



Russians living in the Czech Republic protesting against the war in Ukraine. Prague, Old Town Square, March 26, 2022.

PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

# RUSSIAN ANTI-WAR MOVEMENTS. THE HOPE OF EPIPHANY

by **Alexander Generalov**

**T**he war against Ukraine sank the civil society of Russia into despair. The dreams of turning the country with a centuries-long tradition of despotic power and imperialist foreign policy into a peaceful postmodern liberal democracy were brutally crushed. Alongside the tragedy of thousand Ukrainians, this full-scale invasion has meant a defeat of the Russian intellectuals, liberals, and political dissidents who had been trying for many years to persuade themselves and the outside world that the strange reality they inhabited was an inevitable part of being a transitional society. This defeat forced them out of their country. Cursed

by their compatriots as “traitors” and by some public abroad<sup>1</sup> unwilling to stand up to the criminal regime, the new Russian émigré are now trying to construct a new “Civitas Solis” in exile, a different future for themselves and their country which is supposed to rise in place of the apocalyptic darkness of the present.

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has caused an unprecedented amount of emigration. Individuals from different social strata have a shared belief that staying in a sanctioned combatant country is not a viable option. It is estimated that since 24 February 2022, around 800,000 Russians have left Russia in reaction to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.<sup>2</sup> Throughout 2022,

these individuals stormed the border crossings with neighboring visa-free former Soviet countries such as Kazakhstan or Georgia. Historically, these countries have been viewed by any of these escapees as underdeveloped and dysfunctional outposts of the prostrate empire. Now this imperialist perception has played a cruel joke against them: never could they imagine that they would be forced to ask these “little-brother nations”, who had just recently been staying in humiliating queues for job or dwelling in Moscow, for rescue and access to the conveniences which instantly became unavailable in Russia due to the sanctions.<sup>3</sup>

Many are viewing Europe and North

America as “the lands of Promise”. This was not unexpected, despite travel difficulties<sup>4</sup> and often an unwelcoming and even hostile attitude from government institutions, some sections of the local population, and even long-term resident immigrants from Russia. The latter accuse their newly arriving former compatriots of a “late reaction”, egoism, imperialism and responsibility for the war.<sup>5</sup>

**THIS NEW GREAT** exodus is not the first in Russian history; there have been several since 1917. The October Revolution stands out. Between 70,000 and 80,000 “redundant people” (so called by the Bolsheviks) settled in France alone, a country traditionally influential for the Russian Empire’s upper classes both culturally and politically.<sup>6</sup> In the period 1970–1988 about 290,800 Soviet citizens, mostly of Jewish origin, left the USSR to escape the anti-Semitic discriminatory policies in the country – predominantly for Israel and North America.<sup>7</sup> The collapse of the Soviet Union has brought economic and social devastation to the former republics, among which Russia was not an exception. In total, about 4.5 million have departed in search of a better life since 1991 using newly opened borders;<sup>8</sup> the highest rates were in 1992 and 1993 with 700,000 and 500,000 respectively.<sup>9</sup> Their reasons for leaving were mostly economical, and social, with an increasing number of political refugees since Vladimir Putin came to power and intensified the repressions against his opponents from year to year.

Throughout history, Russian emigrants have clung to their hopes for a better future. The White Émigrés established societies dedicated to discussing post-Bolshevik perspectives, and some even tried to recruit troops for military interventions aimed at overturning the communist government.

Today’s contemporary escapees may seem to be following in the footsteps of their predecessors.<sup>10</sup> However, there is a more promising outlook than ever before. The shared cause of democratic Russians leaving their homeland has led to a global movement known as “Russians Against War.” This movement has not been officially registered as a trademark, but it has become a common identifier for those

with a Russian background who hold pro-democratic views and are protesting against the war in Ukraine or involved in any anti-war movement. The name has become widely popular for organizations established in different countries.

## Before the invasion

It would be unfair to suggest that the opposition movement in exile began only after the invasion of Ukraine. Political emigration had started much earlier, as Putin’s regime gradually transformed into what it is today. Several dissidents, such as chess-star Gary Kasparov and Mikhail Khodorkovsky, a banking and later oil tycoon who was imprisoned for ten years for openly opposing Putin, moved abroad even before the annexation of Crimea and the war in the Donbass region in 2014. Both of them created oppositional political platforms. Khodorkovsky focused on internal Russian oppositional politics through his organization Open Russia, which was declared undesirable and had its Russian representation offices prohibited. It was later forced to operate abroad and after the beginning of the invasion transformed into an initiative that is now known as Kovcheg or The Ark. On the other hand, Kasparov established a think-tank called Free Russia Forum, which gathered leading Russian opposition figures several times a year in Vilnius to discuss the situation in the country.

**THE FREE RUSSIA FOUNDATION**, headquartered in Washington with European offices in Kyiv, Tbilisi, Berlin, Tallinn, and Vilnius, is another notable organization that aims to help political emigrants from Russia. Vladimir Kara-Murza, who was arrested for his anti-war statements and

**“THROUGHOUT HISTORY, RUSSIAN EMIGRANTS HAVE CLUNG TO THEIR HOPES FOR A BETTER FUTURE.”**

promotion of sanctions against Russian statesmen involved in human rights violations, is the most prominent representative of this movement.

While these cross-border organizations are essential in promoting democracy in Russia and unifying political exiles, they are not unique in their efforts. Some organizations were established within specific countries. What is outstanding with them is that they are completely horizontal democratic communities with no clear leadership or role distribution where the participants simply call themselves for “activists”. **Russie-Liberté** in France, which was founded in 2012 as a human rights movement. Its original aim was to raise awareness about the political situation and human rights in Russia. However, after the events of February 24, 2022, the organization shifted its focus to opposing the war.<sup>11</sup> Another such example is **Dekabristen** from Berlin, Germany, which was created in 2011 and has been opposed to the war since the Crimea and Eastern Ukraine invasion in 2014. The Russian oppositional exile communities of a similar model started to rise globally in 2022.

## After the invasion

Aside from the new communities, the old organizations took on new roles as anti-war movements after the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, triggered not merely by the war itself but by the mass emigration of war dissidents and later those fleeing mobilization. It resulted in one more important direction of their activity: providing help to escapees in their relocation from Russia and adaptation in the new countries of their temporary or permanent residence. Free Russia Foundation allocated resident shelters in countries like Georgia and started a project called ReForum, arranging discussion and working platforms for the activists. One of them in Tallinn, Estonia, with its own location, is widely used for lectures, seminars, language courses, concerts and other events.

**WHEN IT COMES TO** political activism, completely new communities have taken on the leading role in various countries throughout Europe and North America.



Russian against the war manifestation in Stockholm, Sweden, November 5, 2022.



Anti-war rally in The Hague, Netherlands, February 25, 2023.



SmåRodina protest in Oslo, Norway, June 4, 2023.

While affiliates of Open Russia or Free Russia Foundation have more traditional structures with multinational boards and management, these new organizations are significantly different and have a grassroots nature. They have no principal leadership and consist of volunteer activists making contributions to teamwork. This is due to a new way of thinking among contemporary dissident generations, in contrast to individually ambitious politicians and institutionalized parties that have been extremely divided due to political factions: For example, left-leaning democrats like Yabloko versus right-wing liberals from the Union of Right Forces, later known as Parnas. The new organizations are tolerant of differing views among their members and instead prefer to act on concrete agendas, without compromised leaders, based on horizontal connections and self-organization. This evolution seems to be truly promising. The horizontal structure is proven by the fact that many communities lacked any legal form for a long time and existed informally, on the basis of e-communication where participants have never had and still do not have any concrete capacity and decision-making authorities.<sup>12</sup> What follows is an outline of some of the communities, listed by the countries of the globe where Russians relocated.

## Europe

**SWITZERLAND.** The organization **Verein Russland der Zukunft (Zurich)** existed for a long time as a community without any legal form, coordinated through Telegram-messenger. It was registered as an NGO in December 2022. The focus is on anti-war activism and promoting sanctions against regime-related Russian statesmen and oligarchs and their funds in Switzerland.<sup>13</sup>

**NETHERLANDS.** **Free Russia NL** is one of the oldest communities of a new type started on January 2021 in support of the Alexey Navalny which got a new life in the beginning of 2022. Free Russia NL clearly expresses its grassroots nature. The community arranges anti-war and pro-democracy protests and actively promotes help to the escapees in their life in the

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Netherlands. The core values recite everything that a democratic Russian national stands for: democratic values, norms and approach, including free elections; human rights, including freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and association, freedom of thought and conscience; tolerance and non-discrimination; rule of law and independence of the judiciary<sup>14</sup>. The focus on tolerance is not occasional since the Netherlands has been for a long known as open to the Russian LGBT-refugees.<sup>15</sup>

**GERMANY.** **Free Russians (Munich)** started as an informal oppositional pro-Navalny community. Now it is on the way to being officially registered as an NGO. The basic goals are support of democracy in Russia, aid to Ukraine, uniting pro-democratic Russians and of course, resistance to the war. The organization has 47 active members and a powerful social media presence.<sup>16</sup> In general, the country with one of the largest Russian-speaking representations in Europe has many other communities, predominantly seated in Berlin, for example **Solidarus**. Some communities do not have any concrete names and are acting in the name of founding activists.

**NORWAY.** **SmåRodina (Oslo)** is a leading anti-war organization in that country. Originally a Navalny support group, the



Post from January 31, 2023, shared by the Telegram channel *Poliska*.



Post from January 21, 2023, on anti-war manifestation. Shared by *Poliska*.

community is one of the most active in Northern Europe. The organization is fast-growing and hosts demonstrations against the war. The community was relatively successful in targeting pressure on Russian diplomacy, which led to the Norwegian government decision to oust three Russian diplomats. *SmåRodina* is strongly oriented to collaboration with the other communities in Europa in order to be part of a wider global community of Free Russians network.<sup>17</sup>

**SWEDEN. Antikrigskommittén i Sverige “Russians Against War” (Stockholm)** unites oppositional Russians residing in Sweden. As well as sharing the same goals as many others, it is known for its hard stance against any Putin regime representation such as pro-Putin Russian diaspora communities, and uses striking visual activism and rallies to call on the Swedish government to break regime-beneficial economic ties with Russia.<sup>18</sup> The community rolls out investigations about the institutions promoting Putin-praising views in Sweden.<sup>19</sup> *Russians Against War* has recently attracted the attention of the Russian government and gained a truly unique status among all similar organizations in the West as being declared undesirable in Russia.<sup>20</sup> Another community is **Jazzik Mira** (from Russian “A little jazz of the peace”)

in Gothenburg which is active in hosting demonstrations, holding cultural events and working not only with a Russian but also a Belarusian agenda.

**FINLAND. The Democratic Society of Russian Speakers** was built in 2021. It is a community focusing on its activities in support of political prisoners. The members are not only Russian nationals but also from other countries of the former Soviet Union like Kazakhstan, with the agenda extended outside Russian politics. The organization’s good efforts resulted in Finnish President Sauli Niinistö’s appeal to the Russian government to provide Alexey Navalny with an investigation by independent doctors. The organization is eager to claim measures against the property of regime-close oligarchs in Finland.

**GREAT BRITAIN.** The country with a big number of wealthy residents of Russian

**“CZECHIA IS A COUNTRY WHICH IS TRADITIONALLY ACTIVE IN HOSTING RUSSIAN POLITICAL EMIGRANTS.”**

origin is also known as a safe harbor for many Putin regime dissidents, who have been targeted for assassinations several times by Russian intelligence.<sup>21</sup> It also has its own grassroots platform called **Russian Democratic Society**. The community was created in 2021 and is active in demonstrations – independently or in collaboration with Ukrainians.

**SPAIN.** A known community is **Russia Tomorrow** that has branches in Valencia and Barcelona. The organization deals with countering Russian propaganda in social networks as well as investigations.

**ITALY.** A community **Comunità dei Russi Liberi** is a main host of antiwar demonstrations on behalf of Italian residents with Russian background. The community is active in Milan and proclaims as its core values opposing the Putin regime and the war as well as standing for release of Russian political prisoners.<sup>22</sup>

**CZECH REPUBLIC.** A country which is traditionally active in hosting Russian political emigrants and forums for Russian anti-war and democratic initiatives, one of which took place in July 3–4, 2022. It is symbolic that the first ever Russian anti-war manifestation was Czech-related: in 1968 seven Soviet dissidents heroically walked into the Red Square in Moscow

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in their protest against the suppression by the Soviets of the so-called “Prague Spring”.<sup>23</sup> The motto from those events “For Your and Our Freedom” (Russian “За нашу и вашу свободу”) is still widely used in protests against the invasion of Ukraine. The **Prague Russian Anti War Committee** is a community of Russian speakers who condemn Putin’s aggression against Ukraine, aim to help Ukrainian refugees in the Czech Republic and to manifest their views in public.<sup>24</sup> The community was established in early March 2022.

**CROSS-BORDER COMMUNITIES.** **Vesna** (from Russian “the Spring”) is an outstanding grassroots community which is characterized by three phenomenal features: it was founded in Russia as a youth democratic movement and is currently cross-border. The community was forced into exile after having been declared extremist in Russia and operates on the basis of interconnections between activists settled in different countries (members are active in Netherlands, Czechia, Sweden and Georgia). In this regard, Vesna differs from others having real political experience inside Russia and demonstrating how a community may exist through its activists in different locations simultaneously, with no need of a classical vertical structure and management.

**NON-REGISTERED COMMUNITIES.** Some communities with the name “Russians Against War” may be traced in other countries, with no signs of legal organization and coordinated through social networks – mostly Telegram or Facebook. **Russians Against War (Polska)** is a Telegram channel informing about the anti-war activities of the Russians residing in **Poland**.<sup>25</sup> It is hard to say whether it is a community or simply an informational channel for coordination of protest activities. A Face-

book group called **Russians against war. Vilnius** arranges the anti-war activities in **Lithuania**.<sup>26</sup> There is no indication whether it is an organized community. At the same time, it must be recognized that Lithuania has provided a safe harbor for many Russian oppositional organizations – from political movements to media – which is why there may not be a high demand for any united anti-war community.

### North America

**CANADA.** **Russian Canadian Democratic Alliance (RCDA)** is a Canadian organization of “democratic Russians” residing in different cities and provinces of Canada who united in order to oppose all wars waged by Russia, including the military aggression against Ukraine, and the colonialist and imperialist mentality. It believes that Russia, like Canada, must undergo a process of decolonization; stand for equal rights for all regardless of gender, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, skin color and eye shape, physical or mental abilities; and demand that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights be observed in Russia.<sup>27</sup> There is no information on the exact period of initiation of the community. The first post on the RCDA Facebook page dated 21 October 2022 suggests that the community is recent. The openly anticolonial stance on the Russian future is quite unusual for the initiatives of this kind.

**THE UNITED STATES.** The US Russian-speaking diaspora is one of the largest and oldest in the world. There are anti-war communities both on national and state levels, each active in their own way. **Russian America for Democracy in Russia** is a federal non-governmental organization having local communities in different states around the country. On the webpage anyone may apply to be a volunteer or make a donation and so the organiza-

tion is contributed to and exists.<sup>28</sup> The **Chicago antiwar community**, founded by local activists in early 2021 in support of Alexey Navalny, hosts regular anti-war rallies and helps Ukrainians. **New Freedom of Russia** is a human rights open membership organization from Florida. Judging by the name and its human rights focus, the organization was built before the invasion. The indicative fact is that none of the acting public members has any capacity other than simply “activist” – a sign of the lack of hierarchy which is typical for this kind of grassroots community.<sup>29</sup> The state communities mentioned here are not the only ones in the country as many never registered in any form and exist as groups in social networks.

### Australia

The Australian organization **Svoboda Alliance** covers the two communities in the state of South Australia where it has existed since 2021 and in New South Wales where it was established in spring 2022. Both were founded by groups of pro-democratic Australian residents with a Russian background.<sup>30</sup> The Alliance focuses on defending human rights and strongly stands for expelling Russian diplomats from the country.

### Middle East

**ISRAEL** has a large Russian-speaking population, mostly Jewish repatriates from former Soviet republics. Many Russians of complete or partial Jewish ancestry were entitled to Israeli citizenship while staying in Russia until the invasion or mobilization due to different personal reasons. A certain number of them are oppositional activists and dissidents, mostly from cultural or media spheres, facing different kinds of political persecution in Russia. Repatriation for these people was rather the most available “fast-track” alternative of forced emigration than a



April 24, 2023 outside the Russian Embassy in Buenos Aires. Posted by the *Protest Argentina* Telegram channel.

conscious move “back to the roots”. That is why the Russian identity is still dominant among many Israeli repatriates from Russia who feel strong cultural and civic ties to their country of birth. They also try to create their own communities, the largest of which is called **Plakat** (from Russian “the Poster”). As stated in a post from its official Telegram channel, Plakat is a “liberal association” founded in 2022 with more than ambitious goals to stop the war in Ukraine, establish a liberal democracy in Russia and “politicize” Russian society. The community comes out with an open call to join the organizational board.<sup>31</sup>

### Outside the “traditional West”

It is worth saying that communities are being built not only in the traditional Western industrial countries with freedom of speech and political expression as a core value, because a poorer minority of Russian escapees succeeded in moving to these alternative countries due to severe entry restrictions in the traditional target countries. Other countries which have

visa free entry for Russian nationals or are located nearby, despite being unstable liberal democracies or not being such at all, are experiencing a greater influx of immigrants from Russia who also try to establish their anti-war or pro-democratic communities as far as it is permissible under local legal or political circumstances.

**ARGENTINA.** There are Russian anti-war communities even in the region of Latin America. Argentina, despite being the most geographically remote from Russia, has become popular among recent Russian emigrants because of visa free entry and historical generosity to immigration. Some feedback from a Russian newcomer in this country shows that anti-dictatorship sentiments based on the tragic Argentinian Peronist experience awakens a

**“GEORGIA TOOK THOUSANDS OF RUSSIANS FLEEING THE COUNTRY.”**

deep compassion in Argentinians towards democratic Russians.<sup>32</sup> The *Protest Argentina* channel in Telegram messenger with more than 100 subscribers<sup>33</sup> announces regular anti-war actions. However, there is no information that any organized Russian community has been established in this state.

**GEORGIA.** This country with its strong self-identity is admired by many Russians for its traditions of generosity and rich national culture. It is still open to travel for Russians and has no entry restrictions. Having common borders to Russia, Georgia took thousands of Russians fleeing the country, including those affected by the partial mobilization declared in the fall of 2022.<sup>34</sup> However, some Russian opposition activists were mysteriously denied entry to the country<sup>35</sup> **Russians in Batumi** is a newly created community which unites the Russians living in the city of Batumi. The scope of activities are demonstrations and help to Ukraine.<sup>36</sup> It is very likely that similar communities are present in other places. Yet the anti-war media is dominated by the branches of

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traditional organizations like the Free Russia Foundation under the leadership of the long-term resident and democratic activist Yegor Kuroptev or Kovcheg.

**TURKEY.** The most desired beach tourist paradise among the Russians, it was not surprising that Turkey became one of the first countries of mass emigration for them. While the USA and EU suspended direct flight connections with Russia, Turkey opportunistically extended Russia flight programs while ignoring harsh criticism for its persistent neutrality to anti-Russian sanctions, becoming almost the only affordable way for Russians to reach American and European destinations by air. Many on their “way to nowhere”<sup>37</sup> preferred staying in Turkey as relatively loyal in providing residence permits and opening bank accounts.<sup>38</sup> **Russians Against War Antalya** is an example of a Russian community opposing the war. In addition to traditional anti-war activities (aid to Ukraine, demonstrations, public events etc.) the community provides shelter to Russian escapees.<sup>39</sup>

### Properties of the communities and challenges

As we observe, the geography of Russian anti-war and democratic communities is vast and encompasses the most prominent countries of emigration since the beginning of the invasion. These societies are organized as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or exist without any legal structure, limited to an informal community coordinated through social media. Membership is open, and as a rule, these organizations lack any vertical hierarchy, except for informal activist leaders. Members have no specific capacities or authorities unless stipulated by NGO laws. Each member or supporter can equally contribute through donations or activities. While the least political among these communities proclaim no political goals regarding Russia’s political

future, most societies serve as platforms for people with different views united in common goals, such as stopping the Russian aggression in Ukraine, aiding Ukraine (including the Ukrainian army, population, and refugees), supporting Russian political or conscription escapees and political prisoners. Some communities consist of Russian-speaking members rather than being based on Russian nationality or origin. As a result, they include agendas of other post-Soviet states subject to dictatorship and involved in the war in Ukraine on the Russian side, such as Belarus.

**IT IS WORTH** to say that even those communities tied to “traditional” organizations and oppositional leaders has reshaped their structures and are operated on more horizontal principles. Kovcheg (the Ark) benefits from a huge amount of volunteers in different areas from immigration advisory to psychological aid. Reform platforms are hardly distinguishable from the new-built communities since all participants are equal in making their inputs into different activities – like demonstrations, conferences and evenings of support of political prisoners.

These qualities are significant in projecting the likelihood of these communities’ participation in Russian political life, both before the end of the war and the fall of the Putin regime and afterwards.

On the one hand, Russian opposition activists experience new forms of cooperation that deny traditional leadership and problematic political personality cults (“vozhism,” from Russian “leaderism”), uniting a wide range of political activists with entirely different views on the future of the country. Communities like Plakat in Israel openly declare the politicization of Russian society as their goal, and each member plays an active role, which can be called “proto-politicization.” This expresses the feeling and acknowledgment that only personal engagement in the

Aristotelian “common good” can bring true democracy, be a guarantee against authoritarian consolidation of power, regardless of the future borders and state structure of what is now called Russia and bring persistent peace to the surrounding parts of the Eurasian continent. A qualitative building of “a future Russian home” through such empirical politicization will not leave space for territorial expansion and aggressive foreign policy, as citizens are focused on solving the everyday internal problems of their country such as healthcare, environment, labor rights, and social justice, among others. Any ideological tensions that are, therefore, perceived as a natural condition of collective action will no longer undermine the future democratic system (or systems – if so is the judgment of history).

On the other hand, the challenges faced by these communities are not insignificant. Sanctions, imposed not only on the Russian state and its decision-makers, but also on Russian nationals, have severely restricted the movement of dissidents from Russia and hindered their ability to engage in new political practices. Additionally, the democratic societies at the grassroots level are largely unheard by national political elites, with few exceptions, such as in Finland. Unfortunately, distrust based on “suspicion of all things Russian” pervades public institutions and hampers the organizations’ ability to open bank accounts to collect donations.<sup>40</sup> Their openness also exposes them to the threat of infiltration by Russian intelligence, as the nature of the communities does not provide for clearance control policies, necessitating support and protection from authorities.

**IT IS CRUCIAL** for Western states to acknowledge that Russia is an unsafe country for political activism, and to provide political asylum to those seeking it. The absence of support or outright hostility from the governments hosting these

democratic and anti-war initiatives can lead to apathy and disillusionment among the Russian political emigrants, who may distance themselves from their home country's fate and give up on transforming it. In some non-Western countries, activists are not even allowed to form communities and are at risk of deportation if requested by Russia, highlighting the need for relocation programs granted by strong liberal democracies.

## Conclusion

Ultimately, overcoming these obstacles is essential to the success of the communities' participation in Russian political life. By offering support and protection, Western democracies can facilitate the empowerment of these groups, whose goal is to build a democratic future for Russia through politicization at the grassroots level. This, in turn, would mitigate the risk of territorial expansion and aggressive foreign policy, as citizens focus on solving internal issues such as healthcare, the environment, labor rights, and social justice, paving the way for a democratic system that can withstand ideological tensions and ensure peace in the surrounding regions of the Eurasian continent. ✖

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- 1 “It is easier for them to flee the country by leaving their wives and kids than to go and protest!”, a women in Kazakhstan lashes out. See “Не интегрируются, у них комплекс” белого человека”. Мнения жителей Казахстана и Кыргызстана о бегущих от мобилизации россиянах [“They don't want to integrate and have a ‘White Man complex’. What the Kazakh and Kirghiz people think of Russians fleeing the mobilization.] *Current Time*, September 26, 2022. Available at: <https://www.currenttime.tv/a/ne-integriruyutsya-u-nih-kompleks-belogo-cheloveka-mneniya-zhiteley-kazahstana-i-kyrgyzstana-o-beguschih-ot-mobilizatsii-rossiyanah/32052368.html>
- 2 See Margarita Zavadsкая, “The war-induced exodus from Russia: A security problem or a convenient political bogey?”, *FIIA Briefing paper* 358. March 29, 2023. Available at: <https://www.fiia.fi/en/publication/the-war-induced-exodus-from-russia>
- 3 Russia has for a long time since 1991 still been a major country for immigration from the post-Soviet republics of South Caucasus and Central Asia. The prosperous Moscow was especially desired. However, seen as a source of criminality and social insecurity, the immigrants were not always welcome by the Moscovites despite being a disposable low-cost labor for the latter. The popular note in apartment rent-out announcements was a flagrant example of racism and discrimination: “Please, slavonic people only”.
- 4 After the invasion the Baltic countries as well as Finland, Poland and Czechia introduced visa restrictions for Russian nationals motivated by the belief that Russian citizens are not welcome for visits of leisure so far the war is in progress. After the mobilization declared by Putin in September 2022 these countries not only abstained from opening the doors for Russian conscription escapees but even banned transit to other EU countries through their territories for Russians due to “security threats”.
- 5 The example of the most ardent Russian-born opponents to the new migrants are journalists Arkady Babchenko, currently refugee in Estonia and earlier refugee in Ukraine, and Ukraine-resided Ayder Muzhdabayev, both claiming that oppositional Russians are in the same degree as the Putinist majority fatally infected by “untreatable” imperialism and therefore are a threat to the democratic societies; artist and philosopher Ekaterina “Katya” Margolis residing in Venice and criticizing the Russian émigrés for narcissism and lack of empathy towards Ukraine; the UK-resided activist Andrey Sidelnikov who promotes “revenge” campaigns against exiled Russian liberal profiles – like actress Chulpan Khamatova – having an episodic collaboration with the Russian government in their background.
- 6 Natalia Starostina, “On Nostalgia and Courage: Russian Émigré Experience in Interwar Paris through the Eyes of Nadezhda Teffi”, *Diasporas*, vol. 22 (2013) *Écrire sa vie*: 38–53. Available at: [https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/536d/c36c730146556323d7d1101164bcf45aeef.pdf?\\_gl=1\\*n16w90\\*\\_ga\\*NTAwNzM2NjkyLjE2ODQ3NTMwODk.\\*\\_ga\\_H7P4ZT52H5\\*MTY4NDc1MzA4OS4xLjAuMTY4NDc1MzA5Mi41Ny4wLjA](https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/536d/c36c730146556323d7d1101164bcf45aeef.pdf?_gl=1*n16w90*_ga*NTAwNzM2NjkyLjE2ODQ3NTMwODk.*_ga_H7P4ZT52H5*MTY4NDc1MzA4OS4xLjAuMTY4NDc1MzA5Mi41Ny4wLjA)
- 7 Mark Tolts, “A Half Century of Jewish Emigration from the Former Soviet Union: Demographic Aspects”, a talk given at a seminar at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, November 20, 2019. Available at: <https://daviscenter.fas.harvard.edu/events/half-century-jewish-emigration-former-soviet-union-demographic-aspects>
- 8 Almost at the very beginning of their rule the Bolsheviks introduced restrictions on traveling abroad which in fact were never lifted until the late Perestroika period. Even a short-term business or tourist trip to a country of the Eastern Bloc required a multiple stage system of permits selectively approved by the Communist Party and KGB on the basis of applicants' social reputation, political loyalty, working class ancestry, strong family ties at home and other criteria guaranteeing their return and excluding their contacts with the “hostile” agents, not to mention permanent emigration to countries like Israel or USA that many Jews were denied in the 1970s (so-called “Otkazniki”).
- 9 O. Vorobyova and A. Grebenyuk, *Committee of Civil Initiatives, Analytical report “Emigration from Russia in the end of XX – beginning of XXI centuries*, 2016: 9 Available at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0Bwfiq8mRQgMaTh0SEJKBopfMfW5/view?resourcekey=0-VyiuLLv8ZG5DpTyHzFPPw>
- 10 Examples are the tensions between the old and new immigrants; ideological discrepancies between advocates of a united democratic Russia and “anticolonialists” standing for the country's territorial dissemination; the recent scandal with mutual accusations of collaboration with the regime between the chief editor of the oppositional radio station Echo of Moscow, Alexey Venediktov, and some of his opponents from Alexey Navalny Anti-Corruption Foundation.
- 11 “Russie-Liberté. 2012–2022. Paris, Bordeaux, Lyon”, Presentation in the I Convent of Russian Civil Communities in Europe, Prague, July 3–4, 2022. Available at: <https://www.beautiful.ai/player/-N61glqduFXvnrRVS6Qh/RL-Prague-RL-Russie-Libertes-202207>

- 12 Many such communities also have a pre-invasion background as they were created in support of the opposition leader Alexey Navalny, currently imprisoned by the regime, and his organizations like Anti-Corruption Foundation (FBK) and regional Navalny Offices which were declared extremist and liquidated by the Russian authorities in 2021.
- 13 "Russia of the Future. Experience in creation of a democratic community", Presentation in the I Convent of Russian Civil Communities in Europe, Prague, July 3–4, 2022. Available at: <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/10ZPCYpFvGqDalVxIvkTJC2paFXKoskMRdzovCTGJMjw/edit#slide=id.p2>
- 14 See Free Russians NL official community webpage: <https://freerussia.nl>
- 15 See "Dutch open doors to Russian LGBT asylum claims", NL Times, September 8, 2015. Available at: <https://nltimes.nl/2015/09/08/dutch-open-doors-russian-lgbt-asylum-claims>
- 16 "Free Russians", Presentation in the I Convent of Russian Civil Communities in Europe, Prague, July 3–4, 2022. Available at: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Vu-ebp3I3W\\_tTEuEbmOwjkcW3wqYXfB9/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Vu-ebp3I3W_tTEuEbmOwjkcW3wqYXfB9/view)
- 17 See the SmãRodina official community webpage: <https://smaaraadina.no/nb/>
- 18 Antikrigskommittén i Sverige [The Anti-War Committee in Sweden] See Russians Against War, official community webpage: <https://www.russiansagainsthewar.se/sv/>
- 19 See for example "Moskvapatriarkatets nya ortodoxa ideologi som ett stöd för Putin i kriget" ("The New Ideology of the Moscow Patriarchy as a support for Putin in the war"). Available at: <https://www.russiansagainsthewar.se/sv/russian-orthodox-church-in-sweden/>
- 20 According to Russian law, collaboration with such organizations is criminally punishable.
- 21 Unfortunately, in some cases like that of former FSB colonel Alexander Litvinenko, such attacks were successful.
- 22 See Facebook community page: [https://www.facebook.com/groups/comunita.russi.liberi/?ref=share\\_group\\_link](https://www.facebook.com/groups/comunita.russi.liberi/?ref=share_group_link)
- 23 The attempts of the socialist Czechoslovak government to carry out more Western-oriented politics challenging the Soviet dictate.
- 24 See Prague, Antiwar Committee official community webpage: [http://rusvobodaorg/?fbclid=IwAR09EZj44ivKMHjFVCJmMY\\_23qgellhNFrZzJVeMaawOAMz5WIRIJoDOeY](http://rusvobodaorg/?fbclid=IwAR09EZj44ivKMHjFVCJmMY_23qgellhNFrZzJVeMaawOAMz5WIRIJoDOeY)
- 25 See Telegram channel "Russians Against War (Polska)": <https://t.me/RussiansAgainstTheWar>
- 26 See the Facebook page "Russians against war. Vilnius": <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1334382813829444/>
- 27 See RCDA official community webpage: <https://rcda.ca/about-us/>
- 28 See RADR official community webpage: <https://democracy4russia.start.page>
- 29 See New Freedom of Russia official community webpage: <https://www.newfreedomrussia.com/members/>
- 30 Chris Zappone, "'We're not afraid': Australia-based Russians taking on Putin", *The Sydney Morning Herald*, January 4, 2023. Available at: <https://www.smh.com.au/world/europe/freedom-fighters-russians-in-australia-working-against-putin-s-imperialism-20221219-p5c7he.html>
- 31 See Telegram channel of Plakat community: <https://t.me/plakat2022>
- 32 "Карету мне, карету! 6 неочевидных стран, где россиянам все еще несложно получить ВНЖ" [I need a carriage! 6 controversial countries where Russians still may easily obtain a residence permit], *The Insider*, June 21, 2022. Available at: <https://theins.ru/obshchestvo/252183>
- 33 See Telegram channel "Protest Argentina": <https://t.me/ProtestArg>
- 34 Zviad Mchedlishvili, "Вся моя жизнь была в Тбилиси". Почему некоторых россиян – в том числе оппозиционно настроенных – могут не пустить через границу Грузии" ["All my life was in Tbilisi." Why some Russians, including oppositional, may be denied entry to Georgia], *Current Time*, February 20, 2023. Available at: <https://www.currenttime.tv/a/pochemu-nekotoryh-rossiyan-mogut-ne-pustit-cherez-granitsu-gruzii/32276501.html>
- 35 According to some evaluations (See, for instance: Francis Fukuyama and Nino Evgenidze, "Russia Is Winning in Georgia. America Needs to Get Tough on Tbilisi", *Foreign Affairs*, April 6, 2023. Available at: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/georgia/russia-united-states-winning-georgia>) the current Georgian government is classified as authoritarian and Moscow-leaning, thus not immune to some political steps favorable for the Kremlin regime. It is, however, hard to draw any direct sequence between such opinion and the entry denials, given the fact that many Russian opposition activists faced no obstacles in securing their residence in Georgia or using this country as a trampoline to Europe or North America.
- 36 See Russians in Batumi Facebook community page: <https://www.facebook.com/russiansbatumi/>
- 37 The symbolic coincidence is that a century ago, Istanbul also was the first crossing-point for the White émigrés who left their country on so-called "philosophers' ships" crossing the Black Sea between Crimea, as one of the last parts of the former Empire to surrender to the Bolsheviks during the Civil War, and the Turkish coast. The tragic journey is skillfully described by Mikhail Bulgakov in his play "On the Run".
- 38 Following the Russian aggression, leading global bank card systems like Visa and MasterCard canceled their services in Russia. Thereafter the bank cards of these systems issued by Russian banks became invalid for using outside Russia while conditions for opening accounts abroad for Russian nationals vary from country to country, in most cases requiring a national residence permit.
- 39 See Russians Against War Antalya official community webpage: <http://raw-antalya.info/#about>
- 40 Up to the time of writing, the community "Russians Against the War" in Sweden is still denied permission to open bank accounts by Swedish banks.