

Accelerated Maturity: Childhood in Emigration (Russian Children on the Balkans 1920-1940)

The life of Russian refugee children represents an important historical phenomenon (essentially, as yet under-researched and unquantified¹). Available historical sources unequivocally point to the fact that constant stressful events and the condition of a permanent life crisis, together with frequent migratory changes, which the emigrant family experienced, led to the kind of situation where child refugees were preoccupied with problems unusual for their age. In other words, they were exposed to a certain process of accelerated maturity. Confrontation with death, which they mostly experienced through the deterioration of their material situation², their loss of parents or close relatives led to profound suffering in a child's psyche. Irregular life conditions and unstable family situations forced those children to carry out different jobs by themselves (often manual labour, for example butchering pigs³) and to take over the main roles in their families. As a rule, the change of dwelling place due to emigration evoked many negative reactions in the children.

The very counting of these elements demonstrates the complexity and importance of the phenomenon of growing up as a refugee.

1) Establishing the problem

There is a very interesting, although slightly simplified assessment of Karen Taylor's work, that the history of childhood is essential for understanding the history of any culture or society, since it enables us to understand the basic values of a certain society⁴. Yet, if applied to research on the history of emigration, and particularly to the life of children in emigration, this evaluation becomes very important, dealing with the values which one social group is trying to preserve, in an extreme life situation and passing them on to the children.

A life in refuge has a direct influence on many aspects of people's lives, on their socialization, social position, family relationships, etc. This is the reason why we must approach research into the

¹ In fact, there were many books concerning childhood problems, but most of them were published by refugees in the interwar period. See: *Vospominaniya 500 russkih detei*, Praga 1924; *Deti emigracii. Sbornik statei*. Red. V.V.Zen'kovskii, Praga 1925; Aleksandr Dehterev, *S detmi emigracii 1920-1930 gody*, Shumen 1931. The last collection of documents dealing with this problem appeared just a few years ago: *Deti russkoi emigracii: (Kniga kotoruyu mechtali i ne smogli izdat' izgnaniki)*, Moskva 1997.

² *Vospominaniya 500 russkih detei*, Praga 1924, p. 13-17.

³ Vypiska iz doklada Kontolera Predstavitel'stva V.Z.S. v Korolevstve SHS A.M.Timchenko - "Polozhenie bezhencev ih zhizni i nuzhdy" (Gosudarstvennyi arhiv Rossiiskoi federacii (GARF), Fond 9145, opis' 1, delo 974, list 65.)

history of childhood in exile by reflecting on the many different theoretical assumptions present in modern science. Bearing this in mind, research into the history of childhood emigration must be focused on the relationship between society and children (this is what Philippe Ariès considers to be one of the main questions related to the research of the history of childhood⁵). But research of this kind ought to pay close attention to the relationship between parents and children through a historical perspective (the school of psychohistory, led by Lloyd deMause also asserts this view⁶). Such a need to classify such problems derives from the specific nature of the phenomenon of emigration – it represents an extreme life situation in which the main life problems as well as the problems connected with relationships towards children and their positions and roles in one social group and in their families, are expressed in different ways.

Besides the social and family situations which have attracted attention during research, many others social factors have also complicated the development and life of Russian children: some of these are the relationship between different generations, or complex social situations in which both refugees and local Balkan "socialites", meaning different humanitarian and pedagogical organisations, simultaneously took care of the children.

The complexity of the problem can be seen through four theoretical questions. The first one is very important and connected with historical sources. These are sources concerning the child's world from an adult's perspective (parents, professors, pedagogues); or from a "grown-up child's" perspective (the memories of adult persons, recalling their childhood); and from a child's perspective (on the basis of surveys, notes and interviews with children). The other question of theoretical character is the relation of historical, anthropological and psychological elements in the history of childhood. Psychological and anthropological elements are certainly the most important ones in the research of a child's life in exile, their development and their views on life. On the other hand, it should not be forgotten that the elements of occurrence, meaning, historical elements really influenced the children as well as their parents on finding themselves in exile. These historical elements - the Revolution, the Civil war, the process of emigration and emigration itself – have not only had a fundamental influence on the life course of refugees but also anthropological and

⁴ K.Taylor, "Disciplining the History of Childhood", in: *The Journal of Psychohistory* (Special Issue "On Writing Childhood History"), 12 (2) fall 1988. (Electronic version: <http://members.xoom.com/childhistory/spwch.htm>)

⁵ See: Filip Arijes, *Vekovi detinjstva*, Beograd 1989, p. 12-13. (Philip Aries, *L'enfant et la vie familiale sous l'ancien regime*, Paris Editions de Seuil 1973.). A very interesting work on Balkans history, in this way, is: Kristina Popova, *Nacionalnota dete. Blagotvoritelna i prosvetna deinstvo na S'yuzza za zakrila na decata v B'lgariya 1925-1944*, Sofiya 1999.

⁶ See: Lloyd deMause, *Childhood in History* (Electronic version:

http://members.xoom.com/_XMCM/childhistory/childhood/chindex.htm; also deMause's articles: L. deMause, "The History of Child Abuse", in: *The Journal of Psychohistory* V. 26, N. 2, Winter 1998; L. deMause, "The Gentle Revolution: Childhood Origins of Soviet and East European Democratic Movements", in: *The Journal of Psychohistory* 17(4), Spring 1990.; L. deMause, "On Writing Childhood History", in: *The Journal of Psychohistory* (Special Issue "On Writing Childhood History"), 16 (2) Fall 1988.; At the same time, in psychology there are differing opinions on this problem.

psychological dimensions. For example, this profound influence on the psychology of Russian child refugees had the effect that, in an extremely brief period of time, they were exposed to extremely difficult and stressful events, processes and situations that inevitably affected all their development. The third question of theoretical character is connected to "desirable" social attitudes towards a child, the stereotypical social concept of a child, childhood, growing up, upbringing, appropriate education and the attitudes towards the role and position of a child in both family and society, etc. These attitudes play a very important part in social relationships with children. Finally, a very important theoretical question is the pattern of social modernization, which means socialization and a child's position in it. In that respect, there are several important factors: pedagogical methods used in the process of socialization (which differ in time and place), generally accepted social values, which are built into the structure of a child through the system of education (for example, in Russian emigration, fighting anti-bolshevism which was the generally accepted social value, had a great influence on the schooling of Russian children).

2) *Russian childhood in the Balkans (the main problems)*

"The question of children as refugees is an extremely complicated one. Although adults can sometimes endure a long lasting lack of food, and many other difficult life conditions, it is totally different for a child, for whom even a temporary lack of food can be a very painful and disturbing experience, affecting the physical and spiritual growth of a child, and often completely destroying it"⁷. This condition, as Russian experts described at the beginning of the twenties, characterized much of the later life and growth of Russian children in exile.

Several factors determined the childhood of Russian children in the Balkans. Firstly, some distinct social aspects played a part in this phenomenon. There is a series of quantifiable statistics, which fully describe the character of exile and the position of children in exile. From this large amount of statistical data it is sufficient to mention three of them: (1) About 10,000 Russian children lived in the Balkans during the interwar period⁸. The figure only represented 15-18% of the Russian refugee population in the Balkans⁹. This very fact shows that the social structure of the refugee group differed from the normal social structure of the population; (2) The number of Russian children who attended (Russian) schools was proportionally small, about 50-55% of the total number of Russian children, in spite of the fact that there were more than 50 Russian schools

Compare, the very interesting and important work of: Igor' Semenovich Kon, *Rebenok i obschestvo*, Moskva 1988. (Serbian translation: I.S.Kon, *Dete i kultura*, 1991.).

⁷ Doklad o polozhenii detei russkih bezhencev v raznyh gosudarstvah. Po svedeniyam k 1-mu Aprelya 1921 goda (GARF, f. 5809, op. 1, d. 56, l. 2.).

⁸ Doklad o polozhenii detei russkih bezhencev v raznyh gosudarstvah. Po svedeniyam k 1-mu Aprelya 1921 goda (GARF, f. 5809, op. 1, d. 56, l. 1.).

⁹ Compare: Svedeniya o polozhenii detei russkih bezhencev v Korolevstve SHS (Arhiv Jugoslavije, Dvor KJ 74, 276/410.); and: Mezhdunarodno byuro na truda, *Bezhencite i usloviyata na truda v B'lgariya*, Sofiya s.a., p. 12.

in the Balkans at that time. Besides, an extremely high percentage of children, 15-20%, did not attend school at all¹⁰. This data clearly illustrates the character of the irregular and unstable way of life in exile; (3) the children's family situation was also characteristic. During emigration, only 60-70% of children lived with their parents, and about 30-40% lived alone¹¹. Although according to some statistics less than 50% of children were financially supported by their parents, while most of them lived in boarding schools¹². There were a high percentage of orphans among children, around 10%¹³; (4) According to available data, the sexual structure of child refugees was relatively balanced and there was no drastic disproportion, as it was amongst the adults. The percentage of girls among Russian children was about 47-49.7% and the percentage of boys was somewhere between 50.3-53%¹⁴. Owing to this data, it is possible to present clear results, which arose from a life in emigration.

There were several important factors connected to the social-historical aspect of the phenomenon. Poverty, irregular, insecure, unstable and unpleasant living conditions, together with frequent migration (caused by an extreme social situation like exile) affected the life of refugees including children and this had a great influence on them. In later years, as adults, they usually connected their memories of childhood with poverty, particularly with a lack of toys (they were forced to play with unconventional things, e.g. old coins)¹⁵. Besides that, facing the socio-historical and cultural values of two countries was of special importance in lives of the Russian children in the Balkans. The values of the Russian refugee group, in other words, Russian cultural and social values took prominence in the lives and education of the children. Simultaneously, the Russian children grew up in Yugoslav or Bulgarian surroundings, for example, and they had to confront the social and cultural values of those local surroundings daily. Adults mostly interpreted this growing up in circumstances where different social and cultural values existed, as "the danger of denationalization and assimilation" of children¹⁶. This problem was the crucial one in the triangle of emigrant group -

¹⁰ Compare: Svedeniya o polozhenii detei russkikh bezhencev v Korolevstve SHS (Arhiv Jugoslavije, Dvor KJ 74, 276/410.); and: *Bezhencite i usloviyata na truda v B'lgariya...*, p. 13.

¹¹ Svedeniya o polozhenii detei russkikh bezhencev v Korolevstve SHS (AJ, Dvor KJ 74, 276/410.); and: P.N.Sokovnin, "Dannyya opyta russkikh uchebnykh zavedeniy v Bolgarii po nekotorym voprosam emigrantskoi shkoly", in: *Soveshchanie predstavitelei russkikh uchebnykh zavedenii v Bolgarii 12-14 noyabrya 1924*, Praga 1925, p. 42.

¹² According to data relating to Bulgaria in 1925, from an approximate number of 2.600 Russian children, about 1.200 were subsidized by parents, and about 1,400 of them lived in boarding schools (*Bezhencite i usloviyata na truda v B'lgariya...*, p. 13.).

¹³ Svedeniya o polozhenii detei russkikh bezhencev v Korolevstve SHS (AJ, Dvor KJ 74, 276/410.); and: P.N.Sokovnin, "Dannyya opyta russkikh uchebnykh zavedeniy v Bolgarii po nekotorym voprosam emigrantskoi shkoly", in: *Soveshchanie predstavitelei russkikh uchebnykh zavedenii v Bolgarii 12-14 noyabrya 1924*, Praga 1925, p. 60.

¹⁴ Glavnoe spravochnoe byuro Konstantinopol', Svedeniya o detyah nahodivshih'sya v Serbii na 24.06.1920 g. (GARF, f. 5982, op. 1, d. 175.); Svedeniya o chisle uchashchihsya v detskih domah VSG i ZGK v Bolgarii, noyabr' 1930 (GARF, f. 5766, op. 1, d. 184.); Statisticheskie svedeniya o kolichestve russkikh bezhencev, zaregistrovannykh v Korolevstve SHS na 20 iyunya 1920 goda (Hoover Institute of War, Peace and Revolution, Coll. Paleologue 001/2.).

¹⁵ R.V.Polchaninov, "Sobrano v Saravee", in: *Novoe russkoe slovo*, New York, 8.3.1986, p. 7.

¹⁶ See: A.Dehterev, *S detmi emigracii...*, pp. 116-117; also: Svedeniya o polozhenii detei russkikh bezhencev v Korolevstve SHS (AJ, Dvor KJ 74, 276/410.); and: Svedeniya o deyatel'nosti Predstavitel'stva Vserossiiskago Soyuzu Gorodov v Korolevstve SHS v dele pomoshci russkim detyam No. 15427, 30.10.1920. (Hoover, Coll. Paleologue 005/10.).

school - children. The frequent migration of refugees was also a serious social-historical problem in the children's lives. Frequent changes of dwelling due to emigration (migration from town to town, from country to country) made the children feel unstable. That is why events, which in normal circumstances were usually special and extraordinary became something ordinary for children (for example a sudden change of school, or dwelling place, change of society or friends...) ¹⁷. A very important social-historical question is connected with dwelling conditions in exile. In the first year of emigration, children lived with other refugees; they lived in shacks, under tents or in damp and dark barracks. They also did not have sufficient clothing or footwear. Such a life, followed by a lack of air, sun, exercise and food, dramatically influenced these children, increasing illness and mortality ¹⁸. When they managed to find some relatively permanent accommodation it usually happened that all the members of the family, both children and adults, lived in the same room ¹⁹. On the other hand, immense poverty often forced the Russian people to work for 12 to 16 hours a day, from morning till night. That was the reason why a large number of Russian children grew up without parental control. This had an extremely severe effect not only on their conditions but also on their normal course of education. For example, Russian pedagogues noticed that children went backwards during the holiday, and they connected it with the lack of parental control during those days (generally during the summer) ²⁰.

The life in refuge, surrounded by permanent stress and trauma, was shown both directly and indirectly through the anthropological problems of the children. Due to poverty, parents were occupied by the difficult life conditions for the entire day - children had a poor diet, they usually spent much of the day in the street and were obliged to work both out of the house to earn money, and to take part in the family economy by helping in the house. Children worked as shepherds, shoe-cleaners, shop-assistants, medical-assistants, news-boys, while in the house they were sewing, ironing, washing, etc., in short, they spent their free time working instead of playing games ²¹. It was obvious that these jobs helped them to improve their life conditions, since all of those who had worked during the summer had new clothes and shoes for the start of the school year in autumn ²². In spite of this, their development was influenced and disease increased. The chief of the Russian hospital in Pan evo (Yugoslavia) noticed, during the health control at the end of 1923, that children

¹⁷ P.N.Sokovnin, "Dannyya opyta russkih uchebnyh zavedeniy v Bolgarii ...", in: *Soveshcanie predstavitelei russkih uchebnyh zavedeniy v Bolgarii ...*, p. 55.

¹⁸ Doklad o polozhenii detei russkih bezhencev v raznyh gosudarstvah. Po svedeniyam k 1-mu Aprelya 1921 goda (GARF, f. 5809, op. 1, d. 56, l. 2.).

¹⁹ P.N.Sokovnin, "Dannyya opyta russkih uchebnyh zavedeniy v Bolgarii ...", in: *Soveshcanie predstavitelei russkih uchebnyh zavedeniy v Bolgarii ...*, p. 53.

²⁰ Svedeniya o polozhenii detei russkih bezhencev v Korolevstve SHS (GARF, f. 5771, op. 1, d. 24, l. 30.).

²¹ *Vospominaniya 500 russkih detei*, Praga 1924, p. 13-14; P.N.Sokovnin, "Dannyya opyta russkih uchebnyh zavedeniy v Bolgarii ...", in: *Soveshcanie predstavitelei russkih uchebnyh zavedeniy v Bolgarii ...*, p. 49.

were tired, with obvious signs of exhaustion²³. It could be explained by numerous school duties but also poor nutrition. Besides that, everyday life in emigration influenced the children of the impossibility of acquiring work habits, the appearance of some wayward kinds of behaviour, etc²⁴. In certain situations the specific life conditions in emigration also influenced suspension of normal relationships between parents and child. Poor dwelling conditions also affected the development of the children in a specific way. Everyday, the children were compelled to listen to the conversation of the adults. The adult world entered the children's lives at a very early stage. They were familiar with and involved in all the problems related to their families and parents. More often they were confronted with the problems of lack of food, money, clothing, shoes etc. Besides that, children became familiar with political problems at a very early stage (they were usually the central theme of adult conversation), alongside the problems of alcohol abuse and so on²⁵. These crises in the relationships of Russian families in emigration also had a great influence on the progress of child development, and in a certain way this led to the alienation of children from their families. It has been noticed that a small number of families in refuge were sufficiently well off to not look after their children properly. As a result parents, who were separated from their children due to them living in boarding schools, would also decide to leave their children at school during the summer vacation because of the poor financial situation at home. Lack of time to take care of their children or their being too busy was the usual explanation for this²⁶, or lack of money of money was blamed²⁷. Such decisions were made due to poverty in exile; this seriously affected the children's upbringing.

²² P.N.Sokovnin, "Dannyya opyta russkikh uchebnykh zavedeniy v Bolgarii ...", in: *Soveshchanie predstavitelei russkikh uchebnykh zavedeniy v Bolgarii ...*, p. 49.

²³ V derzhavnuyu komisiyu, No. 2322, 12.12.1923. (GARF, f. 5771, op. 1, d. 16, l. 179.).

²⁴ Svedeniya o polozhenii detei russkikh bezhencev v Korolevstve SHS (AJ, Dvor KJ 74, 276/410.); also: A.Dehterev, *S detmi emigracii*, pp. 8-9; and: Doklad o polozhenii detei russkikh bezhencev v raznykh gosudarstvakh. Po svadeniyam k 1-mu Aprelya 1921 goda (GARF, f. 5809, op. 1, d. 56, l. 2-4.).

²⁵ P.N.Sokovnin, "Dannyya opyta russkikh uchebnykh zavedeniy v Bolgarii ...", in: *Soveshchanie predstavitelei russkikh uchebnykh zavedeniy v Bolgarii*, p. 53-54.

²⁶ "I want Vanja to stay at the Grammar school during the summer. Don't be surprised. Let me explain, and you will certainly agree: Vanja didn't see much of the summer last year. He was naughty at home, staying alone, since I was in the factory for the whole day. The landlady complained. To avoid unpleasantness I was forced to take him to the factory with me. The whole summer was torture, and I couldn't wait for the day to send him back to the Grammar school. It would be the same this year, if I had to take him home, or else, he would be on the streets for the whole summer..." (A.Dehterev, *S detmi emigracii*..., pp. 10-13.).

²⁷ "I won't take my children home for the holidays, it would be too hard for all of us to survive on 300 levs..." (A.Dehterev, *S detmi emigracii*..., pp. 15.); The fact, that parents very often decided to leave their children in the boarding schools during the summer, is confirmed by many available sources. For example, it is written in the special report about children's positions in the Kingdom of SHS 1922, that: "At last, the living conditions of refugees are such that even parents try to give their children total support, there are a large number of Russians refugees in SHS who are starving and have great needs, and we can say that there are those who are totally provided for. In almost every family the husband is occupied with work for the whole day, the wife with housekeeping and the children are without control. The desire of parents to provide a normal and secure life for their children, forces many of them to send their children to boarding school because of poverty at home". (Svedeniya o polozhenii detei russkikh bezhencev v Korolevstve SHS (AJ, Dvor KJ 74, 276/410.)).

And finally, there is a separate question connected to the psychological dimension of a child's development in emigration:

(1) The normal psychological growth process of children was very unsettled. Even the first pedagogues, who faced the problem of caring for children in exile, pointed out this phenomenon: "These children have experienced everything. They have seen the death of those close to them, they have suffered the torment of poverty and hunger; left on their own and on the street, many children almost totally lacked any appropriate upbringing; they lived in disease-ridden and cold cattle-trucks, lay on the dirty decks of emigrant steamers and hundreds of children perished from disease and starvation. Some of them suffered physically but others were infected by moral degeneration and neglect"²⁸. They were influenced by many stressful and traumatic events that occurred during the children's early life, such as: The Revolution, The Civil war, emigration, the death of their closest relatives (parents, brothers, sisters, grand parents...), the problem of family separation, etc. Almost every day children would hear about these problems from their parents, and they also suffered from many of them personally²⁹. Reports about psychological stresses and traumas suffered were left by children who attended the Grammar school in Moravska T zebova (Czechoslovakia), which started its work in Constantinople in 1920. The principal of the Grammar school produced unexpected questionnaires in order to prevent false responses and so collected many sincere answers, which were evidence of the intense suffering. *The years of revolution*: "The Revolution - that was when father wasn't at home and mother didn't know what to do"; "A life of sickness started then"; "I am the only one who survived from my family"; "The most horrible thing in the Revolution was the wounded. They never got any food. We, the children had to find money for bread"... *Death and pain*: "They came and when they left we couldn't recognize our house"; "Hunger doesn't need a description, all Russian people know it well"; "Our father died of typhus and we started to eat rotten potatoes"; "They took my brother several times to be killed, just to frighten him, but in the end he died of meningitis"; "I am used to death, and it can't frighten me any longer"... *In a distant world*: "We continuously travelled from town to town, but I don't know why"; "Our steamer set off and I cried because my grandmother wouldn't come with us, saying she didn't want to die in a foreign country"; "We went to experience different countries and to see foreign nations"; "I stayed in Constantinople. All the others left but I didn't have anywhere to go so I accepted my own destiny. In the evenings I sat by the steamer chimney. It was hot there. Suddenly, somebody called my name, it was my father. Then we went to France. I suffered a lot and lost all hope for a better life"...³⁰

²⁸ Svedeniya o deyatel'nosti Predstavitel'stva Vserossiiskago Soyuzu Gorodov v Korolevstve SHS v dele pomoshci russkim detyam No. 15427, 30.10.1920. (Hoover, Coll. Paleologue 005/10.).

²⁹ Svedeniya o deyatel'nosti Predstavitel'stva Vserossiiskago Soyuzu Gorodov v Korolevstve SHS v dele pomoshci russkim detyam No. 15427, 30.10.1920. (Hoover, Coll. Paleologue 005/10.).

³⁰ *Vospominaniya 500 russkih detei*, Praga 1924, p. 10-22.

(2) Life in a "foreign" environment, bilingualism and living without a "homeland" was often discussed by parents with high emotions and this played a large part in the self-determination of the children. The principal of the Russian primary school in •umen (Bulgaria), Alexander Dehtarev compiled excellent reports on the children's psychological adaptation to a new environment and on their self-determination. He carried out a poll among children, asking them three questions: (a) Are you Russian or Bulgarian, and why do you consider yourself Russian or Bulgarian; (b) What do you know about Russia and do you love it; and (c) Do you love Bulgaria.

The fact that the answers were classified according to the children's age is of great value. Essentially, Dehtarev received answers like those below:

In response to the first question - *Are you Russian or Bulgarian?*

Among *six years* old children: "I am Russian because my parents are Russian" (4 answers), "I am Russian because I can speak Russian" (1 answer), "I am Russian, because I come from Ruse (sic! A town in Bulgaria)" (1), and "I am Bulgarian, because I was born in Bulgaria" (4);

Among *seven years* old children: "I am Russian because my parents are Russian" (5 answers), "I am Russian because my father came from Russia" (1), "I am Russian because I attend the Russian Grammar school" (1), "I am Russian because I can speak Russian" (1), "I am Russian ... I don't know why" (1), "I am Bulgarian because I live in Bulgaria" (1);

Among *eight years* old children: "I am Russian because my parents are Russian" (8 answers), "I am Russian because I love Russians" (1), "I am Russian because I have Russian clothes" (1);

Among *nine years* old children: "I am Russian because my parents are Russian" (8 answers), "I am Russian, because I can speak Russian" (1), "I am Russian, because I love Russia more than anything else in the world" (1).

In answer to the second question, *What do you know about Russia and do you love it*, produced a more interesting set of answers which could present the children's perception on what they had survived, their inexplicit visions about the country they had never seen, and also the influence of adults, and the subjects that the adults talked about at home:

Among *six years* old children: "Russia is our homeland. I would like to live in Russia. I love Russia" (1 answer), "My father talked to me about Russia, all nice things" (1), "Russia is large, Bolsheviks live there. They can kill you. I love Russia. They talk to me a lot about Russia at home. The Bolsheviks killed my uncle" (1), "I heard that there is a war in Russia. Nothing else" (1), "I know nothing about Russia" (2), "I know nothing about Russia. They haven't told me anything" (1), "I know nothing about Russia. Nobody told me" (1), "I've heard nothing about Russia. My mother didn't tell me anything" (1);

Among *seven years* old children: "I've heard of Russia. It's behind the sea. It is far away. The communists live there" (1 answer), "Russia is a city. It's a poor city. You shouldn't travel there now.

They can kill you" (1), "Russia is large. A lot of people live there. I love Russia. I would like to live in Russia. My father told me a great deal about Russia, but I've forgotten everything" (1), "Russia was a rich country, but now it is poor. Mother talked to me about Russia, there was hunger there. I love Russia. I will go to Russia when the Bolsheviks aren't there any longer" (1), "I was told that Russia is a barracks outside of the town" (1), "They never talked to me about Russia. The Bolsheviks killed my grandfather. I know nothing" (1), "I've heard nothing and know nothing about Russia" (1);

Among *eight years* old children, the answers were more uniform: "I've heard nothing about Russia" (8 answers), "Russia is rich, everything is good there. But the Bolsheviks are there. My mother told me that she spent a horrible time with the Bolsheviks" (1), "Russia, it's a big country. My older brothers are in Russia. It's good there. I would like to live in Russia" (1);

The visions about Russia among *nine years* old children had many nuances: "Russia is powerful, it's enormous. It's rich. I love Russia" (1 answer), "Russia is very big. I love Russia" (1), "I would like to go to Moscow, because it was nice to live there. My mum and dad lived there" (1), "The best city of all is Petersburg. I know about Petersburg, I've heard about it from my father. I love Russia" (1), "Russia was ours, but now the communists are there. Everything is bad there now: they kill and slaughter. It's a war there. You shouldn't go. I love Russia" (1), "The Bolsheviks killed my grandparents. At home, they told me that bad people are fighting there. They don't believe in God. They killed my grandfather Ivan. They badly tortured him. They cut off his legs and hands" (1), "The Bolsheviks killed my grandfather and uncle. They are soldiers... My father went away and he married my mother. Russia is far away. You shouldn't go there" (1), "I've heard nothing and don't know anything about Russia" (1).

The answers to the third question were extremely uniform. Almost all the children (25) simply answered "I love Bulgaria". Sometime a child would give a more complete explanation as to why he loved Bulgaria, "I love Bulgaria, I love Russia, too. I love everything" (6 years), "I love it a little bit" (7 years), "Because it's good here", "Because it's so small", "Because I live in it" (8 years), "Because it accepted us", "We live on it's land" (9 years). There were three exceptions that implied personal involvement of these children towards the reality of the situation and some individual problems that confronted them: "I don't love Bulgaria completely, because it's not our homeland", "I am afraid of Bulgaria, because people fight in my street" (6 years), "I don't love Bulgaria because they talk in Bulgarian" (7 years)³¹.

Basically, all the answers show us that life in exile greatly influenced the children's self-determination. Their visions of Russia were quite considered in regard to the fact that they were not

³¹ A.Dehterev, *S detmi emigracii*, pp. 110-115.

the results of any personal experience, but were acquired indirectly, out of contact with their close surroundings.

(3) Stressful experiences, poverty and the unstable life of exile had a strong influence on certain areas of the development of Russian children. Describing the generation of children who grew up in refuge, many authors put in first place, among many other characteristics of the children, materialism and their concentration on material aspects of the world. The authors, who wrote about these problems, emphasized the fact that the children had started at an unusually early age to listen to the financial problems of the adults and later on they started to consider these problems. So they tried to direct their lives towards their own personal material stability. Due to this, as noted by their professors, they believed material values to be the most important and would enable them to lead a normal life³². Such attitudes, formed by this specific life situation in exile, influenced their choice of school and later their choice of university and thus the course of their life orientation. It is interesting to point out that a high percent of Russian youth studied at the faculties of science and engineering, and a low percentage of them studied social sciences. This happened because science and engineering presented them with the opportunity of permanent jobs, not only in the Balkans but throughout Europe. We can see how the whole generation, which grew up in unstable conditions, tried hard to find stability in education, and also (consciously or not) prepared themselves for the possibility of subsequent emigration. With regards to this it is interesting to mention that the only idealistic notions these children had were of their homeland, Russia. These notions were usually taken from the adults' stories³³. This was the way that the nostalgia of the adults was reflected in the children's' creation of idealistic images of their homeland. The specific formation of these children, which was different from normal development, for example in Russia before the Revolution, was particularly important because it influenced their the later formation and function of the Russian man in exile;

(4) Irregular life conditions, usual for life in emigration, also led the children to acquire a problematical and irresponsible attitude towards other people's property (for example, the property of local inhabitants or school property)³⁴;

(5) And finally, due to such life conditions in refuge, children matured much earlier than is usual. Their development was premature, and this could be better perceived by the earlier appearance of a child's individuality than in normal life circumstances³⁵.

³² P.N.Sokovnin, "Dannyya opyta russkih uchebnyh zavedeniy v Bolgarii ...", in: *Soveshchanie predstavitelei russkih uchebnyh zavedenii v Bolgarii ...*, p. 53-56.

³³ See: Aleksandr Dehterev, *S detmi emigracii...*, pp. 116-117; also: P.N.Sokovnin, "Dannyya opyta russkih uchebnyh zavedeniy v Bolgarii ...", in: *Soveshchanie predstavitelei russkih uchebnyh zavedenii v Bolgarii ...*, p. 53-56.

³⁴ P.N.Sokovnin, "Dannyya opyta russkih uchebnyh zavedeniy v Bolgarii ...", in: *Soveshchanie predstavitelei russkih uchebnyh zavedenii v Bolgarii ...*, p. 50; also: Boris Pavlov, "My i Sloveny v Strnishe", in: *Kadetskaya pereklichka*, New York, 8 (1974), p. 27.

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I would like to point out that the whole comprehensive phenomenon, represented by the history of Russian children in refuge (1920-1940), can hardly be understood as an isolated socio-historical, historical, anthropological or psycho-historical phenomenon.

It was caused and very much depended on many other historical phenomena which were part of traditional historiography (like the Civil war in Russia). That is why it is necessary for the complete understanding of the place and history of the Russian man and children in refuge, to have a comprehensive approach which considers the traditional-historical level, as well as its socio-historical, anthropological and psychological aspect.

³⁵ P.N.Sokovnin, "Dannyya opyta russkih uchebnyh zavedeniy v Bolgarii ...", in: *Soveshchanie predstavitelei russkih uchebnyh zavedenii v Bolgarii ...*, p. 54.