



<https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-8674-2026-25-2-284-302>

EDN: NGVHLP

*Research article / Научная статья*

## Russian Émigrés in Manchuria during the Period of the CER Joint Soviet-Chinese Administration in the 1920s

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**Abstract:** The author in their work considers the history of Russian emigration in Manchuria in the period of the joint Soviet-Chinese administration of the CER in the 1920s. The study focuses on the division of the Russian population into “Soviet citizens” and “émigrés.” It provides a critical analysis of the approaches established in Russian historiography to studying this problem, as well as contemporary scholars’ views and assessments of Russian emigration in Manchuria. The author examines the size and composition of the Russian population on the CER, issues of citizenship, and the émigrés’ attitude toward the Soviet Union. The author uses documents from Russia’s regional archives, as well as published statistical and analytical materials to develop their study. They conclude that the entire Russian population of the CER, regardless of citizenship, constituted a relatively cohesive community of Russian émigrés. Diverse views and political preferences, as well as social and class divide in the ethnocultural and geopolitical conditions of the cross-border region, allowed the émigrés to remain within a unified Russian community.

**Keywords:** Northeast China, Soviet-Chinese Transboundary Area, Communication Routes, Russian Diaspora, Far Eastern Frontier

**Conflict of interests:** The author declares no conflicts of interest.

**Funding:** The study was supported by the Russian Science Foundation grant, project No. 23-48-00004 “The Chinese Eastern Railway as a transboundary socio-cultural system: history of construction, reconstruction and modeling of mechanisms for protecting cultural heritage”, <https://rscf.ru/project/23-48-00004/>

**For citation:** Datsyshen, V.G. “Russian Emigration in Manchuria during the Period of the CER Joint Soviet-Chinese Administration in the 1920s.” *RUDN Journal of Russian History* 25, no. 2 (May 2026): 284–302. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-8674-2026-25-2-284-302> EDN: NGVHLP

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## Русская эмиграция в Маньчжурии в период совместного советско-китайского управления КВЖД в 1920-е годы

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**Аннотация:** Исследуется история русской эмиграции в Маньчжурии в период совместного советско-китайского управления Китайской Восточной железной дорогой (КВЖД), Северо-Восточный Китай, советско-китайское трансграничье, пути сообщения, русское зарубежье КВЖД в 1920-х гг. В центре исследования проблема деления русского населения на «советских граждан» и «эмигрантов». В работе дается критический анализ сложившихся в российской историографии подходов к изучению проблемы, взглядов и оценок современных ученых на русскую эмиграцию в Маньчжурии. Автор рассматриваются численность и состав русского населения на КВЖД, проблемы гражданства и отношения эмигрантов к Советскому Союзу. Исследование выполнено с привлечением документов из фондов региональных архивов России, а также опубликованных статистических и аналитических материалов. Автором сделан вывод о том, что все русское население КВЖД, независимо от гражданства, представляло собой относительно целостную общину русских эмигрантов. Наличие различных взглядов и политических предпочтений, социальное и классовое расслоение в сложившихся этнокультурных и геополитических условиях трансграничья позволяли эмиграции оставаться в рамках единого российского сообщества.

**Ключевые слова:** Северо-Восточный Китай, советско-китайское трансграничье, пути сообщения, русское зарубежье, Дальневосточный фронт

**Заявление о конфликте интересов:** Автор заявляет об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

**Финансирование:** Исследование выполнено за счет гранта Российского научного фонда (РНФ), проект № 23-48-00004 «Китайско-Восточная железная дорога как трансграничная социокультурная система: история строительства, реконструкция и моделирование механизмов охраны культурного наследия», <https://rscf.ru/project/23-48-00004/>

**Для цитирования:** Дацышен В.Г. Русская эмиграция в Маньчжурии в период совместного советско-китайского управления КВЖД в 1920-е гг. // Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. История России. 2026. Т. 25. № 2. С. 284–302. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-8674-2026-25-2-284-302> EDN: NGVHLP

### Introduction

*Relevance.* The subject of Russian émigrés, and the various stages of their history in Manchuria, has aroused enduring interest in Russia. For over half a century, there existed a unique pocket of old Russia in the Sino-Soviet border region along the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER). During difficult periods of domestic political transformations, occurring against the backdrop of significant foreign policy shifts, the problems of Russian diaspora have acquired particular relevance. Interest in the problems of Russian émigrés in North-east China intensified during the Great Break and the Sino-Soviet conflict along the CER in 1929. At the present stage of Russian history, the complex and contradictory history of the formation and adaptation of Russian émigrés once again acquires relevance not only for science, but also for Russia's contemporary migration policy.

The Russian émigrés in Manchuria include most of all those who had left the Russian Empire, the RSFSR, the Far Eastern Republic, and the USSR for Manchuria (North-eastern China)<sup>1</sup> for permanent or temporary residence inside of China. Manchuria was

<sup>1</sup> In China, this region is called the Three Eastern Provinces (三东省) or Northeast (东北).

a particular region which bordered on Russia on three sides, and through which ran the railway built by the Russian Empire; it linked Siberia with the Russian Far East. Russian emigration to the region evolved over a significant period of time and resulted in several waves of movement. Due to geopolitical, socio-economic, and cultural factors, the territories adjacent to the Chinese Eastern Railway can be considered part of the Russian-Chinese border region.

*Historiography of the problem.* The history of Russian emigration to Northeastern China has been examined at all stages of the development of Russian history. The first works published in the 1920–1930s typically emphasized the anti-Soviet nature of Russian émigrés in China and their hostility toward the Soviet Union. The publications of the Soviet period were not truly historical studies; their authors were contemporary with the events, and their works were aimed at solving political and propaganda problems rather than research ones.

In the post-Soviet period of Russian history, alongside publications containing old political and propaganda clichés, works specifically devoted to the problems of Russian émigrés in Northeast China have appeared. Renowned sinologist G.V. Melikhov paid considerable attention to these issues; he wrote a series of works on the history of Russian émigrés in Manchuria<sup>2</sup>. To this day, G.V. Melikhov's works not only remain relevant but also serve as a useful example of research work on the subject.

In the early 2000s, in Russian historiography numerous works appeared which were devoted to the problems of Russian émigrés. In N.E. Ablova's work "CER and Russian Émigrés in China,"<sup>3</sup> the researcher adheres to the established tradition of emphasizing "White émigrés" and makes unsubstantiated assertions without citing any documents. In L.F. Goverdovskaya's monograph "Socio-Political and Cultural Activities of Russian Émigrés in China in 1917–1931" published the same year by the Institute of Far Eastern Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, the approach to presenting the history of Russian émigrés in Manchuria is fundamentally no different. In this research, the emphasis is also placed on the fierce confrontation within the Russian community: "The Russian communists, workers, and employees of the CER worked in very difficult and unusual conditions," they "had to overcome... the hostility of the Russian White Guards."<sup>4</sup> However, the work contains no specific examples of the "hostility" of White émigrés, except for discussions or leaflets. A controversial picture of the history of Russian émigrés is presented in Ya.L. Pisarevskaya's article "Two Russias in Manchuria: Social Adaptation and Re-emigration (the 1920s – early 1930s)."<sup>5</sup>

In modern Russian historiography, émigrés with Soviet passports are traditionally referred to as the "Soviet colony," and "émigrés" are equated with "Russian refugees." In N.N. Ablazhey's work, it is stated that during the Sino-Soviet conflict of 1929, "the émigrés unanimously supported the actions of the Chinese side."<sup>6</sup> As I.K. Kapran notes, "in 1924,

<sup>2</sup> G.V. Melikhov, *Rossiiskaia emigratsiia v Kitae (1917–1924 gg.)* [Russian emigration in China (1917–1924)] (Moscow: Institut rossiyskoy istorii RAN Publ., 1997); G.V. Melikhov, *Belyi Kharbin: Seredina 20-kh* [White Harbin: Mid-20s] (Moscow: Russkii put' Publ., 2003); G.V. Melikhov, *Rossiiskaia emigratsiia v mezhdunarodnykh otnosheniakh na Dal'nem Vostoke, 1925–1932* [Russian emigration in international relations in the Far East, 1925–1932] (Moscow: Vikmo-M Publ.; Russkiy put' Publ., 2007).

<sup>3</sup> N.E. Ablova, *KVZHD i rossiiskaia emigratsiia v Kitae: mezhdunarodnye i politicheskie aspekty istorii (pervaia polovina XX v.)* [CER and Russian emigration in China: international and political aspects of history (first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century)] (Moscow: NP ID "Russkaia panorama" Publ., 2004), 198–239.

<sup>4</sup> L.F. Goverdovskaya, *Obshchestvenno-politicheskaia i kul'turnaia deiatel'nost' russkoi emigratsii v Kitae v 1917–1931 gg.* [Socio-political and cultural activities of Russian emigration in China in 1917–1931] (Moscow: Institut Dal'nego Vostoka Publ., 2004), 76.

<sup>5</sup> Ya.L. Pisarevskaya, "Dve Rossii v Manchzhurii: sotsial'naiia adaptatsiia i reemigratsiia (20-e – nachalo 30-kh gg.)" [Two Russias in Manchuria: Social Adaptation and Re-Emigration (1920s – Early 1930s)], in *Ocherki antibol'shevistskoi emigratsii* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo Ippolitova Publ., 2002), 52–70.

<sup>6</sup> N.N. Ablazhey, *S vostoka na vostok: Rossiiskaia emigratsiia v Kitae* [From East to East: Russian Emigration in China] (Novosibirsk: Izdatel'stvo Sibirskoe otdelenie RAN Publ., 2007), 87.

there arose a phenomenon in Manchuria, when citizens of opposing political systems and ideologies were forced to exist side by side.”<sup>7</sup> According to S. Yu. Yakhimovich, the “Soviet colony” ceased “to be a diaspora.”<sup>8</sup> A. A. Gladkikh’s article describes the activities of the Soviet special services against the Russian émigrés, but it does not provide a single example of subversive actions by Russian émigrés against the USSR<sup>9</sup>. In 2014, M. V. Krotova published a generalizing study “USSR and Russian Émigrés in Manchuria (1920–1930s).”<sup>10</sup> It is devoted to the relationship between “Red” and “White” émigrés along the CER. This research takes the studying of Russian émigrés on the CER to a qualitatively new level, but in this work the author also divides Russian émigrés into a “Soviet colony” and “émigrés.”

Despite the persistence of old fundamental approaches to examining the history of Russian émigrés in Northeast China, in modern historiography there are new approaches indicating the unity of the Russian community along the CER, regardless of the citizenship or political preferences of its members. N. E. Ablova’s works notes the conventionality of dividing the Russian émigrés into two opposing communities<sup>11</sup>, and N. N. Ablazhey’s generalizing study states as follows: “For many Russian employees of the CER, the early summer of 1925 was a time of deep thoughts: what is the best thing to do and is it worth rushing into choosing citizenship?”<sup>12</sup> S. Yu. Yakhimovich notes that “most Soviet citizens... turned out to be Russian old-timers of Manchuria.”<sup>13</sup> Due to the position of Russian émigrés during the Sino-Soviet conflict on the CER in 1929, in I. K. Kapran’s work, he notes that a great part of the Russian employees remained neutral<sup>14</sup>. S. V. Smirnov points out the apolitical nature of the Russian émigrés in China in the 1920s, and M. V. Krotova states that “most old-timers and refugees working on the CER preferred to acquire Soviet citizenship rather than be dismissed.”<sup>15</sup> Ya. L. Pisarevskaya cites various personal documents which indicate that the various groups of the Russian population of the CER were closely interconnected, while the Soviet CER workers in Manchuria, in their own words, were “at home among strangers,” while upon returning to the USSR they became “outcasts.”<sup>16</sup>

<sup>7</sup> I. K. Kapran, *Povsednevnaia zhizn’ russkogo naseleniia Kharbina (konets XIX v. – 50-e gg. XX v.)* [Everyday life of the Russian population of Harbin (late 19<sup>th</sup> century – 1950s)] (Vladivostok: Izdatel’stvo Dal’nevostochnogo federal’nogo universiteta Publ., 2011), 54.

<sup>8</sup> S. Yu. Yakhimovich, *Sovetskie grazhdane v Severnoi Man’chzhurii (1924–1935 gg.)* [Soviet citizens in Northern Manchuria (1924–1935)] (Khabarovsk: Dal’nevostochnyi iuridicheskii institut Ministerstva vnutrennikh del Rossiiskoi Federatsii imeni I. F. Shilova Publ., 2015), 42.

<sup>9</sup> A. A. Gladkikh, “Terrorist activity of white emigrant organizations in the Far East and the struggle against them conducted by the state security bodies in the 1920s,” *Vestnik of the Far East Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences*, no. 5 (2009): 22–30.

<sup>10</sup> M. V. Krotova, *SSSR i rossiiskaia emigratsiia v Man’chzhurii (1920–1930-e gg.)* [The USSR and Russian emigration in Manchuria (1920–1930s)] (St. Petersburg: Asterion Publ., 2014).

<sup>11</sup> N. E. Ablova, *KVZHD i rossiiskaia emigratsiia v Kitae: mezhdunarodnye i politicheskie aspekty istorii (pervaia polovina XX v.)* [CER and Russian emigration in China: international and political aspects of history (first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century)] (Moscow: NP ID «Russkaia panorama» Publ., 2004), 127.

<sup>12</sup> N. N. Ablazhey, *Sibirskoe oblastnichestvo v emigratsii* [Siberian regionalism in emigration] (Novosibirsk: Izdatel’stvo Instituta arkheologii i etnografii SO RAN Publ., 2003), 74.

<sup>13</sup> S. Yu. Yakhimovich, *Sovetskie grazhdane v Severnoi Man’chzhurii (1924–1935 gg.)* [Soviet citizens in Northern Manchuria (1924–1935)] (Khabarovsk: Dal’nevostochnyi iuridicheskii institut Ministerstva vnutrennikh del Rossiiskoi Federatsii imeni I. F. Shilova Publ., 2015), 41.

<sup>14</sup> I. K. Kapran, *Povsednevnaia zhizn’ russkogo naseleniia Kharbina (konets XIX v. – 50-e gg. XX v.)* [Everyday life of the Russian population of Harbin (late 19<sup>th</sup> century – 1950s)] (Vladivostok: Izdatel’stvo Dal’nevostochnogo federal’nogo universiteta Publ., 2011), 56.

<sup>15</sup> M. V. Krotova, “CER employees personal files as the source for the study of the Russian presence in Manchuria,” *Petersburg Historical Journal*, no. 2 (2014): 127, <https://doi.org/10.51255/2311-603X-2014-00030>

<sup>16</sup> Ya. L. Pisarevskaya, “Dve Rossii v Manchzhurii: sotsial’naia adaptatsiia i reemigratsiia (20-e – nachalo 30-kh gg.)” [Two Russias in Manchuria: Social Adaptation and Re-Emigration (1920s – Early 1930s)], in *Ocherki antibol’shevistskoi emigratsii* (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo Ippolitova Publ., 2002), 67.

E.E. Aurilene criticizes the persistence in modern historiography of “a certain stereotype in assessing the scale and results of the anti-Soviet activity of White émigrés based primarily on the report documents of the GPU – OGPU – NKVD.”<sup>17</sup>

Thus, while at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century Russian historiography maintained the fundamental approach of dividing Russian émigrés in Northeast China into two communities with opposing views and political aspirations, there also emerged a critical approach to this viewpoint, which was brought to the fore the problem of the history of Russian émigrés on the CER.

*The purpose of the study* is to identify the position of Russian émigrés within the specific geopolitical context of the Russian-Chinese border region of the CER during the period of joint Soviet-Chinese administration and to clarify the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of the various groups of Russians living in Northeast China in the 1920s.

*Source base.* The study uses various types of published and unpublished sources from the collections of the Chita District Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) (F. P-75) of the State Archive of the Trans-Baikal Territory, and the Harbin City Council of Public Self-Government (F. 577) of the Russian State Historical Archive of the Far East, which contain office documents, including minutes of meetings of the Harbin Society, and of authorized representatives of the Harbin Public Administration, journals of the City Council of the Harbin Public Administration, etc. A valuable and informative source for our research are the rough typewritten texts for the never-published second volume of “Historical Review of the Chinese Eastern Railway,” stored in the personal collection of E.Kh. Nilus in the archive of the Hoover Institution at Stanford University. The problems of the Russian population of the CER were reflected in the publications of the journal “Bulletin of Manchuria.” There were used sources such as journalistic publications, and memoirs and recollections of émigrés and re-emigrants.

### Determining the Russian population size in Northeast China

The Russian émigré community in Northeast China began to be formed in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1898, the CER railway right of way emerged, which eventually helped form a Russian enclave in China. In 1920, the Chinese authorities announced about they had gained full control over the CER railway right of way and renamed it the Special region of Eastern provinces (SREP)<sup>18</sup>. However, the process of establishing the Office of the Supreme Commander of the SREP<sup>19</sup> took until 1923 to complete. The signing of the “Agreement between the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the Government of the Autonomous Three Eastern Provinces of the Republic of China”<sup>20</sup> on September 20, 1924, in Mukden (Shenyang) marked the beginning of a new era in the history of Russians in China. On October 3, 1924, the Chinese Eastern Railway, along which numerous Russian émigrés, including political refugees, lived and were closely associated it, came under joint Soviet-Chinese control.

In modern historiography there remains the question regarding the size of the Russian population in Northeast China, both overall and in specific groups, including in the Special region of Eastern provinces. Contemporaries with those events were unable to provide precise figures. The publications of the time spoke of “200,000 Russian people in the right

<sup>17</sup> E.E. Aurilene, “Russian Emigration in Manchuria: Inertia of Civil War (1920–1940s),” *The New Past*, no. 4 (2023): 49, <https://doi.org/10.18522/2500-3224-2023-4-47-63>

<sup>18</sup> 东省特别区 – Dōng shěng tèbié qū

<sup>19</sup> 行政長官公署 – Xíngzhèng zhǎngguān gōngshǔ

<sup>20</sup> 中俄边界条约集 [Collection of agreements on the Chinese-Russian border] (Beijing, 1973), 218.

of way.”<sup>21</sup> I.G. Baranov cited data from the Main Police Department for 1923 and stated that the number of people living in SREP was 238,083. Of these, 133,705 were Chinese and 98,997 were Russian people. However, as the author acknowledged, “the police figures should be considered greatly understated compared to the actual figures ...”<sup>22</sup> Modern scientific publications cite figures ranging from 265,000<sup>23</sup> to 70,000 people<sup>24</sup> of Russian descent in Northeast China. However, in the second half of the 1920s there was noted a significant decline in the number of Russians on the CER.

The data from the SREP Police Department, obtained through annual summer population registrations, indicate a relative stability in the number of Russian émigrés in the Special region of Eastern provinces after the establishment of Soviet administration along the CER until the outbreak of the Sino-Soviet conflict on the CER in 1929. In 1923, there were 98,997 Russian residents in the SREP; in 1929 – 95,235 residents<sup>25</sup>. It can be noted that the slight decline in the number of the Russian population during the Soviet period occurred against a backdrop of a significant increase in the number of representatives of other nationalities registered in the SREP.

According to the data from the SREP Police Department, cited by CER employee V.A. Kormazov, the number of Russians in Harbin also decreased slightly by June 1929 – from 58,754 to 57,121 people<sup>26</sup>. At the southernmost station of the CER, Kuanchengzi, there were about 500 Russians<sup>27</sup>. The largest number of Russian people lived at the Pogranichnaya and Manchuria stations adjacent to the USSR border. In June 1929 in the city of Manchuria, Russians constituted the majority of the population – almost 8 thousand people<sup>28</sup>. At Buhedu station, located on the western line of the CER, in June 1929 there lived more than 1,700 people (435 families)<sup>29</sup>. In the settlement of Qiqihar station, there lived about 1,300 Russians. In the article “Population Movement in the Area of the Western Line of the Chinese Eastern Railway” published in 1930 in Harbin, it was claimed that along the CER section from Manchuria Station to Petlya Station, Russians constituted more

<sup>21</sup> A.D. “Kirzhits U poroga Kitaia: russkie v polose otchuzhdeniia Kitaisko-Vostochnoi zheleznoi dorogi [At the threshold of China: Russians in the alienation zone of the Chinese Eastern Railway],” *Sibirskie ogni*, book 4 (1923): 126.

<sup>22</sup> I.G. Baranov, “Administrativnoe ustroistvo Severnoi Man’chzhurii [Administrative structure of Northern Manchuria],” *Vestnik Man’chzhurii*, no. 11–12 (1926): 17.

<sup>23</sup> A. Pyatkov, “Vneshnepoliticheskoe protivostoianie v Dal’nevostochnom regione kak faktor uzhestocheniia repressivnoi politiki Sovetskogo gosudarstva v 20–30-e gg. XX v. [Foreign policy confrontation in the Far Eastern region as a factor in the tightening of the repressive policy of the Soviet state in the 1920s–1930s],” in *Aziatsko-tikhookeanskii region v global’noi politike, ekonomike i kul’ture XXI veka* (Khabarovsk: [N.s.], 2002), 147.

<sup>24</sup> S.V. Smirnov, “The Sino-Soviet Conflict of 1929 and Russian Military Emigration,” *Izvestia. Ural Federal University Journal. Series 2. Humanities and Arts* 20, no. 2 (2018): 11, <https://doi.org/10.15826/izv2.2018.20.2.021>; E.N. Nazemtseva, *Na diplomaticheskom urovne: problemy pravovogo statusa russkikh emigrantov v Kitae v sovetsko-kitaiskikh otnosheniakh (1920–1940-ye gg.)* [At the diplomatic level: problems of the legal status of Russian emigrants in China in Soviet-Chinese relations (1920–1940s)] (St. Petersburg: Aletyia Publ., 2016), 191.

<sup>25</sup> V.A. Kormazov, “Dvizhenie naseleniia v raione Zapadnoi linii Kitaisko-Vostochnoi zheleznoi dorogi (Uchastok stantsii Man’chzhurii – r. Petlya) [Population movement in the area of the Western Line of the Chinese Eastern Railway (Manzhouli Station – Loop River section)],” *Vestnik Man’chzhurii*, no. 4 (1930): 51.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>27</sup> A.I. Gorshenin, “Iuzhnaia liniya KVZHD [Southern line of the CER],” *Vestnik Man’chzhurii*, no. 11–12 (1930): 54.

<sup>28</sup> V.A. Kormazov, “Dvizhenie naseleniia v raione Zapadnoi linii Kitaisko-Vostochnoi zheleznoi dorogi (Uchastok stantsii Man’chzhurii – r. Petlya) [Population movement in the area of the Western Line of the Chinese Eastern Railway (Manzhouli Station – Loop River section)],” *Vestnik Man’chzhurii*, no. 4 (1930): 53.

<sup>29</sup> A.I. Gorshenin, “Iuzhnaia liniya KVZHD [Southern line of the CER],” *Vestnik Man’chzhurii*, no. 11–12 (1930): 54.

than half of the local population. Further east, along the Buhedu–Duiqinshan line, there approximately lived 6,500 people of Russian descent<sup>30</sup>.

Regarding the Russian population of the SREP, it should be noted that people of Russian descent also lived in other settlements outside the railway right of way. They were still closely associated with the CER but apparently were not registered by the SREP Police Department. For example, in 1929, several Russians lived in Ninguta. Among them were N.I. Gerasimov, an employee of the “Slon” rice mill; V.N. Kuksin and Zozulya, employees of the local Chinese mill; E. Gutsan, an employee of the Danish company “Vassard”; and possibly others<sup>31</sup>.

Thus, in 1924–1929 in the SREP there lived a little over 100,000 people of Russian descent. During that period, the number of Russian émigrés decreased slightly. In the areas of the SREP bordering the USSR, as well as in Harbin, most Russian émigrés did not acquire Soviet citizenship. In other regions, the vast majority of émigrés were recognized as Soviet citizens.

In 1929, due to the Sino-Soviet conflict, a significant number of Russian émigrés left or were forcibly deported from Northeast China. First, on July 11 and August 7, 1929, the Chinese authorities deported from Harbin active members of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) from the CER’s staff. Some Soviet citizens left China on the recommendation of the Soviet authorities, which intended to stymie the work of the CER in response to the violent actions of the Chinese authorities. The report of the Chita District Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) on April 25, 1930, stated:

Due to the conflict on the Chinese Eastern Railway, many Soviet citizens left for the USSR for various reasons. Following the Red Army’s fighting in November, several thousand people were evacuated from the combat zone <...>. By the end of the conflict, in Chita there were approximately 3,000 evacuees<sup>32</sup>.

It took a long time to get permission to return, and even then, only for certain categories of CER residents. The Soviet authorities did not allow a great number of Russian émigrés to return to Manchuria. In particular, in May 1930, the Far Eastern Regional Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) gave instructions to Chita:

We cannot permit the departure of the party members expelled from China whose families are in Manchuria <...>. The departure from Manchuria of the families of all those left behind to work in the Soviet Union will be facilitated<sup>33</sup>.

Restrictions on the return of émigrés (Soviet citizens) were due to the Bolsheviks’ desire to replenish the Soviet colony on the CER with those directly from the USSR.

During the final stages of the conflict, Soviet secret services forcibly deported anti-Soviet émigrés from the areas of the CER occupied by the Red Army. The “Boevaya Khronika” (“Battle Chronicle”) from Dauria on November 23, 1929, stated: “By November 21, about 250 White Guards had already been disarmed and arrested... Arrests of White Guards continue.”<sup>34</sup> A Chinese local historian, writing about the owner of the best hotels at Manchuria station, notes:

<sup>30</sup> V.A. Kormazov, “Dvizhenie naseleniia v raione Zapadnoi linii Kitaisko-Vostochnoi zheleznoi dorogi (Uchastok stantsii Man’chzhurii – r. Petlya) [Population movement in the area of the Western Line of the Chinese Eastern Railway (Manzhouli Station – Loop River section)],” *Vestnik Man’chzhurii*, no. 5 (1930): 31–32.

<sup>31</sup> A.D. Voikov, “Dnevnik poezdki po Ningutskomu uezdu Girinskoi provintsii [Diary of a trip to Ningutsky district of Jilin province],” *Vestnik Man’chzhurii*, no. 11 (1929): 91.

<sup>32</sup> Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Zabaikal’skogo kraia (thereafter – GAZK), f. P-75, op. 1, d. 1005, l. 57.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 61.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, d. 853, l. 34.

In 1929, after the end of the war along the Chinese Eastern Railway, Nikitin was arrested by the USSR Red Army and deported to his homeland. His wife began running the hotel alone...<sup>35</sup>

N.N. Ablazhey writes:

On behalf of Horvat, appeals were made to the League of Nations, the International League against the Third International, the diplomatic corps in Beijing, and the Chinese government, asking for assistance to 400 Russian émigrés forcibly deported to the USSR from the Manchuria, Jalainur, and Hailar stations during the 1929 conflict<sup>36</sup>.

In total, in late 1929, Soviet secret services arrested and deported to the USSR approximately 600 Russian émigrés.

As a result of the conflict along the CER, the hopes of the Russian intelligentsia in exile for cooperation with the USSR were dashed. Many Russian specialists left Harbin for Shanghai or Europe. On the other hand, in 1930, there was again mass migration from the USSR to Northeast China. For example, according to N.V. Barannikova, in the first two weeks of January 1931 alone, more than 700 refugees crossed the border<sup>37</sup>. Some émigrés of the new wave replenished the SREP population, many headed directly to Harbin or to relatives working on the CER.

Thus, in 1924–1929, the number of the Russian population along the CER was relatively stable amounting to 100,000, despite a general trend of its slow reduction. The active migration processes of 1929–1930, due to their multi-directionality, had little impact on the overall trends and number of Russian émigrés.

### Composition of Russian émigrés

The Russian population of Northeast China was never monolithic. Even in the early stages of its history, divisions existed based on people's way of "entry" into China, including their occupation, ethnic and religious affiliations, and political preferences. However, coexistence in a foreign country, in a foreign cultural environment, and in connection with a single major enterprise (the CER) facilitated the émigrés' integration into a single regional community.

The 1917 Revolution led to a split within the Russian community on the CER, but the factors of regional unity still proved stronger. In 1918–1924, the division within the Russian population of the CER was determined not by political preferences; people were divided into two main groups – "natives" and refugees. The recognition by the government of the Republic of China of the Soviet Union's rights to the CER and the transfer of the railway under joint Soviet-Chinese administration led to the main division of the Russian population in Northeast China according to their citizenship. S.V. Smirnov writes:

<sup>35</sup> Wang Tieqiao (王铁樵), *100 let Man'chzhurii. V oznamenovanie 110-letnei godovshchiny so dnya rozhdeniia goroda Man'chzhurii. 1901–2011 gg.* [100 Years of Manchuria. In Commemoration of the 110th Anniversary of the City of Manchuria. 1901–2011] (Hulunbuer: Kul'tura Avtonomnogo raiona Vnutrennyiia Mongoliia Publ., 2011), 93.

<sup>36</sup> N.N. Ablazhey, *Sibirskoe oblastnichestvo v emigratsii* [Siberian regionalism in emigration] (Novosibirsk: Izdatel'stvo Instituta arkheologii i etnografii SO RAN Publ., 2003), 131.

<sup>37</sup> N.V. Barannikova, "Vynuzhdennye emigranty. Rossiiane v Man'chzhurii v nachale 30-kh gg. XX v. (po materialam gazety «Zarya») [Forced Emigrants. Russians in Manchuria in the Early 1930s (Based on Materials from the Zarya Newspaper)]," in *Shestyie arkhivnye nauchnye chteniia imeni V.I. Chernyshevoi: Materialy Vserossiiskoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii Dal'ni Vostok Rossii: ot proshlogo k budushchemu*" (Khabarovsk: OOO «Amurprint» Publ., 2020), 275.

The differences between the local Russian population and the refugees, initially strong, then less noticeable, were observed until the end of 1924, subsequently giving way to a division into Soviets ('Reds') and émigrés ('Whites')<sup>38</sup>.

It should be noted that the Soviet colony appeared on the CER even before October 1924. As M.V. Krotova rightfully notes, "the acceptance of applications for regaining Soviet citizenship from people living in Manchuria began in 1923."<sup>39</sup>

In the second half of the 1920s, the Russian population on the CER consisted primarily of people from the Russian Empire who arrived in northeastern China after the construction of the CER began, as well as refugees who arrived during the Civil War period. Other distinct groups included Soviet citizens who came to work on the CER in the 1920s, and refugees from the border regions of Siberia and the Far East, escaping from political repression and dekulakization during the 1920s. When, following the amnesty declared in the USSR for participants in the White movement, a considerable part of the refugees returned home and many military personnel left to serve in the Shandong Army, labor émigrés clearly outnumbered political ones. Formally, three groups emerged: citizens of the USSR, citizens of the Republic of China, and stateless persons. Moreover, citizenship did not always coincide with political preference.

Even before the CER came under Soviet control, the Russian population of Northeast China was largely not hostile to the Bolsheviks; it was neutral or even sympathetic to the Soviet regime. With the CER coming under joint Soviet-Chinese administration, the Russian population there remained unchanged, and so did their sentiments. On the CER there worked émigrés, and from the USSR new managers arrived. Of the 1,127 people employed by the CER from October 3, 1924, to March 4, 1926, only 53 were from the USSR itself<sup>40</sup>.

According to data cited by N.N. Ablazhey, the Russian population of Northeast China was divided into two equal parts – Soviet citizens and non-Soviet citizens<sup>41</sup>. In N.E. Ablova's work, it is stated that in Manchuria there were 50,000 Soviet citizens and 60,000 "émigrés."<sup>42</sup> According to M.V. Krotova, over half of the Russian émigrés in Manchuria acquired Soviet citizenship, although the figures vary from 40,000 to 90,000 people<sup>43</sup>.

According to data from the SREP Police Department, the number of Russians who did not acquire Soviet citizenship almost everywhere exceeded that of Soviet citizens. In Harbin, during June 1929, 30,362 Russian émigrés and 26,759 Soviet citizens resided<sup>44</sup>. In the city of Manchuria, in June 1929 Russians constituted the majority of the population; however, the number of Russians registered as Soviet citizens (2,973 people) was significantly smaller than the number of émigrés (4,807 people). Among the Soviet citizens, there were indeed many who had come to work from the USSR, since there were

<sup>38</sup> S.V. Smirnov, *Rossiiskie emigranty v Severnoi Man'chzhurii v 1920–1945 gg. (Problemy sotsial'noi adaptatsii)* [Russian emigrants in Northern Manchuria in 1920–1945 (Problems of social adaptation)] (Yekaterinburg: Ural'skii gosudarstvennyi pedagogicheskii universitet Publ., 2007), 28.

<sup>39</sup> M.V. Krotova, *SSSR i rossiiskaia emigratsiia v Man'chzhurii (1920–1930-e gg.)* [The USSR and Russian emigration in Manchuria (1920–1930s)] (St. Petersburg: Asterion Publ., 2014), 52.

<sup>40</sup> M.V. Krotova, "History lessons: features of the Sino-Soviet management of CER in the 1920's," *Comparative Politics Russia*, no. 2 (2020): 170.

<sup>41</sup> N.N. Ablazhey, *S vostoka na vostok: Rossiiskaia emigratsiia v Kitae* [From East to East: Russian Emigration in China] (Novosibirsk: Izdatel'stvo Sibirskoe otделение RAN Publ., 2007), 78.

<sup>42</sup> N.E. Ablova, *KVZHD i rossiiskaia emigratsiia v Kitae: mezhdunarodnye i politicheskie aspekty istorii (pervaia polovina XX v.)* [CER and Russian emigration in China: international and political aspects of history (first half of the 20th century)]. (Moscow: NP ID «Russkaia panorama» Publ., 2004), 127–128.

<sup>43</sup> M.V. Krotova, *SSSR i rossiiskaia emigratsiia v Man'chzhurii (1920–1930-e gg.)* [The USSR and Russian emigration in Manchuria (1920–1930s)] (St. Petersburg: Asterion Publ., 2014), 67.

<sup>44</sup> V.A. Kormazov, "Rost naseleniia v Kharbine i Futszyadyane [Population growth in Harbin and Fujian]," *Vestnik Man'chzhurii*, no. 7 (1930): 25.

disproportionately fewer Soviet families than émigré families, and there were almost half as many women, while in the population structure, female émigrés outnumbered male émigrés<sup>45</sup>. In the area of Jalainur station, Soviet citizens constituted only a few percent of the total number of Russian émigrés. In Hailar, the number of Soviet citizens was almost half that of other Russians. Overall, in the section of the railway along the Barga on the border with the USSR, there were half as many Soviet citizens as Russians who did not wish to apply for Soviet citizenship<sup>46</sup>. However, further east, the proportions changed: in June 1929, at Buhedu station there lived 1,219 Soviet citizens (305 families) and 494 Russian émigrés (130 families)<sup>47</sup>. In the village at Qiqihar station, there were 1,096 Soviet citizens and 194 Russian émigrés. An article published in Harbin in 1930, “Population Movement in the Area of the Western Line of the Chinese Eastern Railway,” stated that along the Buhedu-Duqinshan line there lived 4,700 Soviet citizens and 1,700 Russian émigrés<sup>48</sup>.

Thus, by the summer of 1929, most Russian émigrés living in the SREP area adjacent to the Soviet border had not acquired Soviet citizenship. In contrast, in the villages in the central part of the SREP, farther from the Soviet border, the overwhelming majority of émigrés there acquired Soviet citizenship. In the capital of the CER, where more than half of the Russian émigrés lived, the number of those who acquired Soviet citizenship was 10% lower than the number of those who refused to recognize the Bolshevik regime.

### Problems of acquiring Soviet citizenship

It can be stated that the transfer of the railway under Soviet control did not seem to affect the service records of the CER employees. For example, “In the documentary materials of the archival fund of the Chinese Eastern Railway, in the personal file of I.F. Rassokhin” it was recorded:

From <...> September 1915 to September 1, 1916, he served as a translator in the Trans-Amur District of the Border Guard <...>. On February 24, 1924, he was enlisted as a temporary translator of the Economic Bureau of the CER. On October 1, 1926, he was appointed senior dragoman of the Economic Bureau...<sup>49</sup>

The archive certificate for V.I. Nechayev notes:

From February 5, 1913 to August 11, 1920, he served as a translator and senior translator of Mongolian and Chinese at the Headquarters of the Trans-Amur District of Border Guard and the Headquarters of the CER Security Guard <...>. On February 6, 1922, he was appointed dragoman of the Russian-Chinese Secretariat of the CER; on May 1, 1928, he was appointed acting senior dragoman...<sup>50</sup>

“Old” Harbin residents who had lived there since pre-revolutionary times acquired Soviet citizenship. M.V. Krotova noted: “Almost all high-ranking CER officials and long-serving employees – engineers, service chiefs, section chiefs, foremen, and workers wanted

<sup>45</sup> V.A. Kormazov, “Dvizhenie naseleniia v raione Zapadnoi linii Kitaisko-Vostochnoi zheleznoi dorogi (Uchastok stantsii Man’chzhurii – r. Petlya) [Population movement in the area of the Western Line of the Chinese Eastern Railway (Manzhouli Station – Loop River section)],” *Vestnik Man’chzhurii*, no. 4 (1930): 53.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>47</sup> V.A. Kormazov, “Dvizhenie naseleniia v raione Zapadnoi linii Kitaisko-Vostochnoi zheleznoi dorogi (Uchastok stantsii Man’chzhurii – r. Petlya) [Population movement in the area of the Western Line of the Chinese Eastern Railway (Manzhouli Station – Loop River section)],” *Vestnik Man’chzhurii*, no. 5 (1930): 30.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 31–32.

<sup>49</sup> Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (thereafter – GARF), f. 10035, op. 1, d. P-52197, l. 62, accessed July, 17, 2020, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B-C7U8SDPAZnWFJJZUpoZi1WcHM/view>

<sup>50</sup> GARF, f. 10035, op. 1, d. P-52197, l. 59, accessed July, 17, 2020, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B-C7U8SDPAZnWFJJZUpoZi1WcHM/view>

to acquire Soviet citizenship.”<sup>51</sup> Upon acquiring Soviet citizenship, many old “Harbin residents” were able to start working for the CER. For example, in 1925, renowned sinologist I.G. Baranov, a college teacher, started to work in the CER administration, but after the sale of the CER, he did not leave for the USSR, but stayed to live and work in Harbin.

The overwhelming majority of White émigrés eagerly applied for Soviet citizenship and subsequently received good positions on the CER. Moreover, even some more notorious individuals were employed. For example, P.L. Ostrovsky, former chief of staff of Baron R.F. Ungern’s Asian Division, acquired Soviet citizenship in 1925 and was appointed head of the Changchun railway station. Colonel V.N. Krylov, a Japanologist who had served at the headquarters of Ataman G.M. Semenov, became a Soviet citizen and worked as a Japanese language dragoman for the office of the CER administration. Generals V.I. Surin, V.N. Kasatkin, V.N. Sukhorsky, and others acquired Soviet citizenship. Prominent representatives of intelligentsia applied for Soviet citizenship: “Professors V.A. Ryazanovsky, M.N. Ershov, E.M. Chepurkovsky, associate professor V.D. Marakulin, archaeologist V.Ya. Tolmachev...”<sup>52</sup>

Available sources and scientific publications do not provide a clear picture of the way émigrés became Soviet citizens. Typically, it could take several years from applying for citizenship to acquiring it. For example, Volunteer Army officer N.A. Baikov applied for Soviet citizenship in 1925 and was immediately employed by the CER, but he received a Soviet passport only in 1927<sup>53</sup>. White Army officer P.A. von Olbrich-Severny applied for Soviet citizenship in 1925 and received a passport only in 1929. Thus, in the second half of the 1920s, most Russian émigrés who expressed their loyalty to the Soviet regime were not Soviet citizens, but so-called “receipt nationals” – a term used to describe émigrés who received a tax receipt upon applying for Soviet citizenship. Many of those “receipt nationals” never acquired Soviet citizenship.

The general picture was complicated by the fact that Russian émigrés often held dual citizenship – Soviet and Chinese; or, having acquired Soviet citizenship, they failed to register it with Chinese authorities. Émigrés who had acquired Chinese citizenship were rarely singled out in general population registration. The percentage ratio can be roughly estimated from indirect data. For example, as of October 1, 1931, among the students at the Polytechnic Institute, there were 511 Soviet citizens and 169 Russian citizens of China<sup>54</sup>.

### Sentiments among Russian émigrés and “split” problem

Despite the fact that the Sino-Soviet agreements formally regulated issues related to the status of Russian émigrés in China, the legal status of Soviet citizens remained controversial. In 1926 contemporaries asserted:

CER employees and Soviet citizens living in Northern Manchuria, in the absence of legal norms for their existence, cannot engage in their peaceful labor <...>. The absence of these legal norms has a detrimental effect on a number of other issues<sup>55</sup>.

<sup>51</sup> M.V. Krotova, *SSSR i rossiiskaia emigratsiia v Man'chzhurii (1920–1930-e gg.)* [The USSR and Russian emigration in Manchuria (1920–1930s)] (St. Petersburg: Asterion Publ., 2014), 56.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>53</sup> M.V. Krotova, “CER employees personal files as the source for the study of the Russian presence in Manchuria,” *Petersburg Historical Journal*, no. 2 (2014): 131, <https://doi.org/10.51255/2311-603X-2014-00030>

<sup>54</sup> V.G. Sharonova, “Rol’ russkoi emigratsii v podgotovke kitaiskikh kadrov (na primere Kharbinskogo politekhnicheskogo instituta (1920–1932)) [The Role of Russian Emigration in the Training of Chinese National Staff (on the Example of Harbin Polytechnic Institute (1920–1932))],” in *Kitai v mirovoi i regional’noi politike: istoriia i sovremennost’*: [sbornik statei: ezhegodnik] (Moscow: Institut Dal’nego Vostoka RAN Publ., 2020), 407, <https://doi.org/10.24411/2618-6888-2020-10024>

<sup>55</sup> E.G. Limanov, “Sovetsko-mukdenskaia konferentsiia i voprosy KVZHD [The Soviet-Mukden Conference and the Issues of the CER],” *Vestnik Man'chzhurii*, no. 5 (1926): 2.

Thus, after 1924, there was no clear legal division of Russian émigrés along the CER.

In 1924, Russian émigrés took the transfer of the CER under Soviet control with discomfort, but no overt split occurred within the Russian community. Even the famous order by A.N. Ivanov, the CER manager to dismiss from the CER all Russians who had not acquired Soviet or Chinese citizenship caused a crisis in Sino-Soviet relations, rather than a split among Russian émigrés. In early 1925, L.M. Karakhan, the Soviet envoy to the Republic of China reported to Moscow:

All Russians on the CER, not only Soviet citizens, but also non-Soviet citizens, the entire top management of the CER stand firmly behind us and, for the most part, work conscientiously for us<sup>56</sup>.

Thus, there is no reason for speaking about a split among the Russian residents of the SREP into two large, opposing groups – the Soviet colony and émigrés. E.P. Taskina points out that all Russians living on the CER

sought mutual understanding in the conditions of residing in a foreign country. If we disregard the position of the political ‘elite,’ there was no pronounced antagonism among the bulk of the population...<sup>57</sup>

It should be noted that there were certain groups of people on the CER that “stood out” among the émigrés. There were Soviet citizens on the CER who were under Soviet jurisdiction and subject to Soviet laws. This is particularly evident in the presence of conscripts from among the Russian residents of Northeast China in the Red Army in the 1920s. However, the number of such Soviet citizens in SREP was small, and they did not constitute an organized community. Furthermore, Soviet citizens conscripted from Manchuria into the Red Army were often characterized by the description of being “anti-Soviet Red Army soldiers.” For example, the documents of the 26th Zlatoust Division recorded the following facts:

On February 19, before the start of drill exercise, Red Army soldier Gorbanev (member of the Komsomol) handed platoon commander Comrade Garmyshev (member of the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks) a leaflet of the Harbin Fascist Organization, which he had received in a letter from his comrade in Harbin<sup>58</sup>.

During the 1920s, within the émigré community there were radical groups – both pro-Bolshevik and anti-Soviet. However, researchers cite examples of communist youth actively fighting against those who did not share their views. The underground “Komsomol fighting squad” in Harbin numbered approximately 200 people. However, after the assassination of a Russian monarchist in 1926, this organization ceased its active violent activities until the outbreak of the Sino-Soviet conflict along the CER in 1929<sup>59</sup>. In opposition to the Komsomol organization, the Russian Fascist Society was created among Harbin students. By the early 1930s, a split had occurred within the society, culminating in

<sup>56</sup> V.M. Kryukov, M.V. Kryukov, *Vesna i osen' revolyutsionnoi diplomatii: Pervoe desyatiletie sovetsoi politiki v Kitae. 1922–1926* [Spring and Autumn of Revolutionary Diplomacy: The First Decade of Soviet Policy in China. 1922–1926] (Moscow: Pamyatniki istoricheskoi mysli Publ., 2015), 1061.

<sup>57</sup> E.P. Taskina, “Na perekrestke epokh i kul'tur [At the Crossroads of Eras and Cultures],” in *Russkii Kharbin* (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo MGU: Nauka Publ., 2005), 41.

<sup>58</sup> Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Krasnooiarskogo kraia (thereafter – GAKK), f. P-96, op. 1, d. 713, l. 34.

<sup>59</sup> M.V. Krotova, “Soviet presence on the Chinese Eastern Railroad (CER) (1924–1935),” *Far Eastern Studies*, no. 1 (2013): 146.

the formation of the Russian Fascist Party<sup>60</sup>. There were also committed monarchists on the CER. General V.A. Kislitsin, the chairman of the Monarchist Union in Harbin wrote in his memoirs as follows:

There was constant awareness of the need to fight for the liberation of the Motherland from the Bolsheviks. This was the main purpose of existence in exile<sup>61</sup>.

However, the radicalism of small groups was partly suppressed by the actions of the Chinese authorities. For example, in April 1925 the Police Department closed the radical pro-Soviet newspaper “Tribuna,” and in late 1926 the Chinese authorities revoked the license of the Soviet newspaper “Ekho” which replaced it. They also hindered the activities of radical anti-Soviet groups.

The overwhelming majority of émigrés who applied for Soviet citizenship remained émigrés; they were merely demonstrating their formal loyalty to the new authorities of the CER. This in no way affected the place of most Russian CER functionaries, scientists, and members of the creative intelligentsia among the Russian émigré community; it only provoked moral condemnation among the few ideological anti-communists. The White officers living in Harbin did not become Soviet colonists, nor did the ideologists of the White émigré movement, despite applying for Soviet citizenship. As M.V. Krotova notes, “following “Smenovekhists” G.N. Diky and N.V. Ustryalov who started to work on the CER, Soviet citizenship was acquired by most professors, scientists, and orientologists...” However, “in various encyclopedias, dictionaries, and reference works on the history of Russian émigrés, when mentioning these people, the fact that they acquired Soviet citizenship is generally ignored.”<sup>62</sup>

The relative unity of the Russian émigré community on the CER is also indicated by the fact that the descriptions of settlements in the journal “Vestnik Manchzhurii” (Bulletin of Manchuria) presented the “Russian population” in such categories as gender, age, settlement type, and residence status (“permanent and temporary”), distinguishing “railway workers’” families, but without specifying citizenship<sup>63</sup>. Sometimes, émigrés were distinguished by nationality: “760 Russians, 120 Tatars, and 18 Japanese (140 houses) live in the central and private settlements.”<sup>64</sup> Indirect evidence suggests the presence of a significant number of Russian émigrés who did not acquire Soviet citizenship. For example, the study “Stations and Settlements of the Eastern Line” presented the following information:

According to Chinese custom, all merchants are organized into a Commercial Society <...> but the Russian residents of Ekho did not lag behind them in this regard and formed the only strong Russian group on the Eastern line, called the ‘Society of plot owners and homeowners of Ekho settlements,’ whose goal was broad protection of their rights to live and work in the Special region of Eastern provinces. This Society is registered by the Chinese administration and enjoys all the rights of a legalized society<sup>65</sup>.

<sup>60</sup> M.V. Krotova, D.I. Petin, “The fate of Harbin repatriate in the mirror of anthropology: Liudmila Abramova (1914–2002),” *RUDN Journal of Russian History* 22, no. 1 (2023): 114, <https://doi.org/10.22363/2312-8674-2023-22-1-110-124>

<sup>61</sup> V.A. Kislitsin, *V ognе grazhdanskoi voyny. Memuary* [In the Fire of Civil War. Memoirs] (Harbin: Izdatel'stvo «Nash put'» Publ., 1936), 110.

<sup>62</sup> M.V. Krotova, “CER employees personal files as the source for the study of the Russian presence in Manchuria,” *Petersburg Historical Journal*, no. 2 (2014): 131, <https://doi.org/10.51255/2311-603X-2014-00030>

<sup>63</sup> I.P., “Stantsii i poselki Vostochnoi linii (prodolzhenie) [Stations and settlements of the Eastern line (continued)] // Bulletin of Manchuria,” *Vestnik Man'chzhurii*, no. 1 (1927): 37–51.

<sup>64</sup> I.P., “Stantsii i poselki Vostochnoi linii (prodolzhenie) [Stations and settlements of the Eastern line (continued)] // Bulletin of Manchuria,” *Vestnik Man'chzhurii*, no. 2 (1927): 28.

<sup>65</sup> I.P., “Stantsii i poselki Vostochnoi linii (prodolzhenie) [Stations and settlements of the Eastern line (continued)] // Bulletin of Manchuria,” *Vestnik Man'chzhurii*, no. 1 (1927): 50.

The relative unity of the Russian community in Northeast China is evident in the matters of education. In 1924, all schools on the CER began to adopt Soviet curricula and standards, and children of émigrés continued to study there, with émigrés working as teachers. In 1925, in Russian educational institutions along the CER, there were approximately 12,500 students and over 600 teachers<sup>66</sup>. Contemporaries noted as follows:

Certainly, not all parents perceived similarly the new school. Former representatives of tsarist policy in Northern Manchuria and members of the black press were particularly active in making dire predictions<sup>67</sup>.

But the general conclusion as early as 1926 was as follows:

In general, there is observed a definitive shift of most parents toward sympathy for the new school<sup>68</sup>.

The transfer of the CER under Soviet control and the formal division between “Soviet citizens” and “émigrés” was not reflected in various aspects of Russian life in Harbin. For example, an advertisement for the “Russian-Chinese Polytechnic Institute” in 1925 mentioned only Russian and Chinese applicants, without mentioning the word “Soviet.” Furthermore, there were specified different tuition fees at the Institute only for “the sons of railway workers” and “the sons of individuals.”<sup>69</sup> The information about the Technical Railway School mentioned two groups: “children of railway employees” and “persons outside the CER.”<sup>70</sup> Even the advertisement of the “Mixed Russian-Chinese high school of science,” which followed the curriculum of Soviet schools, made no mention of “Soviet citizens.” The information contained in the directory “All Harbin in 1926” also made no mention of a separate group of “Soviet” citizens among Harbin residents. In most educational institutions, students were not divided into any groups at all.

Speaking of the relative unity of the Russian population in Northeast China, it should be noted that even communists who had arrived from the Soviet Union were divided in party and organizational terms. Soviet citizens working on the CER belonged to the illegal Harbin Provincial Bureau of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) (from 1926, the North Manchurian Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks)), subordinate to the Far Eastern Regional Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks). Of the total number of Soviet citizens working on the CER, several hundred were communists. Employees of Soviet organizations in the SREP had their own party cells, subordinate to the Bureau of Foreign Cells of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) in Moscow<sup>71</sup>.

Former Harbin resident E.P. Taskina wrote as follows:

From 1924 onwards <...> all life was marked by what is now called pluralism; sacred music and church services coexisted with celebrations of May 1 and November 7...<sup>72</sup>

<sup>66</sup> K. Filippovich, “Sovetskie i kitaiskie shkoly na KVZHD [Soviet and Chinese schools on the CER],” *Vestnik Man’chzhurii*, no. 5 (1926): 39.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>69</sup> S.T. Ternavsky, *Ves’ Kharbin na 1925 god. Adresnaia i spravochnaia kniga* [All of Harbin in 1925. Address and reference book] (Harbin: Tipografiya KVZHD Publ., 1925).

<sup>70</sup> S.T. Ternavsky, *Ves’ Kharbin na 1926 god. Adresnaia i spravochnaia kniga* [All of Harbin in 1926. Address and reference book] (Harbin: Tipografiya KVZHD Publ., 1926), 116.

<sup>71</sup> S.Yu. Yakhimovich, “The bolshevist party organization as part of the Soviet Community in the northern Manchuria (1924–1931),” *Scientific Notes of Komsomolsk-on-Amour State Technical University*, no. III-2 (2012): 21–26.

<sup>72</sup> E.P. Taskina, “Na perekrestke epokh i kul’tur [At the Crossroads of Eras and Cultures],” in *Russkii Kharbin* (Moscow: Izdatel’stvo MGU: Nauka Publ., 2005), 38.

According to the “Table of Non-Working Days”<sup>73</sup> approved by the Harbin City Council in 1926, shortly before its abolition by the Chinese authorities, there were 33 public holidays along the CER. There were two Soviet holidays (“Working Day” on May 1 and “October Revolution Day”) and five Chinese national holidays, and 11 Orthodox holidays were officially celebrated in Harbin.

In the second half of the 1920s, Harbin’s economic development allowed émigrés to live successfully without direct ties to the CER. Experienced Russian railroad workers dismissed from the CER by the Soviet administration were in demand for the construction of other railways in Manchuria. For example, in 1925 B.V. Ostroumov, the former manager of the CER was invited to oversee the construction of the Huai Railway, going from Harbin to the north. V.P. Shuisky’s memoirs, for example, stated that in Harbin, in addition to the CER power plants, many private power plants were also built. He wrote:

The development of electricity supply to the city of Harbin was as varied as its construction <...>. The streets of Pristan, and then other parts of the city, were filled with the poles of both competing stations: Chinese and Japanese. In 1926–1927, the Chinese government pulled itself together and handed over the construction of the power plant and tram to the German company “Siemens”, which launched the tram in 1927. The author worked as a student intern at “Siemens” and had the honor of riding on the first test car<sup>74</sup>.

The actions of the Soviet side were offset by the active stance of the émigrés, who did not accept the Soviet regime. E.P. Taskina writes:

After abolishing the teaching of the Law of God in educational institutions in Harbin, the need arose to organize special lectures or courses in theology for young people <...>. With the participation of Fr N. Voznesensky, in 1928 in Harbin there were opened theological courses <...>. The courses were considered equivalent to a theological seminary...<sup>75</sup>

The history of the CER in the second half of the 1920s was determined by the Sino-Soviet standoff, rather than a split among Russian émigrés. As early as late 1924, the Chinese authorities demanded that the USSR remove Soviet manager A.N. Ivanov from the railway’s management, and in early 1926, he was arrested. The escalation of the conflict on the CER in 1929 led to large-scale military actions, and the Sino-Soviet conflict of 1929 became known in Chinese history as the “Sino-Soviet War.”

This conflict demonstrated that the majority of the Russian population was apolitical and neutral, and the conflict was perceived as solely a Sino-Soviet conflict, rather than a Russo-Chinese one. M.V. Krotova writes as follows: “Most CER employees refused to resign from the railway, confirming their loyalty to the Chinese administration.”<sup>76</sup> At the same time, most Russian émigrés sympathized with the Soviet side. One of the émigrés recalled:

There’s a strange feeling: on the one hand, you are glad the Reds didn’t reach Harbin, but on the other hand, it is great that the Chinese were defeated by the Russians<sup>77</sup>.

<sup>73</sup> Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv Dal’nego Vostoka (thereafter – RGIA DV), f. 577, op. 1, d. 53, l. 43–43 ob.

<sup>74</sup> V.P. Shuisky, “Eshche o Kharbine [More about Harbin],” *Politekhnik (Na pravakh rukopisi)*, no. 4 (April 2, 1972): 133.

<sup>75</sup> A.K. Klementyev, “Archiepiskop Khailarskii Dmitrii (Voznesenskii) [Archbishop Dmitry (Voznesensky)],” *Na sopkakh Man’chzhurii*, no. 126 (March, 2006): 2.

<sup>76</sup> M.V. Krotova, “CER employees personal files as the source for the study of the Russian presence in Manchuria,” *Petersburg Historical Journal*, no. 2 (2014): 136, <https://doi.org/10.51255/2311-603X-2014-00030>

<sup>77</sup> S.V. Smirnov, *Rossiiskie emigranty v Severnoi Man’chzhurii v 1920–1945 gg. (Problemy sotsial’noi adaptatsii)* [Russian emigrants in Northern Manchuria in 1920–1945 (Problems of social adaptation)] (Yekaterinburg: Ural’skii gosudarstvennyi pedagogicheskii universitet Publ., 2007), 76.

The second half of 1929 was a time of increasing Chinese repression against Soviet citizens who supported Bolshevik policies. At the same time, the Soviet side exercised reprisals against anti-Soviet émigrés, and both sides carried out purges among CER employees. Thousands of Russian refugees, victims of Soviet punitive actions, arrived in Harbin. Thousands of CER workers and employees, regardless of citizenship, who continued to work on the railway during the conflict, were dismissed in 1930. The temporary stay of the evacuated émigrés in Transbaikalia intensified their anti-Soviet sentiments. The report of the Chita District Committee of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) of April 25, 1930 stated:

For some unknown reason, individuals with an unequivocally negative attitude toward the USSR have already been returned to the CER, and from received letters, it is clear that these individuals are conducting harmful propaganda, which is why the White Guard riffraff is becoming active. They cast aspersions on our exiled activists<sup>78</sup>.

The “Report of the Refugee Committee for 1930” cited by S.V. Smirnov states:

The conditions of Russian émigrés’ existence in 1930 significantly worsened compared to 1929. The reasons for this were the consequences of the armed Sino-Soviet conflict, the global economic crisis <...> and a new wave of refugees from Soviet Russia<sup>79</sup>.

Due to the onset of collectivization and threat of famine at the turn of the 1930s, mass migration from the USSR which had a particularly significant impact on the Russian community in Manchuria. Researchers write:

They migrated in hundreds and individually; they were residents of border villages and of central Russia. In a month the border was crossed sometimes by as many as 500-700 people, sometimes by less than a dozen. The important thing is that this process was continuous<sup>80</sup>.

From among new refugees there emerged new political activists and leaders.

However, in the early 1930s, the relative unity of the Russian émigrés on the CER, conditioned by loyalty to the Soviet Union, was shattered. After the onset of Japanese aggression in Manchuria and departure of a significant number of Soviet CER employees to the USSR and other émigrés to Beijing and Shanghai, the relative unity of the remaining Russian émigrés was restored. However, the Harbin émigré community of the 1930s was already very different from that of the 1920s, as it had lost ties with Russia, and began to integrate into the multinational society of Manchukuo under the rule of anti-Comintern Japan.

## Conclusion

The history of Russian émigrés on the CER demonstrates that common culture and language, compact settlements, and inclusion in a single national economic mechanism made the formation of a single ethno-national-regional community inevitable, regardless of

<sup>78</sup> GAZK, f. P-75, op. 1, d. 1005, l. 60.

<sup>79</sup> S.V. Smirnov, *Rossiiskie emigranty v Severnoi Man'chzhurii v 1920–1945 gg. (Problemy sotsial'noi adaptatsii)* [Russian emigrants in Northern Manchuria in 1920–1945 (Problems of social adaptation)] (Yekaterinburg: Ural'skii gosudarstvennyi pedagogicheskii universitet Publ., 2007), 78.

<sup>80</sup> N.V. Barannikova, “Vynuzhdennye emigranty. Rossiiane v Man'chzhurii v nachale 30-kh gg. XX v. (po materialam gazety ‘Zarya’) [Forced Emigrants. Russians in Manchuria in the Early 1930s (Based on Materials from the Zarya Newspaper)],” in *Shesty arkhivnye nauchnye chteniia imeni V.I. Chernyshevoi: Materialy Vserossiiskoi nauchno-prakticheskoi konferentsii Dal'nii Vostok Rossii: ot proshlogo k budushchemu*” (Khabarovsk: OOO «Amurprint» Publ., 2020), 276.

historical background and political preferences. Moreover, diversity, including in political views and even formal legal status, can strengthen as community and made it more resilient, as occurred in the Special region of Eastern provinces of the Republic of China.

The Russian population of the SREP in 1924–1929 cannot be divided, as is common in Russian historiography, into a Soviet colony and émigrés. In the second half of the 1920s, in Northeast China there lived a small number of CER workers from the Soviet Union, and in fact they essentially constituted a “Soviet colony.” However, white officers and generals, many prominent members of intelligentsia, and thousands of other political émigrés cannot be called “Soviet colonists.” Applying for Soviet citizenship by Russian émigrés was a formal demonstration of loyalty to the Soviet administration of the CER. However, by the end of the 1920s, a considerable number of those who applied for Soviet citizenship had not received passports, and some of those who did subsequently lose their Soviet documents. Thus, the Russian émigré community of the 1920s, a fragment of the former Russian Empire, slowly became a part of the new Soviet state. The consequences of the Sino-Soviet conflict of 1929 led to the destruction of the relative unity of the Russian émigrés alongside the CER, which had been formed based on loyalty to the USSR as the successor to pre-revolutionary Russia. The subsequent development of the Russian émigré community in Manchuria took place in a different domestic political and international reality, just as the state of the Russian community on the CER was determined by the influence of new factors.

Submitted: 30.09.2025

Approved after reviewing: 23.11.2025

Accepted for publication: 23.02.2026

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