

Michail Talalay

Centro Cultura e Storia Amalfitana

Milan, Italy

Emigration and identity: 'White Russian' literature in Italy

After the Russian revolution and Civil War, Europe, including Italy, was flooded with masses of emigrants from the former Russian Empire, who, regardless of their ethnic origin, were considered there as 'White Russians'. The emigrants created their own diaspora's literature, in the bosom of which they tried to comprehend the causes of the catastrophe and find their place in European civilisation. The most significant literary works were created in Paris (I. Bunin, B. Zaitsev, P. Krasnov, etc.), which - through such intermediaries as E. Lo Gatto - found their Italian readers. The emigrant writers who lived in Italy (M. Pervukhin, A. Amfiteatrov, M. Semyonov, Yu. Danzas, etc.) primarily produced journalism in an anti-Bolshevik vein, which was supported by the Mussolini regime. The novel *Ex Russi* by R. Küfferle, a native of St Petersburg, though can be regarded as a landmark, attempting to make sense of the diaspora's identity. The work of Essad Bey, a Baku native who emigrated to Berlin, stands out: having mystified his origins and presenting himself as a Muslim prince, he published widely in Italy his texts and also introduced the first book on emigration itself, *White Russia*. Italian official circles of the time were wary of emigrants from the former Russian Empire, suspecting communist, socialist and republican agitators among them and imposing a tacit police control.

Key-words: emigration, identity, diaspora's literature

Michail G. Talalay (b. 1956), historian italianist, PhD in History, representative of the Institute of Universal History of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Italy (Milan), author of various books and articles in Italian and Russian (the list of publications can be consulted on his Russian Wikipedia's profile).