gessen.

supreme value of *lichnost'*, that, fusing with the collective *narod*, would reject individual interests to serve the greater good.<sup>224</sup>

#### 4.4 *Tvorchestvo* between the Old and Young Generations

Eurasianism was very popular with the young generation of Russian emigrants. Post-war disillusion, unemployment, xenophobia and existential crisis drove many of them into so-called post-revolutionary movements. These recognised the October Revolution as the one and truly that brought about a new human being in Russia. Some of them accepted the Bolsheviks and agitated for a return to the USSR and service to the new government, like *Smena Vekh* (*Change of Landmarks*),<sup>225</sup> others rejected it but welcomed some of the implemented policies and propagandised a return to monarchy with a Soviet-based society and economy like *Mladorossy* (*The Young Russians*).<sup>226</sup> Eurasianism, that the philosopher Fëdor Stepun called “Russian fascism,”<sup>227</sup> by the early 1930s discredited itself with contacts with fascist and conservative movements in Germany.<sup>228</sup>

The old generation of Russian emigrants that opposed Eurasianism acknowledged the value of the Eurasian comprehensive historical-philosophical worldview and their influence on the Russian émigré youth. However, they found this influence dangerous and decided to create opposing worldviews within which to educate the young Russian writers and direct their *tvorchestvo* towards the service of Russia. In particular, one of the editors of *Contemporary Annals*, Il'ia Fondaminskiĭ, noticed on several occasions in his private correspondence with his

<sup>224</sup> Pëtr Savitskiĭ, *Evrasiiskaia Xronika. Vypusk IX {Eurasian Chronicles. Issue IX}* (Paris, 1927).

<sup>225</sup> *Smena Vekh* (*Change of Landmarks*) was a Soviet-backed émigré movement that agitated for a return to the USSR. In particular, the movement targeted the émigré intelligentsia asking it to “cease their opposition for the opposition’s sake.” The movement had cells and publications in several cities across the émigré community. Burbank.

<sup>226</sup> The *Mladorossy* were a “nationally minded émigré” young movement born in 1923 in Munich. Their programmes was restoration of the monarchy on the basis of Soviets. The *Mladorossy* proclaimed the messianic role of Russia in “the realisation of Christian and social ideals.” Chinyaeva.

<sup>227</sup> Stepun, ‘Thoughts about Russia,’ no. 21 (1924).

<sup>228</sup> Laruelle, ‘The “Third Continent” Meets the “Third Way”’; Beisswenger, ‘A Failed Alliance.’



colleague Mark Vishniak as well as in at least one public speech at one of the *Green Lamp* evenings, that “the Eurasianists are powerful and dangerous and we have to take seriously the fight against them.”<sup>229</sup> Two years later in 1927, Fondaminsky insisted that the émigré Russian youth, driven by the impulse to create was looking after an all-encompassing worldview (*t̑selostnoe mirosozertsanie*) and only “finding it with the Eurasians” – “we do not meet the needs of the growing generation.”<sup>230</sup> It was imminent that a worldview be created to spur “spiritual creativity” among the emigration. The same was echoed by Stepun in one of his articles entitled “Thoughts about Russia” in 1928. Thousands of “Russian boys,” Stepun observed, were craving for a worldview and “a life built in harmony with the world.”<sup>231</sup> So, in 1931 Fondaminskiĭ, Stepun and the philosopher Georgiĭ Fedotov created the journal *Noyĭ Grad* (*The New City*) that set to create the new image (*obraz*) of Russia, and win over the young writers from Eurasianism. *Noyĭ Grad* was the most symptomatic attempt of the old generation to engage the young one in a dialogue about Russia of tomorrow and their role in creating this Russia, first as an idea and an image with which they would fight communism.

At the centre of the journal *Noyĭ Grad* there was the new human being, the *lichnost'*, that would create the new image of Russia of tomorrow. This process of *tvorchestvo* was supposed to occur within a religious worldview. What the journal defended was the absolute freedom of *tvorchestvo*, of the creative activity that formulates the idea of a new Russia.<sup>232</sup> Stepun believed that literature, as one form of émigré *tvorchestvo*, was supposed to “fight against the spirit of Bolshevism,” and admonished the young writers to create in the name of

<sup>229</sup> Il'ia Fondaminskiĭ to Mark Vishniak, June 10, 1925, in *Sovremennye Zapiski*. Parizh (1920-1940). Iz Arkhiva Redaktsii [*Contemporary Annals. Paris (1920-1940). Editorial Archives*], Ed. Oleg Korostelev and Manfred Shrubu (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2011).

<sup>230</sup> Speech at Green Lamp evening, Conversation no. 3 in *The New Steamer*, no. 2 (1927).

<sup>231</sup> “Russian boys” or *Russkie Mal'chiki* was how the young generation was referred to in emigration. They kept being called “boys” despite there being among them several girls, of which the chronicler of these *Russkie Mal'chiki* Vladimir Varshavskiĭ wrote in his Vladimir Varshavskiĭ, *Nezamechennoe Pokolenie* [*The Unnoticed Generation*] (Moscow: Dom Russkogo Zarubezh'ia Imeni Aleksandra Solzhenitsyna, 2010). Fëdor Stepun, ‘Mysli o Rossii {Thoughts about Russia}’, *Contemporary Annals*, no. 35 (1928).

<sup>232</sup> Fëdor Stepun, ‘Porevoliutsionnoe Soznanie i Zadacha Ėmigrantskoĭ Literatury {Post-Revolutionary Consciousness and the Task of the Emigre Literature}’, *Noyĭ Grad* [*The New City*], no. 10 (1935).

Russia. It was the task of the emigration to create the image of future Russia. Only by participating in this common and collective *tvorchestvo* can the emigrants overcome the solitude of exiled life and the destruction of *lichnost'* in foreign land. Émigré literature, in particular, should be directed towards the creation of this image and the conservation of Russian *sobornaiâ lichnost'* – the *lichnost'*, which, without losing their own creative and individual characteristics, fuses with the collective to accomplish its *tvorchestvo* in the name of the greater good, that is, in the name of the Russia of tomorrow, free and religious. In 1938, on the pages of *Noyī Grad* the Eurasianist Pëtr Savitskiĭ lamented the “absence of creative forces in the USSR,” while insisting that the culture in Russia and the one in emigration were one and the same Russian culture, and hence the Russian emigrants should create (*tvorit'*) “in the name and glory of Russian culture.” Because the culture created in emigration had more chances to affirm itself as Russian culture in the future than the one created in the USSR, “every Russian emigrant has to first of all fight for the freedom of spiritual creativity (*dukhovnoe tvorchestvo*) and for the individual independent creativity (*tvorchestvo*).”<sup>233</sup>

A contributor to *Noyī Grad* was the philosopher Nikolaĭ Berdiaev. As in other émigré journals, Berdiaev in his articles defended the absolute value of the *lichnost'* “as an end in itself,” the absolute freedom and *tvorchestvo* inherent to *lichnost'* because “created in the image of God”: “at the centre of my thought is the problem of human beings and human *tvorchestvo*.”<sup>234</sup> In addressing the youth on several occasions, Berdiaev praised the “creative thought about the future of Russia” that was awakening in Russian émigré youth, and pointed to these creative forces being unleashed by the October Revolution, the only “truly accomplished revolution.”<sup>235</sup> In his book *The New Middle Ages* (very popular among the young Russians), Berdiaev proclaimed that in the Christian society of the new epoch of the middle

<sup>233</sup> Savitskiĭ, ‘Russia and Emigration.’

<sup>234</sup> Berdiaev, ‘In Defense of Christian Freedom.’

<sup>235</sup> Berdiaev, ‘Open Letter to Post-Revolutionary Youth.’

ages (*novoe srednevekov'e*) “labor (*trud*) should be understood as *tvorchestvo* (creativity).”<sup>236</sup> Instead of capitalism-driven progress there will be *tvorchestvo* and “life itself.” The site of *tvorchestvo* is *lichnost'* and *tvorchestvo* is what makes of *lichnost'* a subject against depersonalisation, that is, against the transformation of the human being into an object, into a means to an end. *Lichnost'*, wrote Berdiaev in 1937 “can be only understood dynamically” – “*lichnost'* is an act.” And any act is a creative act (*tvorcheskiĭ akt*), one and unrepeatable.<sup>237</sup> *Lichnost'* is the “centre of creative energy (*tvorcheskoĭ energii*),” through which *lichnost'* realises itself: there is always *tvorchestvo* in *lichnost'*. In other words, *lichnost'* affirms itself, its individuality through these creative acts, through *tvorchestvo*, which is inherent to *lichnost'* in view of it being “created in the image of God.” These notions of *lichnost'*, freedom and *tvorchestvo* were very popular on the pages of émigré journals. These circulated among the Russians at evenings, at meetings, and resonated with the young generation to the consternation of the old.

#### 4.5 *Tvorchestvo* in the Name of Russia and Existential Meaning

Although Berlin was where the Russian *tvorchestvo* toured after the Revolution and where it stayed to revive the decaying European culture, it was on Parisian Montparnasse where Russian *tvorchestvo* was taking a new turn, a turn that the old generation was anxious to direct towards Russia and its spiritual revival. The *tvorchestvo* philosopher Berdiaev moved to Paris in 1924 to supervise the “awakening in the Russian émigré youth of creative thought about the future of Russia.”<sup>238</sup> Among the representatives of the “old” generation Berdiaev had the

<sup>236</sup> The book created a lot of consternation in the émigré community. In it Berdiaev argued for the transition from the new history, in which humanism, individualism, autonomy and democracy killed spirituality, to the new epoch of the middle ages, where society will be built on religion and spiritual freedom. The October Revolution for Berdiaev marked precisely the opportunity for this transition – from capitalism to a “socialist monarchy” guided by a “spiritual aristocracy.” Nikolai Berdiaev, *Novoe Srednevekov'e {The New Middle Ages}* (Paris: YMCA-Press, 1924); Varshavskii, *The Unnoticed Generation*.

<sup>237</sup> Berdiaev, ‘Human Lichnost' and the Superhuman Values,’ *Contemporary Annals*, no. 63 (1937), 298.

<sup>238</sup> Berdiaev, ‘Open Letter to Post-Revolutionary Youth.’

greatest influence upon the “young,” to the chagrin of his opponents.<sup>239</sup> Here he set up the religious-philosophical journal *Putʹ* and developed his personalistic philosophy, where *tvorchestvo* was one of the central concepts. From Berlin to Paris moved the poets Nina Berberova and Vladislav Khodasevich, the poet and future archaeologist Boris Vilʹde, as well Gaïto Gazdanov from Constantinople. The young poet Zinaida Shakhovskaïa visited Paris occasionally from Brussels to read her poems, as did Vladimir Nabokov-Sirin – the most acclaimed writer of the young generation. Tickets to his reading evenings at Geographic Society used to sell out immediately.

It was on Montparnasse that writers and poets of all generations met in smoky cafes around coffee and second-rate liquor to talk about poetry and Russia’s destiny. Fearing to lose the young generation to denationalisation or / and to fascism, philosophers and writers of the old generation reacted by setting up circles and journals where they would engage the young Russians in discussions about literature, philosophy and religion. The most famous and dearly recorded in their memoirs by several young poets and writers were the *Green Lamp* (*Zelenaïa Lampa*) organised by the poets Zinaida Gippius and Dmitriï Merezhkovskiï in 1927 and *The Circle* (*Krug*) organised by Il’ia Fondaminskiï in 1931.<sup>240</sup> In 1930, both Gippius and Fondaminskiï (writing under his émigré pseudonym Bunakov) wondered “What was Russian emigration to do?”, echoing the ever unanswered Russian “accursed questions.”<sup>241</sup> Both hoping and anticipating the fall of Bolshevism in the near or distant future, the two intellectuals believed the Russian emigrants could serve Russia from abroad.<sup>242</sup> Hence the circles. At the centre of all discussions was Russia: past, present and future Russia, real and craved Russia.

<sup>239</sup> Varshavskiï, *The Unnoticed Generation*.

<sup>240</sup> The evenings at the Green Lamp and the Circle were remembered in their memoirs by several young writers such as Vladimir Varshavskiï, Vasilii Ianovskiï, Iurii Terapiïano.

<sup>241</sup> The “accursed questions” (*prokliatie voprosy*) were the nineteenth-century “moral and social issues of which every honest man, in particular every writer, must sooner or later become aware.” Isaiah Berlin, *The Hedgehog and the Fox*, First Edition (Simon & Schuster, 1953).

<sup>242</sup> Johnston.

What the “old” writers hoped to achieve was to direct the *tvorchestvo* of the “young” poets and novelists towards Russia, to convince them, that is, that their duty and task was to create in the name of Russia, to create a literature that would serve as the foundation to rebuild Russia when Bolshevism would fall.

During the *Green Lamp* evening conversations poets and writers, young and old, touched upon literature in emigration – the *tvorchestvo* par excellence. Gippius, for instance, insisted that Russian literature in emigration should write about and reflect the “Russian catastrophe,” the everyday life and the ordeals of exile experience. Fondaminskiĭ insisted that the emigration should create the worldview within which the young would create: “spiritual creativeness should be flourishing in émigré Russia.”<sup>243</sup> In one of the *Krug* conversations, the religious philosopher Georgiĭ Fedotov argued that *tvorchestvo* was “the highest form of exploit, the highest manifestation of the spirit on earth.”<sup>244</sup> Both the *Green Lamp* and the *Circle* published literary-philosophical journals: *The New Ship* (*Novyi Korabl'*) and *The Circle* (*Krug*) respectively. Here they published the poetry and prose of the young writers, as well as articles on religious and philosophical themes hoping in this way to direct the education and *tvorchestvo* of the young toward Russia’s spiritual revival.

Rather than dedicating their *tvorchestvo* to the liberation of Russia, the young generation of novelists and poets employed it for their inner searching. They put their plight and despair into words and hoped to be read and heard. Their *tvorchestvo* reflected their experience of trauma of war and revolution. Marginalised, unrecognised and uprooted, the young poets tried to find the meaning of their existence through their *tvorchestvo*, where there was no other meaning than *tvorchestvo* itself. The literary scholar Maria Rubin notices how the central themes of the young literature of the Russian Montparnasse were the “self” and the

<sup>243</sup> Speeches at Green Lamp evening, Conversation no. 2 and no. 3 in *Novyi Korabl'* {*The New Steamer*}, no. 1 and no. 2 (1927).

<sup>244</sup> Conversation no. 7 in ‘*Krug* {*The Circle*}’, *Novyi Grad* {*The New City*}, no. 11 (1936).

“existential search for meaning.”<sup>245</sup> The “human documents,” that is, the novels and the poems reported on the authors’ solitude, boredom and anguish. “‘I alone’ am the only theme of my poems,” wrote the poet Boris Poplavskii. Vladimir Varshavskii, writer and chronicler of the “unnoticed generation” in an article for *Sovremennye Zapiski* (*Contemporary Annals*) acknowledged that the young émigré literature cannot give much besides despair, loneliness and boredom, and a constant “search for the *lichnost’*.”<sup>246</sup> In yet another article, “Montparnasse Conversations,” Varshavskii noticed that “the emigrants, who lost everything, needed stories about glory and the happiness of their previous life in Russia. The young could not write such books: they only heard about the lost paradise of the pre-revolutionary Muscovite feasts from the stories heard from the old generation.”<sup>247</sup>

At one of the *Green Lamp* evenings, Gippius accused the young of their extreme subjectivism in their *tvorchestvo*. *Tvorchestvo* for the young generation was both the sense of their existence and at the same time the means by which they were desperately trying to find a higher meaning for both their existence and their *tvorchestvo*, which for many were one and the same thing. Their *tvorchestvo* was directed towards their inner selves and not Russia. However, the young writers insisted that theirs also constituted Russian literature. “One can write about anything, about the jazz band and still remain a Russian writer,” said Nina Berberova, poet and novelist – “the most important thing is to write in the spirit of Russian literature.”<sup>248</sup> By the same token, Boris Poplavskii, the mouthpiece of the Montparnasse generation, answering to those critics who told the young to write in French if they do not consider themselves Russian enough, said: “... we will write about Russia and not in French,

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<sup>245</sup> Rubins.

<sup>246</sup> Vladimir Varshavskii, ‘O Proze “Mladshikh” Èmigrantskikh Pisatelei {About the Prose of the “Young” Emigre Writers}’, *Sovremennye Zapiski* {*Contemporary Annals*}, no. 61 (1936).

<sup>247</sup> Varshavskii, Montparnasse Conversations.’ 453.

<sup>248</sup> Speeches at Green Lamp evening, Conversation no. 3 in *The New Steamer*, no. 2 (1927).

the way we want and about whatever we want, without asking for permission, and with Western sincerity.”<sup>249</sup>

*Tvorchestvo* was a stumbling block in the Russian émigré generation gap. Both generations agreed that *tvorchestvo* was the essence of their existence and activity in emigration. However, while the old generation wanted this *tvorchestvo* to be directed towards Russia and its liberation, the young one saw *tvorchestvo* as a means of self-discovery. In 1930, the young writers started publishing their own journal *Chisla* (*Numbers*), where “literature could finally breathe freely.”<sup>250</sup> In their first editorial the journal promised to “talk about the aim of life and the meaning of death,” to avoid politics and only focus on literature, because “the centre of gravity of all our problems and questions are decided in literature,” that is, in *tvorchestvo*.<sup>251</sup> *Chisla* was interested in Russian *lichnost’*, “the dark Russian *lichnost’*,” in particular the young *lichnost’* and its self-questioning and self-perfection.<sup>252</sup> Rather than focusing on the idea of Russia, *Chisla* chose “the questions of human existence,” the real Parisian experience, the solitary life, the happiness and unhappiness they were experiencing.<sup>253</sup> Rather than choosing Russia and directing their *tvorchestvo* toward its spiritual liberation, they choose their own individualities, self-respect and self-love, “that we learnt here in the West.” Their absolute values were *lichnost’* and freedom and “if Russia will not accept *lichnost’* and freedom we will never return to Russia.”<sup>254</sup> To critics that accused *Chisla* of only talking about death and decadence, they replied: “we write about death in the name of life.”<sup>255</sup> Only facing their misery can the human being learn about their greatness. The whole journal was a manifesto against the old generation’s writing lectures, against the idea of Russia and the

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<sup>249</sup> Poplavskii, ‘Around “Chisla”.’

<sup>250</sup> Poplavskii.

<sup>251</sup> ‘Editorial’, *Chisla* {*Numbers*}, no. 1 (1930).

<sup>252</sup> Poplavskii, ‘Around “Chisla”.’

<sup>253</sup> Otsup, ‘In Lieu of an Answer.’

<sup>254</sup> Poplavskii, ‘Around “Chisla”.’

<sup>255</sup> Otsup, ‘In Lieu of an Answer.’

service to its national culture. In their *tvorchestvo*, the young opposed to Russia the *lichnost'* and their real life experience with real emotions and thoughts, with dreams and despairs.

Going back to Mjör's classification of *tvorchestvo*'s key historical moments: metaphysical, aesthetic and epistemological, *tvorchestvo* in migration seems to have adopted strands of all three. Through *tvorchestvo* the Russian emigrants perceived the world around them, made sense of their existence in emigration, and interpreted Russia's recent history. While in exile, Russian emigrants were supposed to learn freedom, that, in the form of literature, would reach Russia one day: "One day the doors to Russia will open again, and literature will return there, God willing, with a deeper consciousness of universality."<sup>256</sup> This *tvorchestvo* was to be an aesthetic production, created by a *tvorcheskaia* (creative) *lichnost'*. It was supposed to be an original production, worthy of acclaim, that would put Russia Abroad on the map of world history. Finally, and most importantly, *tvorchestvo* was the essential character of the human condition of the Russian emigrant. *Tvorchestvo* was the essence of their existence and their mission as Russian intellectuals in exile. In 1935, in an article for *Novyi Grad* about the mission and task of Russian émigré literature, the philosopher Fëdor Stepun argued that "turning away from the task that destiny entrusted us [to fight Bolshevism and build the image of future Russia in *tvorchestvo*] leads to the destruction of *lichnost'*."<sup>257</sup> Russians in emigration maintained their Russianness and existential meanings inasmuch as they continued to create (*tvorit'*) and serve Russia.

#### 4.6 The Condition of *Tvorchestvo* in Emigration

At the beginning of the 1930s, the emigrants started to draw up the results of their ten-year exile. Special attention was given to literature and in particular to the "young émigré

<sup>256</sup> Zinaida Gippius writing under pseudonym Anton Kraĩniĩ, "Polet v Evropu," in Rubins, 4.

<sup>257</sup> Stepun, Fëdor, 'Post-Revolutionary Consciousness and the Task of the Emigre Literature.'



literature.” Literary critics and writers themselves lamented the very poor publishing activity. In 1924 the circulation of a published Russian novel in Paris amounted to 300 copies, this when there were around 45,000 Russians in the French capital.<sup>258</sup> Many writers sometimes published at their own expense without getting any revenues or royalties. Critics indicated several reasons for this situation: from intellectual impoverishment of the reading public to expensive books, from high printing costs to poor or absent literature reviews in periodicals. One positive trend though was the Turgenev Library in Paris that, with a found of 100,000 items in the early 1937, offered affordable loan services to the Russian public.<sup>259</sup>

Rather lamentable was the situation of the young writers. They suffered the most from absence of recognition and publication, from poverty and despair. The editors of journals and newspapers were representatives of the so-called old generation, who were raised on Tolstoy, Turgenev and Dostoevsky. The young writers, on the other hand, left Russia still teenagers or while in their early 20s, and remembered little of it to be able to describe it. They wrote what they knew about best— about themselves, about their aimless vagaries on Parisian streets, the constant inner dialogue about the absolute and eternity. Their style, formed under the influences of Joyce and Proust and European existential philosophy and eastern spiritual religions, was alien to the “old” editors who refused for quite a long time to publish the young.<sup>260</sup> Gaïto Gazdanov, one of the young writers, already promising in the 1920s, bitterly noticed how, devoid of any income, the young had to take physically consuming jobs, that left little or no time to dedicate to education and good writing, thus creating a vicious circle.<sup>261</sup> Another problem many a young writer lamented was the absence of a reading public: “For whom does

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<sup>258</sup> Rubins.

<sup>259</sup> Mark Aldanov, ‘O Polozhenii Ėmigrantskoï Literatury {About the Situation of Emigre Literature}’, *Sovremennye Zapiski {Contemporary Annals}*, no. 61 (1936); Mikhail Osorgin, ‘Sud’by Zarubezhnoï Knigi {The Fate of the Emigre Book}’, *Sovremennye Zapiski {Contemporary Annals}*, no. 54 (1934); Rubins; Raeff, *Russia Abroad*.

<sup>260</sup> Vishniak, *Contemporary Annals. The Memoirs of the Editor*.

<sup>261</sup> Gaïto Gazdanov, ‘O Molodoï Ėmigrantskoï Literatury {About the Young Emigre Literature}’, *Sovremennye Zapiski {Contemporary Annals}*, no. 60 (1936).

the writer write in Paris in 1931?“, they wondered.<sup>262</sup> The same Gazdanov explained this with the excruciating experience of revolution and war that were crucial in the education and worldview formation of the young, a worldview within which they created, but was not understood and hence rejected by the old generation. The children had no bright memories of success and glory from Russia to share and cherish in their *tvorchestvo*. Their *tvorchestvo* was full of despair, loneliness, emptiness and void.<sup>263</sup> Hence the writer was facing the following dilemma: to either be truthful to their experience and be read by a handful or to bend to the “expectancy of the tired careless reader,” thus succumbing to self-censorship.<sup>264</sup> The essence of the Russian émigré generational gap was precisely this – different conflicting memories about Russia and opposing understating of their existence in emigration: while the parents created for the Russia of tomorrow, the children created in order to understand who they were and to come up with a sense to their existence.

The only young émigré writer, whose *tvorchestvo* was recognised and acclaimed by both the old and young generation was Nabokov-Sirin. He was one of the first of the young cohort to be published both in journals as well as by publishing houses in Paris and Berlin. Nabokov-Sirin was an exception in the Russian young literature. While setting his *tvorchestvo* in a very much hated Berlin, in those small and lonely rooms, on those boulevards with Stammkafes and bookshops, among well-off Berlin locals and proud but needful Russians, he managed to write about Russians missing Russia and dreaming in Russian, about their fears and dreams, their thoughts and memories, shared by both generations. When one of his first novels *Zashchita Luzhina* (*The Defence of Luzhin*) was published in *Sovremennye Zapiski* in 1929, the poet Berberova thought that “our existence acquired meaning. My whole generation was finally justified.”<sup>265</sup> The hero Luzhin was an acclaimed Russian chess-player in emigration

<sup>262</sup> Georgii Ivanov, ‘Bez Chitatel’ia {Without the Reader}’, *Chisla* {Numbers}, no. 5 (1931).

<sup>263</sup> Poplavskii, ‘Around “Chisla”’; Varshavskii, ‘About the Prose of the “Young” Emigre Writers.’

<sup>264</sup> Ivanov, ‘Without the Reader.’

<sup>265</sup> Berberova, *The Italics Are Mine*, 504.

that, trapped in his thoughts, painful memories and childhood traumas, was desperately trying to find the solution to a complex game combination. Because the solution to all his inner riddles was in his childhood, that is, in Russia, whereto it was painful to return, Luzhin found the way out of the impasse in death. Symptomatically, the novel starts with young Luzhin being saddened to find out that from that moment on, as a *gimnazist*, he would only be called by his second name – Luzhin; and it ends with his death when the reader finally finds out his christened name – Aleksandr Ivanovich. It was easy for the young emigrant to identify with Luzhin, with the loneliness, the desperation, the fear and the yearning.

In yet another acclaimed novel *The Gift*, the young poet Fëdor Godunov-Cherdyntsev, who just published a collection of poems about his childhood memories, wanders the streets of Berlin, hates all German and misses Russia. After meticulously gathering material to write a biography of his father, a famous traveller and ethnographer, he instead gains the attention of the Russian colony with a bibliography of Nikolaï Chernyshevskii, in which in ironic and sarcastic tones he depicted the idol of the revolutionary intelligentsia in a rather compromising and unheroic light.<sup>266</sup> It is not difficult to notice how the choice of the bibliography is an attempt by a young poet suffering in emigration to make sense of what happened to Russia – when and what went wrong and, most importantly, who was to be blamed for the revolutions that eventually brought the Bolsheviks to power and chased them into exile. Chernyshevskii, incidentally, was the “ideological father” to both the Socialist Revolutionaries, who claimed the February Revolution, as to the Bolsheviks – their nemesis. The defiant tone of Godunov-Cherdyntsev as well as of Nabokov-Sirin was also an affront to the ideals of the “old” generation, that the young defiantly repudiated. Sirin, “the loneliest and most arrogant one” among the young émigré writers, writes Nabokov decades later in his autobiography, “passed

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<sup>266</sup> This chapter interestingly created a huge scandal in Russia Abroad with *Sovremennye Zapiski* on the brink of refusing publication, being Chernyshevskii the hero of the Socialist Revolutionaries.

... like a meteor, and disappeared, leaving nothing much else behind him than a vague sense of uneasiness.”<sup>267</sup> Sirin might have disappeared, but he, together with other fellow emigrants, left behind a *tvorchestvo* that serves today as a source of research of that Russian community known as Russia Abroad. Happily enough, Sirin as several others saw, unlike Luzhin, the solution in the written word.

#### 4.7 Conclusion

I started this chapter on *tvorchestvo* with a brief description about everyday émigré life in Berlin not because Berlin was the exclusive site of Russian *tvorchestvo* in emigration. Rather, whatever was thought, written and created in Berlin – as in any other Russian émigré intellectual centre – resonated across the whole Russia Abroad. I chose to link Berlin with *tvorchestvo* within the scope of this thesis, because it was in Berlin that Russian pre- and revolutionary *tvorchestvo* was very much appreciated; because the first and the most appreciated *tvorchestvo* of a young writer, the flourishing of which was the concern of the whole intellectual community, was a *tvorchestvo* created and situated in Berlin – the literature of Vladimir Nabokov-Sirin. Also, the émigré intellectual activity of the Russian philosopher of *tvorchestvo* – Nikolaï Berdyaev started in Berlin to then move to Paris – a philosophical *tvorchestvo* that eventually crossed the borders into the USSR.<sup>268</sup> As a Russian émigré concept, *tvorchestvo* was of course inherent to all Russian communities where there was writing, publishing, and creative thinking and work. It was, in fact, Paris where most of the creative writing in Russia Abroad occurred.

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<sup>267</sup> Nabokov, *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited*.

<sup>268</sup> Marlène Laruelle, ‘The Yuzhinski Circle. Rediscovering European Far Right Metaphysics in the Soviet Underground’, in *Entangled Far-Rights. A Russian-European Intellectual Romance in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Marlène Laruelle (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2018).

Together with *lichnost'* and *mission*, *tvorchestvo* formed that conceptual worldview within which the Russian emigrants set to maintain their Russian identity to prepare for a return to Russia when Bolshevism would fall, to prepare by engaging in *tvorchestvo*, a *tvorchestvo* based on Russian values: national, spiritual or Orthodox. These three concepts formed the conceptual framework within which Russian emigrants interpreted their existence, made decisions, asked questions and looked for answers. The Russian emigrants were in constant search for a meaningful existence in their exile and to link this existence to their service to Russia, its liberation and prosperity. This Russia of tomorrow, of which they dreamt about, was to be formulated and built within certain worldviews, around certain principles that would act as pillars of Russia's future greatness.

*Tvorchestvo* was both the essence of Russian emigrants' existence and of their mission in exile, as well as the means by which they tried to figure out this existential meaning and accomplish this mission. *Tvorchestvo* was the process by which they created or polished their *lichnosti* in their new status as émigré intellectuals, as well as the product of their activity in emigration either in politics, literature or publishing. *Tvorchestvo* was what allowed for this *lichnost'* to affirm itself and maintain its Russian identity. Because the Russian emigrants in exile had freedom but were devoid of any civil and political agency, *tvorchestvo* was the only outlet for their historical agency. *Tvorchestvo* was where the Russians retired from the everyday life hardships as well as the outlet through which they let the world know about their existence and contribution. When in 1934 Ivan Bunin received the Nobel Prize for Literature *tvorchestvo* was vindicated as was the purpose of Russian mission in emigration.

In the next chapter I focus on the concept of *missiia* in Russian émigré thought and settle it in Prague. Mission in emigration was what the *lichnost'* was supposed to accomplish through its *tvorchestvo*. The mission had different manifestations and different outlets, the

ending point though was always Russia, the Russia of tomorrow, new, spiritually revived and ready to share with the world the “new word.”

## Chapter 5

### 5 *Missiia* in Prague

“Russia! Who dares to teach me how to love her.” Ivan Bunin<sup>269</sup>

“We are not in exile, we are on a mission.” Zinaida Gippius<sup>270</sup>

“In the 1930s Russian Paris was rather messianic.” Vladimir Īanovskiĭ<sup>271</sup>

“[These books] are written not for a specific reading audience, but for Russia, for the world, for eternity.” Georgiĭ Fedotov<sup>272</sup>

In the previous two chapters I analysed the concepts of *lichnost'* and *tvorchestvo* in Russian émigré thought. *Lichnost'* was the creative subject-agent of history, the site of struggle against Bolshevism and conservation of Russianness. *Tvorchestvo*, on the other hand, was the process by which these creative subjects created or refined their *lichnosti* in their new status as émigré intellectuals, as well as the product of their activity in emigration either in politics, literature or publishing. *Tvorchestvo* was what made Russian émigré *lichnosti* active agents of history. The third concept completing the worldview within which the Russians emigrants lived and created in emigration is *missiia* – the mission. The mission was the task the emigration set for themselves in their service to Russia. *Missiia* had different manifestations and different outlets in emigration with the focus on Russia, its revival, salvation and conservation. There

<sup>269</sup> Ivan Bunin, “*Missiia* Russkoĭ Ėmigratsii,” Paris, February 16, 1924, <http://www.bunin.org.ru/library/missiya-russkoy-emigratsii/>.

<sup>270</sup><sup>270</sup> “*My ne v izgnanii, my v poslanii.*” This phrase is attributed by many Russian emigrants to Zinaida Gippius and Dmitriĭ Merezhkovskii. Vishniak, *Contemporary Annals. The Memoirs of the Editor*. It was eventually embraced and repeated by many in emigration. Here I cite the translation from Maria Rubins that attributed it to the poet and novelist Nina Berberova, Rubins, 3, 236.

<sup>271</sup> Īanovskiĭ, *Champs-Élysées. The Book of Memory*.

<sup>272</sup> Georgiĭ Fedotov, “*Zachem My Zdes'?* {Why Are We Here}”, *Sovremennye Zapiski {Contemporary Annals}*, no. 58 (1935).

were as many missions as there were ideological and political groups. Where there was a circle or a gathering, there was a *missiia*, or at least a task or a list of values and principles.

*Missionism* was the predicament of the Russian *lichnost'* in emigration to be accomplished through *tvorchestvo*. *Lichnost'* was the site of this mission, the one accomplishing it through its creative historical agency. Because *tvorchestvo* was the only variety of historical agency available to them, the only viable *missiia* in emigration was likewise conceptualised around *tvorchestvo*. Unlike *messianism*, an ideology going back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century in Russian thought and still employed by certain émigré groups, one in which Russia is saving the world and unveiling “a new truth,” in missionism it is the single Russian émigré *lichnost'* that is responsible for the accomplishment of the mission. *Missiia* in emigration was also conceptualised within the intergenerational conflict. In fact, *missiia* was the concept most debated over. Within each age cohort there were conflicting opinions about what constituted the task of emigration. There were several political and ideological groups that declared their missions.

In this chapter I focus on those groups that conceptualised their *missiia* around *tvorchestvo*, as the only viable outlet for their agency and the only one that could succeed. In this case, for the older generation the mission of the emigration consisted in maintaining Russianness in their *tvorchestvo*, that is, in literary creation and the creation of the image (*obraz*) of future Russia that the young emigrants, educated in the Russian and Orthodox traditions, would build once the Bolshevik regime collapsed. The young, on the other hand, did not feel any allegiance to Russia, much less the obligation to serve it. If they committed to a mission at all, this was the mission of survival in interwar Europe as emigrants and create themselves as *lichnosti* through their own *tvorchestvo*. As with the previous concepts, I set *missiia* in Prague, another capital of Russia Abroad, because one of the first ideological movements to talk about *missiia* – Eurasianism – had one of its main centres in Prague. Also,



it was the Czechoslovak government that financed Russian academic and cultural projects with the intention to educate professionals who would serve democratic Russia. I start with a brief description of Prague and the life of Russian emigrants there, to then move to a short historical excursus of messianism in Russian thought, and then finally focus on *missiia* in Russian emigration.

## 5.1 Russian Prague

With the conclusion of the First World War Czechoslovakia acquired independence to become the First Czechoslovak Republic. The new independence and the competitive domestic politics played a crucial role in the fate of Russian emigrants in Czechoslovakia. The politicians fighting for this independence, Tomáš Masaryk and Karel Kramář, eventually the president and the prime-minister of the Republic, had contacts with the Russian political and intellectual establishment prior the Revolution: the latter with the democratic and leftist circles, the former – with the conservative and monarchic ones. After the Revolution and the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, both were interested in the Russian cause, especially after thousands of Russian refugees settled in Czechoslovakia, but each acted with different tactics. While Kramář endorsed an anti-Bolshevik European military intervention alongside what was left of the White Army, Masaryk believed in democratic transformation, and that the Bolshevik regime would not hold on long and the Russian emigrants would soon return to Russia. His idea of helping the emigrants consisted in financial assistance to their education so that they would return as prepared professionals to restore Russia. Because Masaryk dominated this political rivalry and won the presidency, his idea prevailed and culminated in the comprehensive programme of financial assistance known as *Russian Action* (*Russkaia Aktsiia*).

*Russian Action* was launched in 1921 and financed hundreds of educational and cultural projects. In particular, *Russian Action* financed stipends for Russian students in either Czech

or Russian higher institutions, founded two Russian schools – one in Prague and the other in Moravská Třebová, published books and newspapers, provided pensions to Russian writers, philosophers and professors. No other country spent as much as Czechoslovakia on the Russian emigrants.<sup>273</sup> The aim of the Czechoslovak government was twofold: to train professionals for the future Russia and to promote “those émigré institutions whose cultural significance brought prestige to the host country.”<sup>274</sup> In fact, by the late 1920s Prague became the European centre of Slavonic studies.

Russian emigrants in Prague were relatively better off than in any other city across the world. While instances of xenophobia were not uncommon, the support of the president and the prime-minister meant that émigré issues were discussed at the highest level. Both Kramář and Masaryk were sympathetic to the Russian emigrants’ plight, and continued helping them from their personal funds after *Russian Action* was officially closed. For instance, the poet Marina Tsvetaeva, a recipient of the Czech pension, continued receiving it after she moved to Paris. Masaryk helped financially from his own funds the poets Zinaida Gippius and Dmitrii Merezhkovskii, and the novelist Ivan Bunin – all of them residing in Paris. The journalist Dmitrii Meisner remembered in his memoirs “the pilgrimage of the Russian emigrants” to the Kramář’s villa with the most disparate requests: personal documents, accommodation, jobs or pensions.<sup>275</sup>

At the beginning, the Russian emigrants refused to look for permanent accommodation or unpack. They spent their days checking the latest news, hoping to return home soon. Meisner called this attitude *chemodannaia psikhologiia*, literally “suitcase psychology.” After the Treaty of Rapallo and Genoa Conference in 1922, when it was becoming clearer that the return was not imminent, the Russians started to build a routine in Prague. The most challenging issue

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<sup>273</sup> Andreyev and Savický; Chinyaeva.

<sup>274</sup> Chinyaeva, 36.

<sup>275</sup> Meisner.

was to find accommodation. At the beginning, many Russians would rent rooms in a flat called *Svobodarna* in the working class district Libeň, on the outskirts of Prague. Upon arrival many would stop at the inn *Velka Hospoda* in Zbraslav, 12 km out of Prague. The philosopher Nikolai Losskiĭ remembered the so-called Zbraslav Fridays, when starting at five in the evening up to 100 people, arriving even from Prague, would gather at tables to talk, to discuss Russia's fate, read philosophical treatises or just remember the good old days.<sup>276</sup> With time the Russians joined co-operatives and built four apartment blocks, one in Strašnice and three in Praha-Dejvice. Also, in 1922 a co-operative of 80 Russian emigrants built the so-called "professors house," a block of forty-four flats, on Bučková street in Dejvice. The house was denominated "the common grave" (*bratskaia mogila*), not so much for the old age of the academicians, as for their work falling into oblivion. The majority of Russian professors kept publishing and lecturing in Russian for the sake of future Russia, while the majority of their audience remained in the USSR, making it difficult for them to pass on their knowledge and train future academicians. When it became clear that there was no Russia to go back to, Russian students "concentrated on acquiring professional skills, finding employment, and integrating into the host society."<sup>277</sup> The School of Automobiles and Tractors and the Railway Training School seemed a more suitable choice than the Law Faculty.

Nowhere in emigration were academic and cultural projects financed to such an extent as in Czechoslovakia. The Russians set up several higher education institutions with pre-revolutionary academic programmes hoping to soon return and continue the work started with the February Revolution. In 1922, the Russians opened the Russia Law Faculty "to educate the young lawyers Russia needed" under the leadership of the renowned law professor Pavel Novgorodtsev, with 255 students enrolled (in 1924 there were 488). Although the courses were

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<sup>276</sup> Nikolai Losskiĭ, *Vospominaniia. Zhizn' i Filosofskii Put'* {Memoirs. Life and Philosophical Path} (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1968).

<sup>277</sup> Raeff, *Russia Abroad*, 71.

of high quality and taught by specialists in the field and famous names, among which Novgorodtsev himself, Pëtr Struve and Nikolaï Losskiĭ, the programme did not reflect the reality and did not follow the transformation of Russian into USSR, making the degree useless. A graduate of the Faculty, eventually a *Poslednie Novosti* journalist, Dmitriĭ Meĭsner, remembered enrolling being sure he would graduate in Russia. Then followed the disillusion of the uselessness of the degree in a totally new reality. The philosopher Losskiĭ remembered how painting courses were organised for the graduating students of Law School to help them find jobs upon graduation.<sup>278</sup> There was also the Russian People's University (*Narodnyi Universitet*), founded in 1923. The University had little success as a higher education institution, failing to set up a viable programme. However, it became famous as a cultural centre for its literary historical evenings and concerts. The renowned historian Aleksandr Kizevetter alone would gather between 90 and 300 listeners at his lectures in Russian historiography. There were also the Russian Agricultural Co-Operative Institute with 57 graduates in 1922 and the Jan Comenius Russian Pedagogical Institute with 100 graduates in 1926 when it closed. All in all, by 1931 3,500 students graduated from higher education institutions, 784 of which from Russian ones.<sup>279</sup>

The cultural projects were more successful and far reaching, making of Prague the centre of Slavonic studies. These were directed towards keeping a Russian identity in emigration as well as to conserving Russian culture and history for the future. The two most important sites for preservation and study of Russianness were the Slavonic Library and the Russian Historical Archive Abroad, both founded under the auspices of the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Archive – the majority of which was donated to the USSR in the aftermath of Czechoslovakia liberation by the Red Army, – was set up with the intention to

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<sup>278</sup> Meĭsner; Losskiĭ, *Memoirs*.

<sup>279</sup> Between 1924-25 60% of all Russian students in exile resided in Czechoslovakia. Between 1922-23 the Czechoslovak government financially supported 4,464 Russia students, more than any other government. Chinyeva.

gather all documents and evidence concerning the Revolutions and the Civil War. Emigrants across all of Russia Abroad were encouraged to donate their materials. There was also the famous Professor Sergeĭ Prokopovich's Economic Bureau, set up to give an "impartial assessment" of the Soviet economy, as well as The Russian Institute – to study "all aspects of Russia." There were also the renowned Linguistic Circle within which the linguists Nikolaĭ Trubetskoi and Roman Jakobson worked alongside Czech colleagues to develop structuralism, and the Kondakov Institute for Byzantine studies, named after the academician Nikodim Kondakov.

Between 1918 and 1945 5,000 books, series and periodicals on the Russian and Ukrainian emigrations were published in Czechoslovakia. There were also the newspapers *Slaviānskaia Zaria* (*Slavic Dawn*), *Nedelia* (*Week*) then replaced by *Edinstvo* (*Unity*) and, most importantly, the literary journal *Volia Rossii*, edited by the literary critic Marc Slonim and the poet Marina Tsvetaeva, and one of the first to publish the prose and poetry of the "young." Russian cultural life was organised around the Day of Russian Culture, celebrated on Pushkin's birthday, June 6<sup>th</sup>, around the two Russian theatres – the Russian Chamber Theatre and the Prague Group of the Moscow Artistic Theatre, as well as around the concert hall Lucerna on Václav Square, where Fëdor Shaliapin sang.<sup>280</sup>

However generous the *Russian Action* was, the Russians did not like Prague and strove to leave at any occasion with a better opportunity. They did not get along with the locals and resented the rules and traditions. The Russian emigrants found it difficult or simply refused to learn Czech making it hard to integrate into the local society. The result was that they kept to themselves and spent time within their own voluntarily self-created "ghettos." Students did not assimilate with other Czechoslovak students. Meisner remembered how Russian students were easily spotted, "speaking loudly, gesticulating, dressed exotically in what was left of the army

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<sup>280</sup> Andreyev and Savický; Chinyaeva; Meisner.

uniforms.”<sup>281</sup> The Russian intellectuals found Prague provincial and dreamt about moving to Paris or Berlin. Eventually many left. The sociologist Pitirim Sorokin, the philosopher and economist Pëtr Struve, and the poet Tsvetaeva left for Paris. The linguist Nikolaï Trubetskoi moved to Vienna, while his colleague Roman Jakobson and the geographer Georgii Vernadskii emigrated to the USA. The academicians found it difficult to secure jobs and tenures.

Starting 1927, when it was clear that the Bolsheviks were standing strong and there was no return, the *Russian Action* started winding down, to close officially in 1935, after the USSR entered the League of Nations in 1934, and Czechoslovakia could not ignore the international setting. The “young” were also unemployed – the government had to prioritize the Czechoslovak citizens, after all they campaigned with a programme of independence for the Czechoslovak people. The “young” too left: either to Paris where there was hope of employment in Renault factories or farms outside Paris, or returned to the USSR “to participate in the process of growth” there succumbing to the incitement of *Smena Vekh* (*Change of Landmarks*), an ideological movement that propagandised return to the USSR and service to the Soviets.<sup>282</sup> In 1922 there were 6,000 Russian emigrants in Prague, in 1925 the number went up to 25,000, to go down to 15,184 in 1930, to then plummet to 8,000 in 1939.<sup>283</sup> Both the young and the old, disillusioned by the early hopes and promises of return, had to readjust their dreams and the *missiia* they were supposed to achieve in emigration.

## 5.2 Russian Messianism

Russian messianism or the belief and proposition that Russia “is in some way chosen for a purpose,” that is, to save the West or teach by example, goes back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

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<sup>281</sup> Meisner, 127.

<sup>282</sup> Student, ‘Russkoe Studenchestvo v Prage {Russian Students in Prague}’, *Smena Vekh* {*Change of Signposts*}, 19 November 1921; Burbank.

<sup>283</sup> Chinyeva.

When in 1453 Byzantium fell, the monk Filofei developed the messianic doctrine “Moscow, the Third Rome,” called to free and protect the Orthodox believers in Europe and to eventually reconquer Constantinople for Christendom. The second messianic doctrine, individuated by Peter Duncan, is the “Holy Russia,” portraying the Orthodox peasantry and the land, a holiness that was betrayed by the Westernising tendencies of the tsars starting with Peter I. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Slavophiles adopted the “Holy Russia” trope for their version of messianism. Here, Russia, relying on the peasant commune (*obshchina*) and its Orthodoxy and uniqueness (*samobytnostʹ*) would lead the West back to spiritual harmony and to true freedom in *sobornostʹ* (conciliarity). A later Slavophile, Konstantin Leontiev argued that Russia, imbued with the moral force of Byzantine Orthodoxy, had a global mission, that is, “to save Europe from herself.”<sup>284</sup> A version of messianism was pan-Slavism, that after 1848 argued Russia was supposed to liberate and save all Slavs and unite them under its protection. This eventually degenerated into Nikolai Danilevskii’s proposition of Slavdom that Russia would create once it destroyed the Hapsburg and Ottoman Empires and united all Slavs into one empire. Fëdor Dostoevskii’s messianism was more humane. Dostoevskii’s messianic Russia would “bring reconciliation to the European contradictions [and would] show the way out of European despair in our own Russian soul, pan-human and all-uniting.”<sup>285</sup> Duncan calls this kind of messianism, where there is Muscovy or Russia dominating over other peoples or leading them into freedom and happiness, “state-oriented messianism” or “nationalist messianism.”

The kind of messianism, where there is the people of Russia that act as a model for other nations and save both Russia and the West from autocracy and decay, is called “people-oriented messianism” or “universalist messianism.”<sup>286</sup> *Narodnichestvo* was the kind of messianism promoted by Aleksandr Herzen. Herzen, elaborating the Slavophile idea of the

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<sup>284</sup> Peter J. S. Duncan, *Russian Messianism: Third Rome, Revolution, Communism and After* (London: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>285</sup> Quoted in Duncan, 40.

<sup>286</sup> Duncan, 3.

peasant commune, turned it into the economic model that would put Russia at forefront of historical development and the fight to save the West from the morally decaying capitalism. *Narodnichestvo* promoted a revolution lead by a restricted group – the intelligentsia – in the name and through the help of the *narod*.<sup>287</sup> Bolshevism too was messianic at its core, first with the promotion of a world proletarian revolution and later leading by example of a perfect communist society.<sup>288</sup> These few examples prove Duncan's argument that messianism is a fluid term. It lent itself to multiple interpretations and conceptualisations in different historical contexts and for different purposes. More messianic versions were developed in the dissident movement and samizdat in the USSR and even more and more original in Russia after 1991. This short excursus does not do justice to messianism in Russian thought. I tried to give an overview of messianism's main tenets that made their way into the émigré thought.

The religious or political mission in Russian messianism is accomplished by either Russia – Holy or Imperial, or the Russian *narod* through their economic organisation or uniqueness. In emigration, the mission built around *tvorchestvo* – the one I will be dealing with in this chapter and thesis – is accomplished by the *lichnost'*. There is no predestination or God-sent Messiah, but there is the creative and wilful action of the *lichnost'*, the Russian emigrant. In one 1912 passage, the philosopher Nikolaï Berdiaev distinguished between messianism deriving from Messiah and missionism deriving from mission.<sup>289</sup> In emigration, rather than messianism, it is, I argue, missionism, where there is a historically defined mission to be accomplished by a *lichnost'* through its historical agency. It is no longer Russia anointed by God doing the saving, it is Russia being saved or served. From the subject of salvation Russia becomes the object to be saved by a *lichnost'*, who, in order to accomplish the *missiia*, has to perfect itself and create.

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<sup>287</sup> Malia, *Alexander Herzen and the Birth of Russian Socialism*

<sup>288</sup> Yuri Slezkine, 'The Preachers', 'The Faith', in *The House of Government. A Saga of the Russian Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

<sup>289</sup> In Duncan, 7.



### 5.3 Missionism in Emigration

One of the first to start the discussion about the *missiā* in emigration was the historiosophical movement Eurasianism. Its founders and main ideologues Nikolai Trubetskoi, Petr Savitskii, Petr Suvchinskii and Georgii Florovskii were all settled in Prague initially. Eventually only Savitskii stayed until the Soviets arrested and deported him to USSR, where he spent eleven years in concentration camps, after which he managed to return to Prague.<sup>290</sup> Russia, according to their first editorial in *Exodus to the East*, would “reveal to the world a certain panhuman truth.”<sup>291</sup> Having experienced the Bolshevik Revolution, where the *narod* finally rose up against the alien Romano-Germanic culture of the upper classes, and still going through the ordeal of the War Communism and Bolshevism, “Russia took on itself the burden of seeking the truth (*istina*) for all.”<sup>292</sup> In their second volume, Trubetskoi wrote: “Russia’s historical mission is to free the world from the power of Romano-Germanic predators” and teach them to embrace their own national cultures. At the same time, the Eurasianists rejected predestination, inevitability and historical teleology. History, for Eurasianism, “is not given, history is being created,”<sup>293</sup> history was endowed with “plasticity” and hence “open to our action.”<sup>294</sup> History is the result of wilful creative acts. Russia would tell the world the “new truth” not by the grace of God or historical inevitability. It is, indeed, Russia’s mission to unveil this “new truth,” “Russia is foreordained to a world act” but it would only happen if the Russian *narod* would consciously “affirm its national originality” (*samobytnost’*) and actively participate in this process.<sup>295</sup> Before undertaking the mission, Russia had to know itself.

<sup>290</sup> Trubetskoi moved to Vienna where he taught at the University, Suvchinskii and Florovskii moved to Paris, where the later was ordained priest of the Orthodox Church. The following publications of the Eurasianists would be printed in cities across Russia Abroad: Prague, Paris, Berlin or Sofia.

<sup>291</sup> Savitskii et al., ‘Editorial,’ in *Exodus to the East*.

<sup>292</sup> Savitskii, ‘The Turn to the East.’

<sup>293</sup> Savitskii, ‘Two Worlds.’

<sup>294</sup> Florovskii, ‘About Patriotism: the Truthful and Sinful Ones’; Beisswenger.

<sup>295</sup> Savitskii, ‘The Citizenship of Idea.’

Without a *lichnost'*, without an original national individuality (*individual'nost'*) Russia could not unveil to the world the new truthful word.

*Lichnost'* is not a given – “*lichnost'* is born in a historical process.”<sup>296</sup> Therefore, Russia-Eurasia, as a form of symphonic *lichnost'* is created historically too. Russia-Eurasia's historical mission is not predestined, just possible, to be accomplished by the *lichnost'*-individual, *sobornaia* or symphonic. It is the *lichnost'* that is behind Russia's historical mission, not a Messiah. Discovering itself, a *lichnost'* “discover(ed) itself also as a representative of a given people.” In this way *lichnost'*, on the one hand, achieved the highest ideal of a human being – self-knowledge, and on the other – uncovered its membership in a national culture and thus its sense of meaning and mission in history.<sup>297</sup> Serving one's country – the task the emigrants set themselves from the beginning, “means to understand the destiny of one's motherland and to wilfully create it.”<sup>298</sup> And because Russia's destiny was to save the world from the Romano-Germanic oppression and unveil the “new truth,” the task of the *lichnost'* was to prepare itself to serve its motherland in this mission. This was the *missiia* of the Russian émigré intellectual in exile – to acquire consciousness of their *lichnost'* as a member of the Russia-Eurasia culture, to create the new image (*obraz*) of Russia to be built when the Bolshevik regime would collapse, and be ready to serve Russia in its mission.

Concepts like “Russia's mission,” “spiritual freedom” and “Orthodox culture” (within which Russia was to be rebuilt) might seem to refer to the kind of messianism the Slavophiles developed. However, the Russia-Eurasia that in the Eurasianist programme would fulfil the mission, is a historically created entity through a centuries-long fusion of two cultures – Slavic and Turanic. Only when consciously accepted by the *narod* and intelligentsia that it is not Russia but Russia-Eurasia with a Eurasian symphonic culture, and when it would be finally

<sup>296</sup> Trubetskoi, ‘About the True and False Nationalism.’

<sup>297</sup> Trubetskoi, 74.

<sup>298</sup> Trubetskoi, ‘A the Doorstep (Reaction? Revolution?)’

ruled as an *ideocracy*, would Russia be ready to undertake the mission. It is the task of the intelligentsia to create this original national symphonic Russian-Eurasian culture to then teach it to the *narod*.

Russia's *missi̇a* as set by the Eurasianist does not come from God, but rather from the Revolution. Russia will tell the world the "new truth" that it discovered in the Revolution. The Revolution itself was, according to Florovskii, both an "objective-historical necessity" as well as a "lawful (*zakonomernyi*) result of the historical process." The Revolution was bound to happen in a country with such a long and deep cultural gap.<sup>299</sup> Because the Russian *narod* raised against the alien Western culture, it can and should now save the whole world from its oppression. Hence the task of Eurasianism "is the introduction of what happened during the Revolution into the frame of Russian and Eurasian historical tradition." The Revolution "brought an elemental (*stikhiinyi*) change in the human being"<sup>300</sup> and a new worldview. The Eurasianists were one of the first émigré movements to accept the October Revolution as an accomplished fact and argued for taking "this accomplished fact as the basis of the future work."<sup>301</sup> The Bolsheviks raised a worldwide issue – that of work and the situation of the toilers. After the Revolution "Russia is bringing Europe the "new word" – the word of proletarian revolution."<sup>302</sup> Therefore Russia's task is "the spiritual and economic emancipation of toilers." This and "the organisation of life of the distinct world Russia-Eurasia."<sup>303</sup>

What made Russia predestined with a world mission was the Revolution during which Russia learnt the "new truth." It would teach the world this "panhuman truth" though as Russia-Eurasia, as a new *symphonic lichnost'* about which the Eurasianists committed to educate the Eurasian *narody* – so that these *narody* feel as part of this *symphonic lichnost'* and take it as

<sup>299</sup> Florovskii, 'About Patriotism.'

<sup>300</sup> Suvchinskii, 'The Eternal Foundation.'

<sup>301</sup> Florovskii, 'About Patriotism.'

<sup>302</sup> Savitskii, 'The Turn to the East.'

<sup>303</sup> *Eurasianism. Declaration, Formulation, Theses.*

the basis of their national consciousness.<sup>304</sup> To be able to accomplish this, the Eurasianists, while in emigration, should educate themselves as individual *lichnosti* belonging to Russian-Eurasian culture, and to create the image of future Russia and the political programmes they would fulfil once back. By the end of 1920s, they started publishing political programmes built on their historiosophical ideology: Russia maintained the soviet territorial administrative division and the programme of social justice, but there was religion and Russia-Eurasia was an ideocracy. Eurasianism was very famous in emigration, especially among the young cohort. While the “old” considered Eurasianism an evil (*zloe delo*) and a Russian version of fascism, the “young” were very receptive of their ideas, sometime bringing these to the extreme.<sup>305</sup>

#### 5.4 The Messianism of the Young

The Eurasianists inspired some young post-revolutionary movements. The post-revolutionary movement was an umbrella-movement comprising several political and ideological movements. What they had in common was the acceptance and acknowledgment of the October Revolution and the revival of Russia within a religious worldview. The young organisation that managed to gather several hundreds of followers in emigration were the *Mladorossy* (*The Young Russians*). It was formed in 1923 at their first congress in Munich with the slogan “God, Tsar and Homeland.” Their leader, Aleksandr Kazem-Bek, propagandized a post-revolutionary monarchy, that is, a state ruled by the Romanov heir, and at the same time, a state of social justice and economic wellbeing. Here again the October Revolution was accepted as were accepted the ideals it was fought for, ideals to be pursued in the “future

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<sup>304</sup> ‘Editorial’, 1931.

<sup>305</sup> Mark Vishniak to Il’ia Fondaminskiĭ, June 23, 1928, in *Sovremennye Zapiski. Parizh (1920-1940). Iz Arkhiva Redaktsii [Contemporary Annals. Paris (1920-1940). Editorial Archives]*, Ed. Oleg Korostelev and Manfred Shrubu (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2011); Fëdor Stepun, ‘Mysli o Rossii [Thoughts about Russia]’, *Contemporary Annals*, no. 21 (1924).

renewed Young Russia.”<sup>306</sup> Many young emigrant “sons,” as their chronicler Vladimir Varshavskii called them, fell prey to the Russian nationalism (*rus skiĭ natsionalizm*) in the name of a new healthy young Russia they all believed will be soon liberated and awaiting them to conclude the national revolution (*natsional'naĭa revoliutsiia*).

The “young” cohort par excellence in emigration was the National Labour Alliance (*Natsional'no-Trudovoi Soiuz*, NTS) – they staunchly opposed the Russian liberal intelligentsia. Appeared in late 1920s in Sofia, Belgrade and Prague with their slogan “idealism, nationalism and activism,” they preached “unification of all nationally inspired young people ... on the principles of patriotism and social justice” and Orthodoxy. The “national boys” (*natsmal'chiki*) as NTS members were known, fought for a classless monarchy, but unlike the *Mladorossy*, they staunchly dismissed all Soviet ideals. Unlike *Mladorossy*, they did not just limit their activity to education of the young in spirit of Orthodoxy, patriotism and honour – they trained their members for terrorist activities in the USSR, as well as smuggled anti-Soviet literature across the border.

One of the leaders of the young post-revolutionaries was prince Iuriĭ Shirinskiĭ-Shikhmatov, cavalryman in the Imperial army turned in immigration into ideologue by day and taxi driver by night. He was the leader of the Post-Revolutionary Club in Paris where the young would gather. Shirinskiĭ-Shikhmatov preached what he called *national-maximalism*, that is, the belief in the messianic vocation of Russia.<sup>307</sup> In 1929, in one of the Eurasianist essay collections, Shirinskiĭ-Shikhmatov published an essay, where he formulated the historical mission of Russia, country of Faith and Work: the protection of all the oppressed. To be able to do that one had to “deny oneself in order to live for the others.” The slogan of the national-

<sup>306</sup> Editorial, ‘K Molodezhi {To the Youth}’; Editorial, ‘K Molodoĭ Rossi {To Young Russia}’, *Mladorossy {The Young Russians}*, February 1930, 1 edition; Aleksandr Kazem-Bek, ‘O Porevoliutsionnom Monarkhizme {About Post-Revolutionary Monarchism}’, *Mladorossy {The Young Russians}*, February 1930, 1 edition.

<sup>307</sup> Varshavskii, *The Unnoticed Generation*.

maximalists was: “Thorough self-affirmation towards self-renunciation – for the affirmation of Istina (*Truth*).”<sup>308</sup> In 1931 Shirinskiĭ-Shikhmatov started the journal *Utverzhdeniia* (*Affirmations*) “in the name of the Russia of tomorrow,” that only ran for three issues due to financial problems. His mission was to engage “both the old and the young generation united together to formulate the Russian historical Idea in its projection on the present situation.”<sup>309</sup> In the second issue of *Utverzhdeniia*, Mother Maria, poet and a Socialist Revolutionary in the past, distinguished between messianism and missionism (*missionizm*), between Messiah and mission. Every historical *narod* had its mission, but not every *narod* was messianic. Messianism as a religious concept “is the embodiment of the divine into the world.” Russian thought, Russian idea, according to Mother Maria, is a messianic idea, a religious idea, striving to embody (*voplotit'*) the idea of the Third Rome.<sup>310</sup>

These utopian political projects in which the young formulated messianic vocations for Russia had no influence in the USSR or emigration. They did not create any long-lasting, stimulating and far-reaching political theories. Historians, including Robert Johnston and Marc Raeff, agree that “the political life and especially the political thinking of the emigration were actually superficial, poor and ineffectual” and that one “could ignore this political page” of émigré life.<sup>311</sup> What is worthy of attention, though, and here everyone agrees, is the cultural heritage they left behind. In fact, by the end of the 1920s, the majority of the émigré intellectuals themselves, the “old” in particular, conceptualised their *missiia* and their service to Russia around literary, historical and philosophical creation – around *tvorchestvo*. I chose to mention these young movements because I wanted to do justice to their versions of messianism,

<sup>308</sup> Iurii Shirinskiĭ-Shikhmatov, ‘Rossiiskii Natsional-Maksimalizm i Evraziistvo {Russian National-Maximalism and Eurasianism}’, in *Evraziiskii Sbornik {Eurasian Collection}*, ed. N. N. Alekseev et al. (Prague: Politika, 1929).

<sup>309</sup> ‘Editorial’, *Utverzhdeniia {Affirmations}*, no. 1 (1931).

<sup>310</sup> Elizaveta Skobtsova, ‘Rossiiskoe Messianskoe Prizvanie’, *Utverzhdeniia {Affirmations}*, no. 2 (1931).

<sup>311</sup> Marc Raeff, ‘Recent Perspectives on the History of the Russian Emigration (1920-1940)’, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 6, no. 2 (2005): 319–34, <https://doi.org/10.1353/kri.2005.0025>; Johnston; Raeff, ‘Recent Perspectives.

and also because the “old” conceptualised the émigré creative mission precisely in reaction to these utopian projects. Many of the young were leaning towards fascism, some, under the spell of the *Smena Vekh*, returned to the USSR. The “old” started worrying that they were losing the young generation – the hope and future of Russia – to the obscurantist Eurasianists, to fascism and rightist nationalism, Bolshevism or even to denationalisation with many young Russians successfully integrating into the host societies. By the end of the first decade in emigration, faced with a young generation drifting away from all Russian and with Bolshevism taking a stronger hold of Russia, the “old” summed up their current situation, their accomplishments in emigration and their options as Russian intellectuals committed to conserve Russianness. This is when the “old” started to more clearly conceptualise the Russian émigré *missiâ* around *tvorchestvo* and tried to educate the young into it.

## 5.5 The Creative *Missiâ*

The *missiâ* conceptualised around *tvorchestvo* consisted in writing in order to conserve the original Russian national culture, and in creating the image (*obraz*) of the Russia of tomorrow. By the late 1920s, the émigré intelligentsia acknowledged that their only way to fight Bolshevism was to conserve Russianness in *tvorchestvo* and to create an ideological worldview as powerful as the Bolshevik one within which to create and envision the future of Russia. The creation of the worldview was even more pressing since the young, “feeling the impulse to create, were looking for one, and only found it in Eurasianism.” In 1930, the poet Zinaida Gippius and the SR and editor of *Sovremennye Zapiski Il’ia Fondaminskiï* (Fondaminskiï always signed with his pseudonym Il’ia Bunakov) published two essays with the title “What is the Russian emigration to do?” (“*Chto Delat' Russkoï Êmigratsii?*”), echoing

Chernyshevskii's novel *What is to be done?*<sup>312</sup> Assessing their circumstances and the resources they had available, both intellectuals agreed that in emigration they could and should write and create in the name and in service to the Russia of tomorrow, conserving in writing – in *tvorchestvo* – the Russian national values and identity, or Russianness. Taking advantage of the freedom Russian intellectuals were given for the first time in history, they were supposed to create the image (*obraz*) of the future Russia, an image the young, educated in emigration in the Russian and Orthodox traditions, would build once Bolshevism collapsed.

The poet Gippius started the discussion around the task of the emigration during the first *Zelenaia Lampa* (*The Green Lamp*) evening in 1927. *The Green Lamp* was a literary and religious circle Gippius created together with her husband, the poet Dmitrii Merezhkovskii, and to which she referred as the “laboratory for the study of the spiritual state of our emigration.”<sup>313</sup> The task of the emigration for Gippius was to learn freedom, a freedom that would eventually make its way into literature and reach Russia one day. Russian emigration was supposed to learn all the best the West could offer to then bring it to Russia in the form of literature: “One day the doors to Russia will open again, and literature will return there, God willing, with a deeper consciousness of universality.”<sup>314</sup> At one of the *Green Lamp* evenings Fondaminskii argued that the first émigré task was accomplished. The journal *Sovremennye Zapiski*, created to gather, conserve and disseminate Russian culture in all of Russia Abroad, achieved its goal: “Russian culture was safe – its roots were well set.”<sup>315</sup> Even though *tvorchestvo* in all spheres – literature, art, history and philosophy – was fundamental for the conservation of Russianness, it was not enough. In order to fight the Bolsheviks effectively, *tvorchestvo* had to be created within a certain worldview, a worldview that would set the principles and the tasks of the emigration in their fight against Bolshevism. This had to be a

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<sup>312</sup> Johnston, 84.

<sup>313</sup> Zinaida Gippius, Conversation no. 2 in *Novyi Korabl' {The New Ship}* no. 1 (1927).

<sup>314</sup> Zinaida Gippius writing under pseudonym Anton Kraiñii, “Polet v Evropu,” in Rubins, 4.

<sup>315</sup> Il'ia Fondaminskii, Conversation no. 3 in *The New Steamer*, no. 2 (1927).



spiritual “holistic worldview” (*tselostnoe mirosozertsanie*), precisely because spiritual creativity (*tvorchestvo*) was absent, according to the emigrants, in the Soviet material culture.<sup>316</sup> Hence for Fondaminskiĭ, the émigré *missiia* was first to create this spiritual worldview within which all the *tvorchestvo* was supposed to occur. Only by coming up with as powerful a worldview as the one of the Bolsheviks could the émigré *intelligentsia* Order fight them. The philosopher Fëdor Stepun agreed with Fondaminskiĭ: “our main task is the creation and diffusion of the “holistic worldview,” that would eventually uphold the whole émigré fight against Bolshevism.”<sup>317</sup>

One of the most pressing reasons to create the worldview within which then to accomplish the *missiia*, was the urge to save the “young” from denationalisation, fascism or return to the USSR, and to educate them instead in a Russian spiritual culture. In fact, both Gippius and Fondaminskiĭ set up their circles and journals to engage the young in a discussion about the meaning of the emigration and its mission. At the first *Green Lamp* evening Gippius noticed how the young rejected ideas and commonality in favour of subjectivism.<sup>318</sup> As I argued in the first chapter, rather than envisioning themselves as part of the Russian emigration and its task, the “young” relied on their *lichnost’*. To all the efforts of the old generation to engage them in discussions about what and how should they write, the young replied with the journal *Chisla* (*Numbers*), created in 1930, where they formed their own “new worldview in literature.” Rejecting politics, *Chisla* committed only to a literature seeking “the aim of life and the meaning of death.”<sup>319</sup>

The young did not want to engage in politics, that in *Russia Abroad* meant politics about Russia. They cared about life and death, about their existential meaning, about the present and not a distant future in a country they could barely remember. They were not interested in

<sup>316</sup> Il’ia Fondaminskiĭ Conversation no. 3 in *Novyi Korabl’* {*The New Ship*}, no. 2 (1927).

<sup>317</sup> Fëdor Stepun, Conversation no. 3 in *Novyi Korabl’* {*The New Ship*}, no. 4 (1927).

<sup>318</sup> Zinaida Gippius Conversation no. 1 in *Novyi Korabl’* {*The New Ship*}, no. 1 (1927).

<sup>319</sup> ‘Editorial’, 1931.

discussions about political regimes, economies and much less in participating in the creation of the image (*obraz*) of future Russia. Bewildered by the young generation's negation of politics, Gippius, writing under the pseudonym Anton Kraĩniĩ, wondered whether this rejection of politics, of the public and of society in the name of *lichnost'* was not a mere reaction to the repression of *lichnost'* in the USSR.<sup>320</sup> The young surely condemned the repression of freedom in the USSR, but their rejection of politics in emigration most probably was a rejection of the ubiquitous discussions around politics and tasks held in émigré newspapers and journals, discussions around Russia's past, Russia's present and its future, and the total rejection of their émigré present and the "questions of human existence."

The most symptomatic attempt to engage the young in a discussion about Russia's future "image" was the journal *Novyi Grad* (*The New City*), created in 1931 and edited by Il'ia Fondaminskiĩ and the philosophers Fëdor Stepun and Georgiĩ Fedotov. Once Fondaminskiĩ gave up the idea of creating a "holistic worldview" on the pages of *Sovremennye Zapiski*, he directed his energies towards creating a new journal, in which he invited everyone to create the image (*obraz*) of future Russia, the New City, that they insisted was an earthly city, and the new human being, that would create this City.<sup>321</sup> Interestingly, the young considered this project as the only viable forum of intergenerational conversation: "the only possible conversation was with the *novogradtsy* (the editors of *Novyi Grad*) – they accepted the truths of both camps."<sup>322</sup> Later, in 1935, Fondaminskiĩ also created *Krug* (*The Circle*), the philosophical-religious circle, to engage the young in spiritual and religious discussions. The

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<sup>320</sup> Anton Kraĩniĩ, 'Literaturnye Razmyshleniia {Literary Reflections}', *Chisla {Numbers}*, no. 2–3 (1930).

<sup>321</sup> In mid-1920 an "ideational conflict" occurred with the editorial board of *Sovremennye Zapiski*. One of the editors Il'ia Fondaminskiĩ and one of the contributors the philosopher Fëdor Stepun decided to create on the pages of the journal a "religious worldview" in order to fight Eurasianism and to create within this worldview the mission of the emigration. Another editor Mark Vishniak opposed the idea as unnecessary and against the task the journal committed to in the first place: to honour the ideals of the February Revolution. The conflict went on until 1928 when Fondaminskiĩ, for the sake of the journal, decided to create a brand new journal where to develop the new holistic worldview, which eventually was *Novyi Grad*.

<sup>322</sup> Varshavskiĩ, *The Unnoticed Generation*, 228.

writer and student of medicine at the Sorbonne, Vasilii Īanovskii referred to *Krug* as “the place of encounter of fathers and sons, where we discussed literature, philosophical and religious themes”. Fondaminskii himself referred to the circle as the “order of Russian intelligentsia,” echoing the nineteenth-century *Narodnichestvo*, to which Fondaminskii proudly declared to have belonged. During these *Krug* meetings, one of the participants, the writer Vladimir Varshavskii, remembered, Fondaminskii tried to instil into the young “the will to serve the ideal of truth.” Not one single member of the *Krug*, concluded Varshavskii, turned to Nazism.<sup>323</sup> All the “young” remembered in their memoirs *Krug* with affection: there were tea, sweet cakes in abundance, the huge library of Fondaminskii (taken away by a Nazi during occupation), and most importantly, there was a safe, cosy place, where the young could speak openly and defiantly, and read their literature.

The “old” were worried that many young Russians joined political organisations like *Mladorossy* and *NTZ* leaning towards fascism, and that several returned or contemplated returning to the USSR.<sup>324</sup> Also, the “old” were worried that the “young” writers in *Chisla* were only writing about death and decadence, and even more about the denationalisation of those who accepted naturalisation and assimilation into the host societies. When in their first editorial *Novyi Grad* committed to “defend the eternal truth of *lichnost*’ and its freedom” against fascism and communism, they meant to defend the young against joining these organisations or returning to the USSR, not so much the ideologies themselves. In another editorial a year later, addressed specifically to the young, *Novyi Grad* advised against settling in Europe or returning to the USSR. In both cases the young either refused the “Russian depth” or negated “their past,

<sup>323</sup> Il’ia Fondaminskii Conversation no. 3 in *Novyi Korabl’* {*The New Ship*}, no. 2 (1927); Vladimir Varshavskii, ‘Boris Vil’de’, in *Ozhidanie. Proza. Ėsse. Literaturnaia Kritika* {*Expectation. Prose. Essays. Literary Critic*} (Moscow: Dom Russkogo Zarubezh’ia Imeni Aleksandra Solzhenitsyna, 2016).

<sup>324</sup> I do not have at the moment the exact number of Russians that returned to the USSR at different stage of the emigration. However, according to Robert Johnston, under the spell of *Smena Vekh* several thousand émigrés among peasants and Cossack remnants of Wrangel’s army in Czechoslovakia and the Balkans returned to their homes in 1922-1923. Johnston, 149.

culture, god and parents.”<sup>325</sup> The focus on *lichnost’*, its creativity and freedom could be a reaction to Gippius’ observation four years before that the old generation neglected the *lichnost’* prompting the young to embrace subjectivism. In *Novyi Grad* Fondaminskiĭ and his colleagues tried to engage this *lichnost’* in the creation of the new image of Russia of the future.

*Novyi Grad* committed to becoming the outlet for the “spiritual energies” of the young. Against foreign naturalisation and return, *novogradtsy* suggested the young to “organise [their] spiritual *lichnost’*” and prepare to serve Russia. “The task of the émigré youth,” read the editorial in 1931, – “is ... to keep and develop those values that are being repressed in Russia, but without which there is no human life on earth: faith, love, freedom, respect for truth and for the dignity of the human *lichnost’*.”<sup>326</sup> The New City, the Russia of tomorrow, would be built by a new type of human being (*novyi chelovek*), and *Novyi Grad* set to create this new *lichnost’* and set its task in emigration.

The mission of the emigration, according to *Novyi Grad*, was to “create the image (*obraz*) of future Russia based on freedom, and a religious and spiritual cultural order.”<sup>327</sup> Against political activism Stepun wrote in 1938: “if emigration has a task, it is to participate in the creation of the image of Russia ... we have to all finally acknowledge our role in history and replace militant activism with spiritual activity.”<sup>328</sup> This image, however, has to be created within a certain worldview, a worldview that would inform the whole Russian émigré missionism. Hence the émigré intelligentsia had to first create this spiritual “holistic worldview” with which it would fight Bolshevism. Only with as powerful a worldview would they be able to liberate Russia from the Bolsheviks who captured it with a strong ideology. The emigration should become the “centre of fight for the liberation of Russia.” The “high level of

<sup>325</sup> ‘Editorial’, 1931; Editorial, ‘K Molodezhi {To the Youth}’.

<sup>326</sup> ‘To the Youth.’

<sup>327</sup> In case of the *Novyi Grad* this is a Christian image. Fëdor Stepun, ‘Zadachi Ėmigratsii {The Tasks of Emigration}’, *Novyi Grad {The New City}*, no. 2 (1932).

<sup>328</sup> Stepun, ‘About Freedom.’

spiritual and cultural education,” the “strong faith in émigré missionism” and the freedom the emigrants were experiencing for the first time in history, made of Russia Abroad the perfect site of struggle against Bolshevism.<sup>329</sup>

The émigré intelligentsia could not reject this mission – to liberate Russia. The emigration was part of Russia and hence participant of Russia’s mission. Russia’s national-historical idea and mission “[wa]s to affirm and defend the religious idea” and promote the new kind of Christian socialism, in which *lichnost’* was protected against Western individualism and guaranteed freedom of creation.<sup>330</sup> The spiritual mission of the emigration was already put forward by the philosopher Nikolaï Berdiaev in 1925 in the first editorial of his religious journal *Put’* (*The Path*). The Russian emigration, according to Berdiaev, had a positive spiritual mission in exile: to develop a spiritual culture for the future national-cultural revival of Russia, a revival occurring necessarily in Orthodoxy. Only within the spirituality of the Orthodox Church could Russia and the emigration overcome the separation of the exile and keep being a single united *narod*.<sup>331</sup>

This task of creating the spiritual culture and the image of future Russia, and guard these until the return, fell upon the youth and the intelligentsia. It was intelligentsia’s predicament to conserve Russianness and learn in order to be prepared to serve when time comes. The émigré intelligentsia was supposed to liberate Russia so that Russia could fulfil its historical mission: “we have to reinstate the Order – the Order of the warriors-monks ... for the liberation of Russia.” Echoing the nineteenth-century *narodnik* “going to the people,” Fondaminskiĭ insisted that “we also have to go to the *narod* – the émigré *narod* (*idti v narod* –

<sup>329</sup> Il’ia Bunakov, ‘Puti Osvobozhdeniia’ {The Paths of Liberation}, *Novyi Grad* {The New City}, no. 1 (1931); Stepun, ‘The Tasks of Emigration.’

<sup>330</sup> Fëdor Stepun, ‘Ideia Rossii i Formy ee Raskrytiia’ {The Idea of Russia and the Forms of its Unfolding}, *Novyi Grad* {The New City}, no. 8 (1834).

<sup>331</sup> Editorial, ‘Dukhovnye Zadachi Russkoĭ Ėmigratsii’ {The Spiritual Tasks of Russian Emigration}, *Put’* (*The Path*), no. 1 (1925).

*v émigrantskiĭ narod*) ... to organise it economically and culturally ... and then the emigration will become the centre of fight for the liberation of Russia.”<sup>332</sup>

If the centre for liberation of Russia was the emigration, the site of fulfilling the mission, the site, that is, where the worldview and the image of Russia were to be created, was *tvorchestvo*, and most importantly – literature. As I argued in the previous chapter, *tvorchestvo* in emigration consisted not only of literature but also of history, philosophy and journalism. In the tenth issue of *Novyiĭ Grad*, the philosopher Stepun “hoped that émigré literature will be a strong tool in the fight against the spirit of Bolshevism.” He argued that the émigré writers could overcome their solitude only if they turn their *tvorchestvo* towards “the creation of the image of Russia ... only in this way can the young émigré writer find himself and his artistic path.” Moreover, “turning away from the task that destiny entrusted us leads to the destruction of *lichnost’*.”<sup>333</sup> In other words, *lichnost’*’s survival in emigration depended on whether this *lichnost’* participated in the mission with its *tvorchestvo*. This *lichnost’* was the poet, the writer, the one whose mission was supposed to create, and through this creation to participate to that process of building a new image of Russia, and doing it within a defined spiritual “holistic worldview.”

Pëtr Savitskiĭ, geographer and one of the founders of Eurasianism, also believed that Russian emigration should engage in cultural creation because “the culture created in emigration has more chances to affirm itself in the Russian future than the one created in Moscow.” The emigration should direct its energies towards the defence of “freedom of spiritual creativity and of the individual independent creativity” by creating in those domains that are repressed in the USSR, especially in history and philosophy.<sup>334</sup> The philosopher Georgiĭ Fedotov too agreed that, unlike the military and the political groups in emigration, only

<sup>332</sup> Bunakov, ‘The Paths of Liberation.’

<sup>333</sup> Stepun, ‘Post-Revolutionary Consciousness and the Task of the Emigre Literature.’

<sup>334</sup> Savitskiĭ, ‘Russia and Emigration.’

the cultural one accomplished actual results. In an essay in *Sovremennye Zapiski* by the title “Why are we here?” Fedotov praised the emigration for its efforts to keep and develop Russian thought in exile, for conserving Russian national spirit for the future. The only viable way to serve the motherland, for Fedotov, was to create in its name, to write and research Russian philosophical thought. The Russian exiles could honour their motherland by taking advantage of the freedom they were offered for the first time in history and create “for Russia, for the world, for eternity.”<sup>335</sup>

The young writers never saw literature as an opportunity to serve Russia. They never agreed they had a duty to serve a country they barely remembered, and that was promised to them far away in a distant future. When they created their own literature journal *Chisla*, they did it to finally write about their present, the everyday life, their inner thoughts and search for existential meaning. The poet Boris Poplavskii, the pride and hope of Montparnasse, wrote in *Chisla*: “émigré literature is turned towards the human being ... and makes part of the fight for the human soul, for its freedom, to find and protect human essence.”<sup>336</sup> The same Poplavskii came up with the *Parisian Note*, a literary commitment and ideology, rather than a full-fledged literary style. According to the *Note*, literature was not supposed to serve some phantasmal future of Russia, but to focus instead on “the contemporary human being, on their internal condition and their attitude towards external events and spiritual questions.”<sup>337</sup> I covered the attitude of the young towards *tvorchestvo* in the previous chapter. For them, *tvorchestvo* was a site of self-searching and affirmation in the world and history. Rejecting politics, they rejected any calling for service or sacrifice for the future of Russia: “emigration is not the army of future Russia.” Rather, Poplavskii insisted, emigration “is but a Russian way to look at the world.”<sup>338</sup> And the young emigrants put this “way to look at the world” into prose and poetry, but they

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<sup>335</sup> Fedotov, ‘Why Are We Here?’

<sup>336</sup> Poplavskii, ‘The Hero of the Emigre Literature.’

<sup>337</sup> Terapiano, *Encounters*.

<sup>338</sup> Poplavskii, ‘Around “Chisla”.’

were looking from Montparnasse and never at Russia, but at the world, and at themselves in this world.

The “young” intelligentsia, the ones the “old” *Order* could engage in a discussion about the worldview creation and the future of Russia, did not envision returning to the USSR: “if Russia will not accept *lichnost’* and freedom we will never return to Russia.”<sup>339</sup> They enjoyed the freedom in Paris and the self-respect the West taught them. Their worst nightmare was waking up in Russia. They would never dream to trade the freedom, the poverty and hunger in Paris on food, clothes and warm apartments anywhere else.<sup>340</sup> Much less did they believe they had a duty to serve Russia: “if Russia is this eternal, unbreakable idea, it does not need these articles, these newspapers ...”<sup>341</sup> The Russia they were supposed to envision and wait to build when Bolshevism would collapse was at best a Russia in a distant future if not an imaginary Russia altogether. Youth in Paris, on the other hand, however hungry and naked, was there in the moment, and they wanted to live it and write about it. Poplavskii’s alter ego, Apollo the Abominable, “knew no past, despised the future and was always standing with his face turned towards a sunbathed landscape ... Apollo the Abominable was always and entirely in the present.”<sup>342</sup> If there was a *missiia* for the young, it was to find that *lichnost’*, carve an existential meaning for it and win it a place in the world and in history.

The idea of service to the higher cause and the common good was not unfamiliar to the young generation though. While blaming the “old” for being insensitive and unsympathetic to the plight of the “young,” the writer Vladimir Varshavskii, the chronicler of the “unnoticed generation,” argued that the “sons” always remembered the “high meaning of the Russian idea.” Although the young rejected in many instances the democratic ideals, because the old generation failed to teach them, they found ways to honour their commitment to humanity. In

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<sup>339</sup> Poplavskii.

<sup>340</sup> Ivanovskii, *Champs-Élysées. The Book of Memory*; Poplavskii, ‘Around “Chisla”.’

<sup>341</sup> Poplavskii, ‘Around “Chisla”.’

<sup>342</sup> Poplavskii, *Apollo, The Abominable*.



particular, Varshavskii praised the heroism of many Russian émigré sons and daughters who either enrolled in the French army or joined the *Resistance* and died in their fight against Nazism. In his book *Nezamechennoe Pokolenie (The Unnoticed Generation)* he listed 19 names of Russian emigrants that died fighting Nazism, adding to the list the young Vera Obolentseva, who perished in a concentration camp because she refused to collaborate and give up the names of other *Resistance* fighters, and Mother Maria, the indefatigable nun who helped the Jews in occupied Paris.

Two names in particular are familiar to the Parisians: Boris Vil'de and Anatolii Levitskii. Their memorial plaques are pinned on the façade of the Musée de l'Homme, where the two ethnologists worked and organised an underground printing house. Vil'de was one of the “denationalised” young who attended Fondaminskii's *Krug*. He was fondly remembered by many of his generation.<sup>343</sup> He left Russia when he was nine, lived in Tartu and Berlin before moving to Paris, where he took French citizenship and graduated from the Sorbonne. In his prison diary months before his execution he wrote: “Even so I love life. God, how much I love it. But I am not afraid to die. To be shot is to a certain extent the logical conclusion of my life.”<sup>344</sup> Together with Boris Poplavskii, who died of cocaine overdose in 1935, Boris Vil'de was the epitome of the young generation in Russia Abroad: fierce and fearless, talented and curious, self-searching and sacrificing. They were the generation marked by war and exile, the generation looking for existential meaning and taking any chance – drugs or fight against the evil, to finally find it.

In this chapter I looked at the *missiia* conceptualised around *tvorchestvo* and within the intergenerational conflict that occurred mostly in Paris. Again, as with the other concepts, the whole discussion moved eventually to Paris, for reasons I stated at the beginning. Here the old

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<sup>343</sup> Berberova, *The Italics are Mine*; Ianovskii, *Champs-Élysées. The Book of Memory*; Varshavskii, *The Unnoticed Generation*.

<sup>344</sup> Vil'de, *Diary and Letters from the Prison*, 76.

generation reacted to the “young”’s search for existential meaning and their drifting towards fascism or communism. To prevent denationalisation, but also to reinvent for themselves a purpose after ten years of useless political fight, the “old” reconceptualised the émigré *missiia* around *tvorchestvo* and tried to engage the young in it. This version of missionism competed with several others in emigration, but only this proved a viable one given the circumstances, and the only one to have been accomplished. Russia Abroad thought, wrote, produced and published books, journals and diaries that reflect their life in emigration, that freedom they learnt, their hopes and dreams, their hardships and tears, and most importantly, their yearning for Russia.

When in 1933 the novelist Ivan Bunin received the Nobel Prize in Literature, Russia Abroad knew that its sorrows, its hopes and efforts were vindicated. In a speech in Paris in 1924, Bunin said that the émigré mission was to not give up and continue rejecting the Bolsheviks, and wait for the day of Russia’s liberation.<sup>345</sup> It was 1924 and the hope and belief that Bolshevism would collapse and they would return to Russian were still holding strong among the Russian emigrants. Only by the end of the decade would they reconceptualise the mission around *tvorchestvo*. While waiting for the liberation of Russia, the Russians in exile would create and conserve the true Russia in their writings so that one day this literature would enter a free Russia and inform its national-cultural revival.

## 5.6 Conclusion

There were as many missions in emigration as there were political and ideological movements and images of Russia these movements created. The only viable mission and the only one that succeeded was the *missiia* created around *tvorchestvo* and accomplished by the

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<sup>345</sup> Ivan Bunin, “*Missiia Russkoï Èmigratsii*,” Paris, February 16, 1924, <http://www.bunin.org.ru/library/missiya-russkoy-emigratsii/>. In 1945 Bunin was criticized by the community for having drank champagne for Stalin’s health in the Soviet embassy in Paris. Berberova, *The Italics are Mine*.

Russian émigré *lichnost'*. By merely writing about this mission, by engaging that is, in *tvorchestvo*, the Russian emigrants were already accomplishing that very mission they had set for themselves – to conserve Russian culture. At the same time, this mission gave them a sense of meaning as Russian emigrants in exile. This mission, writing about it, creating and promoting it, was the site of their identity – they kept being Russians inasmuch as they had a mission and served Russia. Unlike messianism in the previous centuries, it was not Russia saving the West, it was Russia who needed to be saved and served.

I set the émigré *missiia* in Prague, not because Prague was the exclusive centre of missionism in emigration. In fact, by the end of the 1920s the discussion around *missiia* moved to Paris to then travel in the form of articles, books speeches and letters across all of Russia Abroad. However, nowhere as much as in Prague did the hope to return linger for so long or was the agitation for military intervention more intense. It was in Prague that most Russian schools and higher education institutions were founded with the hope to prepare specialists for future Russia. Finally, Eurasianism, one of the first émigré intellectual movements to conceptualise *missiia* in emigration, had one of its main centres in Prague.

With *missiia* I conclude the analysis of the three concepts that made up the worldview within which Russian emigrants made sense of their existence and kept their Russianness. The *missiia* I talked about in this thesis is a mission not sent by God, but stemming from the historical condition of the Russians as emigrants in exile. It was both their duty and vocation to serve Russia, even from abroad, even only through the written word. And because only *tvorchestvo* made Russian emigrants active agents of history, their only viable mission was to engage in the creation of literature, history and philosophy. The site of this *missiia* was *lichnost'* and the content of this *missiia* was *tvorchestvo*. It was the *lichnost'* engaging in *tvorchestvo* that accomplished this *missiia*. And they succeeded. By late 1980s the literature, the philosophy and the history produced in emigration started to make their way into Russia and mingle with

the works published there. How these have been informing the thoughts and words of Soviet Russia and Russia today is still to be researched.

## 6 Conclusion

As the illusion of an imminent return withered away, the Russian emigrants committed to conserve their Russianness and promote Russian culture while in exile. Scattered across Europe, the Balkans, Asia and Latin America, Russia Abroad maintained a sense of belonging and identity through an array of journals, newspapers, and books that travelled across geographical and political boundaries. Russian emigrants maintained their identity, interpreted their existence, made decisions, asked questions and looked for answers within a certain conceptual framework. This was itself formed of three concepts central to Russian intellectual thought: *lichnost'* (individuality), *tvorchestvo* (creativity) and *missiia* (mission). In emigration these three were reconceptualised in conditions of despair, disillusion, but also in commitment to serve Russia even from abroad.

*Lichnost'* was the émigré Russian intellectual, the creative subject-agent of history whose predicament was to serve Russia while in exile. This service consisted in producing *tvorchestvo*, that is, literature, philosophy, history or any activity, ranging from publishing to attending poetry evenings, that would honour Russian culture. Through *tvorchestvo*, the Russian émigré *lichnost'* was accomplishing its *missiia* – conserving Russianness and promoting Russian culture. In emigration *lichnost'*, *tvorchestvo* and *missiia* were conceptualised within the intergenerational debate. The old generation relied on strong Russian identities, on memories and past glory. The young one, on the other hand, grew up formed by the traumas of war, revolution and exile. Uprooted, disillusioned and lost, the Montparnasse poets did not share the sense of service the parents tried to instil.

Drawing on past meanings and contexts of conceptualisation, *lichnost'* in emigration acquired freedom but lost the Russian soil (*pochva*) whence it drew its energies. It had to rely on the national culture and the Russian word. *Lichnost'* had to reshape itself in emigration in order to be able to maintain that Russianness and loyalty to the motherland. *Lichnost'* in

Russian émigré thought was the creative agent-subject of history, the one that through its creative agency was either engaged in self-reflection as in the case of the young, or involved in crafting the image of the Russia of tomorrow as in the case of the old. *Lichnost'* was the site of *tvorchestvo*, that is, of the only possible historical agency of the Russians in emigration, where, devoid of any political or civic agency, they could only turn to literature, philosophy and history. *Lichnost'* was also the agent behind the *missiia*, that was to be accomplished through *tvorchestvo* – it was in their writing that the Russians could conserve their Russianness for the future generations, for the ones that would return to a free Russia.

With the Russian émigré community scattered across the world *lichnost'* became the only site of struggle against Bolshevism. In this capacity it was up to *lichnost'* to *know itself*, devise the image (*obraz*) of the new Russia and direct its *tvorchestvo* towards the fulfilment of the mission: conserve Russianness, fight Bolshevism and unveil the “new truth.” Devoid of a citizenship and a nation, left with only the status of “refugee,” it was to *lichnost'* that the Russian turned to (re)construct their dignity, their agency and meaningful existence. While the “young” were trying find themselves and assert themselves, and gain acknowledgment as creative *lichnosti*, as self-respected emigrants and citizens of a new world, the “old” were busy shaping these *lichnosti* to better serve the Russia of tomorrow.

Combining in its meaning strands of the metaphysical, aesthetic and religious nineteenth-century content, *tvorchestvo* in emigration did not only refer to creative and original activity. *Tvorchestvo* was both the essence of Russian emigrants' existence and of their mission in exile, as well as the means by which they tried to figure out this existential meaning and accomplish this mission. *Tvorchestvo* was the process by which they created or polished their *lichnosti* in their new status as émigré intellectuals, as well as the product of their activity in emigration either in politics, literature or publishing. *Tvorchestvo* was what allowed for this *lichnost'* to affirm itself and maintain its Russian identity. Because the Russian emigrants in

exile had freedom but were devoid of any political agency, *tvorchestvo* was the only outlet for their historical agency. While the old generation saw *tvorchestvo* as a way to conserve Russian culture and thus serve Russia, for the young *tvorchestvo* was a site for self-perfection and search for existential meaning. The Russian emigrants were in constant search for a meaningful existence in their exile and to link this existence to the service to Russia, its liberation and prosperity. They found this meaning in the written word of which they left an abundant account, a word that contains answers and the leads to more questions.

The Russian émigré *missiia* stemmed from missionism, rather than messianism, that is, there was no predestination or God-sent Messiah, but there was the creative and wilful action of the *lichnost'* accomplishing the mission. There were as many missions in emigration as there were political and ideological movements and images of Russia that these movements created. Because *tvorchestvo* was the only variety of historical agency available to them, the only viable *missiia* in emigration was likewise conceptualised around *tvorchestvo*. By merely writing about mission, by engaging that is, in *tvorchestvo*, the Russian emigrants were already accomplishing that very mission they had set for themselves – to conserve Russian culture. At the same time, this mission gave them a sense of meaning as Russian emigrants in exile. This mission, writing about it, creating and promoting it, was the site of their identity – they kept being Russians inasmuch as they had a mission and served Russia.

Unlike messianism in the previous centuries, it was not Russia saving the West, it was Russia who needed to be saved and served. The *missiia* I talk about in this thesis is a mission not sent by God, but stemming from the historical condition of the Russians as emigrants in exile. It was both their duty and vocation to serve Russia, even from abroad, even only through the written word. And they succeeded. By the late 1980s the thoughts and words, the ideas and images, thought and spoken, written and published in emigration, started to make their way into Russia and mingle with the thoughts and words published there. Whether these brought

with them freedom, as the poet Zinaida Gippius hoped, is yet to be seen. But there is hope. The émigré works are there and open. After all it is about the conceptual framework within which these would be read and interpreted.

I hope this short research contributes to an understanding of Russia Abroad from a different perspective. I believe that the reconstruction of the conceptual framework within which the Russian emigrants lived and produced their writing offers a deeper and wider reading of the literary, philosophical and historiographical production of the Russian émigré community. The thoughts and words, the ideas and the images of Russia Aboard were ideologically, politically and conceptually loaded. Unveiling the historical constructiveness of this framework gives a clearer glimpse into that “mystery-wrapped enigma” that Russian thought is. Additionally, this research contributes to a certain extent to the study of *lichnost'*, *tvorchestvo* and *missiia* as concepts central to Russian intellectual thought. Just as Russian émigré intellectuals relied on past meanings that these concepts had been carrying for the previous centuries, so the new meanings acquired in emigration would be relied upon in future intellectual work. This thesis clarifies the historical circumstances within which the three concepts acquired their new meanings, motives and intentions in the writing of the Russian emigrants, meanings and intentions that then went on informing the Soviet intellectual thought and the current intellectual discourses in Russia.

At least up until the 1930s, when Stalin strengthened the border controls, people and hence concepts and ideas crossed back and forth between the USSR and Russia Abroad.<sup>346</sup> The USSR, for instance, acquired several issues of *Sovremennye Zapiski*, the most important and popular thick journal of the emigration, during the 19 years of its existence.<sup>347</sup> In the 1960s, the exchange of ideas resumed with some Soviet intellectuals travelling abroad as well as

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<sup>346</sup> Raeff, *Russia Abroad*.

<sup>347</sup> According to Vishniak Moscow bought the journal for all 19 years, sometimes up to 25 copies. Vishniak, *Contemporary Annals. The Memoirs of the Editor*.



through correspondence. By the late 1980s, with Mikhail Gorbachev's *Glasnost*, the works published in emigration started to make their way into Russia.<sup>348</sup> Closed borders notwithstanding, ideas and concepts found a way to cross the borders back and forth and mutually inform their conceptualisation and constant reconceptualization. A historical comparative analysis of the Russian émigré thought and Soviet intellectual thought would unveil, I believe and hope one day, a prolific cross-influence.

In this thesis I reconstructed the conceptual framework within which the émigré Russians made sense of what had happened to Russia and to them, built a new image (*obraz*) for the Russia of tomorrow, and most importantly, tried to create existential meaning and a dignified routine for their reconceptualised *lichnosti* (individualities). This is an intellectual history, that is, I studied the thoughts and writings of that small part of the emigration that either managed to live by word or managed to write despite the hardships of menial work. However, this history is conscious of the millions of Russians who did not leave written traces, but toiled to make ends meet and keep their dignity as human beings, either as Russian by soul and culture or naturalised. They were part of this conceptual framework even if they did not participate in building it. Or better, this framework informed their decision-making, their reading of their reality and directed their dreams, opinions and interests. While every single Russian emigrant, whatever their social position and contribution to the émigré “imagined community,” deserve to have their story told, this history is for now concerned with the concepts that made up the intellectual worldview of their daily newspaper and of the occasional poetry recital on rue Colonel Bonnet during the Green Lamp evenings.<sup>349</sup>

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<sup>348</sup> Laruelle, ‘The Yuzhinski Circle’; Marlene Laruelle and Margarita Karnysheva, *Memory Politics and the Russian Civil War: Reds versus Whites*, electronic resource (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021); Raeff, ‘Recent Perspectives on the History of the Russian Emigration’; Brian J. Horowitz, ‘The First Wave of Russian Emigration: New Perspectives Following the Fall of the Berlin Wall’, *The Slavic and East European Journal* 37, no. 3 (1993): 371–79.

<sup>349</sup> The Renault factory workers attended a poetry recital at one of the Green Lamp evenings. Terapiano, *Half-a-Century of the Literary Life of Russian Paris*.

In one of his pieces, “Montparnasse Conversations,” the writer Vladimir Varshavskii quotes the poet Vladislav Khodasevich saying “[...] the future historian will bow with love and in awe before the feat of those who I am talking about: before the talented and talentless, the smart and ignorant alike, because they are all equal in their kind and wonderful good will.”<sup>350</sup> Without any illusion of having managed to do them all justice, I wrote this history in good faith, hoping to once return to their thoughts and do better.

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<sup>350</sup> Varshavskii, ‘Montparnasse Conversations.’

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