

The Cultural Heritage of the White Russian Emigration in Istanbul* **

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The civil war in Russia caused one and a half million people to leave their homeland. The most massive exodus from Russia was across the Black Sea. Istanbul (at that time Constantinople) became almost the only possible port of destination for dozens of overloaded ships. From 1919 to 1921, the city sheltered about 200,000 civil and military refugees. Consequently, it became a very special, iconic place of memory in the history of the first wave of Russian emigration. Some White Russians immigrated to other countries immediately, others left as soon as they got their visas, and the rest – years later. In this respect, Istanbul forever acquired the status of the first vital point of the “dispersal” of Russian white emigrants to all corners of the world. This paper provides a comprehensive overview of the social and cultural life of the Russian civilians who took refuge in Istanbul from 1919 to 1930. Emphasis is placed on their self-organization and diligence in the arrangement of their new life according to their cultural traditions. Attention is paid to the changes they brought to the city’s life, such as the opening of many offices, trade, and entertainment establishments. The transformation of Istanbul into a motley center of Russian culture is discussed. A series of artistic events, such as Russian ballet, operetta, and concerts, were often attended by residents of Istanbul, who admired the musical and artistic talent of the Russians. The reader is informed about the activities of film actors, artists, and writers, who, by the whims of fate, found themselves here. The life and work of creative individuals who chose Turkey as their second homeland is emphasized. Revealing the contribution of Russian refugees to the cultural enrichment of Istanbul, it is concluded that as a result of their stay in the 1920s, Istanbul became irreversibly connected with the West. Publications of that period, state and private archives (such as press archives and archives

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of the Russian associations operating in Istanbul), and the memoirs of dozens of White Russians served as the main sources of the research.

Keywords: Russia abroad, “White” Russians in Turkey, culture of Russian emigration, cross-cultural interactions

Гражданская война в России привела к тому, что полтора миллиона человек оказались за пределами своей Родины. Наиболее массовым был исход из России по Черному морю. Стамбул (в то время Константинополь) стал чуть ли не единственно возможным портом назначения для десятков сверхперегруженных кораблей. С 1919 по 1921 г. этот город приютил около 200 тыс. гражданских и военных беженцев, вследствие чего стал совершенно особым, знаковым местом памяти в истории русского зарубежья первой волны. Некоторые из русских белоэмигрантов эмигрировали в другие страны немедленно, другие – сразу после получения визы, остальные – спустя несколько лет. С этой точки зрения Стамбул навсегда обрел статус первого жизненно важного пункта рассеяния русских белоэмигрантов по всем уголкам мира. В статье представлен комплексный обзор социальной и культурной жизни русских гражданских беженцев, нашедших убежище в Стамбуле с 1919 по 1930 г. Делается акцент на их способности к самоорганизации и основательности при новом устройстве своего быта в соответствии со своими культурными традициями. Уделено внимание принесенным ими переменам в жизни города (открытие множества контор, торговых и увеселительных учреждений). Рассказано о превращении Стамбула в пестрый очаг русской культуры. Русский балет, оперетта и русские концерты были вереницей художественных вечеров, на которые часто сходились жители Стамбула, восхищавшиеся музыкальным и артистическим талантом россиян. Даются сведения о деятельности артистов кино, художников и литераторов, волею судьбы оказавшихся здесь. Делается акцент на жизни и деятельности творческих личностей, выбравших Турцию своей второй родиной. Выявляя вклад русских беженцев в культурное обогащение Стамбула, автор делает вывод о том, что в результате пребывания белоэмигрантов в 20-х гг. XX столетия этот город со всеми новаторскими социокультурными элементами, добавленными к его космополитической структуре белоэмигрантами, стал необратимо связан с Западом. Основным источником исследования послужили издания того периода, государственные и частные архивы, такие как пресс-архивы и архивы действующих в Стамбуле российских ассоциаций, а также мемуары десятков белоэмигрантов, проливающие свет на исследуемую тему.

Ключевые слова: русское зарубежье, белоэмигранты в Турции, культура русской эмиграции, межкультурные взаимодействия

“Russia has come!” was exclaimed in the capital of the Ottoman Empire in November 1920, when 126 ships overloaded with refugees anchored one after another in the Sea of Marmara and the bay of the

Golden Horn. This was the last and largest wave that rushed to the Turkish coast after the Red Army took Crimea. The streets of Istanbul were flooded with thousands of refugees¹ from various strata of Russian society (from peasants and Cossacks to members of the royal family) and representatives of numerous nations and different political views and professions.

Occupied by Allied troops, Istanbul was going through a difficult period – high prices, poverty, and hunger reached terrifying rates [Criss]. As a result of the national liberation war under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal, which was gaining momentum, Istanbul turned into an arena of massive new flows of settlers from eastern Anatolia, Thrace, and the Black Sea region. With refugees and foreigners, the population of the city increased by 30 % and reached 2,250,000 [Solano, p. 661].

Despite the chaos that reigned, the Russians showed an enviable ability to self-organise and engage in vigorous creative activities. Their ability to become quickly involved in business life became the subject of the local media:

Russian refugees... do not run away from any work, they even work as farmers, laborers, and porters to earn their living. <...> They have to act like this in their struggle for life to settle the matter of their throats. Regarding the sheltering of Russians in Istanbul, we consider them to be resourceful. <...> Russian refugees in Istanbul immediately organized themselves into a congregation. They support, protect, and look after each other in every field. There is a fundamental solidarity between them. One sees himself as dutiful to protect another if there is an opportunity... [Ruslar ve Türkler, s. 1].

Russian expansion, so to speak, went in two directions – domestic and cultural; they intertwined, making it sometimes difficult to separate one from the other.

The Social Life of White Russians

With the arrival of Russian refugees in Istanbul, not only was social life diversified, but traditional culture was also threatened by serious convulsions [Русская «белая эмиграция» в Турции век спустя]. Everything from daily routines to eating and drinking habits, from entertainment to fashion, and even general tastes and preferences underwent a complete transformation.

¹ At a dinner party in honor of General P. N. Wrangel at the University Club of Constantinople on 4 January 1922, the Head of the Political Chancellery, S. N. Ilyin, informed that 135,000 people had arrived in November 1920: including the first two waves of White emigration, this meant that the total number of refugees in Istanbul had reached 167,000 people [General Wrangel at the University Club]. 69,000 army members were sent to military camps in Gallipoli, the Chataldja region, and the island of Lemnos [Ibid.]. 32,000 refugees were sent to Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Greece, while 30 warships of the Russian navy, with personnel of up to 6,000 people, went to Bizerte. By 24 March 1922, about 35,000 White emigrants remained in Istanbul and its environs. In September of the same year, there were 18,000. On 6 April 1926, their number was about 5,000 people [Bakar, s. 52–94].

White Russians settled mainly in the European part of Istanbul, on the western coast of the Bosphorus in the Beyoglu region and the neighboring Galata and Karakoy. On the main street of Beyoglu, Cadde-i Kebir (known as Grande Rue de Péra), there was the embassy of the Russian Empire, the Russian consulate, the Russian Red Cross administration, and the propaganda department of the volunteer army Osvag. In neighboring side streets, the offices of the All-Russian Zemstvo Union, the Union of Cities, the Russian post office, and the editorial office of the *Presse du soir* could be found. In Karakoy, there was a branch of the Athos monastery with house churches². All these institutions attracted refugees. They were used to make inquiries, search for a friend, and find or offer a job:

Despite the cosmopolitan character of Istanbul, the Russians, who are flocking to the city, have started to attract everyone's attention. After Turkish, Russian is becoming as common as Greek. Russians are present in every hotel, restaurant, and shop, in short, everywhere open to the public [A Russian Exodus, p. 1].

Street signs for Russian doctors, lawyers, pharmacies, and various commercial and industrial enterprises (such as shops, laundries, bakeries, vodka factories, and others) soon began to appear. Russian restaurants, cabarets, and pastry shops sprang up one after another.

In 1921, Russians owned 30 restaurants, 3 cafes, 3 pubs, and 8 crystal wholesalers in Istanbul [Deaver, s. 226]. The most popular venues of the period were the Garden Bar, the Maxim, the Big Moscow Circle, the Georgy Karpych, the Splendid, the Regence, the hotel-restaurants Novotny and Kievsky, and the cafe-confectionery Petrograd. The names were reminiscent of life in Russia. Shop windows were filled with Russian writing; it looked like a Russian city. All aspects of life in Russia were also reflected in the interiors of these businesses:

The places, with their small insignificant details, such as oil candlesticks burning in front of silver icons, murals and watercolors depicting gilded church domes, Byzantine crosses, eagles and crowns, large cans of caviar, vodka bottles, an orchestra playing in a dark corner, had a warm atmosphere reminiscent of faraway Holy Russia. The customer could suppose being in another country, in his middle-class home, miles away from the military canteens and cosmopolitan tables (cited in: [Sperco, s. 43]).

In entertainment places, everything was done in the Russian way and according to Russian traditions. Sparkling white tablecloths, silverware, crystals, and ladies in evening dresses changed the look of the entire Beyoglu, giving it a peculiar aesthetic.

² The Russian monasteries on Athos, St Panteleimon, St Andreas, and St Ilia, were located on the upper floors of ordinary residential buildings near the pier.

Russian outerwear and fur salons, fashion houses, and shoe workshops became a fashionable novelty in Istanbul. The blue-eyed and fair-haired Russian women were called *karasho*, and their fashionable clothes made a stunning impression. A short bell hairstyle was called a *Russian head* by Turkish women. It was also Russians who spread the fashion for mouches in Istanbul and invented putting perfume on embroidered silk handkerchiefs [İlbeyi, s. 68–69]. These novelties became a topic of discussion in fashion magazines of the time (Fig. 1 on a color sticker).

White Russians also brought beach fashion to Istanbul by opening their first beach business on Prince Island and Florya, a bay on the Marmara coast. Thanks to the Russians, the beaches were transformed – gender-segregated beaches were replaced by mixed-gender beaches. Beach cabins and catering in Florya were run by a few former officers from Wrangel's army and a Russian woman [Sperco, s. 79–80]. In the following years, many beaches would be operated by White Russians in Istanbul. For example, the beach in Buyukada (Prinkipo) was established and operated by Prokofiy Slita³, and the beach Kuchuksu on the Anatolian side of the Bosphorus by Alexander Nasonov.

Initially, the Russians' mixed-gender swimming and sunbathing on the beach came as a shock:

White Russians came, and things changed. People began to swim in the sea with men and women. Oh my God. A doomsday omen. It was the only topic discussed at home in those days. <...> Men and women were swimming in the sea in so-called swimsuits, a kind of sea garment that fell slightly below the knee (cited in: [Evren, s. 91–92]).

In a short period of time, the people of Istanbul, who observed the beach habits of the Russians with surprise, started to visit these beaches [İstanbul'da Deniz Sefası].

The Russians enriched Istanbul with their national cuisine and all kinds of vodka. Borsch, Kyiv meatballs, beef stroganoff, hodge-podge, cabbage pies, and pancakes became the most popular dishes. Famous were the confectionery products of the Petrograd Café, such as chocolate, pastries, pies, Easter cake, and cheese Easter cake, made in the same way as in Russia; breakfasts with rye bread, soft-boiled eggs, butter, Swiss cheese, and tea in thin glasses with cup holders were also noted [Бурнакин; Es]. There were other attractions for visitors to the Petrograd Café. It became a meeting point, a favorite place to eat, relax, and have good time, and not only for Russians but also for the intellectual elite of Istanbul. Moreover, Russians introduced the residents of Istanbul to lottery clubs. Over 400 of these clubs appeared. On average, up to 12,000 people gambled there a day.

If one was to take into consideration the variety of innovations introduced by Russian emigrants and their impact on life in Istanbul,

³ Prokofiy Evstafievich Slita stayed in Turkey, changing his name to Osman Nuri Silita and working as a building contractor.

the most profound one was made on the city's culture. As Reshad Kochu noted in the *Encyclopedia of Istanbul*:

White Russians have an important place in the cultural history of Istanbul. Most of them came from the highest and most educated circles of tsarist Russia. <...> The Turks saw noble genuine art in the restaurants, nightclubs, and cabaret theaters they opened [Koçu, s. 2625].

Beauty settled into the passive and grey life of the city – symphonic, chamber, and opera music was played, ballets were performed, and exhibitions were opened.

A Chronicle of the Cultural Life of White Russians

Classical music played an important role in the life of emigrants in Istanbul. It should be noted that there were more musicians among Russian emigrants than representatives of other types of art. We have managed to reveal 198 surnames with an indication of their profession. Among them, 79 names belong to composers, conductors, pianists, violinists, cellists, flutists, and opera singers, along with graduates of the Moscow, St Petersburg, Kyiv, and Tbilisi conservatoires.

Butnikov's orchestra, for instance, consisted of 50 people; unfortunately, it is impossible to name them. Russian musicians and entire orchestras performed in almost all major hotels, restaurants, cabarets, and theaters in Istanbul: however, their names remain unknown. Detailed information about the activities of musicians and other intelligentsia artists is available in the rare almanacs *The Farewell* and *Russians on the Bosphorus* published in Istanbul [На прощание; Бурнакин]. Furthermore, the memoirs of White Russians who stayed in Istanbul, such as Baroness Valentine Klodt von Jürgensburg⁴ (nee Verzhenskaya), Leonid Senkopopovsky, and Natalya Deleon (nee Khomyakova), contain valuable information on the subject [Deleon].

It is no exaggeration to say that the entire musical life of Istanbul in the first year of evacuation was led by the Slatin brothers: Ilya Ilyich (pianist and conductor), Vladimir Ilyich (violinist), and Alexander Ilyich (cellist). A classical concert conducted by I. I. Slatin took place in Istanbul, where Mozart's requiem was performed for the first time [На прощание, с. XLIX].

Istanbul cultural circles were also familiar with the names of the talented violin conductors Pavel Zamoulenko, Ivan Polyansky, and Christian Lashensky. With a solid musical background, Zamoulenko became famous in Istanbul as the conductor of the salon orchestra of the largest fashionable hotel, Pera Palace. The orchestra included V. Porzhitsky, A. de Matei, I. Tcharkovsky, A. Ivanov, and V. Becker. In the same hotel with the same musicians, Zamoulenko created a famous jazz band.

⁴ Baroness Valentine Clodt von Jürgensburg (1902, Grozny – 1992, Istanbul) is known in Turkey by the name of her second husband, Alexander Taskin. From 1921, she worked as a pianist in the Magic cinema: between 1923 and 1934, she served the national radio of Turkey as its first pianist.

Before his evacuation, the maestro Ivan Polyansky conducted the orchestras of major cinemas in Rostov. He devoted himself to the same activity in Istanbul and conducted, with a mastery of musical interpretation, at the Cine-Magic cinema. On the stage of the Petits-Champs Theater in Istanbul, where most cultural events of the White emigrants would be held, concertmaster Christian Lashensky led the orchestra for six years.

The salon orchestra of the second largest luxurious hotel in the city, the Tokatlian, was represented by talented musicians who had passed through solid orchestral schools in Russia. Ivan Onchik, the violinist of the orchestra, had been awarded the Romanian gold cross, first class. Alexander Sulin, the orchestra's cellist, was also highly professional. In Russia, he played in the Krylov, Amirago, and Potopchina operetta groups. He also had his own orchestra in Yerevan [Бурнакин]. Onchik, Sulin, and the orchestra's pianist Yakov Kordun created a successful trio with an extensive repertoire. The violinists Mikhail Golesko and Evgeniy Shvede are worthy of attention as well. Performing at concerts as the first violin, they worked at the Petits-Champs and the Maxim.

Russian musicians also exposed the Istanbul audience to classical piano music. One such pianist was Pavel Lunich. Lunich chose Turkey as his second homeland⁵ and continued to give brilliant concerts, playing up to a hundred pieces by classical and contemporary authors.

Composer Vladimir Drozdov, who was a professor at the Petrograd Conservatory from 1914–1917, gave brilliant independent piano concerts. He was also the composer of piano works, including three sonatas [Ibid.]. Other names to mention are Sergei Pisanko-Romanovsky, the Moscow Conservatory's professor of piano and a member of the Imperial Musical Society in Russia, and the professor of classical music Alexander Selivanov. They did not perform on the Istanbul stage but were engaged in teaching. The concerts of their pupils were among the most prestigious performances in the city.

Natalya Zhilo, a graduate of the Moscow Conservatory, also became famous for her teaching activities. She gave lectures on the art of expressive singing and gave lessons in solfeggio. At the same time, she was known as a chamber concert actress with a rich repertoire of Russian songs and romances, which she performed in a beautiful sarafan embroidered with *kokoshnik* pearls [Deleon, s. 63].

The list of Russian musicians can be continued with names of the pianist and novice composer Konstantin Nikolsky, the pianists Maria Obolenskaya, Anna Vysotskaya, and Mrs Voskoboinikova, the pianist and conductor Nikolai Vasiliev, the conductor Konstantin Stengach, the music theorists and professors Ovtcharenko and Hartmann, the violin maestro I. Volpin, V. Porzhitsky, S. Boritser, N. Korsak, V. Ovcharenko, S. Petrov, V. Podgaetsky, N. Cherepnin, F. Gilody, I. Frigman, V. Zarzhitsky, A. Petrovsky, Uglitsky, Serbulov, Herder, the Blinder family, and many others [На прощание, с. XLVIII–LII; Бурнакин].

Furthermore, Russian opera artists arrived in Istanbul in large numbers, mainly in 1920. Immediately upon arrival, an opera troupe was organized

⁵ Pavel Lunich died on 15 August 1954, at the age of 87. His grave is located in the Greek cemetery in Shishli district.

under the Italian Opera Society. The troupe's first performance took place on 4 December 1920. This was marked as the opening of the winter season of Russian opera. Anna Volina, Natalya Polyanskaya, and Alexander Sokolov often performed on the Istanbul stage. At that time, Maria Markovich, an actress of the Imperial Mariinsky Opera who performed mainly in large charity concerts, happened to be in Istanbul. However, despite the great efforts of opera singers, Russian opera did not take root. The cosmopolitan audience preferred operetta and romances, the repertoire of which was very extensive; the performances were exotic, colourful, and entertaining.

Taking this into account, the entrepreneur and soloist of the Mariinsky Theater Vladimir Smirnov opened the Parisiana cabaret theater. This is how Istanbul became a progenitor of the art of Russian émigré cabaret. Alexander Vertinsky, a big star, performed in the popular Black Rose cabaret, where Yuri Morfessi and Elena Nikitina performed as well. Chansonettes were sang in the Petits-Champs. Russian musicians played and Russian ballerinas danced in Stella, owned by Frederick Thomas, an Afro-American jazz player from Moscow. In other cabarets, Anna Tarakanova and Anastasia Polyakova sang gypsy romances and Russian songs.

Having closed the Parisiana, V. Smirnov, together with Valentina Piontkovskaya, the prima donna of the Mariinsky Theater and lyric soprano, organized a musical theater buff. Here, under the direction of A. Lyubin, they staged Offenbach's operetta *Beautiful Elena*, in which Yuri Morfessi and Alexander Polonsky also took part. Other popular operetta artists in Istanbul were Vera Burago-Tsekhanovskaya, Alexander Balaban, Nikolai Seversky, Alexander Polonsky, and G. Klarin. The latter were the members of the Davetskaya and Ardatova operetta troupe, which attracted a wide audience thanks to its rich repertoire.

Among the refugees who ended up in Istanbul, there were many artists from the Russian ballet schools and classical dancers. Becoming acquainted with classical ballet for the first time, the Turkish public was deeply impressed by the high skill of Russian ballerinas. The first meeting of the Turkish audience with classical ballet was *Scheherazade*, a one-act ballet to the music of Rimsky-Korsakov based on the collection of tales *One Thousand and One Nights*. It was staged by Nadezhdin during the 1920–1921 season at the Petits-Champs Theater with the participation of Elizaveta Gluck and Viktor Zimin [The Russian Ballet at the Petits Champs]. Zimin also prepared the choreography. The decoration was done by Nikolai Vasiliev, while the costume designer was Pavel Chelishchev. With the same line-up, *Scheherazade* was successfully staged in the two following seasons.

Throughout the winter, Istanbul nights were enlivened by Tchaikovsky. Especially the beauty of the so-called *Dance of the Gladiators* was on everyone's lips. The ballet *Salome* was dotted with oriental sounds. As if ancient Egyptian frescoes came to life to appear in Istanbul. It is not easy for us to express our feelings on paper. Words cannot describe the grace of Russian ballet. White Russians, forced to leave their homeland forever, presented ballet to Pera's nights (cited in: [Cemil, s. 72]).

The majority of the productions of the 1924–1925 season belonged to Vasily Karnetzsky, a former dancer of the Diaghilev ballet who was touring Istanbul at the time. In Istanbul, he created an independent ballet theater and formed a youth troupe, with which he performed on the Turkish stage. In most productions, Karnetzsky's partner was his talented student Marta Kruger.

Performances by a group of Russian dancers under the direction of Evgenia Vorobeva, the famous ballet master of the St Petersburg Mariinsky Theater, were also popular in Istanbul. During the period, ballet actors and dancers such as the duet of Olga Smirnova and Nikolai Tripolitov, the trio of Viktor Krukovsky and his sisters Gemma and Nadezhda, the troupe of the Cossack officer Mikhail Turpaev (dancer Kazbek)⁶, Bianka Foska, Boris Kniazev, Elena Polyakova, Tamara Obolenskaya, Olga Mechkovskaya, Mrs Strelskaya, Lantrevich, Egrikh, Horvat, German, Larionova, Lorep, Trapolly, Mr Dax, Zavarikhin, Drozdov, Gerolovich, and others drew Istanbul audiences' attention [На прощание, с. XXXIX, XLV].

By the end of 1920, most of the dancers had left for Europe and America. Among those who remained, the graduate of the St Petersburg Choreographic School Lydia Arzumanova (1897–1988), known in Turkey as Leyla Arzuman, and her student Evgenia Nanasova from Tbilisi (1915–1992) gained popularity (Fig. 1). Arzumanova was the founder of the first ballet studio in Turkey in the late 1920s. 10 years later, while continuing



1. Leila Arzuman (Lydia Crassa Arzumanova) with her students. Istanbul, 1940s

⁶ Having won fame as an unsurpassed performer of the mountain dance with daggers, Mikhail Turpaev lived in Istanbul until he was 98, dying in 1978.

work at the studio, she began to give lessons at the municipal conservatory and later created a dance school at the cultural and educational People's House. With the production of the ballet *The Forest Tale* (*Orman Masali*) composed by famous composer Adnan Saygun in Ankara in 1944, she became the first choreographer to stage a ballet composed by a Turkish composer. Over her long years of service to Turkish ballet, she brought up generations of dance performers, who learned to understand classical music and express it in the language of dance.

Moreover, some of the pioneers of Russian cinema and theater came to Istanbul. On 10 February 1920, about 20 actors and workers of Josif Ermoliev's studio were evacuated to Istanbul, among whom was Ermoliev himself. The studio artists gave several impromptu performances. Ivan Mozzhukhin in particular was inimitable in these semi-concert performances.

Earlier films by Yermoliev's studio were shown in the Russian American Cinema, which opened in March 1920. Alexander Khanzhonkov, another pioneer of Russian cinema, also opened an office. In November 1920, with the participation of actors from the Moscow Art Theater, he created the Kinofilm production company and announced costume dramas based on Turkish history to be exhibited in his cinema. In November, Grigory Libkin, in collaboration with Vera Charova, Vladimir Strizhevsky, Georgy Azagarov, and others, founded the third Russian film distribution company in Istanbul. Along with distributing earlier foreign and Russian films, filming was carried [Янгиоров, с. 48].

Drama artists had the hardest time due to the language barrier. They performed only in front of Russian-speaking audiences and were forced to look for ways to tour cities like Sofia, Belgrade, Prague, Berlin, and Paris, where White emigrants settled. Thus, the touring theater troupes began to come through Istanbul. The most striking performance was the first stage play of the Moscow Art Theater troupe, with the participation of O. Knipper, V. Strakhova, P. Sharov, N. Massalitinov, and V. Kachalov, on 11 October at the Petits-Champs Theatre. This was followed by several more performances. Dramatizations of Chekhov's stories *Forgot* and *Surgery*, along with Maupassant's *Harbor*, were presented to the public with great success [На прощание, с. L].

Among the refugees, the creative activity of artists and decorators was quite dynamic. Along with a series of colourful expositions, stage decorations, and wall paintings for entertainment establishments, they also carried out many projects on the restoration of churches and the painting of the interiors and arcades being built at that time in Beyoglu; they also restored state buildings, passages, cinemas, and the mansions of elite families in the neighboring quarters.

An important event in the cultural life of the city was the opening of an exhibition on 9 October 1921 in the gallery of the Lighthouse (Mayak) charity club. This was the first professional exhibition in Istanbul. Soon the artists united and created the Union of Russian Artists, consisting of about thirty members, among whom were Evgeny Agafonov, Tatyana

Aleksinskaya, Georgy Artemov, Konstantin Astori (real name Astafiev), Nikolai Becker, Vladimir Bobritsky, Nikolai Vasiliev, Alexander Grekov, Alexey Grishchenko (Alexis Gritchenko), Mikhail Dubinsky, Nikolai Zaretsky, Vladimir Zender, Alexander Ivanov, Vasily Ivanov, Vladimir Ivanov, Dmitry Izmailovich, Nikolai Kalmykov, Petr Kareev, Nikolai Kravchenko, Leon Muradov, Nikolai Perov, Vladimir Petrov, Nikolai Sarafanov, Rakhman Safiev, Leonid Sologub, Nikolai Uzunov, Pavel Chelishchev, Boris (Baruch) Egiz, and others [На прощание, с. XLVI; Бурнакин; Искусство и архитектура русского зарубежья].

Before its closure in October 1922, seven more expositions had been arranged in the gallery of the Lighthouse club on 40 Bursa Street. In the second half of 1922, through the efforts of Foster Stearns, the manager of the American embassy, and his wife, an art workshop was opened; another art gallery began operating in the McMahon barracks in Taksim. Here and in the halls of the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), three exhibitions were held in total, on 18 June 1922, 10 December 1922, and 24 June 1923. All of these, like those that took place in the Lighthouse club, attracted a lot of attention from the press (Fig. 2).



2. Participants of the exhibition of the Union of Russian Artists in Istanbul. June 18, 1922, McMahon barracks on Taksim [На прощание, с. XLVI]

The creativity of White émigré artists during their Istanbul period gravitated towards everyday life; often, this reflected the life of the emigrants themselves. For the most part, watercolours and oil paintings with views of the city and exotic scenes of the life of townspeople prevailed, along with interiors, still lifes, and portraits. Watercolors and oil paintings with views of the Bosphorus and the Golden Horn, as well as the historical sights of the city, melting in soft and magenta tones, were especially in demand. This was the market demand [Толстой]. Such artists as N. Becker, B. Egiz,

N. Zaretsky, and D. Izmaylovich held personal exhibitions with great success. Watercolours by A. Grishchenko were also very impressive. Here he became friends with Ibrahim Calli (1882–1860). This friendship would greatly affect the work of the Turkish artist.

By 1924, with the departure of most of the artists, the activities of the Union ceased. Those who remained in the city, such as M. Bezugly, A. Grekov, V. Ivanov, D. Izmailovich, N. Kalmykov, F. Makurin, N. Perov, V. Petrov, I. Safiev, B. Ediz, and N. Jacobson, being deprived of unity, were doomed to isolation and fulfilling occasional, often commercial, orders. Due to the lack of exhibitions, the interest of society and the press gradually faded away, which forced the rest of the group to leave in 1927. Nikolai Kluge, Nikolai Perov, Nikolai Kalmykov, Ibrahim Safiev, and Nikolai Yakobson settled in the city for good.

Nikolai Kluge (1869–1947) was a prominent figure at the Russian Archaeological Institute in Istanbul, where he served as an artist for 16 years and participated in almost all of its major events. In 1930, he became a staff member of the Istanbul branch of the Byzantine Institute of America. In the same year, he received Turkish citizenship. From 1932 until the end of his life, he restored and reinforced mosaics in the Hagia Sophia.

Nikolai Perov (1886–1963) carried out restoration work in Greek and Uniate churches. He was also responsible for the restoration of the murals of the St Stephen church in 1927. In the same year, at the suggestion of the Turkish director Mukhsin Ertugrul, Perov became a decorator of the Istanbul City Theater, where he worked for 35 years until the end of his life. At the same time, he was a member of the Turkish Artists' Society and exhibited his paintings at exhibitions. Perov was active not only in art but in social activities as well. He played an important role in the church life of the Russian colony. For many years, he was the choir master at the St Panteleimon Church; after its closure, he became the elder of the St Andrei church. In 1950, he was one of the founders (and from 1957 until he died in 1963, the chairman) of a Russian charity circle for helping refugees in Istanbul at the St Andrei compound.

To earn his living, Nikolai Kalmykov (1896–1950) designed many interiors in Istanbul and Ankara and restored frescoes of the Catholic Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Buyukdere. He first exhibited his works in 1930 at a mixed exhibition at the Galatasaray lyceum. Receiving Turkish citizenship 6 years later, the artist took the name of Nadzhi Kalmukoglu and began to sign his works with this sobriquet. In the following years until his death, he was engaged exclusively in painting, combining academic writing and the techniques of impressionism. Portraits of gypsy girls and nude models brought him great success (Fig. 3).

Ibrahim (Rakhman) Safiev (1898–1983) ended up in Istanbul at the end of the Civil War. In 1923, he graduated from the Art School in Istanbul, where he studied with the famous Turkish painter Namyk Ismail. Together they designed the interiors of several Istanbul elite buildings. Receiving Turkish citizenship in 1942, he began to sign his paintings under the name



3. Naji Kalmukoglu (Nikolay Kalmykov) and Ibrahim Safi (Rakhman Safiyev) (in a hat). Photograph by Antikalar.com

Ibrahim Safi. In 1946, he exhibited his works in a free impressionist manner, which brought him success and popularity. Between 1955 and 1966, Safi studied painting in western Europe and simultaneously held exhibitions in Geneva, Zurich, Munich, Cologne, Frankfurt, Bonn, Vienna, Rome, Paris, Marseille, and Athens. Some of them were held with the assistance of the government of the Turkish Republic. His creative activity largely contributed to the recognition of Turkish painting in the West.

About Nikolay Jacobson (1895–1964) we learn that:

The reputation of a good artist and a talented restorer of paintings and, later, ancient icons made a name for him far beyond the borders of Turkey. Antiquaries and collectors of antique icons came to him in Istanbul from large European centers with their ancient treasures. And then he did absolute miracles of art and technology (cited in [H. Б⁷., c. 5]).

Despite incredible financial and moral difficulties, Russian refugees organized literary activities [Олджай]. These activities became the most effective means of uniting and maintaining the spirit of a person in exile. Literature came to be the main source of preservation of national identity and language as the basis of Russian culture. Istanbul became the first pen test center of the literary White emigration. Here, the first literary associations of emigrants arose: the Tsargrad Workshop of Poets, the Union of Russian Writers and Journalists, and the Chekhov Literary and Art Society. All works were published in Russian publishing houses,

⁷ Nadir Bek is the pseudonym of Nikolai Khlebnikov, a former Gallipolitan and a correspondent for the newspapers *Russkaya mysl* (*Russian Thought*) and *Chasovoi* (*The Guard*) in Turkey.

such as L. Baboks and Sons, the Press, Sphinx Abroad, Russian Thought, and others. In the publishing house Russian Thought (Tunnel Square in house number 2), there was a bookstore and a library where readers were offered a wide choice of literature. The bookstores Culture, Natsevo, Zabelo, Marshak, and Chernov operated. All of them ordered works by Russian authors published abroad, as well as world classics in Russian translation, and served as libraries (Fig. 2 on a color sticker).

By 1924, the White Russians of Istanbul, having experienced a short period of prosperity, began to gradually disperse. Prague willingly received engineers, doctors, and students; Bulgaria and Serbia sheltered some Gallipolians; France, which lost a huge number of men in World War I, accepted almost anyone, but preferably those who agreed to work for the Renault factories; those who wanted to settle on land were offered to go to Argentina, with a large number of Cossacks rushing there; and bank employees and furriers went to Germany.

Before leaving the city, a group of Russian writers published the almanac *The Farewell*. Consisting of three parts in Russian, French, and English, the almanac was an attempt “to express a sense of gratitude to all those who extended a helping hand to the Russian emigrants who found themselves on the shores of the Bosphorus”:

To say Turkey was hospitable is not enough. It fraternally warmed those who had lost their fatherland. So much life-giving juice has been given to us by Turkey and its meek and heroic people, who for the first time called us *kardash* (brothers). The word *kardash* will remain in our memory forever. Accept, Turkey, our fraternal thanks and fraternal farewell! (cited in: [На прощание, с. I]).

Four years later, before his departure, Anatoly Burnakin would compile and publish the almanac *Russians on the Bosphorus*, the last major Russian publication in Istanbul.

With the expiration of temporary residence permits on 6 September 1927, Russians began to be expelled from the country. In October 1927, only 3,519 people remained in Turkey: 1,900 men, 945 women, and 664 children [Иванович, с. 41]. By 1930, only 1,400 Russians remained in Istanbul [Ibid.]. Russian Istanbul became desolated, failing to become a permanent center of White emigration.

Despite the temporary and transitory nature of the Russian stay and their material and moral difficulties, the emigres managed to create a bright center of Russian spiritual culture in Istanbul, introducing all nationalities and all segments of the population to it. It was artistic and cultural life that became the most effective means for uniting and maintaining the spirit of Russians in Istanbul. Russian Istanbul became the prototype for Russians in Berlin, Prague, and Paris.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the objective need for further study of Russian heritage in Turkey, as well as the socio-cultural influence of Russian White emigration on Turkish society. Such a culturological study is

extremely important in bringing Turkish and Russian societies closer, since its results will allow us not only to understand each other better, but also, by discovering common features, to acquire in the past a foundation for further progress.

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 of the White Russian Emigration in Istanbul



1. Fashion magazines of the 1920s:
 a – Yeni İnci (1922, No. 7, p. 2); b – Resimli Ay (1924, No. 2, p. 1)



2. Russian publishing houses and bookstores in Istanbul in the 1920s. Collage