

# Flying Away From the Bolshevik Winter: Soviet Refugees across the Southern Borders (1917–30)

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Methodologically drawing on the most recent works in Migration Studies and Russian Emigré Studies, the article studies migration from the USSR into Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan (1917–1930). Using various hitherto untapped archival sources, research looks into the phenomena, such as displaced statehood, political activism and cross-cultural interaction in the context of the migration/refugee policies of the relevant states (Britain, the USSR and the host countries).

**Keywords:** Soviet refugees, Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan, Soviet intelligence

The twentieth century witnessed major shifts in the world political structure, resulting from destructive wars and revolutions, the demise of empires and the emergence of unprecedented polities—processes that led to mass migrations, complicated in strata and extraordinary in numbers. The First World War alone led to the demise of three vast multinational empires (Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman and Russian), which caused massive dislocation of people. The issue of migration has rapidly been gaining further impetus throughout the first two decades of the twenty-first century (Hoerder 2012; Nail 2015; Crawley and Skleparis 2018; Greussing and Boomgaarden 2017; Barbulescu 2019; Trilling 2019). Current developments in the migration crisis can be better understood through the lens of accumulated twentieth-century experience, particularly the migration from Soviet Russia caused by the 1917 Bolshevik revolution, the ensuing civil war and the establishment of the Soviet polity. According to various estimations, these developments resulted in 3 to 10 million individuals fleeing the territory of Soviet Russia/the USSR during the period 1917–41 (Johnston 1988: 23–26; Pivovar 2008: 82–4). As early as 1920–25, there were more than 10 million citizens of Russia residing abroad (Doronchenkov 1997: 5).

Russian migrant communities<sup>1</sup> in Europe, as well as the USSR and European states' policies towards them, have been thoroughly studied in English-, French- and Russian-language scholarship. The ground-breaking works of the very late 1980s by Johnston (1988) and Raeff (1990), justifiably for the initial stages of scholarly enquiry into the topic, generally focused on the 'Russian *émigrés*' (Johnston 1988: 7) in France, who indeed constituted the nucleus of the 'Great Russian Emigration' (Raeff 1990: vii) during the 1920s–30s in many senses: intellectual, political, economic as well as in terms of overwhelming numbers. These works became fertile soil for more nuanced and detailed studies with varying focuses on different social groups and host countries by Andreyev and Savicky (2004), Gousseff (2008), Foshko (2008), Livak (2010), Slobin (2013) and others. However, Russian-language scholarship stands out to some extent. Having thrown off the Soviet fetters amid the late 1980s' *glasnost* (openness) (before that, during the entire Soviet period, the topic was taboo), it has nevertheless remained largely isolated, confined to digging up recently declassified material from Russian archives and not engaging analytically either with the secondary sources of Western scholarship or primary sources in North American and European archives (Borisov 1993; Oleinik and Memetov 1997; Begidov and Ershov 1998; Ershov 2003; Ippolitov 2004; Pivovar 2008; Antropov 2016; Zaitsev 2017; Goncharenko 2018). However, there are rare works that are an exception to the above picture of Russia's isolated *Emigré* studies, particularly the works by Sabennikova (2002), Sabennikova and Gentshke (2014), evaluating and engaging with the exhausting plethora of international sources, and the work by Polian (2004, originally published in Russian), who studied the forced dislocation of population within the Soviet Union.

Although remaining predominantly Eurocentric, similarly to Western scholarship, Russian-language *Emigré* studies have been more diverse in their geographic focus, producing successful works on Asian countries. Scholars such as Pivovar (1994), Uturgauro (2013), Abdullaev (2009), Goncharenko (2009), Krotova (2014) and Khisamutdinov (2010) studied Turkey and the Central Asian region, as well as China and Japan. The latter have undergone thorough study, whereas West and South Asia have received significantly less attention, although this region served as the main transit zone for the interwar exodus from the USSR, especially Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan and even India (Pivovar 1994: 10–13).

Although the Iranian archives—primarily the Iranian National Archive and the Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs—are very rich on recording the life and times of Russian Soviet refugees in Iran, the Persian-language scholarship on the subject is both limited and fragmentary. For example, Kaveh Bayat (1996), in his article on the early Soviet refugees, migrants or immigrants (the Persian terms he adopts interchangeably), focuses on the Soviet refugees in the late 1920s and the early 1930s, who crossed the border chiefly due to economic hardship following the collectivization process in the Soviet Union. Furthermore, in Persian-language scholarship, there is no distinction between the repatriation of the Iranian community, which had resided in the Soviet Union for decades, and the Tsarist-Soviet subjects, Russians, Caucasians and Central Asians, who fled to Iran in the 1920s

and 1930s (Azari 1993; Malekzadeh and Jani 2017). Instead, the life and time of the Iranian communities residing in the Tsarist Russia or later the Soviet Union are in the spotlight of English-language works (Atabaki 2004, 2007). In addition to academic studies, the life and times of the Soviet refugees have also been narrated in a number of memoirs, either by the refugees themselves or by eyewitnesses. In the 1950s, a number of such narratives, chiefly by Azerbaijani or Armenian refugees, were published in the Iranian press (Javanshir 2014 [1954]).

Indeed, it should be noted that, during the *interbellum*, hundreds of thousands of migrants from Soviet Russia either passed through these southern (particularly Transcaucasian and Transcaspian) regions towards Europe and the US or founded migrant communities there. These migrants made a serious attempt to become an integral part of the political activism professed by Russian communities all over the world in the 1920s–30s (Sokolov 2011; Henderson 2017). This often resulted in them being heavily manipulated by other governments in their foreign policies towards Soviet Russia, especially by Britain—Russia’s traditional rival in the region (Bazanov 2013; Gusterin 2014; Volkov 2018a). On the other hand, the positions of the Soviet government in political and military terms towards the southern neighbouring countries were significantly stronger than those in Europe. Having an upper hand in its relations with these states, the Soviet government would resort to military invasions, large-scale intelligence operations, bribery of local police and the military, particularly in the border areas, as well as imposing interstate border-control treaties—all this done with the aim of neutralizing the anti-Soviet *émigré* activities and to physically liquidate their networks and active representatives abroad, as well as to lead to the repatriation of larger numbers for subsequent prosecution on the Soviet territory (Bajanov 1930; Agabekov 1931; Sokolov 2011; Henderson 2017: 226–240; IISH, R 630/279 fol, *MVD-MGB Campaign Against Russian Emigres NTS Report*: 1–2).

This topic has been fully studied either as a whole or in part, yet it is of paramount significance in terms of Hoerder’s human dimensions:

Myriads of moves across space result from the will of men and women to fashion lives. The survival of forced migrants depended on their will to reconstruct their identities and attempt to regain some control over their values, emotions, and relationships (Hoerder 2011: XX; Siegelbaum and Moch 2015: 7).

Normally, host governments are capable of either facilitating or hampering this process, using their own immigration policies; however, the case of the Soviet refugees was also aggravated by another factor. In contrast to a conventional situation, in which forced migrants feel safe as soon as they settle in their new lands after fleeing their native areas due to war, natural disasters, famine or persecution, the Soviet regime would hunt its fugitives beyond its borders, particularly in the neighbouring countries with state apparatuses that were weaker in political and military terms. Thus, the overarching aim of this research is not only to identify who left Soviet Russia/the USSR during the period in question, but also how they were accepted by their host countries, what they did after fleeing the USSR and how the USSR pursued them on the territory of their host states.

This is, of course, the overarching task of a larger ongoing research study, planned to culminate in a monograph covering the entire period between late 1917 (the establishment of the Bolshevik regime) and 1946 (the year of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Iran). The project focuses on all major groups of migrants who left Soviet Russia/the USSR either for political or economic reasons, although the majority of them are likely to combine both. These groups include *ancien régime* diplomats and military officers, Soviet-state and party functionaries, including Azerbaijani Musavatists, Georgian Mensheviks, Armenian Dashnaks, various Trotskyists and other representatives of domestic political opposition, as well as workers, peasants, religious and nomadic groups from the Caucasus and Central Asia. Drawing on recent works engaging with migration-studies theory, particularly [Nail \(2015\)](#), [Hoerder \(2011\)](#), the [Lucassen and Lucassen \(2017\)](#) and [Lucassen and Smit \(2016\)](#), and on international scholarship about interwar Russian migration, as well as documents from various political and military archives in Russia, Iran, Britain, France, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan and the International Institute of Social History (IISH) archive, the larger research project will address conceptual themes such as major social shifts caused by political transformations, displaced statehood, migrants' political activism, as well as the formation and realization of state-sponsored policies toward migrants, including hostile clandestine activities. Therefore, the research outcomes will significantly contribute to migration and area studies as well as to the social and political history within a broader Eurasian context.<sup>2</sup>

This article aims to provide a methodological and historiographical introduction, or a springboard towards the larger project, and focuses merely on the initial phases of the overall period under study, namely from the Bolshevik takeover until the late 1920s—the time at which the underlying changes in the USSR's domestic policies, aimed at curtailing the New Economic Policy (NEP) and the other relatively liberal post-civil war manifestations, defined the field of the USSR's foreign-policy decision-making ([Volkov 2018a: 129](#)).<sup>3</sup> This article seeks to identify the main social strata of those who left the territory of the former Russian empire through its southern borders within the first two decades of the existence of the Bolshevik regime, the dynamics or periodization of this process, where those refugees headed to and, finally, what aspects most influenced this process, in the context of the policies of Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan and that of Britain and the USSR. These aims enable us to engage with Hoerder's 'systems approach' (2011: 19, 2012: 51–56) in comparative analysis of different migrant groups within the 'societies of origin and destination' (2011: 16) and to apply it to the case of Russia and its 'outer South' ([Tolz 2011](#); [Volkov, 2014, 2018a: 159](#)) as regards 'continuities, reorientation and disruption' ([Hoerder 2011: 14–21](#)). The varying background of different groups allows us to go deeper with Hoerder's approach, developed by [Siegelbaum and Moch \(2015: 1–15\)](#) as well as by [Lucassen and Smit \(2016: 6–10\)](#), in the application of the notion of 'organizational migration' and its implications for the agents of the case in question.

### Periodization and Dynamics

The current research proves that, in the context of the so-called first wave of Russian emigration, if one sticks to the terminology of Russian *Emigré* studies (Raeff 1990: 1–14; Doronchenkov 1997: 5–6; Bocharova 2011: 8–10), the first decade of the Bolshevik regime was not only the most intense in terms of migration dynamics, but also the most complicated in many other senses. It is undoubtedly the most complex period in the strata of migration, and its reasons and implications for world and regional politics. Most importantly, the efforts undertaken so far with the aim to compose a detailed periodization of this period have revealed its immense complexity: multiple minor and even sub-waves with no clear boundaries, overlapping each other and resembling a continuous multilayer and multistream exodus from the ‘Communist paradise under construction’.

Nevertheless, based on the current research, it is possible to discern the following meaningful phases. It is conventional wisdom to situate the very first emigration flow, the bulk of which streamed southward, within the time frame of the civil war, marking the lower time border as spring–summer 1918, although this does not take into consideration a significant Russian diplomatic corps residing in numerous countries at the point of the October uprising of 1917. These all, with very few exceptions, refused either to represent the Bolsheviks abroad or to return to the central office of the ministry. Iran was no exception to that, with Russians arguably the largest diplomatic and trade presence there.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, Iran’s unique situation was as the only foreign country that had, according to different estimations, almost 70000–90000 Russian troops deployed in the north and west of Iran, who were fighting the Ottomans on the so-called Persian Front during the First World War (AV, f. 134, op. 1, d. 502, l. 1 Minorsky’s depiction of the situation in Northern Iran; Zarkeshev 2002: 116; Shishov 2010; Ravandi-Fadai 2018: 220–222). As early as several days after the October uprising, Trotsky pronounced them ‘outlaws’ if they did not recognize Soviet power (AVPRF, f. 94, op. 2, d. 2, papka 1, l. 1 Bravin’s appointment, 22/11/1917; Dailami 1999: 67). So a significant number of people became de facto refugees already in late 1917. Later, as an immediate effect of the civil war, one can identify an influx of civilians (1918–20) followed also by soldiers and officers after the defeat of the White Army in South Russia (1920–21) (Bocharova 2011: 47–48). This emphatically overlaps with the flow caused by the disastrous *Povolzh’e Famine* (1920–22), shifting the main southward destinations from Turkey to Iran’s northern frontiers, which remained permeable for years (GARF, f. 5446, op. 5a, d. 865, l. 1–3 OGPU’s reports on border patrolling in the Caucasus and Turkestan, 1923–1924).

For instance, according to Iran’s Ministry of Interior, the early mass influx of refugees arriving in Iran dates back to 1918. Of the total number of 6820 Tsarist/Soviet subjects and Iranian subjects residing in the Tsarist/Soviet territory landing at the Anzali Port in 1918, there were 6322 non-Russian Muslims, 291 Russian Orthodox and 207 Armenians (National Archive of Iran, 23015–2, 251, 4513. Cited in Azari 1993). Following the fall of three independent states in the Caucasus: the Musavati Azerbaijan (1918–20), the Dashnaksutyun Armenia

(1918–20) and the Menshevik Georgia (1918–21), and later the end of the Russian Civil War (1918–20), the number of Soviet refugees crossing the Iranian border increased and, on the eve of the Second World War, in 1939, it reached a total of 52471 (Azari 1993). These refugees were chiefly registered at the Caspian Port of Anzali or the Jolfa border-crossing point in the Iranian Province of Azerbaijan, or to the east of the Caspian Sea, the border crossings with Soviet Turkmenistan–Bajgiran. However, these numbers seem to significantly underestimate the true annual influx of migrants from the north and may reflect only an insignificant part of the real influx. The overall statistics gathered throughout the 1920s–30s by British military intelligence in north-west and north-east Iran speak of dozens of thousands annually, although with varying dynamics (BL–India Office, IOR/L/PS/12/3426, coll 28/29 Persia. Russia. Russian Refugees in Persia; IOR/L/PS/10/211, file 52/1912 Pt 3 Persia Diaries; IOR/L/PS/11/197 Conference on the Russian Refugee Question).

The 1921–27 NEP proclaimed by Lenin included more liberal foreign-trade exchange, which further opened the southern borders for migrant groups in the Caucasus and Central Asia. Further Sovietization of those areas led to the Bolsheviks' political opponents being pushed out to Turkey, but mostly to Iran and Afghanistan. Fearing the atrocities practised during the civil war and later the Red Terror—the use of gas and the execution of entire villages with women and children (Fraser 1987a, 1987b: 8, 52), dozens of thousands of Bukharans, Khivans, Kazakhs and other Central Asian Turkic peoples annually continued to flee over the southern borders, to Khorasan and Afghanistan, throughout the 1920s (Fraser 1987a, 1987b: 64–65; Okorokov 2013; Agabekov 2018: 150–159). Unorthodox Christian religious minorities exiled by the Tsarist regime to the Caucasus and Transcaspia during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries also began to leave the country village by village. Iranian archives give us detailed information on the migration of Molokans and Dukhobors (the so-called Russian Orthodox Protestants) in 1925–27 (GARF, f. 3316, op. 19, d. 905, Correspondence on the Molokans, Chicherin to Kalinin, 30/01/1926; BL—India Office, IOR/L/PS/12/3426 Russian Refugees in Persia; CDRSIMFA, 310/13527 The Molokans Collection, 1925–1927; Breyfogle 2011).

The end of the NEP liberalization that began with the anti-Trotsky campaign in 1927 and instigated the beginning of a new flight of political fugitives, namely Trotskyists, for years to come (RGASPI, f. 589, op. 3, d. 11737, t. 1, l. 10, 54) was preceded by a different protracted flow—relatively minor in numbers but increasingly important in content—that had been under way since as early as 1921. This mostly consisted of Communist-Party members, intelligence officers and functionaries of trade organizations from inside the USSR and abroad. Since Afghanistan, Iran and Turkey were the first countries to diplomatically recognize the new Soviet state, sign treaties of friendship and establish fully fledged diplomatic relations with the Bolsheviks in 1921, this process was particularly conspicuous in these countries. In addition to gaining momentum with each year up to 1927, the numbers of Communists-Bolsheviks

with pre-1917 experience was also on the rise within this group, according to *OGPU*<sup>5</sup> reports (RGASPI, f. 17, op. 113, d. 650, l. 11, 278–9 Protocol of the Secretariat Meeting No 54 of the Central Committee; [Genis 2009a](#): 4), indicating the outward dissatisfaction of these individuals with the divergence between expectations and final outcomes. Therefore, during the period 1917–27, the process largely took the form of a great continuous exodus, extremely complex in its diverse major and minor flows towards the south, and precisely defining their fluctuating and blurred time and content boundaries is posing the biggest hurdle in this research.

### Social Composition and Geography

Operating with Hoerder's terms, the high degree of 'exclusiveness' ([Hoerder 2011](#): 8–21, 2012: 47–51) of the early Bolshevik regime drove the all-inclusive character of migration from Soviet Russia and then from the USSR. So it was not merely a flight of the class of oppressors, as some envisaged it based on the influx of well-educated nobility and the representatives of the upper class into France and Germany ([Raeff 1990](#): 4–6). As was stressed by Vasily Nikitin, the former Russian diplomat in Iran and one of the founders of the Eurasianism Movement in Paris, as early as 1922:

Russian emigration does not resemble the French aristocratic exodus of 1789. It is a new, more significant social and political phenomenon. All social classes are represented in the emigration, with the pre-revolutionary privileged class not much more than a quarter of the whole ([Johnston 1988](#): 10).

Indeed, as [Raeff \(1990: 5\)](#) mentioned, mainly pointing to European countries during the interwar period, the Russian refugee community possessed almost the same complexity as the former Russian empire, although with slightly different proportions.

Flows incoming to Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan showed an even more inclusive composition for geographical and cultural reasons. In this regional context, Iran represents a unique case. At the moment of the October uprising, Iran was the only country where, in addition to a large resident Russian community, including Russian settlers, diplomats and employees of the Russian-Persian Discount and Loan Bank with branches in all significant urban and rural localities, there were numerous Russian troops stationed—as mentioned above, from 70000 to 90000 soldiers and officers. It is noteworthy that, among the entire diplomatic community of almost 200 men, only one diplomat outwardly accepted Trotsky's appeal and was appointed the first Soviet plenipotentiary in Iran. He was eventually ejected from Iran by the local Russian community in June 1918 ([Volkov 2018a](#): 114, 121, 158, 209–215, 2015: 907–909; [Dailami 1999](#)). This also became feasible only due to the amalgamation of Russian military forces and diplomatic corps both present and playing a strategic role on the territory of a foreign country—a unique situation for Russia at that time. The potential of this immigrant politico–

military reunion shortly afterwards developed into a phenomenon known as the Caspian Caucasian Alliance government (Volkov 2020). It was a strong regional hub of anti-Bolshevik power controlling the north of Iran, the extensive territories up to the North Caucasus and the entire Transcaspien region from mid-1918 to mid-1919 (GARF, f. 446, op. 2, d. 56, l. 53–4 Documents of the Transcaspien Government; d. 55, l. 1–3 Report to General Denikin; RGVA, f. 39779, op. 2, d. 73, l. 33–4; d. 90, l. 1; d. 64, l. 20–3; Dunsterville 1920; Bagriantsev and Elagin 1963: 331–418; Bezugol'nyi 2011).

The subsequent developments of the civil war and Bolsheviks' advancement to the south led to a constantly increasing flow of all social groups into Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan. This is also explained by the southward retreat of the main anti-Bolshevik forces. Among them, there were the representatives of the nobility, middle class, peasants and workers, including monarchists, republicanists and then, after the Sovietization of the Caucasus in 1920–21, the Azerbaijani Musavatists, the Armenian Dashnaks and the Georgian Mensheviks (Johnston 1988: 5). Various Christian minorities (including the above-mentioned Dukhobors and Molokans) were mainly attracted by Iran's rather inclusive cosmopolitan society (CDRSIMFA, 310/13527 the Molokans Collection, 1925–1927). Sunni Muslims generally preferred Turkey (Crimean Tatars) and Afghanistan (Central Asian nomads and peasantry), where they were well treated by their brothers in creed (RGVA, f. 25895, op. 1, d. 847, d. 846 Intelligence of the Central Asia Military District, reports about Soviet immigrants in Afghanistan). In the context of the growing disillusionment with revolutionary ideals, the migration flow was enriched by defectors from the Soviet-state apparatus. The defection of Boris Bazhanov, the Soviet secretary of the secretariat of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and Stalin's personal assistant in January 1928, was the most archetypal and will be reviewed in detail in the larger study. The defections of this kind happened increasingly often in Iran where the USSR had a significantly stronger presence than in Turkey and Afghanistan in terms of foreign-trade entities and intelligence activities (BL—India Office, IOR/L/PS/12/3426 Russian Refugees in Persia; Agabekov 2018). However, this strictly political group of migrants was also diluted by those state functionaries who, according to their own words, had nothing against Soviet power but had simply come to the conclusion that life was better outside the USSR and had decided either to remain in the Middle East or to relocate to more prosperous countries (Genis 2009a: 4–8).

From the early days, Iranian authorities classified refugees according to their political and economic motivation. Amongst those recognized by Iran as political refugees who composed the first wave of migrants, there were officers, soldiers and political supporters of the *ancien régime*, as well as the Muslim Musavatists, Armenian Dashnaks and Georgian Mensheviks. However, with the political consolidation of Bolshevik rule, the political composition of refugees in Iran changed. While the Muslim Musavatists and the Armenian Dashnaks remained the bulk of the political refugees from the Caucasus, in the east of the Caspian Sea, there were more Muslim Basmachis who joined the caravan of political refugees. As for the



Russian ethnic refugees, from the mid-1920s, in contrast to the royalist Russians of previous years, the majority of the Russian refugees, according to Iranian documents, were left-wing opponents of the Bolshevik leadership, including Anarchists, Mensheviks and even Trotskyist members of the Bolshevik Party and Red Army military personnel (CDRSIMFA, SH-1306-K2-P36-2). Amongst the refugees who left the Soviet territory with more economic motivation, the Muslims and the Armenians of the Caucasus and later the Turkmen of the Central Asia fled to Iran in thousands. There were also reports of Kazan Tatars, Greeks and Germans, who arrived in Iran in hundreds. For the majority of them, the economic hardship caused by the civil war and later the miscellaneous collectivization policies adopted by the new regime were the chief causes of their exodus (Azari 1993).

In general, it is hard to precisely differentiate the motives and reasons of these migrant groups, allocating them either political or economic status. First, all those who left Russia after October 1917 without the permission of the Soviet authorities were announced as non-Soviet citizens in 1921 (confirmed in 1924) and considered subject to persecution (Pivovarov 2008: 85). On 15 December 1921, the Soviet *VTsIK* and *Sovnarkom* issued a decree depriving of citizenship whoever left the country without the permission of Soviet authorities after 25 October 1917 (Bocharova 2011: 11). The increasingly exclusive character of the Soviet regime laid down the principle that anyone who did not support Soviet power was deemed an enemy. So anyone leaving the Soviet state, even for mere economic reasons (fearing starvation or simply being unable to provide for their family), was automatically recognized as a political enemy, hence becoming a refugee was liable to be persecuted for political reasons. Second, according to the Soviet authorities of the time (as shown in government correspondence), anyone supporting Soviet polity was obliged to endure its temporary deprivations (GARF, f. 3316, op. 19, d. 905, Chicherin to Kalinin, 30/01/1926). In 1927, the Council of People's Commissars initiated a thorough consideration of the 'defectors' problem' among Soviet-state employees abroad. This was entrusted to the OGPU, the NKID and the NKVT. Several months later, the consolidated report resulted in adopting a decree officially licencing the forced return of such individuals to the USSR for subsequent prosecution, or their liquidation on site, on the territory of other countries, among many other secret administrative, military and punitive measures to be taken, including retroactively (RGASPI, f. 17, op. 113, l. 11, 278, 280, 279, 285, 298–332; d. 589, op. 3, d. 11737, t. 10, l. 10; Volkov 2015: 910).

### **Political Activism and State Policies**

In the domain of international political and military struggle, the region in question gives us significant material for the study of migration from the angle of Hoerder's continuities, reorientation and disruption in the societies of origin and destination (Hoerder 2011: 16). The case of post-First-World-War Iran is particularly interesting in this sense. There are continuities from the two-

century-old Great Game—the British–Russian rivalry for political and military influence in the entire Persianate World (Turkey, Central Asia, Iran and Afghanistan, embracing even India) (Sergeev 2014; Volkov 2018a).<sup>6</sup> There is also a reorientation in the sense of Russians exerting strong influence and bringing *la mission civilisatrice* on the heads of Iranians before 1917 and that of Russians thereafter becoming an object at the mercy of Iranian society. The relevant disruption in this case was manifested in Iran, slowly turning into a national independent discourse corresponding to the foundation of the modern nation state in Iran, with a more centralized government, following the foundation of the Pahlavi monarchy.

In the case of all migrant groups, especially during the early interwar period, it ran like a red thread through all memoirs and ‘future actions’ memoranda that they felt they had left their native lands only for a few, at the maximum for several, years (Pivovar 1994: 115–116). In Central Asia, although one could still trace among some political elites mindsets of pan-Turanism or pan-Islamism of the late Ottoman empire, for the majority of people, the return to the old khanates rule, proposed by the Basmachis, was still attractive (Tughan 1996; Atabaki 2006; Pylev 2006; Arapov and Kosach 2007; 64–65; Karasar 2015). For the Caucasians still cherishing the idea of independent republics (GARF, R5802, op. 1, d. 1869 Minorsky’s letters to Burtsev about the situation in the Transcaucasus, 1919–1920), their new host societies did not seem culturally alien. However, Russians found themselves in significantly differing cultural environments for a period of time perceived by them to be very short, hence the efforts to preserve their former way of life—in other words, to create a temporary ‘Russia abroad’ (Raeff 1990: 4–6; Pivovar 1994: 78–79, 2008: 87). This perception spread all over the world and was later referred to using the term ‘displaced statehood’ (Bocharova 2011: 33, 94–113).

In Europe and the US, Russians established their own public and military schools, various professional unions were organized on an ethnic basis, numerous Russian clubs and societies functioned for many years and various Russian-language newspapers and literary journals were published in significant numbers (Pivovar 1994: 78; Bocharova 2011: 110–111;). Raeff maintained:

At first the exiles organised their lives to be ready to return and to reintegrate into the political, social, and cultural activities of their homeland the moment Russia would be freed from the tyrannical Bolshevik regime. In the most literal sense they did not ‘unpack’ their suitcases; they sat on their trunks. The mission was to preserve the values and traditions of Russian culture and to continue its creative efforts for the benefit and ongoing spiritual progress of the homeland—whether one was fated to return or to die in exile (1990: 4).

However, Raeff’s observations are, of course, most accurate in application to the European ‘Russia abroad’, whereas this phenomenon eventually did not persist in Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan, as our research demonstrates later in this article.

The second overarching task was resistance, consisting of the containment of Bolshevism and its subsequent eradication, both of which were supposed to hasten

the inevitable return home, as stipulated by Boris Savinkov (IISH, R517/11 Boris Savinkov, *Bor'ba s bol'shevikami: Russkii politicheskii komitet, 1920*, 1–48). In this regard, especially during the first post-1917 years, the region, especially Iran, played a unique role and was at the spearhead of the implementation of the second task. For example, it was due to the efforts of Russian diplomats supported by the remaining Russian troops in Iran that the Caspian Caucasian Alliance government was established in 1918. As mentioned above, it continued to keep the territories of northern Iran, and almost the entire Caucasus with Dagestan and Transcaucasia, clear from Bolsheviks until late 1919, in some cases well into 1920 (GARF, R200, op. 1, d. 376 transcript of Minorsky's telephone conversation with the Omsk government, 16/11/1918; d. 378 Minorsky's correspondence with the Commander-in-Chief of Russia, November–December 1918; d. 379 Minorsky about the Cossack Division still in service and its Commander Starosel'skii).<sup>7</sup> The first Soviet invasion of Iran in 1920 was also stopped by the Persian Cossack Brigade, mostly staffed by Russian officers and soldiers at that time. They were also instrumental in the demise of the short-lived Soviet Socialist Republic of Iran (Chaqueri 1995; Genis 2000). Central Asian migrants and the Basmachi movement were hosted by a specially organized Immigration Department within the government of Afghanistan (RGVA, f. 25895, op. 1, d. 847: 3–4; d. 846: 1–6 Intelligence of the Central Asian Military District, reports from Soviet informants in Afghanistan). Furthermore, General Wrangel succeeded in maintaining a significant part of the White Army in a state of tactical efficiency in Turkey until 1922 (Bocharova 2011: 55; Goldin 2011: 19–20). After the establishment of the Brotherhood of Russian Truth (BRP) in 1921 in Berlin and the Russian All-Military Union (ROVS) in 1924 in Belgrade, branches were secretly opened in Iran and used its territory as a springboard for sending volunteers from Europe to carry out subversive and sabotage operations on the territory of the USSR (Dvinov 1955; Goldin 2011: 117, 200; Bazanov 2013: 172–176; IHS, R522/10). It thus appears that the overall balance between Iran's relative geographical proximity to the areas of Soviet central power, along with the periphery of strategic importance such as oil-rich Azerbaijan and the relative 'leakiness' of Soviet Russia's borders in the Transcaucasia and Transcaucasian, proved one of the underlying factors stimulating elevated anti-Bolshevik resistance in the region. Therefore, in terms of political activism during the first post-1917 years, the region in question significantly outpaced all other host countries in political activism.

However, the heightened political activism that manifested itself immediately after the Bolshevik revolution in the region under research was, to a great degree, neutralized by the ongoing political processes and the relative weakness of local governments. The European states did not succumb to the fear of a Bolshevik invasion, due to their political and military strength as well as their relative geographical remoteness from Russia, whereas, in Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan, among their government officials, there were well-grounded concerns that Bolshevization had great potential to overflow onto their territories, followed by inevitable Bolshevik invasion. The Turkish National Movement that during 1920–23 defended the territory of modern Turkey from Allied occupation

sympathized with the Bolsheviks for the same reason (Pivovar 1994: 84; Gözde 2018: 13). Afghanistan also had a long pre-history of military stand-off against the British and became the first state that officially recognized Soviet Russia and established diplomatic relations with her in 1919. Although Amanollah-Khan wholeheartedly welcomed Central Asian refugees fleeing the Bolsheviks, he was realistic enough not to give the Bolsheviks pretexts to take more active military measures and positioned its government as neutral amongst Basmachi hostilities against the Bolsheviks, often trying to curb them (Fraser 1987a: 14, 16). Similarly, Iranians finally realized that, in case of a Bolshevik invasion, the British would try to defend only their oil fields in the south of Iran and the areas adjacent to the Indian border, at most. In so doing, all three states hurried to negotiate and sign treaties of friendship with Soviet Russia in 1920–21. All three treaties contained an article stating the prevention of anti-Soviet activities. However, in Iran's case, the Bolsheviks succeeded in including an article allowing them to bring their military into the Iranian territory in case of such activities (GARF, f. 10003, op. 12, k. 46 *Obshchestvo pomoshi russkim bezhentsam v Persii*, Reports: 718–719.). Therefore, the policies of these countries towards migrant communities from Soviet Russia diametrically differed from those in European countries and were aimed at the prevention of anti-Soviet political activism (in Turkey and Iran) or at least tried to significantly limit such activities (in Afghanistan).

The young republican Turkish government of Atatürk took the most hostile stance: it hardly recognized Nansen passports, induced Russians to adopt Turkish citizenship or deported them in case of their refusal so that, by the late 1920s, all 10 Russian public schools were closed and there were hardly more than 800 Russians remaining in Istanbul as refugees (Pivovar 2008: 77; Bocharova 2011: 53–54). Iran, like Afghanistan, considered all Central Asian peasants and nomads its own citizens as soon they crossed the border, and peacefully encouraged Russians to adopt Iranian citizenship after 3 years of residence. Simultaneously, based on migrants' memoirs and correspondence, it should be noted that, at the grassroots level, all migrants were received without hostility and with a degree of compassion throughout the region, and only in Iran was there felt a grain of gloating towards white Russians as yesterday's imperial oppressors; but this faded away within 2 to 3 years (GARF, f. 10003, op. 12, k. 46 *Obshchestvo pomoshi russkim bezhentsam v Persii*; a letter-report to Maria Wrangel: 696–697). So, in sum, it may be concluded that, for the bulk of Russian migrants, this region was generally perceived as a mere stopover towards either European or South/North American countries, also due to the immigration policies of the local governments of Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan.

Nevertheless, quite a considerable number were unable to continue their rescue journey, for a variety of reasons. Settling finally in the Iranian northern cities of Tabriz, Rasht, Anzali, Mashhad or in the capital Tehran, the Russian/Soviet subjects tried to set up their clubs and societies. One the most active of these organized networks was the Russian refugee society in Tehran at the registered address of Postkhaneh street in Tehran, *Anjoman Kheyriyyeh Mohajerin Rus dar Iran* (Charitable Society of Russian Migrants in Iran). Although the society was

registered as a charitable association, it enjoyed the reputation of providing the most vigorous political network for the Russian Whites in Iran, providing a platform for coordinating activities with the Russian Whites in Warsaw, Paris and Istanbul. In the archive of the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, there are several copies of complaint and remonstrance correspondence sent to the Iranian government either by the plenipotentiaries of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic in Iran or later the Embassy of the Soviet Socialist Republic in Tehran, protesting about the activities of *Anjoman Kheyriyyeh*. For example, on 8 June 1926, the Soviet Embassy in Tehran demands that the Iranian government should not permit a demonstration planned by the Armenian and Russian refugees in Tehran (CDRSIMFA, SH-1305-K2-P70-3). The Soviet authorities, referring to clauses 5 and 6 of the Russo-Persian Treaty of Friendship of 1921, which prohibited ‘the formation or presence within their respective territories, of any organization or groups of persons, irrespective of the name by which they are known, whose object is to engage in acts of hostility against Iran or Russia, or against the Allies of Russia’ (League of Nations—Treaty Series 1922: 401–413), called on the Iranian government not only to disband the *Anjoman Kheyriyyeh* and terminate its activities, but also to extradite the Soviet refugees residing in Iran. While the Iranian authorities’ reaction to the Soviet call to limit the activities of the Soviet refugees on Iranian territory was positive, confirming that ‘it never allowed the refugees to engage with activities jeopardizing the interests of their countries of their origins’ and it utterly rejected the call for extradition of the refugees ‘who found a safe shelter in Iran’ (CDRSIMFA, SH-1306-K2-P4-38). Therefore, the Iranian government’s diplomatic stance was adamant in referring to the nonexistence of any treaty of extradition signed between the two countries (SH-1306-K2-P4-38).

On their arrival in Iran, the refugees were accommodated in the villages and cities in the border neighbourhood. Following an early interview by the local Iranian police, and in some cases by the representative of the local military security officers, the major concern of the Iranian government was to place the refugees as far as possible from the border region, in Tabriz, Rasht or Mashhad. All refugees received the daily allowance, although there were reports of complaints that their received daily allowance could not meet their expenses. Some refugees who could reach Tehran received limited financial support from the Tehran Municipality or the foreign delegation, chiefly the United States Embassy in Tehran (CDRSIMFA, SH-1303-K2-P6-7). The next step was either to leave Iran for Europe or the US or to find employment in Iran. The refugees with qualifications who opted to stay in Iran were chiefly directed by the Iranian government to find employment in the enterprises that were run by Russians prior to the revolution, such as the Tabriz-Jolfa Railway, Anzali-Tehran and Qazvin-Hamedan chaussée (*Izvestia*, 18 September 1927).

Another fundamental distinction in the field of immigration policies that strikingly distinguishes the countries under research from Europe is the lack of interest of local intelligence services in working with the migrant communities in question. France, Germany, Romania, Poland and other countries not only allowed various

Russian *émigré* political and military formations to legally function, but also directly sponsored clandestine activities of the main anti-Bolshevik organizations (Johnston 1988: 101–104, 141–157; Basik 1998: 44–45, 90–98, 228–229, 668; Antropov 2016: 606). The inaction of the local governments in Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan in this field was successfully replaced by the traditionally strong presence of British intelligence. The activities of the ROVS, BRP and the Basmachi movement were mostly coordinated and sponsored by the British (Bazanov 2013: 172–3) until summer 1941—the year in which Britain and the USSR finally found their mutual overarching interest in fighting against Nazi Germany.<sup>8</sup> For the sake of the new strategic alliance, Britain even satisfied Stalin’s request and extradited more than 500 former post-1917 migrants residing in the zone of British occupation in Iran who had Iranian citizenship and either had been far from political activism by that time or had never participated therein (CDRSIMFA, 310/13527 the BP-Iranian Oil Company, 1940–1946)—an action never taken even by the weaker local states.

For example, even in the early and mid-1920s, when the Iranian government was still in many senses significantly more vulnerable to the Soviet threat than Turkey and Afghanistan, it never met the Bolsheviks’ extradition requests. As also demonstrated by Ravandi-Fadai in her ‘A Native in Exile’, Reza Shah always met such requests with indignation (2018: 222). This did not stop the Bolsheviks, though. The radical political activities of the *émigrés* persuaded Moscow to extend its surveillance network in Iran. There were reports of the kidnapping of Russian fugitives by Soviet intelligence agents and taking them back to the Soviet Union (Bayat 1991: 41). Moscow also exerted maximum pressure on the Iranian government to ban all political activities of the Soviet refugees in Iran, liquidate their networks and even deport all of them from Iranian territory (CDRSIMFA, SH-1306-K2-P4-29). Meanwhile, with the consolidation of central power in Iran, following the inauguration of the Pahlavi dynasty, and with the approach of the 10-year anniversary of the Bolshevik takeover, the need for settling all economic and political disputes between the two countries became the chief concern of Tehran and Moscow.

In October 1927, after years of negotiation, a Trade Agreement and Customs Convention was signed between Iran and the Soviet Union (Rezun 1981: 115–128). In the Agreement, the passages in the Russo-Persian Agreement of Friendship of 1921 denouncing the political activities of ‘counter-revolutionary Whites’ on Iranian soil were added. On the eve of the signing of the agreement, pressure on Iran was intensified to end the activities of the Russian refugees now forming an established diasporic community in Iran. The first outcome of a *note verbal* (exchange of notes) reached between the two governments was to dissolve the *Anjoman Kheyriyyeh Mohajerin Rus dar Iran* (Charitable Society of Russian Migrants in Iran). On 5 September 1927, 3 weeks prior to the conclusion of the Trade Agreement and Customs Convention, the *Anjoman Kheyriyyeh* was disbanded. Its secretary Stefko was detained for some hours and discharged only after pledging not to be engaged in any activities, political or cultural, imperilling the interests of the Soviet Union (*Toufan*, 5 September 1927, p. 3). Following the

closure of the *Anjoman Kheyriyyeh*, Romanowski, the president of the Society, petitioned the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, demanding to issue a warrant officially guaranteeing the Russian diaspora in Iran the right to set up their cultural network—a call rejected at once (*Bisim-e Moscow*, 5 September 1927, p. 131). According to the Soviet press, ‘the Iranian authorities have called on all Russian/Soviet subjects residing on Iranian soil not to engage in any activities endangering the interests of the Soviet Union’ (*Bakinsky rabochii*, 11 September 1927, p. 212).

The Iranian press reported the dissolution of the *Anjoman Kheyriyyeh* in much detail. *Koushesh* called it a ‘friendly response by the Iranian government to an enduring request of the Soviet regime’ and hoped that ‘this act of the Iranian government removes one of the chief obstacles still remaining between the two countries in order to establish beneficial relations’ (*Koushesh*, 5 September 1927, p. 89) while the leftists and liberal *Toufan* (5 September 1927, p. 3) and *Shafaq-e Sorkh* (5 September 1927, p. 613), or *Setareh-e Iran* (6 September 1927, p. 3), referring to the Russo-Persian Agreement of Friendship of 1921, denounced the political activities of ‘counter-revolutionary Whites’ not only in Iran, but also in Europe, ‘organising a cataclysmic campaign’ to ‘destabilize the Soviet Union’. The national daily *Ettelaat*, by welcoming the act of the Iranian government in the closure of *Anjoman Kheyriyyeh*, ‘which coincided with the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Russian Revolution’, hoped that ‘the life of tenants inside the house of the northern neighbour would be altered, so that no one from there take the risk of passing the border’. Furthermore, the daily *Ettelaat* (5 September 1927, p. 299) called on the Iranian government to verify that the ‘white Russians’ are welcome to continue residing on Iranian soil, providing they do not engage in any anti-Soviet political acts.

The dissolution of the organized network of the Russian/Soviet diaspora in Iran overlapped with another new endeavour by the Soviet Embassy in Iran, launching once more a campaign of ‘Return’, encouraging Russian/Soviet migrants to leave Iran for the Soviet Union. Although the new campaign of ‘Return’ was crafted under the banner of the ‘General Amnesty on the Occasion of the 10 Years of the Revolution’, nevertheless, in the Iranian archives, there are no documents on the reaction of the Russian diaspora in Iran to this call (CDRSIMFA, SH-1306-K2-P2-4). On the other hand, all documents refer to an uninterrupted influx of refugees, chiefly because of economic reasons, arriving both from the west and the east of the Caspian Sea. However, there were also political refugees, the key figures amongst them Bazhanov, as mentioned earlier, who defected to Iran in the New Year dawn of 1928 when the OGPU officer and his soldiers at that border-control point were asleep, heavily drunk (Bajanov 1930: 7), or a high-ranking commander of the Red Army Simochevik, who also defected to Iran in January 1928, or later the Soviet pilot Peter Ivanov who landed in Mashhad on his flight to Afghanistan, appealing for political-refugee status (NAI 19493, 13 October 1930). In all these cases, the numerous calls from the Soviet government on Iran to extradite them were rejected as earlier, since the Russian Revolution, by the Iranian government, due to the argument that there was no agreement between the two countries on the extradition of refugees (CDRSIMFA, SH-1306-K2-P36, SH-1301-K15-P17-28).

Alongside the diplomatic manoeuvring, the Soviet government continued its secret surveillance activities in Iran—initiatives such as infiltrating into the remaining informal Soviet refugees' network by Soviet secret agents, who stated to be on the Soviet government's wanted 'counter-revolutionary' list. These claims were supported by the name and picture published in the Soviet press (NAI 2538, 18 November 1930) or through supporting the activities of the Iranian communists inside Iran or in the neighbouring Soviet republics (10371, 18 February 1930). However, with time passing and the increasing influx of refugees, chiefly from Nakhjavan and other southern districts of the Caucasus (CDRSIMFA, SH-1308-K30-P59-52–56), or the Turkmens from Central Asia (SH-1309-K32-P59-1–53), the Iranian government adopted measures to prevent border-crossing, mostly in north-west Iran. There were also reports that, in some cases, the Iranian-border guards did not allow the Soviet subjects to step onto Iranian soil (SH1309-K32-P51-40, SH-1309-K32-P59-52–97) or even, in one case, four Soviet subjects from Karadag were returned, on the grounds that they were identified by the border police as 'undesirable individuals', i.e. Bolshevik *provocateurs* (SH-1309-K32-P59-97).

The local governments' inhospitable measures caused major concern amongst the Russian/Soviet diaspora living in Europe and Turkey. *Akhbar Qafqaziyeh* (SH-1309-K32-P59-40–51), the organ of the Soviet diaspora in Turkey, in April 1930 published a report alleging that, during the first 3 months of 1930, there were thousands of Caucasian subjects of the Soviet Union who met with inhospitable treatment by the Iranian-border authorities when they arrived in Iran. The same allegation was repeated by other Soviet diasporic communities in Paris. There were also reports of a meeting in 1930 between Mohammad Amin Rasulzadeh, the president of the short-lived republic of Musavatis in the Caucasus and later the leader of the Musvavatis in exile with the Iranian Ambassador in Turkey, when Rasulzadeh called on the Iranian government to facilitate the accommodation of Soviet refugees on Iranian soil (*Bildirish*, 2 January 1931, pp. 23–25). In reaction to such allegations, the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, by publishing an official communiqué, underlined the Iranian government's stance by stating the necessity to follow the 'international protocols' protecting the rights of 'political and military fugitives' entering Iranian territory (CDRSIMFA, SH-1309-K32-P51-40). Although, in this communiqué, there was no reference to those refugees who had found shelter in Iran due to economic hardship, nevertheless there are reports that the Iranian Ministry of Interior allocated cotton farming lands to 50 Turkmen families arriving in Iran—an act vividly in contrast to the policy imposed by the Soviet Union regarding the forced return of the fugitive Turkmens through contacting the Turkmen tribe leader in the Soviet Union (SH-1309-K32-P59-1–53). In another case, the Iranian government reacted favourably, when some 30 families of German origin from the Marinkel-Tsartesky region in the Soviet Union approached the Iranian Consulate in Baku to obtain the legal documents for presenting to the Iranian authorities following their illegal passing the border. According to a petition signed by these German families, during the Tsarist time, they worked in Astrabad (today's



Gorgan) in northern Iran as farmers and their demand was ‘to return to the same district in Iran, where they had worked before’ (SH-1307-K18-P187-34).

Notwithstanding the Iran government’s staunch reluctance to extradite the Soviet refugees, their social and particularly physical security was still in serious jeopardy from the political regime ruling in their former homeland. It is conventional historiographical wisdom that Soviet intelligence activities, strengthened by the vast opportunities provided by the Comintern, significantly outpaced Western intelligence in qualitative and quantitative dimensions (Sabennikova 2002: 153–166; Antropov 2016: 245, 607; Dumbadze 2018). Bolshevik opponents were widely poisoned, shot or kidnapped in broad daylight in the streets of Paris, Berlin and Belgrade in the 1920s–30s, and almost all seconded subversion groups were seized on the territory of the USSR. As argued by historians of the Soviet intelligence services, the first underlying task of Soviet military and political intelligence stipulated by Lenin in 1921 was the struggle against ‘Russian emigration abroad’ and this was rigorously followed during the entire interwar period (Lenin 1970: 39–41; Khristoforov 2015: 71, 74, 76, 208–219). Soviet intelligence was particularly efficient in Iran due to the weakness of local counter-intelligence and the traditionally strong cultural and trade ties with the south of the USSR, which together produced an advantageous operative environment for OGPU, Razvedupr and Comintern agents.

According to the later revelations of Soviet military and party defectors, the ROVS and BRP activities in Iran were neutralized by recruiting their leading activists and by planting new agents as active members into these deeply clandestine organizations (GARF, f. 10003, op. 12, k. 46 *Obshestvo pomoshi russkim bezhentsam v Persii*, a letter-report to Maria Wrangel; Khristoforov 2015: 72, 76, 201, 202, 209–210; Agabekov 2018: 98–113, 160–164). Moreover, in addition to their overall disunity over political credo, Russian communities in different cities of Iran felt insecure because of the mutual distrust nourished by Soviet *agents provocateur*, as well as being demoralized because of ever-increasing Soviet military might and political pressure threatening new requests for extradition or potential military invasion (GARF, f. 10003, op. 12, k. 46 *Obshestvo pomoshi russkim bezhentsam v Persii*, a letter-report to Maria Wrangel: 695–8; RGVA, f. 25895, op. 1, d. 666 Operative plan of the activities of the Soviet Central Asian Army in case of a war with Persia and Afghanistan, 31/01/1928: 2, 13 About pre-emptive occupation of Northern Persia and Afghanistan; d. 723 Operative plan of the activities of the Soviet Central Asian Army in case of a war with Persia and Afghanistan, 1931; d. 730 Operative plan of the activities of the Soviet Central Asian Army in case of a war with Persia and Afghanistan 1932; Agabekov, 2018: 70–80). All this, aggravated by the relatively small numbers of the so-called Russian Whites’ communities, is reckoned to be one of the main reasons that the phenomenon of displaced statehood, namely ‘Russia abroad’, did not persist in this region, in contrast to what happened in other countries, particularly in Europe. For the majority of Tsarist and Soviet subjects finding shelter in Iran, both Russians and non-Russians, it seems that integration into the new society turned out to be the best option.

## Conclusions

To conclude this article, it is possible to draw four criteria about the period studied. First, similarly to the early interwar migrations from Bolshevik Russia via other main routes (north-west and far east of Russia), the migration flow through Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan embraced all social, political and religious strata of Russia's society, although with significantly greater numbers of Muslims, naturally attracted by these countries due to cultural affinity and geographical proximity. Research has identified that sedentary Muslim migrants would mostly prefer to move to Turkey and Iran, whereas nomads mainly opted for Afghanistan and, in fewer cases, for Iran's Khorasan. Second, all migrant groups were united in their anti-Bolshevik sentiments; however, they were immensely divided in their visions of a Russia after the fall of the Bolsheviks, which was perceived by the absolute majority of migrants as imminent. Russians advocated different polities, predominantly in a Russia within the pre-First-World-War imperial borders, whereas Caucasians, who had already tried the tempting taste of independence, envisaged a prosperous future within the borders of their own nation states, such as Azerbaijani, Armenian, Georgian and other republics, and Central Asian Muslims piously aspired to the re-establishment of the old khanates, independently from Russia. This decisively undermined their unity, and consequently their strength, in the struggle with the Bolsheviks' further consolidating power, and made their political organization and physical survival extremely vulnerable to the Bolsheviks' ruthless political, military and clandestine activities.

Third, the current research has demonstrated that the initial plan, aimed at the construction of a conventional periodization of the migration process in question, should be substituted by a detailed study of its dynamics, deeply influenced by two major factors, namely: underlying changes in the political course followed by the Bolshevik regime at any given time, on the one hand, and the economic situation in different areas inside the USSR, on the other. The dynamics in question also depended on several minor factors, such as the varying degrees of political and military strength of central power in the relevant countries, the ad-hoc cultural in(ex)clusiveness of local societies, border-control activities ranging from the securing of borders to the signing of interstate border agreements and secret protocols, as well as global and local foreign-policy issues. The latter brings us to the fourth conclusion, which is the absence of 'displaced statehood'. In contrast to the other countries, migrants' lives and activities in the countries studied were significantly damaged by the strategic and tactical political considerations of the states involved. Lack of political security resulted in *scared disunity* among all groups of Soviet refugees in these countries, which largely prevented them from becoming an integral part of the interwar worldwide phenomenon of the temporary 'Russia abroad'.

## Archives

AV—*Arkhiv vostokovedov* [The Archive of Orientalists], St Petersburg Institute Manuscripts.

AVPRF—*Arkhiv vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii* [The Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation]

BL—India Office —British Library-India Office.

CDRSIMFA—Centre for Documents and Research Services of Iran’s Ministry for Foreign Affairs

GARF—*Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii* [The State Archive of the Russian Federation].

IISH—The International Institute of Social History Archive.

League of Nations—Treaty Series, 1922, <http://www.worldlii.org/int/other/treaties/LNTSer/> (accessed on 2 October 2019).

NAI—The National Archive of Iran.

RGASPI—*Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv sotsial’no-politicheskoi istorii* [Russia’s Archive of Socio-Political History].

RGVA—*Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi voennyi arkhiv* [Russia’s State Military Archive].

1. In this research, we will be using the term ‘migrant’ as a noun and adjective designating all social groups who left Soviet Russia/the USSR during the period in question or who were abroad before October 1917 and refused to return. This is for the purposes of uniformity and to avoid the historical, social, political, economic and other connotations of the words immigrant, emigrant, *émigré*, refugee, etc. The latter will be used specifically where necessary.
2. This research project is underway at the International Institute of Social History, supported by the Prince Dr Sabbar Farman-Farmaian Research Project and the Dutch Research Council (NOW).
3. The rupture of diplomatic relations with Britain in 1927; preparations for the Soviet invasion of Iran and Afghanistan in case of the start of military hostilities against Britain; the stepping-up of the Russian Emigration subversion activities in the USSR; the adoption of the notorious Article 58 (anti-Soviet activity), under which most of Stalin’s purges were carried out; the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1929.  
One should also bear in mind that 1927 was the start of Chicherin’s almost permanent absence from Moscow: during 1927-1930 Chicherin was hospitalized in Switzerland and Germany, trying to be cured from homosexuality. Although he nominally remained the USSR’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs, the Commissariat was run by his first deputy, Maxim Litvinov—a bureaucrat who was obedient to Stalin and at odds with Chicherin (Volkov 2018b: 215; Genis 2009b: 72-80).
4. Persia before 1935. It should be noted that Persia was the only Muslim country across Russia’s southern border where Russia had a very strong diplomatic, military and trade presence. In 1917, there was no Russian presence whatsoever in Turkey, Afghanistan and British India.
5. OGPU (*Ob’edinennoe gosudarstvennoe politicheskoe upravlenie*) was the Joint State Political Directorate; NKID (*Narodnyi komissariat inostrannykh del*) was the People’s Commissariat for Foreign Affairs; NKVT (*Narodnyi komissariat vneshnei torgovli*) was the People’s Commissariat for Foreign Trade; VTsIK (*Vserossiiskii tsentral’nyi komitet*) was the All-Russia Central Committee and Sovnarkom (*Sovet narodnykh komissarov*) was the Council of People’s Commissars.

6. 'The concept of the broader Persianate World was first emphasized by Vasilii V. Bartol'd (1860–1930) in 1901 as a thesis regarding the role of Iranian culture as a binding agent for a region spreading 'far beyond the linguistic Iran—from Constantinople to Calcutta and the towns of Chinese Turkestan.' However, the usage of the relevant term gained momentum after the publication of Marshall Hodgson's *The Venture of Islam in 1974*' (Volkov 2018b: 210).
7. On the activities of General Lazar' Bicherakhov (1882-1952) and the First Secretary of the Russian Legation in Iran Vladimir Minorsky (1877-1966) see Bezugol'nyi (2011: 139-50); Bagriantsev and Elagin (1963: 331-418).
8. The Russian historian of Soviet intelligence services Oleg Mozokhin also gives interesting information on Azerbaijani (Mensheviks) and Armenian fugitives (Dashnaks) who fled from the Soviet GULAG (the Solovki camp) to Finland where they were recruited to be sent to Iran and then to Soviet Azerbaijan as BRP agents (2011: 86). On the post-1917 activities of British Intelligence in Central Asia and the Caucasus particularly see Taline Ter Minassian (2014: 73-172). Also see Lieutenant-Colonel Bailey's memoirs (1946).

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