

Vyacheslav Ivanov's Italian emigration

1. S. Rachmaninoff left his country in 1917; S. Prokofiev in 1918; D. Merezhkovsky, D. Filosofov and Z. Gippius in 1919, and K. Balmont and I. Bunin in 1920. In 1921 A. Blok, who was not allowed to go abroad, died, and N. Gumilev was executed. Philosophers L. Karsavin, S. Bulgakov, I. Ilyin, S. Frank, and F. Stepun; writers M. Osorgin, Y. Aykhenvald, A. V. Peshekhonov, and V. Bulgakov; historians A. Kizevetter, A. Florovsky, V. Myakotin, and S. Melgunov; sociologist P. Sorokin; biologist and Rector of Moscow University M. Novikov, and mathematician V. Stratonov - total of more than 200 people - were expelled to Germany on "philosophers' ships." These exiles took place at the initiative of Lenin in 1922. The 60 Mensheviks expelled from Georgia that same year added to the number. There is an important detail: those expelled on "philosophers' ships" were officially informed that in case an expellee returned without permission, he would be shot on the spot.



«Философский пароход» Ольги Цуцковой

Olga Tsutskova's picture *Philosophers' ship*, 2007

In the summer of 1924, a poet and scholar Vyacheslav Ivanov (Moscow, 1866 - Rome 1948; hereafter *VI*) left Moscow for exile. Olga Shor's memoirs recalled "a long human serpentine ... a line for the poet's word as if it were bread or sugar" made up of readers who wanted to bid him farewell. B. Pasternak was among them, too¹. Artist N. Vysheslavtsev made a portrait of the poet (1924) preparing for exile.

¹ O. Shor's letter to Stepun of 30 June 1963 // Лидия Иванова. Воспоминания: книга об отце. Paris, 1990, с. 123; http://www.v-ivanov.it/lv_ivanova/01text/02.htm#h2_5



Н. Вышеславцев. Портрет Вяч. Иванова

N. Vysheslavtsev. The portrait of V. Ivanov>

Memoirists also recall the poet saying before his departure: "I am going to Rome to live and die." In addition to the motif of the irretrievable nature of genuine exile, the motif of death is also important in this formula. Socrates, who faced a choice between death and exile, chose the former, as exile brings more ordeals. In a sense, emigration was viewed as an equivalent of death. Ivanov used this powerful formula as the basis of his first sonnet of the cycle *Ave Roma. Roman Sonnets*, composed immediately upon his arrival in the Eternal City. It should be noted that the sonnet contains no denunciation, protest, or nostalgia. Ivanov had no illusion that "we will meet in Petersburg again". Unlike most emigrants, his 20-year-long studies of Ancient Classic culture before the First World War provided him with a spiritual homeland and his return to the homeland revived his buoyant creative instinct and his confidence in historical continuity.

2. The first sonnet alludes to the founding myth of European emigration. The rhymes of quatrains at the beginning of the first sonnet comprise the name of the city in its Russian translation ("Рим" - lines 1, 3, 5, 7) and Latin or Italian ("Roma" - lines 2, 4, 6, 8) transcription. The solemn rings of rhymes and words ryming with it seem to glorify the name of the city. While in past millennia, enemies of the Eternal City hoped to destroy not just the City proper, but also its name, the apotheosis of the Roman name dating back to the *Aeneid* is contraposed to such a barbarian "Logoclasms." The sonic and semantic structure interacts with traditional mythopoetic palindromes: Both Latin – "Roma-Amor" and Russian "Рим-мир".

Again, true pilgrim of your vaulted past,
I greet you, as my own ancestral home,
With evening 'Ave Roma' at the last,
You, wanderers' retreat, eternal Rome.

The Troy of your forebears we give to fire;
The chariots' axles crack from furious churning
In this hippodrome of the world entire:
Regina Viarum, see how we are burning.

And you went down in flames and rose from embers;
The mindful blueness could not blind the eye

Of space in your unfathomable sky.

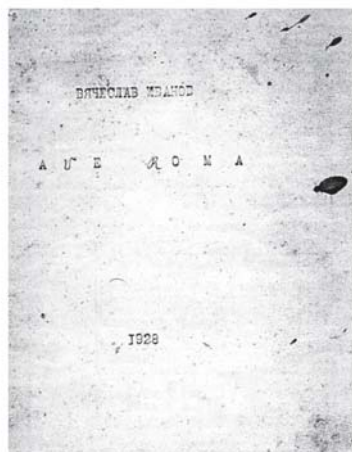
Your cypress, standing sentinel, remembers
In the caresses of a dream of gold
How strong was Troy in ashes lying cold.

(Translated by Laury Nelson Jr.)²

The context of the sonnet corresponds to the classic model: beginning of action, subject matter, swing, antithesis, and paradoxical synthesis. The extremely concise plot of the sonnet can be retold in the following manner. Subject matter: the destiny of Troy that perished in the fire started by the ruthless enemy, befell Russia, which claimed to be the Third Rome. These are us who are responsible for the revolution's disaster, not foreign invaders. (Speaking about the Russian revolution in 1919, Ivanov admitted: "Yes, it was *we* who started the fire"³. "The peculiarity of the first wave of Russian emigration lay precisely in the fact that philosophic honesty was on a very high level among these people, who were ready to bear their cross of the consequences of the revolution," philosophy historian A. Kozyrev noted recently.)

As full as the Eternal City's history may be with numerous devastations and revivals, it may give rise to a remote hope. This meaning and this gleam of hope is not articulated, however by the Russian expellee, who has returned to Rome. This hope is based on the memory of the past kept both in the Heavens and on Earth. A new Troy founded by Trojan Aeneas, the first "emigrant" of old Europe, on the banks of the Tiber is a symbol of the preservation of the Past and Fulfilment, the continuity and unity of the Christian culture, which enables Rome to give birth to a new European history. The paradoxical synthesis at the end of the sonnet is underscored by an unexpected and powerful antinomy: "Troy grew strong/lay burnt". An indication of the idea of sacrifice of "life through death", and supra personal immortality can be seen here.

It is noteworthy that the cycle, which was sent to Moscow, was disseminated through the Soviet Samizdat as early as in 1927.



Обложка самиздатского машинописного сборника,
выпущенного в Советской России в конце 1920-х гг.
Римский архив Вяч. Иванова

The cover of the Samizdat edition of "Roman Sonnets"

In 1934, VI published his prose translation into Italian of two sonnets; in 1936, he published the whole cycle in the 62nd issue of the *Sovremennye Zapiski* magazine of Russian emigrants issued in Paris. As far as I know, *Roman Sonnets* is now the most frequently read text by VI.

² Вяч. Иванов. Ave Roma. Римские сонеты. СПб. 2011, с. 48.

³ Вяч. Иванов. Собр.соч. Bruxelles, 1987, том IV, с. 81.

3. During his years in emigration, VI expressed quite unequivocally his opinion on the regime he left behind: "I do not have the desire to live in Russia, because I was born free, but silence has the flavour of slavery there" - 1925; "I cannot breathe in the carnifical and blasphemous atmosphere" - 1927; "Christmas trees ... are prohibited under the threat of imprisonment. Moscow is being *cleansed* by demolishing churches and monasteries" - 1929; "The problem ... of Christianity is the *crux mistica* of my problematic patriotism, which organically rejects non-Christian Russia and is alive until and inasmuch as the inextinguishable icon lamp glimmers within it" - 1930; "I cannot return to Moscow ... so long as churches are being demolished there" - 1937. (The aforementioned quotations are taken from private correspondence and the last one from a conversation with a Soviet journalist.)

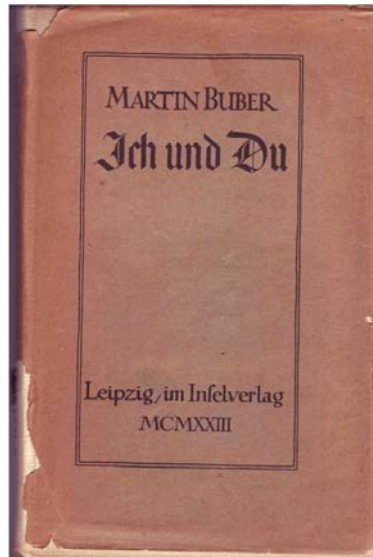
In a sense, VI publicly expressed his attitude toward the Mussolini regime. In 1926-1934, the poet held the humble position of teacher of languages at Collegio Borromeo in Pavia. The head of Collegio, a cleric Leopoldo Riboldi, was a supporter of the *Duce*. One day in 1927, the cleric insisted that VI express his position regarding the new ideology. VI answered: "I believe that it is my obligation to say that I recognize personal freedom as a supreme religious and moral value and I do not approve of the viewpoint of extreme statists (such as Fascists), which regards a personality only as a tool for achieving purposes of the state; ... I place the church higher than the state and a Christian higher than a citizen".

4. During the first decade in emigration, VI published nothing in Russian. A translation of his book *A Correspondence from Two Corners* (1920) proved to be best known of his works in Europe. It was translated into German (1926), French (1930), Italian (1932), and Spanish (1933). Problems raised in the book put the author in line with Ch. du Bos, M. Buber, G. Marcel, F. Mauriac, J. Maritain, E. R. Curtius and other European thinkers.



Мартин Бубер

Martin Buber



Обложка книги М. Бубера «Я и Ты», 1923
из библиотеки Вяч. Иванова в Риме

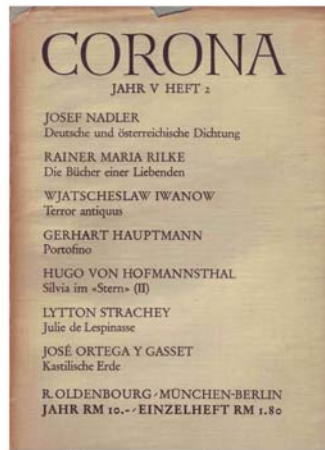
The cover of M. Buber book “Ich und Du”, 1923, V. Ivanov library in Rome



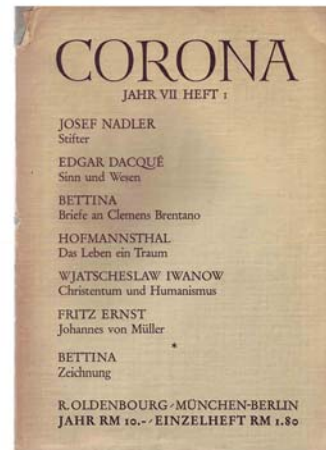
Обложка книги Э. Р. Курциуса «Немецкий дух в опасности», 1932
из библиотеки Вяч. Иванова в Риме

The cover of E. R. Curtius book “Deutscher Geist in Gefahr”, 1932, V. Ivanov library in Rome

VI wrote essays in Italian, French, and German, cooperating with the Italian magazine *Frontespizio*, German Catholic *Hochland* and Swiss *Corona*



Обложка журнала «Corona»



Обложка журнала «Corona»

The covers of Corona review, 1934 and 1935

His philosophic essays written in German were published in Germany and Switzerland - *Virgils Historiosophie*, *Anima*, and *Humanismus und Religion*. In the third essay devoted to the most renowned 20th century German specialist in Classics in the 20 century - U. Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, VI challenged his competence and even integrity as a historian of the Hellenistic religion, a bold and independent step that was quite unexpected for an emigré and an outcast.

Before World War II, as conflict between totalitarian Communist, Fascist, and Nazi regimes became evident some emigrants pinned their hopes on Fascists or Nazis as those who could enable the Russian people to restore their state. They thought that only a jolt from the outside could defeat Communism in Russia. VI was not involved in the practices pursued by these political emigrants. Trusting none of the sides, he plunged deeper into his own religious and historic realm.

From 1936 to almost the end of his life, VI taught at *Collegio Russicum* and the *Pontifical Oriental Institute* in the Vatican. Philippe de Régis, the head of *Russicum*, interceded with Pope Pius XI to create a permanent position of professor for VI. His main argument was the need to help the 71-year-old poet to complete his *Tale of Prince Svetomir*, "a spiritual bequest ending his life journey". Depending on the mood of a reader, this text can be understood as "a fairy-tale, an adventure saga, a quasi-historic novel, or a theological treatise" (Tomas Venclova). Elaborating on some ideas of V. Solovyov and cautiously criticizing the well-known Moscow - Third Rome theory, the *Tale* raises the problems of a utopian God's Kingdom on Earth, relations between the secular and ecclesiastic powers, and a fair Christian rule in general. The *Tale* was not completed during the author's lifetime. It was printed in 1971 by a Catholic publishing house *Life with God* in Brussels. It's academic edition with commentaries is being currently prepared for publication in Moscow as part of the *Literary Monuments Series*.

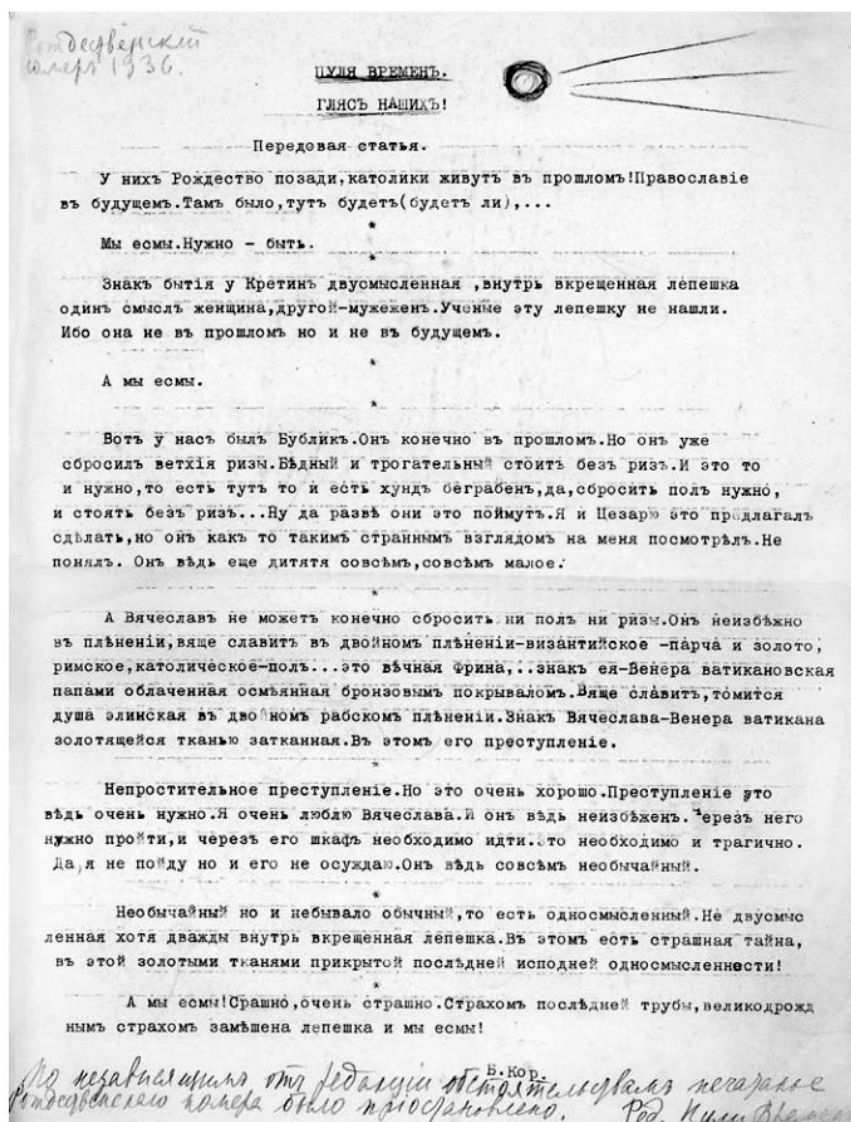
5. As a kind of counterpoint in the life and work of VI, I should mention Dmitrij Merezhkovsky, whose magazine *The New Path* published VI's first monograph, back in 1904. The two poet scholars ardently polemicized in the Religious-philosophical Society during the following two decades. In 1934-1936, Merezhkovsky lived in Rome and Florence and frequently associated with VI and his family. However, Italy was for Merezhkovsky a kind of emigration from France that had become too "leftist" and he arrived in Rome with quite a dangerous literary, political, and mythopoetic project. He had several meetings with *Duce*, who approved his future book and screenplay for a film about Dante. Merezhkovsky pinned special hopes on the leader, but these hopes failed to pass the test of real politics.



Мережковский, З. Гиппиус и Вяч. Иванов в Риме в 1930-е годы

Merezhkovsky, Z. Gippius and Ivanov in Rome

Zinaida Gippius chronicled these hopes and disappointments in her published diary. We have no direct information about *VI's* attitude towards Merezhkovsky's project of cooperation with the Fascist government, but the general attitude of *VI's* family can be seen in the comic magazine the poet's son and daughter "published" in one copy. They mocked Merezhkovsky's story of his meeting with the Leader: "I offered the Caesar too to do this, but he gave me a somewhat strange glance. He failed to understand. He is still a *small* child. *Very small!*"



Страница из семейного журнала «Пуля Времени»

A page of the of Ivanov family magazine mentioning Merezhkovsky and Mussolini

Presumably, the Leader had also originally counted on some benefit from Merezhkovsky's project. It is noteworthy that in 1933, Mussolini made an attempt to start relations with Berdyayev, but the thinker resolutely refused.⁴

There was another kind of episode in 1928, when the great emigré sculptor Paolo Troubetzkoy sent Mussolini his project of a statue featuring the Leader riding a horse, a plastic incarnation of the Fascist idea possibly with elements of caricature⁵.

⁴ Archivio russo-italiano. Russko-ital'janskij Archiv. IX. Salerno, 2012. P. 142.

⁵ I reproduce here the plasters from Troubetzkoy museum in Verbania, Italy, thanks to the courtesy of G. Guiliano. Cf. G. Giuliano. I russi alla corte' di Mussolini // Archivio Russo-Italiano V. Russko-ital'janskij Archiv. V. Salerno 2009, pp. 303-323; Дж. Джулиано. Русские при "дворе" Муссолини // Персонажи в поисках автора: Жизнь русских в Италии XX века. М. 2011, с. 290.



Проект памятника Муссолини работы Паоло Трубецкого



Проект памятника Муссолини работы Паоло Трубецкого



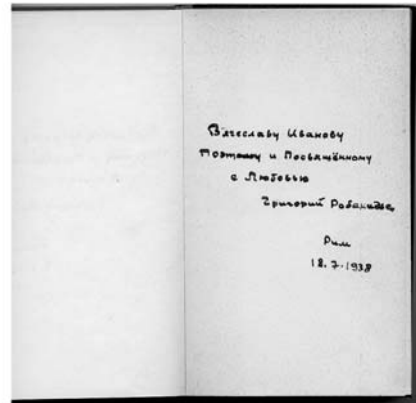
Проект памятника Муссолини работы Паоло Трубецкого

Troubetzkoy project of a Mussolini statue

Another counterpoint in *VI*'s position in the 1930s can be viewed in the activities, in the 1930s, of Georgian-Russian-German writer Grigol Robakidze, who knew *VI* since 1910. In 1938, the former arrived in Italy from Germany, visited *VI* in his home in Rome on 18 July 1938, and presented the poet with his book about J. Stalin written in German - *Dämon und Mythos* (Jena, 1935) - with a dedication: "To Vyacheslav Ivanov / devoted poet / with love...".



Фотопортрет Г. Робакидзе середины 1930-х гг.



Дарственная на кн. Робакидзе «Демон и Миф»

A photo of Robakidze and his dedication of a book *Dämon und Mythos* to Ivanov, Roman archive of Ivanov

It is known that at that time, Robakidze was carried away by dangerous ideas of the German and Italian leaders and devoted two books to them. The second edition of one of the books published in 1942, *Mussolini. A View from Capri*, can be found in VI's library. It is noteworthy that the other book, *Adolf Hitler in the Eyes of an Unknown Poet* (1939), cannot be found in VI's library. In his five letters written to VI, Robakidze speaks about VI's article *Terror Antiquus*, and about the project of his new book about "the man of our days ... the descendant of Atlantes", and God's path to man, but does not mention a word about the metaphysical work on the German leader. Hopefully, we will be able to be more specific on the dramatic collision of "dictator and writer" or "regime and Robakidze", when the Georgian writer's archive is found in Switzerland. It is worth adding that VI maintained contact with German catholic humanists (C. Muth, F. Muckermann), but already as a student, back in the 19th century, VI was repelled by the military and nationalistic sentiments rife among "academics" in Berlin.

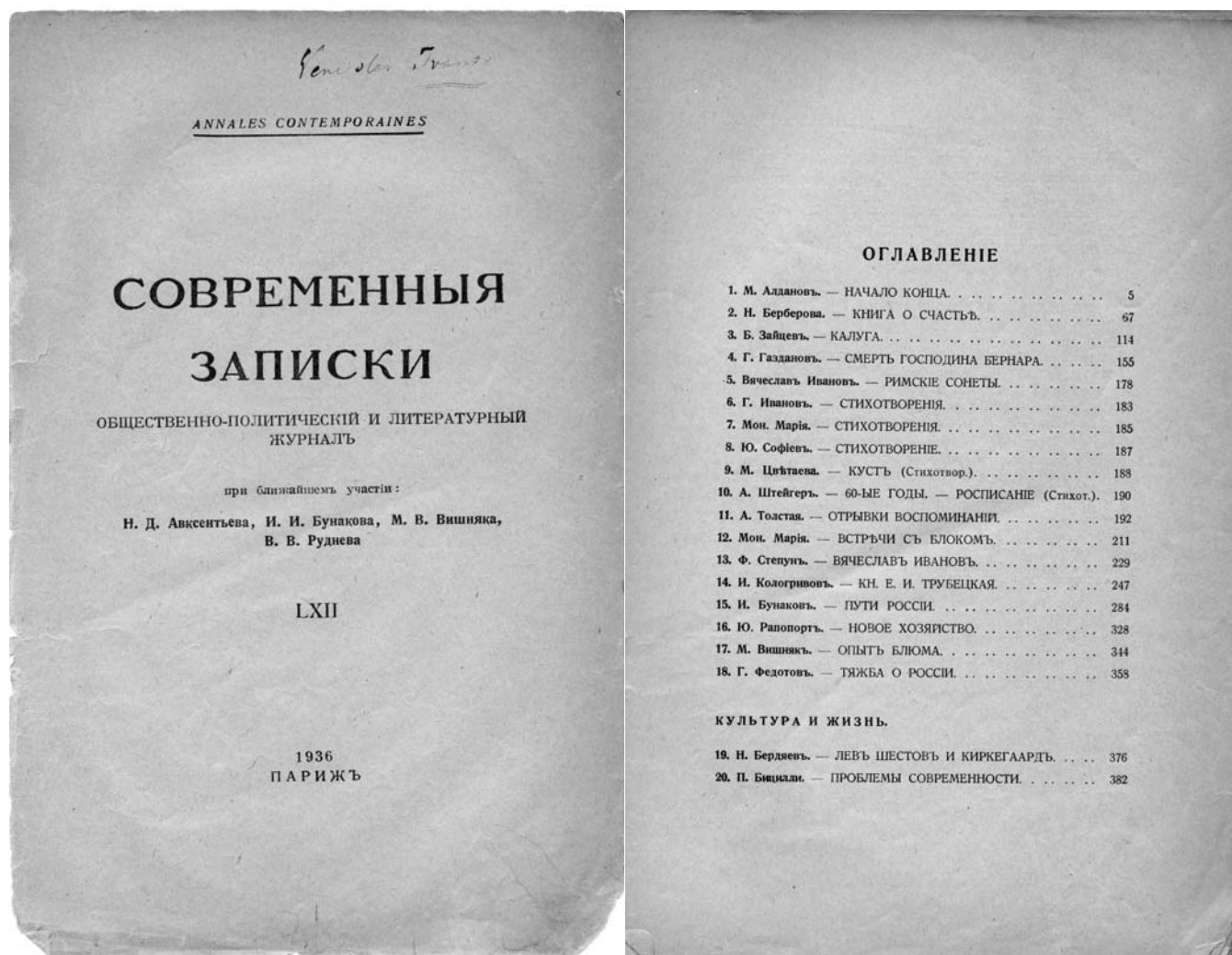


Обложка кн. Робакидзе «Муссолини», 1942

A cover of *Mussolini*, 1942, by Robakidze, Ivanov archive in Rome

6. To what extent VI's contribution to the literary culture of emigrés can be considered an "alternative discourse"? This question is a focus our conference. The strategy and tactic of the most

prominent emigré magazine published in Paris, *Sovremennye Zapiski* (1920-1940, 70 books), reconstructed in detail in the recent publication of the editorial correspondence, provides some answers in this case. It is noteworthy that the founders and editors of the magazine - I. Fondaminsky, V. Rudnev, N. Avksentyev, M. Veshnyak, and A. Gukovsky as well as F. Stepun, adviser to the poetry section - were professional politicians (Avksentyev, Fondaminsky, Veshnyak, and Gukovsky were members of the All-Russian Constituent Assembly and Stepun was the head of the political department in the War and Navy Ministry of the Russian Provisional Government). The amount of protest literature is quite insignificant on the pages of the magazine. Literature on the lost past aimed at describing "how things were" and the idealizing "literature of nostalgia" are somewhat more voluminous. Publications of Balmont's works are quite scanty. Tsvetayeva's manner did not satisfy the taste of the editors, but they recognized her importance as a poet and amply published her works in the magazine. V. Ivanov's poetry and prose were published practically in every issue, after his *Roman Sonnets* appeared. The poetry and prose of Nabokov-Sirin seems to be represented in the magazine most widely (despite sharp criticism from I. Bunin and B. Zaytsev). *Lasting influence* seems to have been the main criterion for the policy of the magazine.⁶



Sovremennye Zapiski, v. 62. Title-page and index

7. During the two decades between the two suicidal wars in Europe, in conditions of a total crisis and of the destruction of moral, religious, and cultural values, VI held the position of supra-national and

⁶ Cf. А. В. Лавров. Двадцать лет «Современных записок» // Современныя записки. Репринтное комментированное издание. Т. 1. СПб., 2010, с. 7-16; «Современныя записки». Париж, 1920-1940. Из архива редакціи. Под ред. О. Коростелева и М. Шрубы. Т. 1-3. М. 2011-2013.

supra-personal Christian humanism. Such distance from protests of social and political journalism was shared by many emigré scholars, artists, and writers, who delved deeper into the abstract realm of their professions, working for some remote future of humanity. *Communion de fois, eine geistige Kommunion, spiritual community* united his humanist associates scattered in Europe - G. Marcel, Ch. du Bos, F. Mauriac, J. Maritain, E. R. Curtius, M. Buber, C. Muth, F. Muckermann, T. Zielinski, M. Bowra, A. Pellegrini, T. Gallarati Scotti, F. Stepun, V. Rudnev, I. Fondaminsky, and partially T. Mann.

8. In conclusion, I would like to familiarize my respected colleagues with two Italian websites that are very useful instruments for studying the phenomenon of emigration along with the websites www.emigrantika.ru and <http://librarianum.fr>. These websites are www.russinitalia.it and www.v-ivanov.it. Much of what I showed - *Roman Sonnets*, portraits, covers of books, Robakidze's dedications, and others, 24,000 pictures of manuscripts and approximately the same number of pages devoted to the Silver Age - can be freely viewed on these websites.

Thank you for your attention.