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**Transformation of Russian Migrants' National Identity in Istanbul in the Aftermath of WWI**

The story about the plight of Russian refugees in Istanbul after the First World War is quite known. The literature on the subject generally follows the two lines of discourse: the cultural achievements of Russian émigré[1] and a description of everyday life difficulties of refugees.[2] A few studies deal with legal questions, finances, and jazz.[3] However, the very notion of refugee was not self-evident at that time, especially if we are talking about a vivid community of a few hundreds of thousands of Russian migrants, many of whom possessed strong feelings of group identity and social ties. Becoming a refugee was a process, which implied changes in legal definitions, restructuring social hierarchy, and reevaluation of self-identity. In many cases, during this process group identities became weaker and were replaced by other forms of self-designations, which better responded to new types of survival strategies in the circumstances of displacement. My research studies the external factors, involved actors, and responses of people, which all contributed to the

[1] Jak Deleon, *The White Russians in Istanbul* (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 1995); Olcay Türkan, "Vklad Russkoi Diaspory v Kulturnuiu Jizn Stambula [Contribution of the Russian Diaspora to Istanbul's cultural life]." *International Symposium "Innovations in Russian Language, Literature and Culture Studies"*, (Plovdiv, 2006); and others.
[2] Paul Robinson, *The White Russian Army in Exile, 1920-1941* (Clarendon Press, 2002); V. Kostikov, *Ne Budem Proklinat Izgnanye [Let us not to imprecate the Exile]* (Moscow: IR, 1990); Ahmet Özgiray, "1918-1920 Senelerinde, İstanbul'un Sosyo-Ekonomik Problemleri ve Beyaz Rus Göçü", *Birinci Milli Türkoloji Kongresi, Tebliğler* (İstanbul, 1980); and others.
[3] E. I. Pivovar et al., *Rossiiskaia Emigratsiia v Turtsii, Iugo-Vostochnoi I Tsentralnoi Ievrope v 1920-h godah [Russian Emigration in Turkey, South-East, and Central Europe of the 1920s]* (Moscow: RGGU, 1994); S.S. Ippolitov, V.M. Nedbaevskii, Yu. I. Rudentsova, *Tri Stolisty Izgnaniia: Konstantinopol, Berlin, Parij [Three Capitals of Exile: Constantinople, Berlin, Paris]* (Moscow: SPAS, 1999); Vladimir Alexandrov, *The Black Russian* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2013); G. Carol Woodall, ""Awakening a Horrible Monster": Negotiating the Jazz Public in 1920s Istanbul", *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, Vol. 30, No. 3, (2010), 575-578; Charles King, *Midnight at the Pera Palace* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2014).

transformation of national identity and refugeezation of Russian migrants in post-war Istanbul. It also shows the meaning of being a refugee for the Russians in the city as well as the connection of a refugee question to the new International political order after the First World War.

**Russianness, Refugees, Constantinople**

The First World War brought to a triumph the nation-state principles as the main legitimate form for countries' political organization. The age of empires was declared to be over. For the Russian and Ottoman empires, particularly, this meant a series of wars, which aimed to define and assert national uniqueness of many ethno-social groups in their realms. The fiercest struggle in the former Russian Empire lands was for the right to define Russianness and the Russian destiny. The Bolsheviks imagined Russia younger, defiant, ambitious, and competitive. There was no place in their Russia for anyone who is discordant. Whoever was against this vision should be fought back and suppressed. The anti-Bolshevik forces were similarly irreconcilable. They all were enraged by the provocative, insolent, and violent manner of the Bolsheviks' actions and would do anything to crush their enemy. However, those who were against Bolsheviks represented many different ideological camps and their visions of Russia differed greatly. The so-called White Guards consisted of a range of parties and troops, whose ideological views extended from monarchists and adherents of the greater Russian empire, through regional leaders supporting a confederative union to fully autonomous national states. Quite often, the participants experienced disagreements and struggle for leadership inside their own camp. If there was anything able to unite them all, it was the vision of the future without Bolsheviks.

By the time when in April 1919 Baron Wrangel managed to consolidate dominant disjointed forces of the South Russian region and assume power over them, the fever of foreign anti-Bolshevik intervention went down. Britain and France started reconsidering their policy in

Russia. Changes in political configurations inside and outside France led to a hasty withdrawal of French military contingent based in Odessa and to a surrender of the city to irregular pro-Bolshevik troops. While leaving the city, French took with them a few thousand Russian administrators, soldiers, and civilians, which for the first time arrived in Istanbul as refugees.

The refugee problem was not new for Russian society. It first appeared in the Russian Empire with the beginning of the Great European war. As Peter Gatrell shows in his book *A Whole Empire Walking*,[4] in the 1915 Russian High Command deported around six million people of Jewish, Polish, Latvian, and German origin from the borderlands to the inner parts of the Empire fearing a potential collaboration of these people with the enemy. The concern about those refugees was engraved into the texture of day-to-day life of Russian society during the war years. Everyone encountered with refugees as the newspapers and non-governmental organizations tired in a routine manner to appeal to people and organize a humanitarian aid. It is important to emphasize here how Russian society understood refugeedom and how it dealt with the refugee problem. For the most part, refugees were on their own, in a perpetual movement fleeing from place to place and looking for accommodation and occupation. Public humanitarian organizations, the most important among whom was The All-Russian Zemstvo Union of Aid, just stepped towards these people trying to ease the burden of their wandering. The Zemstvo Union established feeding stations, bathing and laundry wagons along the routs of moving refugees. It also organized employment bureaus, schools, and orphanages for refugee children.[5] The key factor in supporting

[4] Peter Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005).
[5] *Kratkiĭ ocherk d͡ieĭat͡el'nosti V.Z.S. : apr͡iel' 1919 g. - okt͡iabr' 1920 g [A short Report of V.Z.S. activity: April 1919 – October 1920]* (Sofia, 1920), Leeds Russian Archive, Zemgor Collection 436.

and absorbing the masses of refugees in the interior of the Russian Empire was expanding civic activism of the Russian society.[6]

Refugeedom, however, was perceived as a temporary and inevitable by-product phenomenon of the war, which, was hoped, will disappear with the restoration of a normal life after the war end. Unfortunately, the European war evolved into the Revolution and the Civil War in Russia, which further complicated the refugee situation. Many new waves of refugees appeared as people tried to escape from the hostilities and terror of war and find more quiet angles of the Empire. Nevertheless, despite the sounding presence of refugees in the fabric of the Russian society of that time, this problem did not exceed the frames of a traditional internal dispute about nationality, belonging, and social hierarchy inside imperial Russia. Emigration and evacuation of masses of displaced Russian subjects abroad changed the meaning and advanced the notion of refugeedom to a new level, where an entire social group united by a national vision was collectively perceived as refugees.

Important, the movement of Russian subjects abroad during that difficult period not necessarily should evoke a sense of refugeedom. Istanbul/Constantinople was always a place of special interest for many Russian subjects: merchants, pilgrims, travelers frequently visited this city. Many settled there as permanent residents. A small permanent Russian colony with its own newspaper exited in Istanbul by 1914.[7] With the beginning of WWI many Russian civilians, as representatives of an enemy nation, were deported into remote parts of the Ottoman Empire. However, the documents of the Ottoman Interior Ministry show that as early as the October 1917

[6] Gatrell, 49-72.

[7] *Ustav Russkago kružka v Konstantinopolě* [*The Statute of the Russian Circle in Constantinople]* (Babok 1914), Slavonic Library, Prague.

Russian deportees started petitioning their returning to Istanbul.[8] In the March-April 1918, the communication between Istanbul and Russian Black Sea ports was restored and even before the official ending of the war Russians actively participated in the socioeconomic life of the city again.[9] After the Allies occupied Constantinople in November 1918, the developing trade relations between the city's Allied administration and South Russian government increased the involvement of Russian subjects into the city's affairs.

The evacuation of Odessa in April 1919 brought to Istanbul more than 8,000 people.[10] This fact alone, rather than being a point of transformation, just extended the sphere of official Russian interests, facilitating the communication even more. In some imperial minds, the intensification of Russian presence in Istanbul even awakened the thoughts about long-desired Tsargrad and returning Constantinople into the Russian realm.[11] After the Bolsheviks seized headquarters of many political and non-governmental organizations of the former Empire in Moscow and Petersburg, these organizations opened their branch offices in several European capitals including Constantinople to ensure correct coverage of the events in Russia and affect the moods of local residents and Russian expatriates. Thus, The Zemstvo Union opened its bureau in Istanbul around May 1919 together with its new administrative center in Ekaterinodar.[12] Leonid Alekseevich Matveev (b.1880), a representative of All-Russian National Center of the Volunteer Army, sends a letter from Istanbul to Ekaterinodar after the events of Odessa evacuation in 1919. In this letter, titled *Constantinople as one of the junctions of Russian politics*, he depicts a vivid political activity of many Russian organizations in the city: ultra-right monarchists, discredited S.R.s, patriotic

[8] Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), DH.EUM.5.Şb 46.
[9] BOA, HR.SYS. 2136, DH.EUM.SSM. 19, DH.EUM.5.Şb 57, DH.EUM.5.Şb 68.
[10] FO (The British National Archive) 608/204/2, The National Archive in London; M.S. Margulies*, God Interventsii: Kniga II [A Year of Intervention: Book II]* (Berlin: Grzhebin, 1923): 32.
[11] Kezban Acar, "Çargrad; Rus Tarihi ve Kültüründe İstanbul," *7th Turkish Culture Congress*, (5-10 October 2009).
[12] A short Report of V.Z.S., 9-10, 22-23.

Ukrainians, and Russian Zionists; and warns that the National Center too should have a branch there.[13] On May 11th, 1919 The National Center notifies Sergey Fyodorovich Shtern (b.1886), an experience Russian newspaper editor now in Istanbul, about establishing The Center's office in the city and suggest him to participate in its work and development.[14]

Since Spring 1919 injured soldiers used the city's hospitals for their rehabilitation and then moved back to the war. Many families of Russian officers fighting in the front lines against Bolsheviks considered Constantinople as a place of relaxation from the sounds and hardships of war. Letters of Iraida Barry (b.1899), Russian migrant and later a famous Turkish sculptress, show how it was easy to make a decision to come to Istanbul from Russian Black Sea shores. Her godmother sister, Elena Tchashinsky/Askov, invited Iraida in a letter dated by October 1st, 1919 to visit her in Istanbul for Christmas, to rest after exhausting events in Odessa. She even organized for Iraida free passage in a navy ship of her friends-officers and even without a need for passport routine. Elena promised Iraida to find her a place with an easy job if she is uncomfortable to rely on her sister's support in the city. Already on November 25th, 1919 Iraida headed to Constantinople. She stayed much longer in the city than just for Christmas, although she visited Sevastopol once for a short vacation before Crimea was surrendered to the Bolsheviks forever.[15] All these Russian people in Istanbul were considered by the local administration and society rather as foreigners residing abroad than as refugees. A transformation in the Allies' attitude toward the Russian problem changed the entire situation.

[13] Krovopuskov Papers, box 3.14, Bakhmeteff Archive, Columbia University.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Iraida Barry's papers, Writings of IB, *Silver Ring* (2nd Draft): 61-63; *The Shattered Mirror (Les batards et les orphelins)*: 3-5, Bakhmeteff Archive.

**Transformations**

The years 1919 and 1920 brought a series of gradual transformations on different levels. The Allies' policy on Russian Civil War changed under the pressure of political and economic circumstances in Russia and back at home. Many Russian migrants discovered new aspects of refugeedom while in Istanbul and vicinities as they lost their ties with the Russian territory. The Russian elite set new tasks in the circumstances of exile. As a result, new types of identities overshadowed previous ones.

The intricate configuration of French internal problems, Russian Imperial debts to France and the French-Bolshevik negotiations resulted in discontinuation of French intervention in South Russia and revocation of French military presence in Odessa. As the White forces have proven that they were not able to create a strong united reliable governing body from whom France could expect repaying all Tsarists debts, the French secured such a promise from the Bolsheviks. Exhausted by the war France placed her internal concerns as the highest priority and was quick to leave unpromising Russian shores. To counterbalance the negative effect of this decision, which caused a blow to the French reputation among the International community, France announced her responsibility on Russian refugees in Constantinople.

However, the first signs of a restructuring of a social hierarchy between French soldiers and Russian civilians were seen in the course of the evacuation of Odessa residents. Elizaveta Vladimirovna Isaakova (b. ca. 1890), from a noble family, is one of many eye-witnesses who wrote down their memories about this emotionally shocking evacuation.[16] An uninterrupted stream of crowds of people was invading the harbor. A French sailor saw Elizaveta and her husband Dimitry

[16] Elizaveta Vladimirovna Isaakova Memoirs, ca. 1962. Pp.309-311, Bakhmeteff Archive.

carrying a white bundle with their little son Michael. He helped them step aboard of a French ship CORCOVADO, that delivered supplies of sardines and oranges for Odessa. However, as they managed to find accommodation among few other refugees in a small saloon, they were announced that the ship will not leave Odessa and that all Russian refugees should return to the town occupied by the Bolsheviks. "*An elegant French officer, riding-stick in a hand, entered the saloon where we had taken refuge, and, pointing at us drawled to his batman: "Take this away, I want to have my breakfast here,"*" – remembered Elizaveta Isaakova. Eventually, the announcement turned out to be a fake. "*It had been done by Frenchmen on purpose, to make fun of us and mock us the hour of great national and personal drama*," – suggested Elizaveta, continuing – "*This inhuman act gave rise to a bitterness that I will never forget*." In her memoirs, she brings the words of Carl Eric Bechhofer (b.1894), a British author, barrister, and journalist, who wrote later in his book *In Denikin's Russia and the Caucasus, 1919-1920*: "*The Allied forces retired. The conduct of the French ships and their officers and crews was so amazing that no Allied Government has yet dared to publish an account of it. Theft, rape, and all kinds of villainy were the order of the day*."[17] However biased a memory of a migrant and political publications of the period could be, emotional reverberations of human tragedy are clearly seen in these and many other accounts on April 1919 Odessa evacuation. Elizaveta Isaakova shares with the reader her personal experience: "*Thus, before leaving our country's shores, we learnt the humiliating experience of what it meant to be a defenseless refugee*."[18] For eleven days stayed CORCOVADO at the entrance to the Bosphorus

[17] C. E. Bechhofer, *In Denikin's Russia and the Caucasus, 1919-1920*, New York: Arno Press, 1971 (first published in 1921). In the original text, the author continues: "*From that memorable occasion the French have become the most hated nation in Russia*," (p.32).
[18] Isaakova, 311, Bakhmeteff Archive.

with refugees on board not knowing where they will be taken and bartering their belongings for food with Turkish rowing boats.

There were three more evacuations from South Russia to Istanbul – January 1920 from Odessa, March 1920 from Novorossiisk, and November 1920 from Sevastopol and other Crimean ports. They all were much more tragic and violent with the similar negative attitude of the French and British commanders who, although offered their ships for the evacuations, treated the refugees just as cargo at the best. The memoirs of Isaakova about the April 1919 evacuation from Odessa are important here since they show the first practical implementation of a switch in the Allies attitude towards Russian subjects, who now moved in a hierarchical ladder down to the position of a dependent.

Sure enough, there were objective reasons for this social hierarchy restructuring: abruptness of changes in political and military situation and a sudden need for evacuation, unpredictably big amount of people rushing to be evacuated, and finally, an acute shortage of transportation as well as coal and food supplies – all resulting in panic and brutality. Nevertheless, the personal attitude of commanding officers and the position of official governments regarding evacuation also contributed to the construction of a sense of desperateness among the refugees. Thus, the British government ordered to take on board only British subjects or, in some cases, Russians affiliated with British structures and organizations.[19] On the other hand, sometimes the Allies allocated comfortable personal cabins or entire ships for those refugees who were able to pay enough. Thus, Iraida Barry writes to her mother on February 4th, 1920 asking how they are planning to go to Istanbul – with money or as refugees.[20] Admiral Calthorpe reports about Russian

[19] FO 371/3314.

[20] Barry, *Family Correspondence - Iraida (Kedrina) Barry to Elizaveta Vasilievna Muraviova (mother)*, Feb. 4th, 1920, Bakhmeteff Archive.

refugees from Constantinople back to London on April 20th, 1919 - short after Odessa evacuation: "*Considerable confusion prevails owing to great lack of suitable arrangements beforehand by French authorities while their treatment by French has been unnecessarily harsh and arbitrary. Money has, I am creditably informed, been the only road to any lenient treatment both here and Odessa*."[21]

As a contrast to the humiliating attitude of French and British commanders, Elizaveta Isaakova remembered a human touch that she and several hundreds of other refugees on Antigona received from American Red Cross and Italian officers. For the Christmas 1920, they got a gift of warm blankets and clothes and a big Russian flag with a small Italian flag sown in the middle as a sign of friendship. "*It warmed our hearts to feel that someone cared for us*," – shares us Elizaveta.[22] Even in the circumstances of refugeedom, little human attitude may transform a "refugee" back into a person. The dichotomy between bureaucratic and often senseless official authorities on the one hand and humanitarianism of people and charitable organizations on the other was ever-present during the refugee regime in Istanbul.

**Refugeezation**

Russians that found themselves in Istanbul after the First World War witnessed a transformation of one type of refugeedom into another one. Earlier, charitable organizations dealt with the desperate situation of refugees in Russia by encouraging civic activism among people and institutions. Now, refugeedom experiences an institutionalization process, in which refugees were depersonalized, categorized and eventually placed under the jurisdiction of one governing body – the League of Nation to avoid direct responsibility for these people by the immediate

[21] FO 608/87/7.
[22] Isaakova, 366, Bakhmeteff Archive.

administration in Istanbul and by the involved governments. There is a big difference between the position, in which people are asking for help, asylum, and receive humanitarian aid; and the one where people's movements, communication, and actions are restricted by regulations and orders, and people's identities reduced to certain expectations only on the basis of them being depended on external help. Passing the blurred line between these two types of refugeedom means to be in a dangerous bordering with utilizing institutionalized refugeedom as a tool for mass deportations and social engineering.

In this regard, it is interesting to learn how Russian expatriates perceived their legal status abroad and the responsibilities of international governments in the situation of refugeedom. Andrey Nikolayevich Mandelshtam (b.1869), a Russian diplomate and a jurist in the area of international private rights, address these issues in his notes "About Legal Status of Russian Emigrants in Foreign States, which would potentially recognize Soviet Republic," presumably composed before May 1921.[23] The author expects from hosting foreign countries a degree of patronage, since otherwise, in the countries recognizing a national jurisdiction of a subject, Russian migrants, outlawed by Bolshevik Revolution, will be "totally deprived of their rights." With that, these foreign countries should not interfere in the affairs of local Russian organizations, which would stand as intermediaries between Russian subjects and a foreign jurisprudence. In other words, Mandelshtam suggest considering Russian expatriates as Tsarist subjects living abroad, and not as disenfranchised exiles depended on the mercy of foreign governments. The author especially addresses this appeal to France and ask the French government to accept all Russian subjects in "capitulation countries of the East," particularly in the "Turkish Empire," under its patronage. To support his request Mandelshtam recalls the case of former subjects of États de l'Église or the Papal

[23] Russian National Committee Records, Box 21, Bakhmeteff Archive.

States, who refused to accept Italian subjecthood in 1870 and now live in Turkey under French patronage. According to Mandelshtam France owes to protect Russians form any encroachments of Turkish authorities.

The uncomfortable question of Allied countries' commitment towards Tsarist Russians also played a role in the Russian migrants' status. After the Bolshevik revolution, the status of Russia caused a big confusion among her former Allies. Relying on British prime minister Balfour's view Sir Ronald Graham defined the Russian subjects' status in a document dated by October 5th, 1918 as follows: "*It is impossible to define the position of Russia, whether an allied country or not, at the present time. It is, however, possible to recognize as Allies all Russians who are definitely anti-Bolshevist*…"[24] However, later agreements of Britain with the Bolsheviks brought to a conflict between Wrangel's government in Crimea and the British government, which demanded form Wrangel in an ultimatum to accept Bolsheviks' terms of a peace agreement. Following Wrangel's rejection of the ultimatum British government revoked all its help to Russians by a telegram from November 13th, 1920 to French and Russian governments, just the same day of the beginning of the last, biggest, and most disastrous evacuation from Crimea: "*His Majesty's Government cannot assume any further responsibility in respect of refugees from South Russia other than those of British nationality or in any way assist them to escape. …refugees cannot be allowed to land in Constantinople… if refugees arrived there they must be sent on at once… as the French Government has recognized the South Russian Government it must take sole responsibility for destination of refugees. … His Majesty's Government offered to mediate between General Wrangel and the Soviet Government earlier this year in order to bring about an arrangement which would make it unnecessary for any further refugees to leave South Russia,*

[24] FO 371/3314.

*but… their proposal was rejected by General Wrangel*."[25] The following few days 126 French and Russian ships were evacuating around 150,000 of Russian refugees to the shores of Constantinople, where most of these ships, with dying from hunger and lack of hygiene crowds on board, were not allowed to disembark for several weeks.

As stated earlier, politically motivated official positions of governments toward refugees are often contraposed by humanitarian empathy and aid on the ground. Thus, despite the decision of British Government and regardless of its attitude on the status of Russian subjects General Officer Commanding-in-Chief Charles Harrington provided very essential help to the arrived refugees sending reports back to London asking approval and further help. One of his emotional letters, in which he described the situation, was widely circulated among British governmental offices: "*Ship after ship absolutely crammed kept passing my house. They were all sent to Moda Bay… About 65 to 70 ship were soon collected, some carrying up to 8 or 10,000 without food or water, the refugees and troops standing day and night without any sanitary arrangements… The 28th Divisional Headquarters reported to me that the scene was indescribable, and that their forced inaction was more than British soldiers could bear. I immediately approved their desire to give hot soup to the nearest ships. I went myself amongst the ships to see the conditions, a sight I can never forget*."[26] One of Harington's concerns was "not to depart from the policy of the Government," which he emphasized several times in his letter, explaining all his actions by "the cause of humanity" and by the attempts to prevent epidemy among his troops. Because of this sensitive restriction, he framed his participation as helping the French in "their almost impossible task," supplying them with all their demands. Responding to General Harington's reports a

[25] T 161/89, The British National Archives.
[26] Ibid.

Conference of Ministers held on 25th November 1920 approved his action out of concerns about humanity and prevention of diseases and agreed to provide up to £20,000 on the work of relief, making clear though, that "*there should be no semblance of participation in any steps for the re-equipment or re-formation of General Wrangel's forces*."[27] While thanking for this funds Harington noted that this aid "*has disarmed rather unpleasant propaganda… as regards our refusal to help and brutality*…" To comply with these additional restrictions Harington was forced to manipulate with wording in his letter describing a refugee camp's population: "*In the 2,000 landed I found a majority of soldiers. By arrangement with the French I have had these moved in order to conform exactly to the policy of the British Government and the camp now consists of women and children and the husbands of these women*." Sure enough, not all soldiers were married to be treated as "husbands" and we do not know who really populated this camp, but there is a solid ground to believe that Harington used the phrase "husbands of these women" to wrap his actually unconditional help with proper wording.

Anna Van Schaick Mitchell, an American Red Cross worker during and after World War I, returns us to the question of the status of Russian migrants in Istanbul as Allies. In a letter to her sister in January 1922 Anna Mitchel recalls images of foodless and freezing German prisoners trying to walk home after their release from captivity and compares them to the current catastrophic situation of the Russians: "*But after all, this is three years since the armistice and these men are not in German hands, or holding ground against German guns, but are wards of the four great allied nations, who won the war and on whose side they fought*…"[28] Nevertheless, the perception about Russians as Allies faded out quite quickly among these great nations, as changing political,

[27] Ibid.
[28] ARA – Russian Refugees, box 94, Rockefeller Archives.

social and economic circumstances forced them to think about Russian expatriates rather as refugees.

Two episodes, which took place in Spring 1920 may illustrate how this transformation in perception potentially occurred for British representatives in Constantinople. At the beginning of April Grand Duchess Olga Alexandrovna Romanova left a hotel in Prinkipo without paying her bills owing to lack of funds. British High Commissioner in Constantinople Admiral De Robeck was confused and sent a telegram to Foreign Office asking to arrange with Grand Duchess residing now in Europe in order for him be able to pay her bills. Foreign Office refused, saying that they cannot be intermediaries in the matter.[29] A few days earlier Xenia Vasilyevna Denikina, the wife of Anton Denikin, then still the Commander-in-Chief of the White forces in South Russia, arrived in Istanbul without means and asked for accommodation and allowance for her and her family.[30] Whereas the British needed to take care of members of two ruling elites' families fled to Constantinople, it is not surprising then to see a transformation in the perception of the British about their former allies.

Both British and French were overwhelmed by the care about Russians in Istanbul and count every pound or franc spent on them, which became a basis for constant disputed between two governments and permanent motif in their correspondence. Eventually, the two great powers called for a creation of international body on the basis of the League of Nations, which would take responsibility for all Russian refugees in the Middle East, since neither Ottoman state, Britain, nor France were willing to support the refugees anymore and admit more of them to their territory. However, even after the creation of a High Commission for Russian Refugees affairs, disputes

[29] FO 371/4053.
[30] Ibid.

around the frames of responsibility have not ceased. The main solution was to disperse Russians from Istanbul in the quickest and the most efficient manner. The seemingly easiest way on the table was to repatriate them back to Soviet Russia. The Allies and the League undertook a series of negotiations with the Bolsheviks, launched wide propaganda among Russians in Istanbul, but ideologically still strong Russian military and civil administration together with the Russian press in the city drastically opposed this initiative. When reports on shooting down of those who took the risk and arrived at Soviet shores reached Istanbul, Russians started petitioning the League of Nation to cancel its policy of repatriation, reminding it about their right of refuge.[31]

The situation with the Soviets' actions closed for the Allies the door for this "easiest" solution. There were still tens of thousands of the Russian refugees in Istanbul. Their disposal to other countries turned to be not an easy task that required a multistep approach, of which the first should be turning Russians into governable refugees. To accomplish this task the Allied authorities closed Russian self-organizational institutions in Istanbul and the environs, tried to classify people into different categories and to control their movement and communication.

In the first matter, the French aid for the Russian refugees in Istanbul was conditioned by a liquidation of all property belonging to Wrangel's Voluntary Army – all former Tsarist fleet with its cargo, including ammunition and uniform. New clothes were provided from the stocks of the Allies of humanitarian organizations. French-Russian liquidation commission was formed to register items and correlate the aid to revenues. In addition, French informed General Wrangel that the Russian army could not be considered as a recognized force, but merely as refugees. Wrangel himself should remain at the head of these refugees, but for "disciplinary purposes only" to avoid

[31] T 161/89; FO 371/5419; FO 371/6849; FO 371/6862; Krovopuskov Papers, box 3.14, Bakhmeteff Archive.

the outbreak of brigandage. Since the Russians themselves continued to insist on their national army identity, the French conditioned their humanitarian aid with the avowal of their civil refugee status and leaving military camps for Constantinople. In some cases, skirmishes between Russian and French soldiers took place caused by French attempts of forceful relocations of Russians from camp to camp. To relieve the tension and dissolute Russian soldiers French recruited some of them into French Foreign Legion and sent others as labor to its colonies or in South America. Finally, Russian consular court in Istanbul was invalidated and gradually reduced to a voluntary council of Russian advocates to assist in the Interallied court, as well as Russian police was not approved accepting only Russian interpreters' services.[32]

Not all Russian refugees were treated equally. Even civilian refugees and those who eventually have chosen to abandon their military identity. Ethnicity, professional skills, languages, education, and ideological views became criteria and increased chances to be helped. These classifications were instrumental for the Allies in handling the refugees easier and disseminating them quicker. This, in turn, weakened the refugees' group identities, facilitating their transition to a refugee self-perception. The subjects of newly founded, so-called, Limitrophe states – primarily Poles, Lithuanians, and Lettish – were separated and promptly sent for the care of their governments. Jewish humanitarian organizations managed to secure for many Russian Jewish refugees to be sent to Palestine. Cossacks preferred to be camped together, and Ukrainian refugees demanded to separate them from Russians for their own camps and to be treated differently. Most of the Russian Muslim refugees were allowed to convert to Ottoman and later Turkish citizenship. Slav countries accepted a big portion of Slavic refugees. Their help in many cases was conditional,

[32] FO 371/5448; T 161/164 (folder 2); N. V. Savic, *Vospominaniya [Memoirs]* (S-Petersburg: Logos, 1993), 425, 430; FO 371/6779; FO 371/8171.

however. Agricultural skills were the most valuable for all hosting countries, including Serbia and Czechia. Other crafts and just physical strength appreciated as well. Invalids and injured refugees stayed in Istanbul for the most part. The Czech Republic initially refused to accept Russians refugees arguing that they are all ultra-monarchists and anti-socialists and later accepted mostly professors, students, and farmers. Czech even sent their own committee to select appropriate refugees on the spot. American representative in Istanbul Admiral McCully suggested to the Secretary of State to add several classes of useful Russian refugees to American population – seamen, technicians, scientists, artists, farmers, and domestic servants. Many of such considerations were aimed to help, but their selectiveness made them resemble a refugee market rather than a humanitarian aid based on universal principles. Even for some missionary representatives, the Russians in Istanbul were not enough Christian souls to get help. Multiple forms, questionnaires, and instructions that Russians were supposed to fill out and follow completed on the ground the categorization process among the refugees.[33]

Control, restrictions and disciplining further materialized the status of refugeedom for many Russians in Istanbul and environs. Refugees were not supposed to leave their camps. Allied military personnel or even garrisons were stationed in the camps to prevent riots and casea s of getaway to Greece, Bulgaria, Anatolia, or to Mustafa Kemal's forces. Sometimes, because of logistic, financial or political considera,tions the refugees were not allowed to join their families in other camps. Whenever it was possible, families preferred to stay together, even in soldiers' or medical barracks, in order not to lose each other forever, since camps could suddenly and without

[33] *Ukrainskiĭ Natsi͡onal'nyĭ komitet v Konstantinopoli͡e; i͡anvar' 1921 goda* (Konstantinopol':Babok, 1921); *Otchet o dei͡atel'nosti Donskogo pravitel'stva za granit͡seĭ po 25 sentiabri͡a 1921 g* (Konstantinopol': Pressa, 1921): 33-34*;* Russian National Committee Records, V.D. Kuz'min-Karavaev, *Uchrezhdeniia Krasnogo Kresta I Belogo Kresta v Konstantinopol'skom Raione*, - all Bakhmeteff Archive; Admiral McCully to Secretary of State correspondence, Feb. 14th 1921, NARA, Box1; Charles Riggs to James Barton correspondence, Dec. 4th, Dec. 28th 1920, ABCFM Archives, ABC 16.9.3, Harvard Library.

notice be relocated to places k of certain addresThe ses. British presence in the Middle East after the war allowed them to maintain a network of refugee camps throughout the region from India, and Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean. Many Russian refugees were settled in these different camps as the war and the revolution dispersed them into unexpected directions. British documents show how easily groups of people could be transferred from place to place. A petition to British Prime Minister signed as "Colonel of former Russian Army Sergey Nikolayevich Staroskolsky" complains about miserable conditions of life of Russian refugees in a camp in Cyprus: "*Sir, My Minister, (I) ventured to call your attention to, and to express to you my dissatisfaction with, the conditions of the life, in which you have placed the Russian refugees, who in addition to an ocean of grief and tears, have the misfortune of entrusting their lives to your sinister protection*…" The colonel mentions a lack of protection from 60-degree (Celsius) heat in barracks, where sick, injured officers placed together with their wives and children, shortage and bad quality of food, diseases it causes, steadily expanding Russian cemetery on the island, impossibility of communication with their relatives, since letters and telegrams do not reach the camp. He ,stops tired to, list and concludes ironically suggesting Brin to make an alliance with the Bolsheviks since in their moral approach to other people both are brilliantly similar.[34] Circumstances and policies of external actors made the reality of Russian exile a mechanism of gradual refugeezation. While responding to this mechanism, priorities, , iews and self-perceptions of Russian migrants have changed too.

**Responses of Russian Refugees**

Living abroad not necessarily meant for Russian exiles to abandon their Russianness, national pride and patriotism. Many articles and pamphlets published in Istanbul by the Russian community

[34] FO 371/6861; FO 371/6866; FO 371/6873; ARA – Russian Refugees, box 94, Rockefeller Archives; FO 371/5419 – Colonel Staroskolsky to Prime Minister.

discussed ways how to reconstruct Russia and preserve national spirit in exile. Valery Levitskiy in his brochure "On Love for Fatherland and People's Pride" published in 1921 in Tsargrad (as indicated in the brochure) talks about State-Nationalism as the only acceptable form of nationalism and toolor a state prosperity.[35] General Wrangel and his pro-official "Bureau of Russian Press in Constantinople" tried to promote a sense of Russian government in exile controlling the situation and to support the semblance of national unity among civilians and soldiers. The Union of Zemstvos too worked hard to mobilize any available funds to not letting evacuees from Russia be dependent on charity and "to fall into a state of refugeedom."[36]

Self-invigorating moods prevailed in the Russian community in Istanbul mostly throughout the 1919 and of the 1920 until the final defeating evacuation from Crimea took place in November 1920. For man,y exiles the loss of last territorial ties bonding them to their Motherland was the total loss of hope, future, and previous identities. "*We had no country any longer and became "stateless refugees" as we have been labeled ever since*," writes Elizaveta Isaakova. She continues: "*Behind us lay long years of war and revolution. Since 1914, life had been intense, varied and inspired by patriotism… A great national and human idea had been the impulse and inspiration of our lives welding them together for the common cause… Deprived of its idea, life had become mere existence…*" Elizaveta translates the feelings of Russian expatriates to feelings of a wounded or disable man readjusting to a normal life. "*Emerging from war and revolution we were faced by a great, strange world, where money seemed to be the decisive factor*." After her husband Dimitry died from diseases, she focused only on making their son Michael happy, despite

[35] V. M. Levitskii, *O l͡iubvi k otechestvu i narodnoĭ gordosti* (Tsar'grad, 1921), Butler Stacks, Columbia University.
[36] *To Provisionary Chief Committee of the Zemstvo Union* (Dec 1920), Russian National Committee Papers, The Russian Red Cross files, Bakhmeteff Archive; *Ocherk d͡ieiatel'nosti Vserossiĭskago zemskago so͡iuza za granit͡seĭ:April 1920 – January 1922* (Sofia, 1922), Bakhmeteff Archive.

the hardships of the wanderings. Motherhood became her guide and supporter throughout their refugeedom, admits Elizaveta.[37]

Since Fall 1920 Russians in Istanbul and environs started slowly accepting and adapting to their status as refugees. One of the indicators of this process was a dying away of "Russian currencies stock" at the Galata St in the 1921. For a certain period after the Crimean ev,acuation the trades even intensified. The Wrangle's and Don Currencies were even traded on the official stock approximately for a month, but gradually decreasing in value. The Russian stock traded Romanovs', Kerenskiy's, Duma's, Arkhangelsk's, Tashkent's and many other types of Russian governments' currencies. Eventually, they all had been selling by weight turning to hispieces of evidencevidences rather than money. The end of believing in non-Soviet money signified one more step toward transming of the Russian exiles to refugees.[38]

In military refugee camps, following the French conditioning of their aid by formally accepting a refugee status, many Russian soldiers started abandoning their regiments' positions despite draconian disciplinary measures undertook by nationalistically motivated Wrangel's commanding officers. Being trapped between the loyalty to the Russian national unity idea and their daily soup they were forced to choose their survival. Many fled to Istanthe bul, to countryside, or were transferred to a so-called refugee battalion, where, hated by their brethren, they could receive a civilian ration. The French also recruited the most military active Russian soldiers to their Foreign Legion, promising them good treatment and food supply. Finally, the idea of national unity was shattered by constant French attempts to repatriate Russian soldiers back to Soviet

[37] Isaakova, 366-368, Bakhmeteff Archive.
[38] *Slobodskoi, "Sredi Emigratsii [*Amidst of Emigration],"in *Beloie Delo. Kniga XIII [White Affair. Book XIII]* (Moscow: RGGU, 2003): 80-81.

Russia. Boris Pokrovskii in his letters brings the moods of Cossacks saying that thare ose who leaving for arS eoviets either women, elderly, or "the faint of heart among us."[39]

On the other hand, disparate Russians started to utilize the notion of refugees for their benefits. Thus, Don Cossacks suthe ggested Polish govment to accept their regiments under the guise of refugees, on which the Polish representatives responded by strictly selective conditions. Many brochures were issued in Istanbul by the Union of Zemstvos or other Russian charitable organizations explaining requirements, conditions and advantageous ways to be accepted as refugees in different countries in the world. In the appeal by the Russian Committee in Constantinople issued in November 2nd, 1922 Russian refugees are advertised as a "valuable social element owing to their culture, scientific and technical preparation," as well as "loyal to those who have given them refuge."[40]

A first alternative for the falling apart Greater Russian national cause was the adherence of the refugees to their particular national identities. One reason for that was discontent and criticism of Wrangel's government for its inability to achieve practical results in anti-Bolshevik struggle and in establishing a a form of confederacy, where national aspirathe tion of variety of regional groups could be expressed. Don Cossack government and Ukrainian National Committee were the most outstanding actors in dissociating their interests from the "Russian case" title among their subjects as well as in international level. They insisted on separating their refugees from the rest of the Russians not only because of ideological reasons and political motvations, but also hoping

[39] Reports by Boris Pokrovskii, Constantinople & Vienna, 1920-1921, Box 1, Pokrovskii Papers, 1914-1926, Bakhmeteff Archive.

[40] Ibid, VIII (Spravka): 23-24; V Pragu: Studencheskii Sbornik [To Prague: Student Digest] (Konstantinopol': Pressa, 1921); V Nju Jork: Chto Nuzhno Znat' Emigrantu S Shtatov [To New York: What an Emigrant to US Should Know] (Konstantinopol': Vecherniaia Pressa, 1923) – all Slavonic Library; Krovopuskov Papers, box 3.14, Bakhmeteff Archive.

to receive a more focused treatment from international charitable organizations and world governments hosting refugees. Whereas all possible charitable aid in Istanbul was far from sufficient for everyone in need, the main concern of a refugee was trying to stand out and be chosen for help. Polish and Baltic states' passports could increase chabe sent be send out form the harsh living conditions of Istanbul. Russian Jews applied to the Ottoman and Allied governments in be sent be send to Palestine, where they could receive a piece of land and assistance from Zionist organizations. Andrei Fedorovich Berladnik-Pukthevskii, a head of the Union of Refugees from the Northern Caucasus in Istanbul tried to arrange a separate deal with French representatives regarding financial aid and transportation of the Mountaineers to Marcel and other French cities. The primary argument of the Union of the Mountaineers, as well as of other ethnically different groups of refugees like the Kalmyks or the Ruthenians, was a preservation of their unique culture and traditions, for which they insisted to be treated as a distinct group and asked for allocation of funds and ensuring proper living conditions in Istanbul or abroad. A group of Cossacks tried to reach Nekrasovites – historical Don Cossacks, in early 18th century migrated to the Ottoman Empire - looking for help from them, only to discover that they themselves live in misery.[41]

Religious identity functioned as an important variable in the questions of survival and national belonging. In the brochure "An Open Letter to Archbishop Anastasiy" from June 15th, 1922 Russian Catholics complain that they were called renegades betraying their Russianness for a "lentil soup" since "to be Russian means above all to be Orthodox." To defend themselves newly converts argued that not only Catholic refugees receive proper care, and not only Catholics were sent abroad to continue their education; but their actual reason was an inspiration from Catholic monks' and nuns' charitable work revealing a true love and care of Christianity. The documents

[41] Pukovskii Papers, Bakhmeteff Archive. *Otchet o deıatel'nosti Donskogo pravitel'stva za granitseĭ*, 62-64.

in the Ottoman Interior Ministry show that many Russian Muslim refugees from Crimea, Caucasus, Cen, ral Asia and Volga regions were accepted as the subjects of the Ottoman Empire, and others converted to Islam and also were accepted as the subjects.[42]

ethnonational-national and religious attributes, anothedistinguish distinct themselves from other refugees looking for help was a creation of associations based on a variety of characteristics. The Union of Russian Navy Officers, the Club of Russian Ladies, the Society of Women of Smolensk, unions of writers, poets, artists and artisans, students and professors, agricultural workers and many other interest and professional groups were organized for self-help or in hope to receive a special treatment from Russian and foreign charitable organizations. In this way, the self-perception of this part of Russian migrants traintoformed to the direction of denationalization.[43]

Nevertheless, many Russians in Istanbul were not ready to perceive themselves as helpless refugees, depethedent on a mercy of the Allies. For these Rus,sians too the refugeezation process meant a transformation of their initial national self-identification. However, instead of relying on their new refugee status, they have chosen to switch to an ideal of self-support and self-organization. The experience of civic activism and local self-governing in the late Russian public sphere turned to be very important in Istanbul. The foundation of The Central United ,owhich mmittee, consthe isted of Russian Red Cross Organization, The All Russian Union of Zemstvos and The Union of Russian Towns, was a result of that experience. The Union dealt with many urgent refugee issues such as subsistence supply, housing, health, education, orphanages, recreation, culture, and employment in Istanbul. Some refugees even did not want any aid from

[42] Otkrytoe Pis'mo Archiepiskopu Anastasiju [An Open Letter to Archbishop Anastasiy] (Franco-Russian Society, 1922), Slavonic Library.

[43] *Navy Officers Club, Sep. 15th, 1921*, Russian National Committee Records, Box 47, Folder 5, Bakhmeteff Archive; Presse du Soir/Vecherniaia Pressa (October-December announcements); LRA/MS 1066/2146 – Chirikov to Bunin, Leeds Russian Archive.

the authorities but allowing them to stle on a fertile land to support themselves. They preferred to live as self-sufficient communities rather than to rely on any national government, fulfilling a long-desired dream of social reformers in Russia about autonomous peasantry communes. One such a project suggested to settle Russian soldiers in Keşan province near Gelibolu to be a buffer between Turkish and Greek population in the region. Another asked to settle Russian refugees in Alashkert Valley of Van province to facilitate recovering of an agricultural value of the soil and ensuring peaceful coexistence of local Kurds and returning to the area Armenian refugees.[44]

Finally, whenever it was possible, individuals engaged in different types of commercial initiative for their survival. Depending on their economic and social circumstances Russians organized factories, shops, service, agencies and the retail, or found creative and original ways to support themselves: lotteries, cockroach races, circus, fortune-telling and others. In the atmosphere of tough competition, many refugees utilized fraud and scams. Some made a profit by selling humanitarian aid, others organized fake joint-stock companies; Russian ", when caught by the police,he police argued that they lost their licenses during the evacuation; local newspapers stated that right after Russian refugees' arriving counterfeit Turkish money started to circulate in the city. These initiatives helped to promote perceptions of Russian resourcefulness, extravagance, and immorality. However, it was restaurant owners who stretched the Russian national idea to the ultimately utilitarian level. Most of the Russian restaurants in Istanbul rested upon and exploited the patterns of Russian national cuisine, Russian entertainment, and the beauty of Russian women.[45]

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[44] Pokrovskii Papers, *Information from Constantinople*, Feb 28, 1921, p.38; *O Pereselenii Chasti Russkih Bezhentsev v S-Vostochniy Raion Maloi Azii [On Resettlement of Parts of Russian Refugees to North-Eastern Area of Asia Minor]*, RNC, The League of Nation and the Russian Refugee Question, - all Bakhmeteff Archive.

[45] For the description of Russian refugees' life in Istanbul see S.S. Ippolitov, *Rossiiskaia Emigratsiia I Ievropa [Russian Emigration and Europe]* (Moscow: Ippolitov Publish House, 2004); S. Uturgauri, *Belyie Russkiie na Bosfore.*

## Conclusion

This paper traced the process and the mechanics of turning Russian expatriates into refugees. The main purpose of the study, however, was not to blame multiple actors involved in this transormation, but to show the complexity of the political, economic, and social situation surrounded the Russian refugee question in post-WWI Istanbul and the environs. As an example, we can see how the position of official bodies regarding the refugees greatly differed from the attitude of the representatives on the ground who directly encountered with the needs of these desperate people. The dichotomy between pragmatism and empathy, control and care, politics and humanity was always presenthe t during refugee regime in occupied Istanbul, very often without clear cut separating available options.

Refugeedom and humanitarianism are also two concepts, which meanings were somehow ambiguous during this period. Where responforlity over refugees passes the edge of disciplining and control? When a need for help turns to a bounding dependency? Should humanitarianism be based on universal principles and rights or be selective and at the same time serve as an effective supply of cheap labor?

The process of refugeezation gradually transformed perceptions of Russian expatriates about Russia and about themselves. After all, it was their patriotic belief in non-Bolshevik Russia that bounded them all together and brought to exile. While in Istanbul, this unifying national identity was staggered, giving way for more pragmatic priorities, based on different strategies for survival. The choices of people were not identical and reflected personal views, , bilities and decisions. But r ofegardless the way for survival they have chosen, it reflected their gradual acceptance of their

*1919-1929 [White Russians on Bosporus. 1919-1929]* (Moscow: MBA, 2013), Bülent Bakar, *Esir Şehirin Misafirleri: Beyaz Ruslar* (İstanbul: Tarihçi Kitabevi, Ocak 2012).

refugee status and their adaptation to new circumstances. Just the sole fact of migrants' presence abroad,, in exile did not immediately imply becoming the refugee-minded. Only a series of events, actions, and realizations was needed to accomplish this switch.

The idea of Russianness, which temporary overshadowed by immediate concerns for survival, was eventually recollected in many places in exile in a form of diasporic Russian communities. In Istanbul too, a small community of Russian refugees continued to exist after the "Russian refugee question" was generally resthe olved in late 1930s. The "afterlife" of Russian refugees in Istanbul was mostly overlooked for a long time. Rising interest in the refugee studies and particularly in the Russian refugee history initiated a series of recent publications[46] and opens a way for more interesting studies on this topic.

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BOA - Başkanlığı Osmanlı Arşivi
FO - Foreign Office (The British National Archive)
LRA - Leeds Russian Archive (University of Leeds)
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[46] Marina Sigirdzhi, *Spasibo, Konstantinopol' [Thank You, Constantinople]* (S-Petersburg: Evropeiskii Dom, 2018).

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