

COLONIAL IMPULSES AMONG FIRST WAVE RUSSIAN ÉMIGRÉS IN AFRICA, CHINA AND SOUTH AMERICA

An NCEEER Working Paper by

Laurie Manchester



**National Council for Eurasian
and East European Research**

University of Washington

Box 353650

Seattle, WA 98195

info@nceeer.org

<http://www.nceeer.org/>



TITLE VIII PROGRAM

Project Information*

Principal Investigator: Laurie Manchester
NCEEER Contract Number: 827-07g
Date: September 29, 2013

Copyright Information

Individual researchers retain the copyright on their work products derived from research funded through a contract or grant from the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research (NCEEER). However, the NCEEER and the United States Government have the right to duplicate and disseminate, in written and electronic form, reports submitted to NCEEER to fulfill Contract or Grant Agreements either (a) for NCEEER's own internal use, or (b) for use by the United States Government, and as follows: (1) for further dissemination to domestic, international, and foreign governments, entities and/or individuals to serve official United States Government purposes or (2) for dissemination in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act or other law or policy of the United States Government granting the public access to documents held by the United States Government. Neither NCEEER nor the United States Government nor any recipient of this Report may use it for commercial sale.

* The work leading to this report was supported in part by contract or grant funds provided by the National Council for Eurasian and East European Research, funds which were made available by the U.S. Department of State under Title VIII (The Soviet-East European Research and Training Act of 1983, as amended). The analysis and interpretations contained herein are those of the author.

Executive Summary

This paper explores how first wave Russian émigrés, as stateless refugees, exhibited colonial impulses in areas of the world where informal and formal colonialism were practiced by Western powers. Questioning the traditional assumption that the state alone—in the guise of people who have power as experts or state officials—is the driving force of colonialism. I discuss how Russian émigrés acted as amateur ethnographers, missionaries and organizers of émigré resettlement movements in Africa, China and South America. In striking contrast to Westerners in the colonial world, Russian émigrés also laid claim to these three areas by remarking in the personal texts that the landscapes and indigenous peoples of these regions reminded them of Russia and the peoples of the Russian empire, including Russian peasants. The experience of statelessness, whereby émigrés needed desperately to replace the world they had lost, coupled with the humiliation they experienced at the hands of colonizers, encouraged some of these former subjects of a multi-national empire—and those who exhibited these impulses primarily belonged to the dominant ethnicity and ruling social estate of that empire—to view themselves as competing with European and American colonizers when they found themselves living in a colonial setting.

Introduction

The traditional assumption about exiles is that they live only in the past, denying the present or future.¹ Yet the first wave Russian émigrés who lived in parts of the formal and informal “colonial” world studied in this paper—Africa, China and South America—were primarily engaged in a different mission: to engage in amateur ethnography, recording their observations about the customs, morals, daily life, economies and religions of the people they encountered abroad. This mission was future-orientated, for they justified their time in exile by collecting new information to impart to a Bolshevik-free Russia.² But for some refugees—not coincidentally primarily those who belonged to the dominant ethnicity and ruling social estate of the former Russian empire--it was also part of another future-orientated mission: to use their time in exile to find territory and new subjects for the extraterritorial nation of “Russia Abroad.”³ These colonial impulses were especially prevalent in the early 1930s, when, following the end of N.E.P. and the colossal changes brought about by collectivization, many émigrés gave up their hope of returning to a Bolshevik-free in their lifetime. This paper explores how one response to statelessness that first wave Russian émigrés in colonial parts of the world adopted was to engage in colonial behavior and strategies, thereby challenges the traditional notion that the state alone—in the guise of people who have power as experts or state officials—is the driving force of colonialism.⁴

Although the Russian Empire was contiguous, its rulers exhibited at various times colonial ambitions in these three areas of the world in the late Imperial period. In 1888, the first Russian Orthodox church was opened in South America under the auspices of Konstantin Pobedonostsev, director of the Holy Synod. He hoped to save from apostasy and bring under the control of the Russian Orthodox Church

¹ For one example, see Andre Aciman, *Letters of Transit: Reflections on Exile, Identity, Language, and Loss* (New York, 1999), 10.

² Diaspora as a future-orientated project based on the past lies at the heart of the mission of the Jewish diaspora, and future orientation has become part of the study of a number of other diasporas, including the African American diaspora. See Jenny Burman, “Remittance; Or, Diasporic Economies of Yearning,” *Small Axe*, 12 (September 2002), v..6, no.2:50.

³ The term “Russia Abroad,” to describe the émigré’s extraterritorial nation, was first used at the all-Russian congress of émigrés—the most inclusive of any such congress ever held—in Paris in 1926.

⁴ I am defining colonial impulses as when you want your way of life to be adopted by people whom you consider inferior, and whereby you will benefit economically or politically by having these people adopt your way of life.

the hundreds of thousands of Orthodox peasants from Slavic and Arab countries who had migrated to South America. Persecuted minorities and religious groups migrated to South America from the Russian empire before the revolution. So did significant numbers of ethnic Russian peasants. 160,000 former subjects of the Russian Empire, for example, were already living in Argentina in 1917. Pobedonostsev's missionary activity abroad was not limited to South America. He also sponsored the opening of a Russian mission in Abyssinia in 1888. He and other government officials were associated with two covert attempts to settle Russian Cossack communities in Abyssinia, at a time when the Russian Orthodox Church was exploring reuniting with Abyssinian Orthodoxy. In China, the Russian Ecclesiastical Mission, founded in Peking in 1715, had become a major center of sinology by the nineteenth century, and by 1914 had overseen the baptism and schooling of thousands of Chinese. It received new lifeblood with the settlement of thousands of Cossacks peasants in Manchuria in the 1890s, and in 1898, when the Russian State built the city of Harbin. Harbin was leased to Russian Imperial jurisdiction for the construction of the Chinese Eastern Railroad (CER), and was part of the Russian State's attempt to exercise hegemony over Manchuria. At least 45,000 Russians were living in Harbin alone in 1913. In turn, the Russian Imperial Geographic Society sent more expeditions to Africa and China than to anywhere else outside of the Russian empire, and in 1914 launched its second major expedition to South America

Following the White army's loss, hundreds of thousands of Russian émigrés from all social estates joined these Russian settlers in China. At its height in the 1920s, the population of former subjects of the Russian empire in Harbin swelled to 200,000. Harbin was run as a Russian colonial zone, with its own police and laws, until 1920, the year Russians lost their extraterritorial status in China. General Horvat ran the railroad from 1902-1920, and until his death in 1937, was the leader in China of ROVS, the international Russian émigré military organization. Because Russian remained the lingua franca in Harbin until the 1950s-- with émigrés having expanded the pre-revolutionary Russian infrastructure of educational and religious institutions-- it was possible for Russians in Harbin to engage in all the white collar professions that had practiced in Russia. Those who worked for the CER lived prosperously until

the railroad was sold to the Japanese in 1935. In addition to Harbin, tens of thousands of Russian peasants lived in border villages in the Chinese countryside, many having fled Soviet collectivization. A significant White Russian community also existed in Shanghai, numbering at its height in the mid-1930s approximately 25,000. Several thousand Russians populated each of several other Chinese cities, such as Tientsin. Russian primary and secondary schools existed in most of these Westernized cities, but many Russian parents sent their children to foreign schools to bolster their prospects of post-graduate employment in Western firms in these cities. In cities with foreign concessions such as Shanghai and Tientsin, racial politics made it difficult for Russians to engage in manual labor (in Harbin, by contrast, most Russian employed Russian servants and many Russians engaged in skilled trades). Russian women were, however, the only European women who worked as taxi dancers in significant numbers, and former White army soldiers often were employed as bodyguards to wealthy businessmen, including Chinese merchants. Thousands of former Russian soldiers also served as professional soldiers and officers in Chinese armies in the 1920s. A few Russians opened highly successful businesses in Shanghai and in Harbin before 1935.

In 1920-1921 the White Russian Navy was stranded in Tunisia and Egypt. Approximately half of the approximately 3,000 Navy personnel and their families on these ships remained in Africa. Navy wives worked as nannies, nurses and tutors, while former navy personnel joined the foreign legion, or worked as bank tellers or chauffeurs. From the mid-1920s until the mid-1930s, several thousand Russian professionals migrated from Western Europe to Africa. Some were on temporary assignment, and left their families in Europe. In Africa their Russian diplomas were sufficient to secure prestigious positions, and they were paid significantly more than Russian émigrés anywhere else in the world. In Africa émigrés worked as doctors, dentists, surveyors and engineers. Their colonies never numbered more than several hundred in any single geographic location. Most Russian émigrés in Africa were former nobles. In French colonies, stateless Russians were protected by French law, but in Egypt, for example, they were the first Europeans be subject to Egyptian law beginning in 1923.

First wave Russian émigrés also fled to South America in two waves before World War II. Approximately 3,000 men who had fought with General Wrangel arrived in Brazil in 1921. In the late 1920s between 50,000 and 60,000 peasants of different nationalities, including Russians, arrived in Brazil from the former Tsarist province of Bessarabia. In the early 1930s, several hundred Russian professionals arrived in Brazil from Europe, around the same time a contingent of Old Believers migrated there from Lithuania. The only other countries in South America that had significant populations of White Russians were Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay. Several thousand peasants and several hundred professionals migrated to these countries around 1923; in the first half of the 1930s, several thousand more professionals migrated to these countries from Europe. Educated Russians in South America usually had to spend their first five years working as manual laborers or servants on plantations, farms or factories; some built roads. Once they mastered Spanish or Portuguese, some were able to resume the professions they had practiced in Russia, while others opened their own business or worked for foreign companies.

Politically, first wave Russian émigrés in these three formal areas of the world were more conservative than Russian émigrés in Western European countries. As in the case of Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, very few socialists or liberals migrated to the “colonial” world. Russian first wave émigrés throughout the world were linked by an international press. The Russian dailies and journals published in European centers of the emigration were read in the colonial world, though Buenos-Aires, San-Pablo, Harbin, Tientsin and Shanghai also published dailies and journals to which some Russians in Europe subscribed. The Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, based in Serbia, supervised all of the parishes in Africa, China and South America, just as it supervised most parishes outside of the Soviet Union. International Russian professional, military, political and cultural societies linked Russians in these areas to other Russians globally. Given how transient Russian émigrés were, many émigrés--especially those who were professionals--had close relatives with whom they corresponded strewn across the globe.

Stateless Russians in these three parts of the world were eligible from 1921 onwards to hold Nansen passports issued by the League of Nations; some did. In South American countries, it was not difficult to become a citizen, and some émigrés did become citizens of the countries they were living in.

In China, very few chose to become Chinese citizens. Some Harbiners became Soviet citizens in 1924 to retain their jobs on the CER; most remained stateless. In French colonies in Africa becoming French citizens was a possibility, but because many first wave émigrés equated adopting foreign citizenship with denationalization, many refused to do this; this was also the case for some émigrés in South America.

Discovering the Russian Empire in the “Colonial” World

Whereas many Western travelers and colonizers saw the colonial world as the opposite of their homeland, Russian émigrés often found the Russia they had lost in these areas of the world.⁵ Unlike other Europeans, who could at any time theoretically return to their homeland, Russian émigrés, consumed by homesickness for a home they might never see again, were eager to find a replacement. They did not attempt to find this replacement in Western Europe, whose culture the Russian intelligentsia had for generations perceived as superior. Nor did they seek it in Slavic Eastern Europe, whose universities and cultural institutions welcomed Russia émigrés as representatives of a more developed culture, but whose nations were ruled between the wars by members of the dominant ethnicity and whose independence Russia had traditionally championed. It was in the areas of the world where the indigenous population was either directly or indirectly being exploited by foreign powers, where indigenous peoples were not in control of their own destiny and power was thus theoretically up for grabs, that they found their replacement. They depicted Africa, China and South America as the opposite of Europe, but far from the opposite of Russia, as a means of conquering and dominating them.

The existence of a contiguous ecologically diverse Russian empire made it particularly easy for them to imagine even the most tropical regions of Africa and South America as part of Russia. The two areas of the Russian empire that they invoked the most as reminiscent of these two continents were Ukraine, and, to a lesser extent, the Caucasus. One émigré described in a 1935 article published in a Russian Argentinian daily, how the Uruguayan countryside, with its snakes, huge frogs and parrots,

⁵ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London, 1992).

reminded him of the Caucasus.⁶ Another émigré described in 1930 his first trip through the Argentinian countryside, remarking how he thought he was in the Kuban as they drove through the hills:

it is as if we are traveling in the Kuban. The very same unrestricted steppe, fields of corn, large herds of cows and horses. Here you have spread about farms--“ranches”--surrounded, as we have, by Lombardy poplar and Acadia trees. The very same purple scrubs extend across the steppe. The landscape is completely Kubanesque.”⁷

Yet another argued that the Venezuelan coast was a replica of the Black sea coast, and still another wrote a friend in Europe in 1929 from the Congo that “the negroes’ little huts are completely like those of our little brother Ukrainians.”⁸ By finding Slavic Ukraine, a region both populated mainly by a nationality linguistically and religiously closely related to Russians and historically integrally linked to Russia, rather than an area of the Russian empire more culturally and historically distinct from Russia, as analogous to these continents, Russian émigrés were able to claim them as their own.

Their identification of the Russian border regions with the colonial world is not because they were averse to defining the colonial world as the Russian heartland. This predominantly noble group divided Russia not only into colony and metropolis, but into the capital cities versus the district provinces. Describing Harbin when he arrived in 1920, a former noble remarked, as almost every Russian refugee who arrived in Harbin did, that it was like returning to pre-revolutionary Russia before the civil war and revolution: “as if our entire old Russian way of life was completely preserved down to the last detail, as if under protected glass in some sort of museum.”⁹

While defining neighboring Manchuria as part of Russia follows both Russian Imperial intentions as well as the patterns of Russian colonization illuminated by Willard Sunderland—that nineteenth century Russian historians and statesmen justified their colonization of regions bordering Russia as a

⁶ I.K. Bitte, “Minas,” *Russkii v Argentine* (hereafter *RvA*), 3 February 1935. 3.

⁷ Hoover Institute Archive (hereafter, HILA), Boris Nicolaevsky Collection, 635:1:1-2 (A. Bardizh-Griuner, “Pis’ma iz Argentiny: Ot Biuenos-Airesa do Misiones”).

⁸ Rozhdestvenskii, “Ocherki Venetsuely (putevye zemtki)” *RvA*, 1 May 1937, 1; V.K. Ronin, “Kolonial’nye memuray, dnevniki i pis’ma Russkikh emigrantov (20-30 gody XX veka),” in *Odissei: Chelovek v istorii* (Moscow, 2000), 235-237.

⁹ State Archive of the Russian Federation (hereafter, GARF), f.6599, op.1, d.8, l.1, 6, l.26, 219 (I.S. Il’in’s diary, 5.02.1920, 8.2.1920, 17.4.1920, 7.09.1924)

“natural” progression—Russian émigrés did not only find central Russia in Manchuria.¹⁰ One émigré described the train station in the capital of Tunisia as “a pitiful, one story building, completely not fit for the grandiose reserve of warehouses on the embankment. Yet it was as if everything at the station was very and long familiar to me, as if I had ended up at a small Russia provincial station.” Another émigré described the entire structure of Brazil as comparable to pre-revolutionary Russia, including the enormous gulf between the folk and the intelligentsia.¹¹ By finding parallels between the colonial world and the Russian heartland, as well as Russian border regions, Russian émigrés expressed their imperialist sentiment that Russia was invariably defined as including all areas of the Russian empire, and this diverse definition of Russia affirmed that “Russia” could be found virtually anywhere abroad.

Just as the lands of the colonial world reminded them of their native Russia, so did its indigenous peoples. Whereas Western travelers tended to describe an Africa and South America devoid of humans, focusing on the natural surroundings, Russian émigrés almost always depicted the residents as well as their environs.¹² This fascination with the indigenous peoples of these regions explains why an Argentinian Russian 1930s émigré daily newspaper sometimes included pictures of naked Indians—caption less and without any accompanying articles—on the middle of its front page.

As Susan Layton found in her study of Russian explorers to the Caucasus in the Nineteenth Century, Russians émigrés, also venturing into these areas for the first time, tended to liken the indigenous peoples of these territories to Russian peasants.¹³ A Russian émigré working as an agronomist in the Congo wrote his family in 1929: “a Black is clever, like a *muzhik*” and concerning native Africans, “their health reminds me of our strong kulaks.”¹⁴ Another, a former Zemstvo doctor who arrived in

¹⁰ Willard Sunderland, *Taming the Wild Field: Colonization and Empire on the Russian Steppe* (Ithaca, N.Y., 2006).

¹¹ GARF, f.6340, op.1, d.2, l.35 (Aleksandr Voevodin, “Dva goda v Tunizii,” 1928); l.35; the Manuscript Division of the Russian State Library (hereafter, OR RGB), f.587, k.5, d.2, l.6, l.19 (E.M. Spiridonova, “Braziliia”, 1946).

¹² Pratt, 125.

¹³ Susan Layton, *Russian Literature and Empire: Conquest of the Caucasus from Pushkin to Tolstoy* (Cambridge, U.K., 2005).

¹⁴ Quoted in Ronin, 243-244. Ronin argues that Russian émigrés who arrived from Belgium to work in the Congo generally “returned” to pre-revolutionary Russia, through the high social status they were awarded there, the power they exercised over the native population, and their ability to practice the professions they had engaged in in Russia. I am, however, describing this “return” as a colonial impulse, and am examining how these colonial impulses were present among some émigrés not only in the Congo, but in other African countries, in China, and in South America.

Central Africa in 1924 to practice medicine, wrote in 1931 that the dances of tribe he was closest to in Africa reminded him of the Russian peasant sectarian group, the Khlysty.¹⁵ A few former military officers who ran plantations in the Congo organized their soldiers along the same lines they had directed their troops. The descriptions by one former officer in his memoirs of his troops during World War One, and later, his African workers, are eerily similar; in both cases he argued that he succeeded not only in enforcing external discipline upon his soldiers and workers, but in restructuring their hearts and minds.¹⁶ The seeming racial differences between Russian peasants and indigenous Africans were muted for émigrés by the racialization of Russian peasants by nobles during centuries of serfdom.¹⁷

Another émigré did not bother to articulate which nationality of peasants from the Russian empire (if any) he was invoking, further displaying émigré's conflation of the Russian heartland and borderlands. Describing the peoples of Brazil in 1930 as diverse, industrious and open-hearted farmers, he stated: "Russian readers have without difficulty guessed that I am writing about Russia... However, I am not writing about Russia, but about a country across the ocean."¹⁸ Émigrés were thus also prone to liken indigenous populations to the minority populations of the Russian empire. One compared the character of the population in Chile to the population of the Caucasus where he and his correspondent had both attended gymnasium before the revolution.¹⁹ Like some Western travelers, who projected their concerns about their homeland onto the colonial world, Russian émigrés found in these regions the minority peoples and Russian peasants they had lost either to the Bolsheviks or to independence.²⁰ By finding the peoples of the former Russian empire in these regions, they were also, laying claim to them.

Émigrés were much more likely, however, to liken the indigenous peoples in Sub-Saharan Africa and South America to Russian peasants than they were the Chinese or Arabs, the two indigenous peoples of these areas of the world with whom they were most familiar. Chinese people and Arabs had lived in the

¹⁵ HILA, Maria Vrangal collection, 57-14 (P.K. Iur'ev, to M. Vrangal, 1931).

¹⁶ Ronin, 241-242.

¹⁷ Peter Kolchin, *Unfree Labor: American Slavery and Russian Serfdom* (Cambridge, MA, 1987).

¹⁸ HILA, Maria Vrangal collection, 58-8, 1.1 ("Ocherk inzhenea I.D. Pokrovskogo").

¹⁹ Bakhmeteff Archive (hereafter, BAR), Rozhdestvenskii Collection, box 1 (A.N. Rozhdestvenskii to M.M. Karpovich, 15.06.1947). Rozhdestvenskii had lived in Chile between the wars.

²⁰ Tim Youngs, *Travelers in Africa: British travelogues, 1850-1900* (Manchester, UK, 2004), 6.

Russian empire, rendering them not only more familiar, but also part of the world they had lost. They also differentiate them as representative of ancient, great civilizations that had been destroyed, as was the Russian empire, by Western modernity. This factor binds and likens Russian elites to their cultural elites, rather than their peasants, allowing émigrés to find themselves, or rather remnants of themselves, in the colonial world.

Parallels between Russian and Chinese or Arab Civilization is always predicated by reference to their ancient, no longer existent, pasts. In particular, respect for China's ancient history, culture and religions is widespread in émigré narratives.²¹ In response to a query from an émigré friend in Europe about Russian émigré life in Shanghai, one nobleman felt obligated to begin his response, written in 1930, with a twenty-five page history of "the most ancient nation in the world." In his history he expressed nostalgia for a distinct Chinese past he had not known, when dynasties ruled. He bemoaned the influence of European culture, stating "now China is not what it was." Only the closed city in Peking offered entrance into China's rich past. The predominant Western view in the early Twentieth Century was that China was dying of stagnancy and had to adopt Western ways or perish; this was not the consensus among émigrés. Like Soviet Russia, China was being devastated by rapid change, a point our nobleman in Shanghai indirectly made by comparing the Bolshevik revolution to the Chinese revolution of 1911.²² Émigrés clearly felt superior to the present-day Chinese and Arab peoples, on the other hand, although they ascribe to them, unlike Western travelers, numerous positive as well as negative traits.

Émigrés' questioning the notion of Western superiority also led some to find and emphasize similar traits between themselves (as members of a now classless Russian nationality) and the indigenous people in these regions. Numerous émigrés underscore that the hospitality among creoles in various South American countries reminded them of their kinsmen in Russia.²³ And even when describing the Africans

²¹ For an example on Arab civilization see HILA, Maria Vrangal collection, 57-12 (Aleksandr Kolenko to M. Vrangal, 22.09.1929).

²² HILA, 56-2 (A. Klibukov to M. Vrangal, 2.11.1930). For another example, see HILA, I.N. Seryshev collection, box 9, "V zemnom plane moego vechnogo bytiia," 113-114,

²³ For two examples see S. Golubintsev, "V Paragvaiskoi kavalerii," *Rodimyi krai*, no.121-123 republished on <http://www.dk1868.ru/history/PARAGVAY.htm>; "Pis'ma iz Argentiny," 35.

in Sub-Saharan Africa, whom they generally depict in the same overtly racist hues employed by Westerners, émigrés stressed that the indigenous peoples are superstitious, just like Russians.²⁴ One of the reasons émigrés argued that indigenous peoples preferred them to “foreigners” (interestingly, Russian émigrés rarely referred to themselves as foreigners) was because they shared certain traits with the indigenous peoples, while Westerners had nothing in common with them.

“Competing” with Western Colonizers

Émigrés in the colonial world understood that they enjoyed a higher material standard of living there than émigrés in Europe. One émigré wrote in his diary in Tientsin in 1932 that although he envied the more cultured world Russians in Europe enjoyed, he knew he would never be able to afford the inexpensive servant he employed in China if he lived in Europe.²⁵ Many who came to live in Africa and South America migrated from Europe, and made direct comparisons between life in Europe and in its “colonies.” Whereas Russians in Europe occupied the lowest rungs of society, Russians were at least above the indigenous peoples in the colonial world. Their skin color alone guaranteed them a certain degree of privileged status. From Sudan in 1931 a Prince wrote a friend in Europe that: “our life is drastically different from the life of the masses of refugees and more than anything resembles an exotic film, than the international phenomenon of the Russian emigration.”²⁶ Many, such as Baron Nol’de, saw the colonial world as a return to pre-emancipation Russia, and they justified their right to the privileges the colonial world afforded them precisely because they had suffered as refugees in Europe. In a letter to his wife in France, he wrote from the Congo, in 1926:

In general one of the advantages of my work is that here I am a master (*barin*). Not a refugee, not any kind of petty clerical worker, but an equal, even higher than other Whites and gentlemen. A “*bvana*”, before whom Blacks hold their hats in their hands when they speak to me, whose orders they fulfill without the slightest hesitation. In a word, I have become a person. This is amusing,

²⁴ On superstition, see Ronin, 236.

²⁵ Ivan Serebrennikov, *Kitai i russkaia emigratsiia v dnevnikh I.I. I.A.N. Serebrennikovykh, 1919-1934* (Moscow, 2006):211 (30.07.1932). For the importance an émigré places on the fact most Russians in the capital of Paraguay employed servants see HILA, Maria Vrangél collection, 59-5, 1.2, 6 (Ia.K. Tumanov to M.D. Vrangél, 7.8.1930).

²⁶ HILA, Maria Vrangél collection, 57-21 (Dmitri Trubetskoi to M. Vrangél, 17.10.1931).

but is it completely comforting, and one can understand it only by having suffered through our plight as refugees.²⁷

Yet it was not just their race, but also the fact that all Europeans, not just them, were foreign to the colonial world, that attracted émigrés to the colonial world. As one recalled in her memoir: “In Morocco we were in the end the same as all the other foreigners, even the French.”²⁸ But they were not always treated equally by Western European colonizers, and they felt they should be, as they had just as much right—or more—to be living in these foreign lands.

Unlike Russian émigrés in Europe, who wrote little about anyone besides Russians, Russian émigrés in the colonial world not only wrote about the indigenous peoples they encountered, they also included descriptions of the Western peoples with whom they came into contact. They described in copious detail any humiliation and exploitation they encountered at the hands of the Western colonizers. Describing his life in Shanghai, one émigré complained: “Foreigners looked at Russians as if they stood above the Chinese, and looked at the Chinese as if they were animals. They looked at Russians, like uninvited hangers-on, who had insolently intruded into Shanghai.”²⁹ Whereas Russian émigrés eagerly found at least some traits that they shared with the indigenous peoples in the colonial world, émigrés were apt to distance themselves from Westerners, just as they argued Westerners distanced themselves from them. This disassociation explains why Russians in these three areas rarely referred to themselves as Europeans after 1917, preferring to call themselves “Russians.”

²⁷ Manuscript Division, Russian National Library (hereafter, OR RNB), f. 1401op.1, d.23, l.65ob (B.A. Nol'de to T.S. Nol'de, 10.10.1926), On portraying émigré Russian Harbin as a replica of pre-emancipation Russia, with Chinese servants replacing serfs, see E. Rachinskaia, *Pereletnye ptits: vospominaniia* (San Francisco, 1982), 92. For other examples from Africa that evoke pre-emancipation Russia see HILA, Maria Vrangeli collection, 57-14 (N. Kofodkova to M. Vrangeli, 4.11.1936); *ibid.*, 57-11 (M. Gavrilov to M. Vrangeli, 20.3.1928); Mariia Sazonovich-Kozhina, “Pis'ma russkoi emigrantki iz Bel'giiskogo Kongo,” *Illustrirovannaia Rossiia* 718 (February 11, 1939):8.

²⁸ The Solzhenitsyn Archive of Russia Abroad (hereafter BFZR), f.1, M-52 (I.G. Berkman's 1979 memoirs). For a similar example from Brazil see HILA, Maria Vrangeli collection, 58-8, 23 (26 page untitled and unsigned manuscript).

²⁹ BFZR, f.1, M-198, ll. 2-3 (A.S. Ivel'skii, “Vospominaniia”). For other examples, see HILA, Maria Vrangeli Collection, 56-2 (N.A. Ivanov to M. Vrangeli, 1929); GARF, f.6340, op.1, d.2, ll.7-8, l.31 (Aleksandr Voevodin, “Dva goda v Tunizii,” 1928); BAR, E.I. Lakier General Manuscript Collection, l.12 (S.A. Susuchinskaia, “Begstvo iz Odessy v Sevastopol' i evakuatsiia iz Rossii v Egipet,”); BAR, I.M. Shadrin, General manuscript collection., l.7, l.39 (1936 memoir on Tunisia).

Yet if they now spurned Western peoples, they had once respected, even often fashioned themselves upon, the culture of these peoples, and they could not help occasionally slipping into measuring themselves by Western standards. But their present humiliation as stateless refugees also made it imperative that they remind Westerners that they too came from a great country, and like any great country, theirs had a unique, distinct culture. The diary of Ivan Serebrennikov, a peasant born former social revolutionary intellectual who lived in exile in Tientsin, captures this ambivalence. Writing in 1930, he commented on an article in the local paper about a Russian woman who had killed her common-law Russian husband when he refused to marry her. He was shocked by the brutality of the crime (she killed him with a knife), but also because this woman had previously been married to an Englishman and “a Russian woman who had spent so much time with foreigners should be more cultured.” Yet this “culture” that should have prevented this woman from her crime was not something he wanted for Russian youths in Tientsin. He complained that because of the lack of Russian secondary schools in the city, Russian youths all spoke English and graduated from college half-English, having been born imbued with the “foreign English spirit” of the city, which was permeated with the carefree lifestyle of a colony. Acknowledging how much English charities had helped Russian refugees, he nevertheless accused English doctors of letting a twelve year old Russian boy die in their hospital due to negligence. He was further distressed by articles about drunken Russians in local English newspapers, and angry that the monuments wealthy Russian merchants had bequeathed to the city in the late nineteenth century had been forgotten. He countered his sad musings about the fates of Russian prostitutes in China, beaten regularly by their foreign clients, with expressions of pride about those Russians who, unlike Westernizers, had come to China without a penny in 1918 and without the assistance of credit had built up financial empires. But his greatest source of pride—one that all other émigrés shared—was when foreigners came to Russian cultural events and watched their Russian Orthodox Easter processions in large numbers.³⁰ As we will see, émigrés sought to convert “foreigners” as well as indigenous peoples.

³⁰ Serebrennikov, 109, 116, 149, 164, 206, 210 (24.04.1930, 12.11.1930, 18.12.1931, 13.02.1932, 20.07.1932, 29.07.1932).

The most common way for émigrés to distance themselves from Westerners was to contrast the different ways Russians and Westerners treated indigenous people.³¹ Professor Georgii Gins, describing Shanghai in an oral interview he gave in the 1960s, stated that the Russians “did not treat the natives so haughtily as the Englishman did...but it is also very important that Russians not only came later but also were neighbors of Chinese and had some old connections with the Chinese nation and people.” He despised seeing foreigners putting their legs on the shoulders of “men-horses” (rickshaws), and watching these foreigners pay their “men-horses” by throwing money on the sidewalk. He contrasted this to his own behavior, when he paid a rickshaw driver the full fare after insisting the driver stop well before the destination when it was clear he was close to suffocation. A “foreigner” would never have done the same.³²

Like other émigrés in the colonial world, Gins, who from 1909, helped oversee the Russian colonization of Turkestan, never mentioned in his critique of the treatment of indigenous peoples by Westerners any of the brutal acts the Russian state perpetuated toward any of the national minorities of

³¹ There is evidence that some Russians did interact differently with indigenous peoples in China and that the Chinese—the only indigenous peoples whose testimony we have in these three regions—did view them differently than other Europeans. In China, far more Russians intermarried with the Chinese, although virtually all marriages were between Russian women and Chinese men. The children of such marriages were raised with Russian as their native tongue; only a minority learned Chinese. Their fathers also converted, or were already converts, to Russian Orthodoxy. Chinese was taught in most Russian émigré schools and fluent children of émigrés served as interpreters for the Red Army when it liberated Manchuria in 1945. Russian repatriates from China to the USSR after Stalin’s death filled the Eastern Studies and Language departments of Soviet universities. Russian émigrés in China are the only Europeans in any Colonial setting that I have found so far who translated and published popular editions of indigenous fiction. The Shanghai émigré journal *Podene’nik* was partially devoted to translations of Chinese fiction and articles by Chinese scholars about Chinese culture. In Russian home movies and television documentaries since the fall of the Soviet Union, Russian repatriates are also welcomed by their former Chinese neighbors and school friends. Chinese alumnus of Harbin’s Russian Institutes have also contribute to alumni journals. In 1998 one Chinese alumnus traveled to Russia with his family and stayed with various former friends in different cities. Vera Dun, “Kratkie svedeniia o Pekintsakh-KhSML,” *Druz’iam ot druzei*, 1999, no.50:33-34. Another Chinese alumni recalled sorrowfully the beauty of the main Russian Orthodox cathedral that was destroyed in Harbin during the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s. Sun Iiu-nan, “Kharbin-Gorod moego detstva,” *Druz’iam ot druzei*, 53 (December 2000), 34-35. This evidence is in keeping with the thesis several scholars have asserted regarding how Russian Imperial colonial ambitions abroad differed from that of other European colonialists Ilya Vinkovetsky, *Russian America: An Overseas Colony of a Continental Empire, 1804-1867* (Oxford, 2011); R.K.I. Quedsted, “‘Matey’ Imperialists? The Tsarist Russians in Manchuria, 1895-1917 (Hong Kong, 1982). Miscegenation was also generally not frowned upon by pre-revolutionary Russians in the Russian empire (Robert Geraci, “Genocidal Impulses and Fantasies in Imperial Russia,” in Dirk A Moses (ed.) *Empire, Colony, Genocide: Conquests, Occupation and Subaltern Resistance in World History* (N.Y., 2008), 364).

³² George C. Guins, *Professor and Government Official: Russia, China and California and Related Material: Oral History Transcript* (Berkeley, 1968),” 277; See also the unsigned 1929 letter to M. Vrangal from Shanghai, in her collection at HILA, Maria Vrangal collection, 54-7.

the Russian empire. In fact, while émigrés living in former parts of the Russian empire in Europe understood that local populations regarded them with hostility due to Tsarist cultural russification policies, even in the case of Manchuria, where there had been a dominant Russian Imperial presence, émigrés only bragged about what Russians had given the people and region.³³ When Russians compared the treatment of nationalities in the Russian empire, they claimed it had been fundamentally different. The wife of the General Beliaev who we will meet in the final section of this paper, moved to the Caucasus in 1911 when her husband was stationed there. She directly contrasted the treatment of Indians in Paraguay to the peoples of the Caucasus: “This cruel, unfair fate stripped them of all the joys of an unrestricted life, which we witnessed in our homeland (*u nas*) among the freedom loving proud men of the Caucasus.”³⁴

Émigrés in China and Africa also argued that they treated their servants much better than Westerners. In her 1965 memoir, an émigré who lived in South Africa claimed that Russians never humiliated their servants the way the Boers and English did. They also paid them well, fed them, never over worked them and even spoiled them—without over spoiling them--and helped their families.³⁵ Émigrés in the Congo concluded that Belgians were so cruel to their servants because they themselves were, unlike Russian émigrés in the Congo, not of high social origin, and thus did not know how to treat servants since they had not been raised with them working in their homes..³⁶

Émigrés argued that indigenous peoples decidedly preferred them, even adored them, mainly because of how humanely émigrés treated them. Baron Nol’de wrote his wife from the Congo in 1926: “In general, I can say that the Blacks interact absolutely wonderfully with me, perhaps because I never beat them and even don’t yell at them, which, unfortunately, the Whites allowed themselves to do earlier. Now that has almost ceased, because I made it very clear once and for all that I will not tolerate that kind of treatment (*vospitanie*).” Nol’de treated them so humanely, because, he, a noble used to ruling peasant soldiers and peasant servants, paternalistically understood their child-like nature: “Maybe once some time

³³ See the historical narrative of the CER railroad from 1896 to 1923 in HILA, E.K. Nilus Collection, 1-2. On Lithuania see HILA, Maria Vrangeli collection, 54-7 (M.V. Chepenskaia, “Svedeniia,” 1929).

³⁴ OR RGB, f.587, k.2, d.57, l.2 (A.A. Beliaeva, “Nashi indeitsy. 1954).

³⁵ BAR, E.L. Miller, box 2, “Russkie v Iuzhnoi Afrika” (1965), 58.

³⁶ Ronin, 247.

has passed I will also yell, swear and what have you. But I don't think so...you can't demand much from a Black for they are children of nature and aren't capable of thinking things through."³⁷

Not all émigrés shared this paternalistic view of indigenous people, but many others shared Nol'de's belief that humanity was part of the Russian national character, that indigenous peoples decidedly preferred Russians to other Whites, and that Russians should save the natives from cruel Western colonizers. In making these arguments, some émigrés adopted the genre of the noble savage and "went native". A noble born metallurgical engineer who serialized his memoir about working in the jungles of Bolivia in an Argentinian Russian émigré newspaper in 1939, described how he stood up for Indians when they were beaten by Americans with whom he worked: "for us, for Russians, that way of relating to a human being, regardless of his race, is not in our nature." He found it absurd that White Bolivians looked down on Indian Bolivians since Indians, although half-wild, were obviously superior to them. He found Indians sympathetic, modest and unforgettable, and unlike any other Whites, he learned their language fluently. The Indians loved and completely trusted him, saving his life many times, something they wouldn't have done for other Whites. Around late night campfires they told him about the genocidal acts committed against their people. He was flattered when they told him they did not consider him "White"; the great spirit, they told him, can give anyone white skin, but his heart was not that of a White man.³⁸

Yet some other émigrés argued that they had greater success than foreigners in "taming" indigenous peoples precisely because they adopted a sterner paternalism, yet one based on interacting more on a human level with their charges than Westerners did. In letters to Russian émigrés friends in Europe written in the 1930s, one of the few émigrés living in Peru wrote how the Indians who worked on his estate feared him. He was not a sadist, but he knew they could be terrible thieves. He required that they bow to him and take off their hats in his presence, and if they did not greet him, he beat them. Yet his foreign friends in Peru teased him, calling him a "White Indian." For from the start he had possessed

³⁷ OR RNB, f. 1401op.1, d.23, l.42ob, l.43ob (B.A. Nol'de to T.S. Nol'de, 2 July, 1926).

³⁸ BAR, Mikhail Karateev Collection, box 6 ("Na rodnikakh Bolivii").

the desire to get to know them. He learned their language, their hunting techniques, invited them to his home and even once participated in their religious rites. He called them “his” Indians and taught them to play polo.³⁹ This greater intimacy that they shared with their workers and servants is echoed by most émigrés in the colonial world. For example, a noble born émigré who grew up in Harbin stated in her memoirs, “there is no question that China, and more especially the Chinese people, were much closer to the Russian population than to any other nationality. Our homes were taken care of by the Chinese servants, who would become affectionate members of the household, with loyalties, duties and interests closely connected with our own.”⁴⁰

Émigrés in the colonial world generally argued that unlike Westerners, they garnered the respect and trust of indigenous peoples because they either took the time to get to know their culture or that they intuitively understood or sensed what was important to them. Several émigrés in Africa explained, for example, that unlike Europeans, they understood that Blacks had different nationalities, and that they called them by their tribal names, which they greatly preferred.⁴¹

Given their allegedly inherently closer relations with indigenous peoples, émigrés did not fear them. An émigré recalled how shocked the foreign owner of the plantation where he was staying was when he and his Russian friends, despite their host’s warning, went for a walk in the woods in 1929, where no White man had ever dared to venture. They met wild Indians, but went unharmed. He concluded: “And then I remembered that he called himself the king of this area!”⁴² No king, clearly, should fear his subjects.

Émigrés who lived in the colonial world were not united in their evaluation of Western colonialism, though positive assessments of it—that it did more good than harm--appear in hindsight,

³⁹ Igor Dontsov, “Belyi indeets (neobyknovennaia istoriia zagranichnogo kadeta),” *Kadetskaia pereklichka*, 1984, no.36:74-88.

⁴⁰ HILA, Antonina von Arnold Collection (Dora von Arnold, “Bright Skies of Manchuria: Remembrances and Events of our Early Years,” 2:21).

⁴¹ Zinaida Shakhovskaia, “Kongo,” in *Africa glazami emigrantov* (Moscow, 2002), 37; HILA, Maria Vrangeli collection, 57-14 (P.K. Iur’ev, to M. Vrangeli, 1931).

⁴² BFZR, f.1, M-104, l.6 (A.I Kalugin’s memoir).

once émigrés were no longer living in the colonial world.⁴³ One émigré in the colonial world condemned colonialism as the equivalent of the intelligentsia’s belief that “abroad is better,” which he argued had been Russia’s downfall in 1917.⁴⁴ But émigrés, as we will see, did not equate russification with western colonialism. Like the Paris-based émigré intellectual movement Eurasianism, which declared Russia part of the colonial world, albeit a superior part, a would-be leader of its revolt against the West, some émigrés in the colonial world argued that they could save indigenous peoples from Western colonialism. This could do this given that they did not fear them, were similar to them, intuitively understood them, and were preferred by them.⁴⁵ Imperialism is inherent in the Eurasianist’s mission, just as pre-revolutionary statesmen touted Russian empathy for minorities as a justification for imperialism.⁴⁶ They would need these advantages to russify the colonial world, since, as stateless refugees, as they were at a tremendous disadvantage. Yet this disadvantage, in the eyes of the indigenous people, was yet another advantage that made them so unlike Western colonizers..⁴⁷ Émigrés thus partially inverted traditional colonial theories of guardianship; indigenous peoples needed to be protected from Western colonizers while still being fundamentally restructured.

The extent to which Russian émigrés fantasized about revenging their ill treatment at the hands of Westerners and replacing them as the dominant colonizers is dramatically expressed in a handwritten Russian émigré camp newspaper produced and circulated in Tunisia in 1922. A short story in the newspaper, “Tunisia in 2000,” is accompanied by cartoons depicting Russians as starving and badly

⁴³ On colonialism doing more good than harm see Guins interview and Shakhovskaia, “Kongo,” 38. On colonialism doing more harm than good see HILA, Maria Vrangal collection, 57-14 (P.K. Iur’ev, to M. Vrangal, 1931). A few émigrés even argued that colonial economic exploitation would lead to communism. For example, see *ibid.*, 56-2 (A. Klabukov to M. Vrangal, 19.12.1930).

⁴⁴ V. Solokhnika, *Iskry zhizni* (Buenos-Aires, 1969), preface.

⁴⁵ Interestingly, I have uncovered only a few émigré intellectuals in China who affiliated themselves with the Eurasianist movement, and the most prominent of them—Vs.N. Ivanov—was denounced by the Eurasianist movement as promoting “Asianism”. V.P. Nikitin, “Perepiska s “Aziatom” V. Ivanovym,” *Evrasiiskaia Khronika*, 1926, 6:6-12. Several émigrés in China also noted how unpopular Eurasianism was among émigrés in the Far East. See N.V. Ustrialov, *Pis'ma P.P. Suvchinskomu, 1926-1930* (Moscow, 2010) 39 (20.10.28); GARF, f.6599, op.1, d.8, l.1, l.6, l.26, l.149 (I.S. Il’in’s diary, 5.02.1922). Undoubtedly émigré intellectuals who moved to Africa and South America from Western Europe in the early 1930s were familiar with the ideas of Eurasianists, but they do not appear to have given them much weight, hence the apparent absence of any mention of Eurasianism in their personal texts.

⁴⁶ Geraci, “Genocidal Impulses” 361.

⁴⁷ For example, an émigré in Tsindao, writing in 1928, argued that the Chinese liked émigrés because they pitied people without a homeland. HILA, Maria Vrangal collection, 56-2 (A.A. Purin to M.Ia. Domracheev, 8.03.1928).

dressed, contrasted with caricatures of plumb and well-dressed Frenchmen. Yet in the short story, in 2000 in Tunisia Russians lived on the best streets. The Russian language was spoken everywhere, and all the restaurants were Russian. Russians had replaced the French as the colonizing power, and evidently quite quickly: house museums were erected where the contemporary generation's grandfathers had lived.⁴⁸

A Missionizing Diaspora

As we have seen, Russians, at least peasants and minorities, were already present to some extent in the colonial world in the guise of indigenous peoples. Yet to compete with the millions of Soviet citizens, or to even simply try and recapture some of the glory of the Russian empire and stave of being assimilated by Western culture, émigrés needed to engage in russification to fully assimilate native peoples and to add more numbers to their ranks. Émigrés believed they could do this because historically Russians have not had a developed biological concept of Russian national identity; prior to 1917, Orthodox missionaries and scholars debated whether Russian as one's primary tongue or being an Orthodox Christian was the primary criterion to define Russianness.⁴⁹ Disseminating Russian culture abroad among foreigners was indeed one of the three missions articulated by émigré leaders in Paris in the 1920s.⁵⁰ The belief of some émigrés in the possibility of transforming parts of the colonial world into Russia Abroad is evident in a diary entry of a noble émigré describing his new home in Manchuria in 1921: "Here is the Russian spirit which we brought with us. This is also very characteristic and demonstrates the originality and natural Great power force of the Russian *narod*-we brought here all that characterizes our Russianness."⁵¹ Émigrés envisioned russifying the indigenous populations—and some of the foreigners as well—through the traditional means Russians had used in the late Imperial people:

⁴⁸ *Zhili-Byli*, April 1922, no.2, 38-39, 42-45 (New York Public Library).

⁴⁹ See Robert Geraci, *Window on the East: National and Imperial Identities in Late Imperial Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca, NY., 2001), 76-81.

⁵⁰ I. Bunakov, "Chto delat' Russkoi emigratsii?" in Z.N. Gippius, Z.N. and K.R. Kocharovskii (eds.). *Chto delat' Russkoi emigratsii* (Paris: 1930), 3. The other two were: ensuring that Russian youths received specialized higher education abroad that would enable them to rebuild Russia once they returned; and the preservation of pre-revolutionary culture while cultivating a Bolshevik-free Russian culture that could eventually be brought home.

⁵¹ GARF, f.6599, op.1, d.8, 1,6 (I.S. Il'in's diary, 20.03.1921).

employing the science of ethnography to study them, converting them to Russian Orthodoxy, teaching them the Russian language, and culturally russifying their way of life.

In the case of Manchuria, the ethnographic institutions established before the revolution continued their work after 1917. Sinologists such as P.V. Shkurkin, who was one of the founders of The Society of Russian Orientalists in Harbin in 1908, which published the journal *Vestnik Azii* from 1909 to 1928, continued their ethnographic work at these institutions after 1917 (Shkurkin left China in 1929 to emigrate to the United States).

Ethnographic work in Manchuria, however, expanded significantly with the collapse of the Tsarist regime. The other main ethnographic organization in Harbin, *Obshchestvo izucheniia Man'chzhurskogo kraia* (Manchuria Research Society), was founded in 1922, and financed by the CER. Its museum was founded in 1923, and it published *Vestnik Manchzhurii* from 1923-1934 as well as hundreds of pamphlets. In 1945 it was renamed The Harbin Museum of Local Lore, History and Economy (*Kraevedcheskii muzei*) and until 1955 The Harbin Society of Natural History and Ethnography operated at this Museum. The ethnographers and naturalists Vladimir Zhernakov (1909-1969) and Vladimir Ponosov (1899-1975) were just two of the more prominent Russian émigré scholars who began their careers in Manchuria and worked continually at these institutions until their departure from China in 1959 and 1961. Another, less formal, émigré ethnographic venue was the *kruzok vostokovedeniia*, which met from 1928-1937, as part of first the Institute of Commercial and Oriental Sciences (1925-1937) and then the Eastern Studies Faculty of the Institute of St. Vladimir. Over the course of seven years, more than 2600 people attended the meetings of this *kruzok*.⁵² In Harbin, The National Organization of Researchers in the Name of Przheval'skii, named after the famous Russian Imperial explorer, even established between 1929 and 1934 a program for Russian scouts through the museum of the Manchuria

⁵² "Molodye russkie orientalisty," *Rubezh*, 1935, no.48:15-16.

Research Society. It took Russian youths on expeditions and taught them how to be ethnographers of the region.⁵³

In Shanghai and Tientsin, various “think” journals, such as *Vestnik Kitai* (1935-1936) *Zheltyi lik* (1921-1923), and *Ponedel’nik*, (1931-1934) which featured translations of Chinese authors, but had no connection to any ethnographic institutions, also contained ethnographic articles by Russian émigrés about Chinese literature, folklore, religion, art, and history. In the mission statement of *Zheltyi lik*, the editor stated: “We believe, we are convinced that such a publication is useful and necessary, and it is especially necessary now, when the Russian Far East is suffering tragedy, and in which—who knows—maybe China is fated to play a major role.”⁵⁴ Some émigrés understood from the start that their stay in China might be more than temporary, and by familiarizing themselves with their new home and its peoples, they could begin to bring it under their control.

Émigrés in Africa and South America, who lacked the concentrated demographic presence and pre-revolutionary infrastructure Russians in China possessed, lacked ethnographic institutions and “thick” journals. But their colonizing impulses are present in newspaper articles in the émigré newspapers published in South America, and, in the case of Africa, where no regular newspaper was published by émigrés, articles by Russians in Africa about African peoples were published in Russian émigré newspapers in other parts of the world.⁵⁵ For example, an article entitled “The Population of Paraguay,” published in the Russian Argentinian daily in 1935, contained a wealth of demographic statistics, as well as a description of character traits, dwellings, dress, manners, religion and food prices.⁵⁶ Some émigrés in these parts of the world perceived themselves as continuing the ethnographic work begun by Imperial Russian travelers and explorers. In 1936 a Russian émigré who had been employed in Tbilisi as a

⁵³ Museum of Russian Culture (hereafter, MRC), Vladimir Ponosov Collection, box 1 (report about the activities of the Przheval’skii society).

⁵⁴ E.A. Magaram, “Ot redaktsii,” *Zheltyi lik*, 1921, no.1:3.

⁵⁵ For two examples, see A. Sazonoich-Kozhina, “Afrikanskii budni,” *Illustrirovannaia Rossiia*, 1939, no. 8 (718):8-10, 18; “Pis’mo iz Kongo,” *Rul’*, 18 December 1927 (2145):3-4.

⁵⁶ Be, “Naselenie Paragvaia,” *RvA*, 1 September, 1935, 4. Russian newspapers in China, particularly outside of Harbin, were also filled with ethnographic data about the Chinese. The editor of the main Russian émigré Shanghai daily (*Shankhaiskaia zaria*) even published as a book a collection of the articles about Chinese life, culture, morals, history, gender and racial particularities that he had published in his newspaper. L.V. Arnol’dov, *Iz strany belo’ogo sol’ntsa: etudy o Kitae* (Shanghai, 1934).

prosecutor before the revolution, applied for financial support from the League of Nations to travel from France to Venezuela on an exploratory trip to investigate settling Russian refugees there. In a letter to a friend, he confided that he also needed to continue the work of the Russian Geographic Society since he had checked the Turgenev Library in Paris and discovered how little information had been published in Russian before 1917 on Venezuela.⁵⁷

This ethnographic impulse was not limited to scholars, or would-be explorers and would-be journalists. Rank and file educated émigrés in all three parts of the world engaged in amateur or “spontaneous” ethnography by recording *and* analyzing the history, geography and economy of these regions as well as the daily life and rituals of the indigenous populations in their diaries, letters, autobiographies, and scrapbooks. They appear to have been much more engaged in informal ethnographic work than Russian émigrés were in Europe or North America. For example, when Baroness Wrangel, the mother of the General, reached out in 1927 to émigrés throughout the world to report on the living conditions of Russian émigrés in their countries of refuge, both her supporters, and respondents, showed an overwhelming interest in colonial parts of the world; in newspapers articles about the Baroness’ project in the émigré press the only countries mentioned about which she had collected materials were the “exotic” (their terminology) ones, and although there were few Russians in a country such as Uruguay, the Baroness received twenty-six responses from it, as opposed to the thirty-four responses she received from Yugoslavia, one of the largest centers of Russian emigration. And whereas émigrés in Europe and North America tended to follow various forms of a questionnaire she had composed, respondents in Asia, Africa and South America responded not by answering questions, but often by writing detailed sketches of their country of refuge.⁵⁸

Knowing more about populations was a step toward russifying them, but a more advanced stage of russification was conversion to Russian Orthodoxy. After largely ceasing its missionary activity in

⁵⁷ BAR, Rozhdestvenskii, box 1 (A. Markoff to Paon, 28.01.1936; A.N. Rozhdestvenskii to Petr Evgrafovich, 1936).

⁵⁸ I.L. “Zhivaia letopis’ zhivikh: Delo Baronessy M.D. Vrangel”, *Vozrozhdenie*, May 1, 1930; “Interesnyi zamysel,” *Rossiiia i slaviansstvo*, April 5, 1930. The approximately 400 responses she received from émigrés in 58 countries are housed in her collection at the Hoover Institution, boxes 50-59.

1921 to divert all of its resources to assisting Russian refugees, the Peking Spiritual Mission suddenly refocused its activity and resources on missionary work in 1931, reopening missionary schools it had closed in 1921.⁵⁹ This was not because the material situation of refugees had improved; on the contrary, Russian peasants fleeing collectivization caused a new wave of refugees at that same time in China, and the Japanese invasion of Manchuria increased unemployment and depressed the wages of Russians. Rather, the timing of the intensification of missionary work coincides with the moment when many émigrés gave up hope of returning to a Bolshevik-free Russia in their lifetimes. In 1935 missionary work among the Chinese was described by the mission as “very intensive.” In all cities of Northern China there were Russian Orthodox missions, and there were also many in central China, where the Russian population was described as especially enthusiastic and involved in missionary activity, perhaps because of the humiliation they suffered--which Russians in “Russian” Harbin did not--as second class Europeans in these cities. New schools were opened in China in the early 1930s to train both Russian and Chinese missionaries, as were bi-lingual prayer houses. In these schools, Russian boys were taught the Chinese language, morals and way of life. Primary schools that were opened by Russian émigrés for Chinese children were also geared toward preparing graduates to be missionaries, and though knowledge of Russian would not be necessary for Chinese missionaries of Orthodoxy, the Russian language was taught alongside Chinese. “Cultural-enlightenment” work was also propagated by the missions and schools for Chinese children. The mission in the city of Hailar, near outer Mongolia, was referred to in a Russian Orthodox missionary periodical published in China in 1934 as “a center of Orthodox russification.”⁶⁰

In Africa, a few émigrés attempted to extend Russian Orthodoxy among indigenous populations by continuing the late Imperial mission of the Russian Orthodox Church to strengthen its ties to the Eastern Orthodox Coptic Church in Abyssinia. In letters written in 1929 and 1932, one émigré living in Abyssinia, while acknowledging how different the two types of Orthodoxy were, expressed his sense of kinship with the Coptic church he encountered: “the church is strange for us in terms of its rites, but I

⁵⁹ “Otkrytie shkoly v Dukhovnoi Missii,” *Kitaiskii blagovestnik* (hereafter, KB), 1931, no.9:35.

⁶⁰ “Sovremennoe polozhenie missii,” KB, 1935 no.6:113-120; “Kitaiskii shkoly missii,” KB, 1938, no.5:25-27; “Poezdka preosveshchennogo episkopa Viktora po eparkhii,” KB, 1934, no.7-8:34.

respect it very much.” Describing the blood sacrifices their ceremonies involved, he noted: “it has a varied, completely mystical life, pagan rites and customs.” Although they were theologically heretics, he concluded: “But from my point of view they are more Orthodox Christians than we are.” His contact with the Church was not purely superficial; he became good friends with an Ethiopian Bishop. Nevertheless, he disliked living there intensely and wished he had never migrated from Egypt. It wasn’t the simple, “pious“ people he disliked; it was the rich Abyssinians, who drank whiskey and beer, converted to Protestantism or Catholicism, and became philistines just like the Europeans and Russians in Abyssinia.⁶¹ The simple people of Abyssinia, steeped in traditions and non-Westernized, were near and dear to émigrés, just as the lost peoples of pre-revolutionary Russia were.

First wave Russian émigrés built Russian Orthodox Churches in all these three areas before World War II. The churches were built not only to serve the Russian faithful, but to act as missionary vessels. The unusual, beautiful buildings themselves would entice the non-Orthodox to enter, and, as one parishioner stated in a Brazilian Russian daily in 1933, because of the superiority of the Russian faith, “foreigners” (a term never used to refer to indigenous peoples) would leave “Russian in spirit.”⁶²

In South America, Pobedontsev’s mission was continued in the emigration by the very priest he sent to Argentina in 1891. Until his death in 1953, Fr. Konstantin Izrazstov attempted to maintain Orthodoxy among, and convert or reconvert to Orthodoxy, Slavic immigrants and their descendants.⁶³ Despite the poverty of Russian refugees, and the existence of comparatively wealthy Greek and Syrian parishes which welcomed the Russians--even recruiting a Syrian priest who spoke Russian and a Greek priest who had graduated from Moscow Theological Academy before the revolution--the Russian Orthodox Church was insistent on opening separate Russian Orthodox parishes in Brazil, since, as Fr.

⁶¹ HILA, Maria Vrangeli Collection, 57-11 (M. Gavrilov to M. Vrangeli, 20.3.1928, 29.1.1932).

⁶² A. Krats, “Kratkii obzor zhizni russkogo pravoslavnogo prikhoda v San Paulo,” *Russkaia gazeta*, 1 January 1933, no.348:2.

⁶³ GARF, f.r.6343, op.1, d.219, l.126ob (Report of Fr. Konstantin Izrazstov to the Émigré Synod, 2 August 1931).

Konstantin put it in 1923: “Russia cannot turn away from her historical mission as the sponsor of Orthodoxy, regardless of where we are.”⁶⁴

Émigrés also maintained the hegemony of the Russian language amongst Slavic peoples and minorities from the Russian Empire in South America. One article in the Argentinian émigré daily promoting the migration of more Russian to the area proudly stated that when Slavs in South America interact; “the Russian language occupies the supreme position.”⁶⁵ Indeed, advertisements and articles were published in this paper for cultural events of the former minorities of the Russian empire, including non-Slavic peoples, indicating that in lieu of their own press, this newspaper united them.⁶⁶ An advertisement in the Brazilian Russian émigré daily for the agricultural colony “Baliza” stated that it had existed for three years and was made up of 200 families, including Russians, Bulgarians, Bessarabians, Poles, Lithuanians, Germans and Rusyns; all were Russian speaking.⁶⁷ Preserving knowledge of the Russian language among former minorities of the Russian empire was so important to émigrés that despite widespread anti-semitism in colonial world, one émigré expressed his chagrin that although the White Russian colony in Paraguay shared a Russian library with Russian Jews, many Russian Jews there were forgetting the Russian language.⁶⁸

Because most of the schools in Manchuria remained Russian until the 1950s, it was easiest to maintain the hegemony of the Russian language there. Only the Jews, Ukrainians and Poles from the Russian empire managed to open primary and secondary level schools in Harbin, while some minorities, such as the Georgians, did not even have a single primary school in the city. Even many parents who could have sent their children to schools in their national language chose to send them to Russian schools, where one could find university professors from Petersburg teaching. Children of all nationalities of the Russian empire attended Russian schools, and the degree to which these schools served as a russifying

⁶⁴ GARF, f. 6343, op.1, d.224, l.37 (report to Metropolitan Antonii from Fr. Mikhail Kliarovskii, 10 February, 1928) and l.60ob, 61ob, l.67ob (reports of Iztraztsov to Émigré Synod, 7 August 1923, 16 September 1923)

⁶⁵ “O kolonizatsii,” *RvA*, 14 July 1935, no.258:1.

⁶⁶ For two examples see “Vecher Litovskogo iskusstva,” *RvA*, 11 July, 1936, 4; “Latyski v Urugvae,” *RvA*, 4 November 1934, 4; “Latyski v Urugvae,” *RvA*, 4 November 1934, 4.

⁶⁷ *Ruskaia gazeta*, 29 November 1930, no.204:3.

⁶⁸ HILA, Maria Vrangeli Collection, 59-5 (Ia.K. Tumanov to M.D. Vrangeli, 7.8.1930).

force is attested to in the memoirs of an ethnic Russian graduate: “The whole tenor of life in school was purely Russian, but that did not deter individuals of other nationalities from studying there”⁶⁹ More significantly, hundreds of Chinese students were among the various nationalities that attended the entire range of Russian language schools in Manchuria--there were few Chinese schools there until 1949--and Russian remained the language of the Chinese intelligentsia in Harbin into the 1950s.

Russians also spread the Russian language in China, as they did in parts of Africa, by speaking Russian to the vendors they bought from and the servants they employed. In Harbin, virtually any Chinese who did business with Russians knew pidgin Russian into the 1950s. But even in Morocco, where far fewer Russians ever lived, Arab vendors learned enough Russian to spare Russian women who did their families’ shopping from having to learn any foreign languages.⁷⁰ As in China, émigrés in Africa not only often spoke Russian to their servants, but also gave them Russian names.⁷¹

When Russian émigrés in these areas of the world described their efforts to spread the Russian language among indigenous peoples, they were giddily optimistic. One émigré, remarking upon a Brazilian he encountered who spoke Russian, surmised: “What is so surprising about it? After all, we have more than 3,000 Russian workers here.”⁷² The implication was that once Russians were present in somewhat significant numbers amongst culturally inferior peoples, these peoples who naturally learn their language. An article published in an émigré ethnographic journal in Harbin in 1941, in fact, argued that the Russian Chinese were learning now in Manchuria was even superior to the Russian that Chinese migrant workers to pre-revolutionary Russia had learnt living for years in Russia. The author attributed this to new textbooks that had been developed for studying Russian and to the large numbers of Russians living in Manchuria, but he failed to perceive the irony; the numbers of Russians in Manchuria could not

⁶⁹ P.P. Dobrynin, “1-oe Kharbinskoe Russkoe real’noe uchilishche,” *Russkaia atlantida*, 2001, 5:32.

⁷⁰ BFZR, f.1, M-52, l.56 (I.G. Verkhman’s memoirs).

⁷¹ BAR, E.L. Miller, “Russkie v Iuzhnoi Afrike,” ll.8-9; Amherst Center for Russian Culture (hereafter ACRC), Shakhovskoi archive, 8:40, Z. Shakhovskaia, “O chernykh slugakh, ikh naivnoi khitrosti, vorosovsti, prodelkakh, i otnoshenii k belym (pis’mo iz Kongo)” (undated and unidentified émigré newspaper article in the old orthography).

⁷² BFZR, f.1, M-104, ll.5-6 (A.I. Kalugin’s memoir). Another émigré in Brazil became hopeful about further spreading the Russian language there when he encountered a Black Brazilian who spoke only German. BAR, A.P. Bragin, 3:2, Bragin, “Po Iuzhnoi Amerike” (unlabeled 1939 émigré newspaper article).

possibly equal the number of Russians in Russia, but then again, Russians in Russia had less of an interest in teaching the Chinese Russian than stateless refugees in Manchuria did.⁷³ And the Chinese were not the only ones émigrés wanted to teach Russian. One memoirist provided insight into why Harbin was such a treasure for the emigration, when she remarked about Harbin: “The public in the restaurant of the Yacht club was made up of the best of society. There were foreigners present, but they all spoke Russian.”⁷⁴

Living amongst Russians not only spread the Russian language among non-Russian speakers, it also civilized them, both naturally and through civilizing projects of individual émigrés. One émigré explained how Russians in particular liberated Brazilian attitudes toward women, simply by their example; before Russians arrived it was not acceptable for a woman to walk on the street alone after ten o'clock at night.⁷⁵ Another émigré recounted how when she served as a governess in Brazil she attempted to eradicate a Black servant's belief in superstitions; she was more successful in teaching the servant how to feed her infant.⁷⁶ In her memoir of a russified Chinese family, written in 1973, a Russian émigré author lavished praise on the father, a member of the Chinese intelligentsia: he was the first Chinese in Harbin who did not bind the feet of his daughters; he cut off not only his braid, but forcibly did a friend a favor by cutting off his as well. He also sent his children to Russian schools, even though it meant they had to leave home and live with Russian families to quickly learn the language. His daughter later married another russified Chinese, and their children spoke Russian perfectly.⁷⁷ Émigrés were thus capable of converting populations they encountered in the colonial world into members of their diaspora.

The above examples provides a sense of what émigrés meant by russification; that their civilizing mission did not have to be synonymous with westernization. After all, Russian men didn't wear braids and Russian women's feet were not bound. Having turned against the West--which they blamed for 1917 and whose culture they desperately hoped would not assimilate theirs--émigrés appear to have emulated

⁷³ HILA, Zhernakov Collection, Box 1, L.M. Iakovlev, “Zametki ob “izuchenii” Russkogo iazyka Kitaiskim prostonarod'em,” *Zapiski Kharbinskogo obshchestva estestvoispytatelei i etnografov*, 1941, no.1:32-37.

⁷⁴ BAR, General manuscript collection Artamanova, l.89 (O.O. Artamanova, “Moia sem'ia”, 1972).

⁷⁵ HILA, Maria Vrangell Collection, 58-8, 9 (anonymous untitled 26 page manuscript on Brazil).

⁷⁶ OR RGB, f.587, k.9, d.26, 18-19 (E.M. Spiridonova's memoir).

⁷⁷ HILA, Kharbinskoe Kommercheskoe ushchilshcha collection, 1:11, Iu. Kruzenshtern-Peteretz, “Sem'ia Chzhu,” *Kharbinskoe Kommercheskoe ushchilshcha* 1973, no.11:24-27

a civilizing mission propagated by the Russian Orthodox Church in late Imperial Russia. Westernization did not have a monopoly on teaching hygiene, grooming and literacy, on battling superstition and family violence; these acts could be part and parcel of being a good Russian Orthodox Christian, a Christianity that defined itself in opposition to the Western Christianity in the modern period.⁷⁸

Émigrés viewed themselves as inherently culturally superior in all three “colonial” areas of the world. An article in a student newspaper published in Harbin in 1923 stated: “The genius of Russians exposed itself decisively in all walks of life fulfilling a civilizing role amongst less cultured populations.”⁷⁹ A country like Brazil was ideal, because as one émigré put it in 1930: “In all regards it is better of course here than in Europe because amongst the largely uncultured intelligentsia of South America we get more attention”⁸⁰ And it was precisely amidst the informal colonialism of South America that émigrés attempted to actualize their mission and turn Russia Abroad from an extraterritorial nation to an actual nation.

Acting upon Impulses: The Attempt of Émigrés to Rebuilt Imperial Russia in Paraguay

On the first page of the first issue of a newspaper titled *Paragvai*, published in 1934 in Paris, a metropolitan of the Russian Orthodox Church in exile addressed his flock:

time is going by, difficult years have dragged by, our hope of going home soon, to our Russian hearth, has faded. And you have decided to depart to a country across the ocean, to start a new life there. Apparently, you desire to give up the thought of returning to Russia. You firmly want to settle your domestic hearth in a new, far away country, to carry forth even there *the Russian name, the Russian spirit, the Russian way of life*. Well why not? Even there it is God’s land!⁸¹

Having realized in the early 1930s that their exile was not temporary, some émigrés became enamored by the idea of Russian émigrés en masse moving to a single geographic idea. Following in the footsteps of

⁷⁸ For late Imperial Orthodox conceptions of a civilizing mission that did not entail westernization see Laurie Manchester “Gender and Social Estate as Nationality: Orthodox Clergymen’s Wives and Daughters as Civilizing Agents in Late Imperial Russia,” *The Journal of Modern History* 83, no.1 (March 2011):48-77.

⁷⁹ Russian State Historical Archive, f.1679, op.1, d.23 (*Studencheskaia zhizn’*, February 1923, no.1:5).

⁸⁰ HILA, Maria Vrangeli Collection, 58-8, 3ob (Sviatoslav Golubintsev to Maria Vrangeli, 7.8.1930). For a similar statement see page 18 of the twenty-six page anonymous manuscript on Brazil in the same folder.

⁸¹ Metr. Elevferii, “Poslanie vysokopreosviashchennogo Elevferiia mitropolita Litovskogo i Vilenskogo khristoliubivomu Kazach’emu voinstvu,” *Paragvai* 1934, no.1:1.

other late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries utopianists--ranging from German racists led by Nietzsche's sister to Finnish vegetarians to Australian labor movement activists-- they were told by émigré leaders of this movement that they could recreate Imperial Russia in Paraguay. But unlike these other colonists, émigrés were interested not only in founding an isolated community that could prosper undisturbed in the jungles, they were also intent on putting into practice the colonial fantasies we have seen Russians throughout the colonial world harbored.

In 1923 General Ivan Beliaev, who led a division of soldiers from the Caucasus in World War I and fought for the White Army during the Civil War, combined what was a life-long dream with founding this utopian mission when he arrived in Paraguay:

like an irrepressible fit, I also was pulled toward the amazing wilderness, to those same Indians, whom I already knew from childhood, having read everything about them which I could get my hands on, from scouring the Imperial Geographic Society to combing the Academy of Sciences, and whom I was able to envision in my soul exactly as they were when I found them in real life. My life thus was split under the influence of another mission: to find a corner where everything sacred that eternal holy Russia created could be preserved.

When he arrived in Paraguay, he was struck by how much the capital, Asuncion, reminded him of a typical Russian district city, and he emphasized in his memoirs how both were the opposite of Europe: "The general style of life was reminiscent of Russia before 1900. The same patriarchal nature, warmth toward foreigners, life without pretensions of European prestige." But Paraguay did not just look like Imperial Russia; Beliaev also argued that it had been exploited by the West just as Imperial Russia had. He recalled dreaming of Paraguay's awakening when he read about Paraguay as a child, for Paraguay had been "strangled by those who envied her, exactly like the envy of the Germans and English and others, who had not allowed Russia to strike out on its own politically and culturally up until the first World War." It was thus here, in the country so similar to Russia, that: "It became clear as day to me that here I should do everything possible to preserve the spark of a live flame of Russian patriotism until that moment, when the plenitude of time is completed and the glorious awakening of our Fatherland, having been punished terribly, looms again."⁸² As soon as he arrived in Paraguay Beliaev met the president of

⁸² Ivan Beliaev, *Zapiski russkogo izgannika* (St. Petersburg, 2010), 372-374.

Paraguay, who was keen on encouraging immigration from Europe. In 1924, through Beliaev, the president invited Russian specialists--railway engineers, geologists--to move to Paraguay. But until the world wide depression hit Europe in the early 1930s, few Russian émigrés took up Beliaev's invitation. Life was still tolerable in Europe, and while they still harbored hope of returning to Russia they wanted to remain near its borders. The governments of France, Belgium and Luxemburg, once besieged by the depression, were delighted by the idea of purging their borders of Russian refugees, and were even willing, as was the League of Nations, to pay for, and or arrange, their transportation.⁸³ Between 1932 and 1935 Beliaev, along with scores of other White Army officers, played a decisive role in Paraguay defeating Bolivia in the Chaco war, which bolstered the reputation of Russians in Paraguay and the government's support for immigration of Russian refugees.

From the start Beliaev's movement, and its appeal to Russian émigrés, was about dominating a territory and converting its indigenous people into new subjects for Russia Abroad. The presence of large numbers of exploited Indians also played a decisive factor in Beliaev's choice of geographic location. The husband of Beliaev's niece recalled in 1928 how disappointed Beliaev was when he arrived first in Argentina, only to find that there were no Indians there. He left for Paraguay specifically to find Indians. Once there, he invited 30,000 Cossacks from Europe to marry Indians and settle in Paraguay. In twenty years a new tribe of Cossack-Indians would exist, and would live just as the Russian Cossacks had lived from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries.⁸⁴ Beliaev's wife recalled that her husband transferred his love of the people of the Caucasus to the Indians of Paraguay after they arrived in Asuncion. Because he had often filled their house in the Caucasus with "half-wild" Chechen, Khevsur, and Circassian mountain men, she was not at all surprised when he brought Indians home and asked her to feed them as honored

⁸³ The Nansen archive at the UNOG archive in Geneva includes records of the efforts of the League of Nations to resettle Russian refugees from China and Europe to Algeria, Paraguay, and other South American countries between 1931-1933. There was an earlier, less successful attempt to move Cossacks en masse to Peru in the late 1920s. A few hundred went to Peru only to a return soon after. P. See Korolevich, *Istoriia pereseleniia kazakov v Respubliku Peru* (Novyi Sad, 1930). Other such movements that were never actualized include the president of Bolivia agreeing in a private conversation with an émigré to the migration of tens of thousands of Russian émigrés to Bolivia (HILA, Maria Vrangel Collection, 58-7 (D.R. Karateev to M. Vrangel, 28.09.1929) and, in 1923-1924, the Belgium government discussing relocating large numbers of Russian émigrés to Africa (Ronin, 224).

⁸⁴ RGB OR, f.587, k.7, d.30, l.32, ll.37-38 (F.F. Fisher, "Nashi v Paragvae," 1928).

guests.⁸⁵ Beliaev himself compared the Indians to a military brigade, known for their discipline, obedience and loyalty.⁸⁶

Beliaev was assured that Russians would dominate, because he –along with at least a few other Russians—saw Russians as having first conquered Paraguay. In 1928 his niece’s husband described Beliaev’s arrival in Paraguay in 1923 as akin to the Vikings having discovered America.⁸⁷ Beliaev also made similar statements, in public and private. In a letter to the editor of the émigré Paris daily *Vozrozhdeniia* in 1935, Beliaev tried to convince him that Paraguay was the solution to the problems of the Russian emigration: “Europe is descending at the same time as Paraguay, the heart of South America, is just like California in the last century.”⁸⁸ That same year, in the newspaper his movement published in Paris, Beliaev compared his movement to the colonization of Virginia by the British and to Russian peasants colonizing the steppe.⁸⁹ According to Beliaev’s niece’s husband, one of the appeals of Russian émigrés settling in Paraguay was precisely because there were few foreigners there.⁹⁰

Few foreigners meant less competition for Russian émigrés wishing to dominate, but it also promised a warmer welcome. The decision by émigrés to move to Paraguay was inherently tied to their rejection of the West and to the humiliation they felt they had suffered in Europe. Articles published in 1934 in Beliaev’s newspaper constantly referred to the Paraguayan people as Russian’s brothers, and enticed Russians in Europe by promising them that their brothers would treat them far differently than Europeans had: “we don’t want any more insults, miserable pittances, we don’t want to hear anymore that nasty phrase “dirty foreigner” or be pitied as “poor Russians!” This same article went on to assure émigrés that they would be able to live in Paraguay as they had in Russia: “We want a simple, but guaranteed and independent life, living according to our ancient, unique lifestyle, we desire peace in our

⁸⁵ RGB OR, f.587, k.2, d.57, l.2 (A.A. Beliaeva, “Nashi indeitsy,” 1954)

⁸⁶ RGB OR, f.587, k.1, d.11, 1 (Beliaev’s notes for article on Indians, 1930s-1940s).

⁸⁷ OR RGB, f.587, k.7, d.30, l.37 (F.F. Fisher, “Nashi v Paragvae,” 1928).

⁸⁸ MRC, von Remiers Collection, box 4, l.1,5. (I. Beliaev to Iurii Vasil’evich, 6.4.1935).

⁸⁹ Ivan Beliaev, “Poka ne pozdno,” *Paragvai*, 1935, no.1:1.

⁹⁰ RGB OR, f.587, k.7, d.30, l.36 (F.F. Fisher, “Nashi v Paragvae,” 1928).

huts on our own fields.”⁹¹ Another article directly blamed Western powers and Western “civilized” culture for the abomination of Soviet Russia:

and we believed that the cultured West would not allow our homeland to be transformed into a laboratory of Stalinist vivisectionist experiments, we believed that with the Christian help of our highly cultured neighbors the “red plague” brought from the west to our homeland would be destroyed. And all the same a country was found, not in the enlightened West, but in *Paraguay*.

As in the other article, this article emphasized that this rejection of Europe was tied to Russian émigrés finally achieving their independence. The Cossacks who had gone to Paraguay and spilled their blood for it (ostensibly in the Chaco war), the author concluded, had “given Russians *the right to be the master of one’s own land*.”⁹²

Émigrés were so confident that they would dominate Paraguay, not just because they had little competition, but because of their conception of Paraguay’s inherent backwardness. Pamphlets published by Beliaev’s organization portrayed the country as inexpensive, sparsely populated, and under industrialized.⁹³ Beliaev’s niece’s husband described Paraguay as the only country where the president and his ministers have never seen a paved road, where everyone but foreigners goes barefoot, where no one dies from hunger, even though due to laziness hardly anyone works, because fruit falls from the trees. The possibilities for émigrés were therefore enormous.⁹⁴ Another émigré living in Paraguay wrote a friend in Europe in 1930 that Russians in Paraguay had not assimilated in the least, and wouldn’t in the future, due to the fact that they were more cultured than anyone else there, including the foreigners. Because of their elite position, Russians in Paraguay were much less homesick than Russians in other countries.⁹⁵ Russians interested in migrating to Paraguay were told in 1935 that Paraguayan people had

⁹¹ MRC, von Remiers Collection, box 4, Nikita Morozov, “Chego my khotim,” *Paragvai*, 1934, no.1:3. One pamphlet, hand typed in Paris in 1935, even promised Russians than moving to the jungles of Paraguay would be just like living in a Russian village. MRC, von Remiers Collection, box 4.V. Golovchenko, *Chto nuzhno znat’ kazhdomu pereselentsu v Paragvai* (Paris, 1935), 17.

⁹² AS, “Chuzhoe i nashe,” *Paragvai*, 1934, no.3:4.

⁹³ MRC, von Remiers collection, box 4, A.P. Pilkin, *Paragvai: Kratkii ocherk* (Paraguay, 1934), 5-6.

⁹⁴ OR RGB, f.587, k.7, d.30, l.19, l.32ob (F.F. Fisher, ‘Nashi v Paragvae,’ 1928).

⁹⁵ HILA, Maria Vrangal collection, 59-5, l.9 (Ia.K. Tumanov to M.D. Vrangal, 7.8.1930).

already flocked to the Russian Orthodox Church in Asuncion, completed in 1928; stunned by the beauty of its architecture, church singing and church service, they could not stay away.⁹⁶

From the start, émigrés interested in colonizing Paraguay with Russians understood that to succeed in their mission of domination, large numbers of Russians needed to move to Paraguay. A 1935 letter to the editor published in the Russian émigré Argentinian daily stated:

If Russians were to move here [to Paraguay] in massive numbers, then it would become our second homeland with our language and our customs, and it would be incredible. After all, the country is abundant and sparsely populated...I repeat, if Russians come here in massive numbers, it won't be boring here: we'll have schools, churches, and everything will be Russian..."⁹⁷

An article from this same daily, republished in Beliaev's newspaper in 1934, claimed that articles in Paraguayan newspapers expressed a high degree of interest in Russians coming in large numbers, in part "to improve the way the natives (*tuzemtsy*) live."⁹⁸

"Paraguay fever" gripped the Russian émigré community in Europe and North America by 1934. The émigré press, regardless of the political affiliation of its editors, was filled with articles about Paraguay. Émigrés living in Paraguay were inundated with letters from émigrés they had never met requesting information. Rank and file Russian émigrés who had never been to Paraguay gave standing room only lectures on the country in any space émigrés gathered. An émigré journalist who visited Paraguay and wrote articles recommending that émigrés migrate to Argentina instead nevertheless received letters from émigrés who refused to be dissuaded, begging him for more information about Paraguay.⁹⁹ The hysterical pitch of Beliaev's movement helped to encourage this fever. His main representative in Paris, who envisioned 200,000 migrating to Paraguay, warned that if they did not move Russians en masse from Europe to Paraguay, they would be massacred.¹⁰⁰ Beliaev's representative in Canada, who had never been to Paraguay but had been active in the Zemstvo before the revolution, described their movement as a messianic quest to save both Paraguayans and Russian émigrés:

⁹⁶ Golovchenko, 7.

⁹⁷ K. Gorovenko, "Pis'mo iz paragvaia," *RvA*, 2 November 1935, 4.

⁹⁸ "Russkaia zadacha," *Paragvai*, 1934 no.1:4.

⁹⁹ For example, see ACRC, Konstantin Parchevskii Collection, 1:15 (P. Gukovskii to K. Parchevskii, 17.2.1936).

¹⁰⁰ MRC, von Remiers collection, box 4 (N. Gorbachev to Vladimir Aleksandrovich, 17 April 1935).

“Paraguayans say to us from a far off region, as Jesus Christ said, “come to us, help us develop our region and for that we will treat you like our brothers and allow you to feel at home.””¹⁰¹

One émigré who gave lectures on Paraguay in Paris, a hereditary Noble born in 1879 who as a military officer had led divisions in Western Russia before World War One, wrote detailed letters—asking more than a hundred questions—to Russians already farming in Paraguay to supplement the information Beliaev’s movement provided. Although he too had never been to Paraguay—he considered himself too old and infirm to migrate—émigrés who heard his lectures about Paraguay wrote him asking for advice about whether they should migrate. Despite the replies he received from émigrés in Paraguay contracting the propaganda Beliaev’s organization was feeding him, he refused to give up his utopian dream of creating a free Russia. He told a crowd that future colonists should take a brave woman, “*rodnoi po krovi*,” (related by blood, i.e., ethnically Russian), willing to sacrifice, who would give him Russian children, and “he will always feel the tender breath of his homeland in the virgin forests of Paraguay.” To himself he scribbled, as Paraguayan fever in the émigré press was replaced by a sensationalization of the problems colonists who migrated encountered: “Let that beacon [mass migration of Russians to Paraguay] show the path for our suffering emigration. Let it be that guiding star which will bring us meaning, to the place where *pravda* (truth-justice) and *istina* (truth-verity) originate.”

As early as 1935 a handful of returnees from Paraguay began to surface in Paris telling horror stories about farming in the jungle. The fractured émigré community was quick to point fingers, and a scandal erupted. One of the two thousand Russian *intelligenty* who migrated to Paraguay from Western Europe in 1934, a Prince born in 1904 who had fought in the White Army and earned a doctorate in Chemistry in Belgium in 1933, serialized his memoir about his experience in the Argentinian émigré daily between 1937-1939. He explained that although he and his companions did not believe 100% of what was written in Beliaev’s newspaper, they expected that it couldn’t all be lies. Yet when they got there, they realized that the climate was not the same as Southern Ukraine, there were not good roads everywhere, and there really were nasty bugs which ate everything they grew, and they didn’t have the funds to buy

¹⁰¹ MRC, von Remiers collection, box 4 (Iakunin to von Remiers, 8 May 1935).

insecticide to destroy them. Even if they had been able to salvage what they grew, they were too far from any transportation to inexpensively get their goods to market. The heat sapped their energy. His group of forty-four émigrés came from Luxemburg, and there wasn't a single individual among them who had ever farmed before. Without an axe to hack one's way it was impossible to move an inch in the jungle. The trees seemed to have iron roots. A dictator emerged amongst their ranks. They all stayed a year and then fled for the capital, where most found work as professionals. In 1972 he revised his memoirs, and emphasized that the groups of Russian peasants who migrated to the jungles of Paraguay succeeded after a few years. They knew how to farm, had more patience, and didn't have professions to fall back on.¹⁰²

From the start, Beliaev encouraged *intelligenty* to migrate to Paraguay. One 1934 article in his newspaper specifically addressed this subject, stating that it would be easy for an *intelligent* to farm in Paraguay due to the fact that the climate was much milder than in Russia.¹⁰³ A 1935 article on colonizing South America in the Argentinian émigré daily explains why the presence of *intelligenty* was central to émigré dreams of recreating Imperial Russia in Paraguay. Without the intelligentsia, the article explained, national organizations would not be created.¹⁰⁴ Peasants would assimilate or keep to themselves, but Russian *intelligenty* would ensure that Russian émigrés missionized in Paraguay.

After the failure of his dream, Beliaev turned his attention entirely to his beloved Indians. He learned their language fluently. His archive is filled with letters he wrote to the presidents of Paraguay complaining about the mistreatment of Indians at the hands of Whites. When he died in 1953, his Indian friends buried his body on the island where he had built them a school. His Indian friends often visited his wife after his death.¹⁰⁵ Her assessment of the fate of the Indians her husband "helped" is indicative of the civilizing mission émigrés believed would assist, without westernizing, indigenous peoples in the colonial world:

¹⁰² M. Karateev, *Po sledam konkvistadorov; istoriia gruppy russkikh kolonitsov v tropicheskikh lesakh Paragvaia* (Buenos, Aires, 1972); BAR, Karateev collection, box 7 (memoirs serialized in *RvA*, 1937-1939).

¹⁰³ Donets, "Vozmozhno li intelligentu ustroit'sia na zemle v Paragvae," *Paragvai*, 1934, no.5:2.

¹⁰⁴ "O Kolonizatsii," *RvA*, 14 July 1935, no.258:1.

¹⁰⁵ RGB OR, f.587, k.3, d.18, ll.5-6, 8 (E.M. Spiridnova, "Puteshestvie v Pargvai,"); Karateev, *Po sledam*, 43-45.

they are no longer those black haired lions, chocolate boys, who gave our garden that exotic character. Over the course of several years they have joined the general rhythm of life, they found a solution by their own fortitude to ensure the future of their children. From nothing, by their own fortitude, they achieved for themselves a fairly good standard of living... the men dressed in their elegant suits and fashionable haircuts, the women dressed in expensive cotton. But all the same, just like back then, their eyes gleam with unfeigned, child-like feelings.¹⁰⁶

So were stateless first wave Russian refugees acting as potential colonizers in the colonial world?

Recently some scholars have begun questioning the binary of colonized and colonizer.¹⁰⁷ Historians studying Italians in Tunisia, for example, have argued against Albert Memmi that not every European in a colonial setting becomes the colonizer. They contend that politically marginal European actors occupied a fluid space of negotiation in colonialism. The French, who possessed real political power in Tunisia, oppressed and attempted to assimilate, the Italians who lacked it.¹⁰⁸

But the Italians in Tunisia were not stateless. They chose to live abroad, and could theoretically go home whenever they wanted. They did not need to recreate Italy in Tunisia, even if they did resist assimilation. Italians were also not from a major multi-ethnic empire, nor were those Italians in Tunisia representatives of all classes of Italian society, including its nobility and aristocracy. First wave stateless Russian refugees were used to colonizing the national minorities and peasants they had lived amongst for centuries. Russian refugees also came from a country that had unrealized colonial ambitions in all three parts of the world examined in this paper. While their colonial fantasies based on a sense of loss were similar to those of the Germans who lost their colonies after World War One, they are the only example in world history where millions of members of the dominant ethnicity of a major multi-ethnic empire, many of them from the dominant class, were strewn into a colonial setting as stateless, penniless.¹⁰⁹ The closest

¹⁰⁶ RGB OR, f.587, k.2, d.57, l.2 (A.A. Beliaeva, "Nashi indeitsy. 1954).

¹⁰⁷ See, for example, Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London, 1994).

¹⁰⁸ Mark I. Choate, "Identity Politics and Political Perception in the European Settlement of Tunisia: The French Colony versus the Italian Colony" *French Colonial History* 8 (20:07) 97-109; Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (Boston, 1965), 13-14., 17.

¹⁰⁹ Sara Friedrichsmeyer, Sara Lennox, and Susanne Zantop (eds.), *The Imperialist Imagination: German Colonialism and Its Legacy* (Ann Arbor, 1998). French revolutionary émigrés were numerically a far smaller, less diverse group than the first wave of Russian émigrés. Many went to London, where they were greeted warmly by English aristocrats. They were not humiliated abroad and did not seek to recreate pre-revolutionary France, other than one small-scale failed attempt in the Ohio wilderness. Even that attempt did not include missionary impulses. See Kristy Carpenter and Philip Mansel (eds.), *The French Empires in Europe and the Struggle Against Revolution*

comparison may be to a much more successful group of colonizers-- the British diaspora who colonized the United States.¹¹⁰

The statelessness of Russian refugees--which, ironically, may have led some of them to sympathize with the colonized--was instrumental to their colonial ambitions. The humiliation they perceived themselves to have endured at the hands of Western powers, and many émigré's belief that 1917 was caused by Western ideas, inspired émigré's to not only aspire to gain a geographic territory for their extraterritorial nation, but to compete with Western powers in the colonial world. The Russian intelligentsia's historically ambiguous relationship with countries to its West led to its simultaneous criticism and emulation of Western colonialism in a bid to win respect from Westerners.

Utopias play a central role in colonialist thinking, but in the case of Russian émigrés desperate to impose their culture on groups they deemed inferior, utopian thinking became their only means to imagine replacing the peasants and national minorities they had lost.¹¹¹ They regarded indigenous people as educated Russians had treated Russian peasants in the late imperial period; they were to be either exploited or rescued. Their colonial impulses demonstrate that colonial ambitions are not limited to representatives of an actual state.

1789-1814 (London, 1999); Bette Wyn Oliver, *Surviving the French Revolution: A Bridge Across Time* (Lanham, 2013), 35-42.

¹¹⁰ For the founding of the United States read through the lens of diaspora theory see Edward Larkin, "Diaspora and Empire: Toward a New Synthesis?" *Diaspora* 15 (2006), 1:167-184.

¹¹¹ For colonialism and utopianism, see Jurgen Osterhammel, *Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Princeton, 2005), 110.