as a Bolshevik outsider left him "relatively immune to the almost morbid feelings of pride and solidarity that characterized the Bolshevik party" and also best suited to build an army based on principles that most Bolsheviks initially found unpalatable. For his efforts, Trotsky earned the hostility of many Party leaders. Even his relationship with Lenin was far from the cozy ties that Deutscher depicted in his writings. Benvenuti argues persuasively that after a crisis in military-political relations during the summer of 1919, Trotsky's position was never again so secure, even though the opposition to him was never again so fierce, as it had been before.

Although nowhere does he claim to revise our understanding of Stalin's role in early Soviet history, Benvenuti also makes a contribution here. Stalin was intimately involved with Army affairs in several critical episodes; more important, he appears to have been a far more "typical" Old Bolshevik than was Trotsky. Stalin, in defending a strong role for the Bolshevik Party in the Army in the person of the military commissar, represented a key cohort of political leaders whose state careers were made in Army service. Moreover, the Army became the single largest recruitment agency of the Party during the Civil War years. For these men and the few women who entered political life through Army service, military politics became their model for Bolshevik politics in general. Although Benvenuti does not explore this matter for its implications for later political developments, he hints that the political style of military Party organizations and the pedagogic and state-building missions that the Party discovered in the course of building the Army did not bode well for the survival of the NEP compromise.

Mark von Hagen


In the aftermath of the Russian Revolution and Civil War, a great wave of Russian emigration poured into France. Reliable numbers have never been available, but at least 120,000 Russian émigrés settled in France, close to half of them in Paris, which became the capital of "Russia Abroad." Robert H. Johnston's aptly titled "New Mecca, New Babylon" (as Mark Vishniak called Paris in his memoirs) sets out to provide a "collective biography" of Russian France and particularly Russian Paris.

Johnston profiles a community which for the most part we have known only from the memoirs or literary works of its leading cultural lights. He surveys its publications, its occupational structure, and its institutional life, as well as its evolving relationship with the host country. No central figure
dominates the story—though greater attention to a few salient individuals might have lent some concreteness to the survey. If the community had any hero, it was Vasilii Alekseevich Maklakov, the Kadet leader who served as the Provisional Government’s ambassador to France and remained as the émigrés’ informal representative. Even after he had to vacate the Paris embassy to make way for the new Soviet ambassador in 1924, through the darkest days of the Nazi occupation, to the hopeful but short-lived efforts to seek rapprochement with the Soviet authorities at the end of WWII, Maklakov served the Russian community with as much dignity and diplomatic skill as could be mustered under the circumstances. By and large, the same could be said for the community as a whole.

To judge by Johnston’s account, in general France acquitted itself quite honorably in regard to the Russian émigrés, despite frictions generated by economic problems, changing attitudes toward the Soviet Union, and several unfortunate episodes which strained relations with the French. Economic survival absorbed much of the Russians’ energies, but they were free to use what remained to work out their new identity as Russia Abroad. Politically, at least, they used those energies to replicate the deep divisions and uncompromising ideological positions that had done so much to create their present predicament. Those divisions were reflected most clearly in the two major newspapers of Russian Paris, the liberal Poslednie novosti and the conservative and nationalist Vozrozhdenie, whose divergent positions to some degree anchor Johnston’s account. Though the often petty animosities of émigré factions are enough to try the patience of any historian, Johnston writes with sympathetic objectivity, laced with appropriate flashes of irony. Resisting the temptation to dismiss émigré opinion as the idle chatter of history’s losers, he treats it seriously and tries to assess the broad historical significance and achievements of the emigration.

Although Johnston discusses the Russian community’s cultural institutions, such as the “thick journal” Sovremennye zapiski, he has wisely chosen not to dwell on literary and cultural life, which is already the best-known aspect of the Paris emigration’s history. Aside from its specific cultural achievements, as well as its interest as an early example of that all-too-common twentieth-century phenomenon, the efforts of a refugee community to adapt to exile, in what ways was the Paris community significant? Obviously, it is part of French history, but is it truly relevant to Russian history? Johnston suggests at least two ways in which it is.

First, the émigrés believed, and with some justification, that they were keeping alive traditional Russian values at a time when deliberate efforts were being made to obliterate them at home. Even their political squabbles and ideological discords were a healthy reflection of the pluralism of pre-revolutionary Russian life, in marked contrast to the conformity that was descending on the Soviet Union. The award of the 1933 Nobel Prize in literature to one of the community’s members, Ivan Bunin, provided not only its most shining hour but also vindication of the cultural mission it felt it was