References


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Historiography of the Russian Diaspora in the USA

The article is devoted to the historiography of four waves of Russian emigration to the USA. It describes perception of the migration processes in Soviet Russia/USSSR (V. Obolensky, L. Bagramov, E. Nitoburg), paying particular attention to the works published by the Academy of Sciences; emigrants’ self-appraisal (M. Vilchur, V. Petrov, I. Okuntsov); its interpretation by Western scholars (J. Davis, G. Govorchin, M. Raeff).

Keywords: migrations, Russian Diaspora, USA, historiography, Academy of Sciences, scientific communication.

The US “Russian” Diaspora consisting of four waves emigrants’ descendants is the largest in the world. Each of migration waves had different social structure, home country escaping reasons, political views, religious beliefs and its own level of adaptation to American society. At the end of the XIXth century emigration from the Russian Empire began drawing attention of statisticians (Бородин [Borodin], 1915; Воблый [Vobluj], 1904) and diplomats (Щербатский [Ch’erbatskii], 1915; Курчевский [Kurchevsky], 1914) who put the bases for the further studies and created the migration processes evaluation methods. They tried to describe emigrants’ ethno-religious and social structure and their reasons to resettle in the USA, emphasizing illegal nature of emigration. To give a brief description of the literature devoted to the topic is a complicated problem and leads to reduction of materials into three groups: 1) Perception of the migration processes in Soviet Russia/USSSR (V. Obolensky, L. Bagramov, E. Nitoburg); 2) Émigré self-appraisal (M. Vilchur, V. Petrov, I. Okuntsov); 3) Its interpretation by Western scholars (J. Davis, G. Govorchin, M. Raeff).
1) After 1917 the hegemony of ideology in the works made by Soviet scholars and its rejection by the majority of their émigré and Western colleagues caused difficulties in the mutual enrichment of the researches conducted within and outside Russia which was overcome only after censorship cancellation during “Perestroika” resulted in a boom of original Russian articles and monographs, documents publication, reissue of the émigré literature and works of the Western scholars.

Certain interest to the Russian emigrants in the USA appeared in the early 1920s, when Soviet Russia authorities discussed the emigrants’ mass repatriation prospects. The research by the USSR Central Statistical Office head V. V. Obolensky (Osinsky) (Оболенский [Obolensky], 1928) was based on a great number of statistical records. He analyzed the demographic structure of Russian emigrants’ main ethnic and religious groups from the end of the XIXth century to the beginning of the World War. The work by G. Smolyansky (Смолянский [Smolyansky], 1926) mostly reflecting the global migration at the turn of the XXth century partly described Russian Diaspora in the USA. Unlike the pre-revolutionary researchers both authors emphasized the causes of emigration, especially highlighting negative impact of the tsarist government. They draw attention to the difficult social and economic situation of immigrants in the US, trying to justify the necessity of their returning to Soviet Russia.

With the end of re-emigration from America in the late 1920s until the 1950s no significant studies concerning Russian emigration to the USA were made in the USSR. Communist propaganda painted “white” emigrants in one color – black. Since Stalin’s death several attempts were made to overcome the gap. L. A. Bagramov (Баграмов [Bagramov], 1957) in his monograph gave a detailed description of the major ethnic groups in the US having been formed by the middle of the XXth century. He also provided brief analysis of US immigration laws. Later E. Pletnev (Плетнев [Pletnev], 1962), A. N. Shlepakov (Шлепаков [Shlepakov], 1966) and C. B. Filippov (Филиппов [Filippov], 1973) studied immigration processes in the USA, ethnic and social structure of its population, the ratio of “new” and “old” immigration, the contribution of individual national immigrant groups to the evolution of the American nation. Using the Marxist-Leninist approach to the problems of emigration, they described the difficult economic and political situation of emigrants and their role in the development of the American working class and the socialist movement and their struggle for economic and political rights.

Sh.A. Bogina studied the immigration to the USA as an American nation ethnic formation process. She investigated large national groups of immigrants (Irish, Germans, English), examined the ethnic and social structure of the USA population. In her book “Ethnic and cultural processes in the United States” she determined the basic types of immigrants’ assimilation showing the influence of ethnic and cultural contacts between immigrants on the assimilation course and pace (Богина [Bogina], 1965, 1976, 1986). The issue of re-emigration of Russian immigrants and their participation in the reconstruction of Soviet Russia was studied by G.Ya. Tarle who later published and edited a number of researchers devoted to the topic (Тарле [Tarle], 1968, 1993; 2006).

In the 1980s Russian emigration studies revived in the Soviet historiography. G. P. Куropyатник ([Куropyatnik], 1981), A. Ya. Кiperman (Кiperman [Kiperman], 1980), A. M. Chernenko (Черненко [Chernenko], 1989) wrote about political emigration from the Russian Empire, mostly about the Narodniki and the Social Democrats. Speaking about the pre-revolutionary emigration N. L. Tudoryanu characterized Russian immigrants as “labor” coming to the US to find a better-paid work, and highlighted the impact of Rus-
sian immigrants on the social, political and labor movement in the country (Тудоряну [Tu-
doryanu], 1986). Despite the researchers made in the 1980s were obviously ideological, they
were the first scientific studies in which the Soviet scholars summarized data collected by
pre-revolutionary, Soviet and partially American researchers using a wide range of docu-
ments from the Soviet archives the same time.

Perestroika marked positive changes in the development of the migration processes
studies in the USSR allowing scientists to expand the field of study, shifting its emphasis.
A new stage in the study of Russian emigration abroad started, the trend became very popu-
lar, thousands of professional and not very scholarly books and articles have been devoted
to the different issues of the Russian emigration to the USA, a large number of papers re-
stored the biographies of the Russians emigrated to the USA during and after the Civil War
in Russia. Such interest to the “white emigration” was a result of the unofficial ideological
interdiction on its studies and the fact that unlike the pre-revolutionary emigrants the
representatives of the next wave made a significant contribution to the cultural and social
development of the recipient countries.

Since early 1990s many Russian libraries created specialized book collections devot-
ed to Russia abroad, the largest are in the Russian State Library, State Public Historical
Library and in the Institute of Scientific Information on Social Sciences of the Russian
Academy of Sciences. In 1992 the Committee of the Archives of the Russian Government
initiated the state program Foreign archival “Rossica” aimed at the identification and re-
turn of documents from the collections having belonged to the Russian emigrants. One the
major reference books prepared by contemporary historians of Russian emigration: an en-
cyclopedic biographical dictionary “Russia abroad. The Golden Book of emigration. The
first third of the XX century” (Русское зарубежье. Золотая книга эмиграции [Russkoe
zarubezh’е. Zolotaja kniga jemigracii], 1997). It contains biographies of 417 most promi-
nent Russian emigrants mostly during the period of the ‘white’ emigration (История
российского зарубежья: Проблемы историографии (конец ХIХ–ХХ вв.) [Istorija ros-
sijskogo zarubezh’я: Problemy istoriografi i (konec XIX–XX vv.)], 2004).

Monographs and articles published in the 1990s by V. M. Kabuzan were devoted to mi-
gration processes in Russia in the XVIII–XX centuries. Using both local and foreign sources
the author analyzed emigrants’ ethnic structure. He tried to speak about emigration causes,
extent and orientation. A large number of sources giving sometimes conflicting data did
not allow creating a complete picture of ethnic structure of Russian emigrants in his works
(Кабузан [Kabuzan], 1996, 1998). The Ural scientist A. A. Pronin tried to analyze histo-
riography of the Russian emigration abroad mainly summarizing contemporary authors’
eff orts. He concluded that a great deal of émigré studies made by Russian researchers in
the 1990s was descriptive, contained errors, unverifi ed information; noted uncritical ap-
proach to the sources, in some cases the published books and articles were pure compila-
tions (Пронин [Pronin], 2000, 2009).

The significant contribution to émigré studies in the last two decades has been made
2004, 2005). Using a wide range of Russian and Western published and unpublished docu-
ments he reconstructed different stages of migration from Russia to America in the late
XIX–XXth centuries. In his monograph “The Russians in USA history and destiny, 1870–
1970: an ethno-historical essay” he summarized previously analyzed data depicting Rus-

generations but not unique. Other ethnic groups having arrived to the country experienced similar difficulties in the course of their inclusion to the American economical, political and cultural life.

Observing recent publications devoted to the history of the Russian emigration to the USA one may have found an increasing flow of the books, articles and documentaries describing prominent Russian émigré scientists’ legacy. Such publications expand the source base of the further research and specify the details of the Russian Diaspora history but do not give a broad picture of the Russian emigrants’ influence on the development of American society. A great deal of them are just complications of borrowings from the works of the Russian émigré scholars. J. Brodsky’s biography written by L. Losev (Лосев [Losev], 2006) and the book “Russian scientific emigration: twenty portraits” edited by G. Bongard-Levin (Российская научная эмиграция: Двадцать портретов [Rossijkaja nauchnaja jemigracijja: Dvadcat’ portretov], 2001) are not the only but bright exceptions from this flow of often not original and not very well verified data.

2) First attempts to describe different groups of emigrants from Russia were made by the participants of Russian revolutionary movement who had to escape to America in the late XIX—early XXth centuries. Some of them left the country and did not make any significant contribution to its culture; others like Peter Demens or Isaac Hourwich were naturalized and stayed in the USA to the end of their lives. P. Demens was not only a successful businessmen and politician he frequently published articles in Russian periodicals, left two books of memoirs about his life in America helped the emigrants from the Molokan Church creating the bases for the researches devoted to the Russian religious minorities migration. I. Hourwich unlike many American authors studying migration to the USA that time noted that Eastern European immigrants could make a significant contribution to the development of the country showing the positive impact of the migration from Russia on the American economy and industry (Hourwich, 1912).

A book written by a former head of the New York Public Library Slavic Division A. Yarmolinsky described the early attempts of the Russian revolutionaries to organize agricultural communes in the USA. He sympathetically portrayed the failure of W. Frey’s social experiments based on the ideas of “positive religion” (Yarmolinsky, 1965). M.E. Vilchur may be regarded as the first émigré scholar writing in the US about Russian emigrants’ resettlement and economic situation, level of their adaptation to consumer and cultural environment in America. He described Russian emigrants’ social organizations, labor groups, their cultural achievements speaking primarily about the first and the second waves (Вильчур [Vilchur], 1914, 1918). A small ethno-sociological study “Molokans in Los Angeles” was published by L. Sokolova in 1919 in California (Socoloff, 1918). Several informative but not very academic books and articles by V. Petrov (Петров [Petrov], 1992) and I. Okuntsov (Окунцов [Okuntsov], 1967) gave an eye witnessed picture of the Russian Diaspora’s life. They were reissued several times and may be found in the Internet so they have been widely quoted in the contemporary studies.

Emigrants’ periodicals and other publishing enterprises have always been a rich source of the information about the Russian Diaspora. Hundreds of newspapers, magazines and journals have been issued in America since the end of the XIXth century. One of the first attempts to give their bibliographic description and save to the future generations was made in 1928 by M. Vinokourov and M. Karpovich. In the local émigré newspaper they published an article “This must be done” — an appeal to Russian writers and publishers interested in preserving Russian literature in the USA. They offered to make a bibliography containing
information about all Russian books, newspapers and magazines published in the country. Later the pamphlet was printed as a brochure sent out to all Russian émigré organizations. During the next decades a private imitative of Russian scholars was adopted by the major American institutions holding significant collections of Cyrillic Books. In 2003 the collaboration of Russian and American scholars B. Budnitsky, A. Tartakovsky and T. Emmons resulted in publishing four volumes of the Russian books, newspaper and magazine publications issued abroad annotated index (Россия и российская эмиграция в воспоминаниях и дневниках [Rossija i rossijaskaia jemigracija v vospominanijah i dnevnikah], 2003—2006).

Several Russian — born American scholars chose migration processes as their major field of study. E. Kulischer, a sociologist working for the Library of Congress in the 1940s, coined the phrase “displaced persons” and was one of the first scholars who tried to document the number of people lost in the Holocaust and during relocation of millions of Europeans after WWII (Kulischer, 1948). One of the country’s leading scholars of Russian history Marc Raeff created the fundamental research concerning various aspects of Russian Diaspora’s life in Europe, Asia and America. He described Russian emigrants’ political, cultural and social organizations; spoke about their religious associations and publishing activities (Raeff, 1990). He is also the author of the introductory chapter in the one of the best émigré books describing the past of the Russian Diaspora in the US — “The Russians in America. Waves of Russian emigration to the United States” (Русские в Америке. Волны русской эмиграции в США [Russkie v Amerike. Volny russkoj jemigracii v SShA], 2011).

3) I will only briefly mention several American scholars having written about the Russian Diaspora. The development of such studies was not as ideologically dangerous as it was in the USSR but political confrontation between two systems also restricted cooperation with Eastern European colleagues. In American historiography Russian emigration has been traditionally seen as a part of the US ethnic history. American scholars have studied Russian Diaspora’s social structure and ethno-religious characteristics, a lot of books are devoted to various minorities and local communities (Berokoff, 1969; Moore, 1973; Morris, 1991).

Books written in the 1920s by J. Davis put the bases for the Russian émigré studies in the USA. Using results of sociological researches the author examined emigrants’ life and work conditions proving their socio-cultural adaptation possibility (Davis, 1922 a, b). Several scholars investigated the separate ethnic groups: Ch. Bernheimer analyzed Russian-Jewish Diaspora in America (Bernheimer, 1905), G. Blok and E. Essing wrote about Russian emigrants in San Francisco (Blok, Essig, 1933). Polish community was analyzed by P. Fox (Fox, 1922).

The 1920s stricter immigration laws significantly reduced the flow of newcomers from Eastern Europe. Russian émigré studies began declining. A new period began after the WWII. Usually the information about Russian emigrants may be found in the special chapters of the books analyzing the USA social structure. Only few scholars wrote solely about the Russian Diaspora: N. Eubank (Eubank, 1973); E. Hassel (Hassel, 1991), G. Govorchin (Govorchin, 1993). N. Eubank researched the history of Russian emigration to the US from the colonization of Alaska to the middle of the XXth century. Despite the small amount of a book the author tried to show the emigrants’ contribution to the development of national literature, music, theater, science, and American society. G. Govorchin using federal documents described size, age, gender and social structure of Russian Diaspora from the end of the XIXth century to the 1980s.

The US libraries and scientific institutions have been holding the biggest collections of the Russian émigré papers, manuscripts, books and periodicals allowing to trace all stages
of Russian Diaspora’s evolution. Only a quick search through the Library of Congress Informational Bulletins revealed several dozens of Eastern European émigré scientists who were employed by the LC in the 1940–1960s. Except M. Vinokouroff, S. Yakobson and E. Kulischer having been already mentioned I may without looking into the notes recall poets and novelists Gizella Lakhman, Vladimir Ilyashenko, Tatiana Fessenko, Boris Nartsisoff, lawyers Samuel Kucherov, Vladimir Gzovsky, Leo Okinshevich. Being bilingual they influenced both the advance of the Slavic studies in the USA and development of Russian literature and science in exile paving the way for the further collaborations between American and Russian scholars. Scientific exchanges between two countries during last two decades, new informational technologies, especially Internet databases broaden the academic dialogue, allow to observe large volumes of published and manuscript materials, draw verified conclusion about a long scale processes, clarify known data and avoid misinterpretations in the future.

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Историография русской диаспоры в США

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Статья посвящена осмыслению истории четырех волн эмиграции из России в США. В ней рассматриваются труды отечественных ученых (В. Оболенского, Л. Баграмова, Е. Нитобурга), в том числе выпущенные Академией наук; работы русских эмигрантов (М. Вильчур, В. Петрова, И. Окунцова); отдельные исследования западных специалистов (Д. Дэвиса, Д. Горорчина, М. Раева).

Ключевые слова: миграции, русская диаспора, США, Академия наук, научная коммуникация.