

# Pre-Reformed Russian Orthography in Clerical and Secular Spheres as a Symbol of the Russian National Identity Outside Russia. Part 1: Theoretical Justification

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*The Orthography of Russian language was reformed by the Provisional Government in 1917, but this reform was not accepted by the people of Russia. The Bolsheviks provided the reform again in 1918 transforming the Pre-Reformed Orthography into symbol of resistance against them. After their victory in the Civil War many of Russians from various classes emigrated from Soviet Russia. In the Emigration many of them continued to use the Old Orthography because of various reasons. The Pre-Reformed Orthography was used in both secular and clerical spheres of the Emigrants' life. This article is devoted to the theoretical justification of the symbolical role of the Pre-Reformed Russian Orthography in Emigration.*

## I.

First of all we need to clarify the terminology, we are using in this article.

There were two reforms of the Russian language in XX century. First was provided in 1917-1918 during the Revolution and the Civil War, the second one in 1956 by the decrees of the Soviet Government. The term *Pre-Reformed Orthography* is used only for the system that existed before the Revolution of 1917-1922. The systems introduced in 1917-1918 and in 1956 both are called as *Reformed* ones. It can be explained, because the reform of 1956 just corrected some moments existed in the language before, not providing any big changes in spelling (for example, in 1956 was made a rule to write abbreviation as *USA*, not as *U.S.A.*), so the language of 1918 and 1956 differs not so much.

For the Pre-Reformed Russian Orthography are also used these terms: *Pre-Revolutionary, Imperial, Czaric, Old and Traditional Orthography*; and for the Reformed ones – *New, Soviet or Bolshevik Orthography* and also *Krívopisanie* (Il'jin, 1956) (*кривописание/кривописание* – wrong spelling, from Russian *кривой* (*krivóy*) – wrong and (*на*)*писание* (*pisánie*) – spelling; a game with Russian word *правописание* (*právoisanie*) – orthography, literally: *right spelling*). The last one obviously has not scientific but political subtext, but it says more about the relation to the reform among some groups of Russia.

*Russian Emigration* is a term, used mostly for the Russian diaspora that was formed before the Revolution of 1917-1922. Russians had emigrated from Russia and years before the Revolution, but it was not a mass process. There were only single people, like Alexander Herzen or Vladimir Ilyanov (Lenin). Before the Revolution there were thousands of Russians who left Russia and stayed abroad during the centuries. During the Revolution, there were millions of them in ten years. In 1940s, 1960s and 1980s there was also a mass emigration from the Soviet Union. The emigrants from that time also became a part of the Russian diaspora, but they were mostly sovietized and we do not speak about them in this article. Also, after the fall of the Soviet Union there are millions of Russians who live now abroad of the Russian Federation, and they also could be called the diaspora, but not an emigration. So, in this paper, *Russian Emigration* means the Russian diaspora which appeared in Europe, Americas and Asia in 1920s.

Actually, Russians abroad made a quasi-state existing on all continents. They had their own societies of help, parishes, military, educational system. In 1920s-1930s they thought that the Bolsheviks will fall, and they would return back to Russia. Because of it they stayed subjects of the Russian Empire, did not have passports of the lands they lived in and translated Russian traditions on their children, including the orthography they used before the exile.

Prof. M.V. Shkarovskij made a right note that the Russian emigrants abroad recreated many institutes of the Pre-Revolutional Russia: educational and scientific system, publishing houses, traditions of art, archives, museums, libraries and the Church (Shkarovskij, 2012: 45). That system is sometimes called as *the Second Russia or the Foreign Russia* (*Русское Зарубежье - Ruskoje Zarubezhje*), so it can describe all the life of the Russians outside Russia as a way to keep their Russian identity alive. First of all, it was provided by the literature, the church, and the political organizations, like Russian All-Militant Union,

which consisted of the generals and the officers of the Former Russian Imperial Army and the Russian Imperial House, united all Romanovs, that survived the Revolution, until the split in the Dynasty in 1930s-1940s. Both organizations played a big role in keeping traditions, but they united not the whole Russian Emigration, because there were many supporters of the Provisional Government, of the Left Revolutionary Parties, banned in the Soviet Union, etc. And also the Monarchists abroad had not a common leader of the Dynasty itself. It makes the cultural organizations more important in emigration than the political ones.

In the beginning we also must say why the orthographical aspect is so important for the researches about Russian Emigration. The language is one of the most important aspects of any ethnical or national identities (Klejn, 2013: 22). It is not the main sign of ethnicity but is the basic sign of any national processes, the item, which makes the nation alive. And for the diaspora it should be even more important, than for the people who stayed in their Motherland. In that situation any problems, that exist in language and deconstruct its unity, have the first grade importance for the community of emigrants, who wanted to save and to translate their own national identity.

## II.

The problem of Russians outside Russia is a field of research of many Russian and foreign historians. They mostly are studying the political sphere, the ideologies of the Russian Emigrant Societies, the social problems related with their statuses of apatrides, adaptation with new situations, integration processes, Russian literature in emigration etc. For instance, clerical historiography was studied by Saint-Petersburg Prof. Mikhail V. Shkarovskij (See Shkarovskij, 2012: 56-97). The question about reasons of using the Old Orthography in various lands of the World is not so popular among the researchers, but there are some works on it.

The first thing that we should talk about is the reform itself. It would be wrong to call the reform of 1917-1918 a Bolshevik Idea. The talks about reforming the Russian language was a long live idea: various project of the spelling reform existed in Russia since XVIII century (See Kuznetsov, 2014). Here we are speaking about the project that was discussed in Russian Imperial Academy in late 1890-1910s. But while there was *Ancient Régime* in Russia, no one could say, that the reform would be accepted and supported by the Government.

First project of the reform was prepared in 1900. In 1904 H.I.H. Grand Duke Constantine Konstantinovich of Russia was a President of a committee for the reform (Oglezneva, 2007: 16). Many professors, academicians, scholars and teachers agreed, that the Russian Orthography had to be reformed. But, many of people from that groups were against it. For instance, Professor Tomson in 1904 wrote a book, in which he tells, why the reform is not a good idea (Tomson, 1904). So after all, the Government in 1912 decided to stop discussion and to keep the spelling without any changes proposed by the Committee. One of the main reasons not to start the reform was a position, that it will make it difficult for the people to read both secular (in Russian) and clerical (in Slavonic) books, that almost had no differences in spelling before the Reform was provided.

So, what should be changed, by thoughts of the reformators? The main problem existed in the Russian language (and actually, «*the problem*» that still exists), was a difference between the spelling and the phonetics. It was, first of all, in the alphabet. The Russian language had three letters for the sound /i/ (*u*, *i*, *v*), two for the sound /f/ (*ϕ*, *θ*), two for the sound /'e/ (*e*, *ѣ*) and also had letter ъ that was used as a soundless sign in the end of the word.

All these sounds were historical. For example, letters *θ* (fita or theta) and *v* (izhica) were from the Greek languages (*ϑ* (th) and *υ* (y)) and originally had other sounds: /ð/ for *θ* (just like in English «th» in «theater»), /ü/ for *v* (just like «y» in English «system»); both were used in the words of Greek origin, just like *орѳографія* (orfografija, look on: **orthography**) and *Синодъ* (Sinod, look on: **Synod**). Also we should notice, that the letter *ϕ* (fert) was also taken for the Greek words instead of Greek *φ* (ph), because originally Slavic languages had no sound /f/.

There is an interesting moment with the letter izhica (*v*) in Russian Pre-Reformed Spelling. This letter was rarely used in the Russian language. By 1913 there were only **three** words, in which we had to write izhica: *миро* (miro - chrisim), *Символъ Вѣры* (Simvol very – Credo) (look on *символъ* (simvol) – symbol) and *Синодъ* (Sinod – Synod). All of them were clerical words. Actually almost all words with izhica were from the clerical sphere, e.g. names from the Holy Bible, liturgical and Church administrative terms, etc.

Letter *ѣ* (jat') was for originally Slavic sound /æ/, that in some Slavic languages transformed into /'a/, /i/, /'e/, /je/, /ije/ (by the way, in some Russian dialects, *ѣ* also transformed not to /'e/); there were

many words which sounded the same but were written differently with *ѣ* and *е*. Some homographs see in the Table 1.

Both letters *у* (izhe) and *и* (i decimal) were taken from the Greek ( $\eta$  (*ē*) and  $\iota$  (*i*)) and sounded the same, but there were differences in use with Russian words: letter *и* was used only before another vowel and in the word *миръ* (*mir* – the Universe), that sounded like *миръ* (*mir* – peace) but had a different meaning. Final letter *ъ* (*jer*) originally had a sound /*ǫ*/, that reduced into null; by his origin it seems to be relative to Latin final *-us* or Greek final *-ος* (*-os*).

So, the changes with sounds were the lead reason to make a reform of an alphabet. The second one was connected with other orthographical rules, just like writing *-аго* or *-яго* (*-ago* or *-jago*) in the adjectives in Gen.sg. instead of sounds /*-avo*/, /*-jevo*/ (Please note: after the reform this is writing not as *-аво* or *-ево* (*-avo* or *-jevo*) but as *-ого* or *-его* (*-ogo* or *-jego*), so it tells about how unprepared and inconsistent this reform actually was).

More about the reform itself and grammatical and orthographical changes see: Kuznetsov, 2012; and about a discussion on the reformation of the language see: Grigorjeva, 2004. Please note, that the authors of both works have different positions about the reform: Kuznetsov thinks, that it was a mistake and language can be not reformed, but Grigorjeva fully supports the reform.

**Table 1. Some homographs in the Modern Russian language, that did not exist in Pre-Reformed one.**

Modern language	Pre-Reformed language	Translation into English
мир(о) – mír(o)	миръ	peace; truce
	міръ	world; secular world (rel.)
	мѣро	chrism (rel.)
символ – símvol	символъ	symbol
	сѣмволъ	Credo (rel.)
все/всѣ – vsé/vsě	все (vsjo)	everything
	всѣ (vsje)	everyone
обрусение – obrusénije	обрусение	becoming Russian by the force
	обрусѣние	becoming Russian by your own decision
ведение – védénije	ведение	ruling, governing

Modern language	Pre-Reformed language	Translation into English
	вѣдѣніе	knowing, science
лечу – lechú	лечу	(I) am flying
	лѣчу	(I) am healing
есть – jest'	есть	are
	ѣсть	to eat
некогда – nékogda	некогда	(there is) no time
	нѣкогда	once
пафос – páfos	Пафосъ	Paphos (island)
	паѳосъ	pathos
речь – rech	речь	to speak
	рѣчь	speech
эфир – efír	эфиръ	broadcast
	эѳиръ	ether

(Source: Kuznetsov, 2012)

### III.

When the Parliament overthrew the Emperor, the Provisional Government started the discussion and decreed to teach the new orthography in all schools of the Russian Republic since September 1, 1917. But many schools decided not to support this decree. When the reform was provided, writers also negatively answered on it (Kaverina, Leschenko, 2008: 118), because in some aspects it deconstructed the traditional image of the words.

When November 7, 1917 the Bolsheviks overthrew the Provisional Government, they decreed again to use the reformed orthography in schools and in all public spaces since January 1, 1918 (Oglezneva, 2007: 17). But the people were against it, because the reform «did not make people more literate, it made them more illiterate» (Mordukhaj-Boltovskoj, 2009: 1). Decision to establish the new orthography for the Russian language was made by «academician who have never worked in school teaching children» (Ibid).

Despite the reform was prepared by the Imperial academicians and decreed by the Provisional Government, it was associated with the Bolsheviks, who established it both: by two decrees and by force. So, the reform was even called as «a Socialist bastard» (Mordukhaj-Boltovskoj, 2009: 2). And, what

also could be a reason not to support that «bastard», the Bolsheviks proclaimed using of the Pre-Reformed Orthography the Crime against the State (Kaverina, Leschenko: 2008: 122). So, what if you are not supporter of that State?

It made this question a political one. Now, anyone who was against the Bolsheviks could use the Traditional Orthography against the *Krivopisanije of the Soviets*. This is similar with a position of the Russian philosopher Ivan Il'jin, who was a supporter of the Old Spelling and said in his works, that «Soviet Union is not Russia» (Il'jin, 2007). So, it could say, that in opposition to Soviet Russian, the Pre-Reformed Orthography *could be* used as a symbol of *Russianity* (from Russian: *русскость* – *russkost'*, Russian identity) (Also in: Grigorjeva, 2004: 141).

On the other hand, the letter *Ѣ* became a symbol of the Old Russia, the Russian *Ancient Régime* itself (Kaverina, Leschenko, 2008: 117). The symbol of State, not of the nation, We think, that it said more about a symbolical role of the Pre-Reformed Orthography for the Russians outside of Russia. But this cannot be the final answer on the question of that article, because it says only about a relationship between the Fallen Empire's image and the Emigrated Subjects, not about a personality and identity.

Periodicals in Europe used the Old Orthography from the 1920s to 1940s (Grigorjeva, 2004: 140), but there were journals, that used the Pre-Reformed Orthography after that, too. For example the journal «*Vechnoje*» (*The Eternal*) which was published in Paris since 1948. Mostly, Russian Emigration started using the New Orthography since the mass emigration from the Soviet Union in 1940s – 1960s, which brought many of Russian Intellectuals, writers and scientists to Europe and the USA, who continued their work in their exile. To that moment the main part of the Russian intellectuals, emigrated in 1920s, died or stopped their activity, so the publishing houses were faced with a new reality and the New Orthography.

The main themes of the Russian Emigration literature is a reflexion about the Revolution and the time before it. Emigrants tried to understand, why the Revolution happens, why the Whites lost the Civil War, why Bolshevism took a victory in Russia. In their books they are writing about their life experience, describing their thoughts on politics, ideology and historical-philosophical way of the Russian history. The orthographical question was not the theme which they discussed in their works. But we can analyse the themes of their books (see: Appendix). We can say, that authors tried to save their own view on the



We can notice that even in the lexicon. First of all, in Emigration they still used titles like Prince (*Knjaz'*), Duke (*Knjaz', Herzog*), Earl (*Graf*), banned in Russia in 1917. Also, in Emigration styles were used, existing before the Revolution, like *Sudar', Gospodin* (both means Mister or Lord) instead of the Revolutionary ones *Grazhdanin* (Citizen) and *Tovarisch* (Comrade; please note, that before the Revolution, word *Tovarisch* had meaning «a deputy», e.g. Deputy Minister – *Tovarisch Ministra*). Also, there were other differences in lexicon (see the Table 2 below). So, we can say, that thought of the Russian researcher E.A. Oglezneva «Russian language abroad is an independent system» (Oglezneva, 2007: 16) is fair.

**Table 2. Some differences between the Russian Language abroad an in the Soviet Union.**

Russian language abroad	Russian language in the USSR	Translation into English
автомобиль - avtomobil	машина - mashina	a car, an automobile
аэропланъ - aeroplan	самолёт - samoljot	an aeroplane
перо - pero	ручка - ruchka	a pen
умывальникъ - umyvalnik	раковина - rakovina	a sink
ледникъ - lednik	холодильник - kholodilnik	a refrigerator
штаны - shtany	трусы - trusy	pants
аглицкій - aglickij	английский - anglijskij	English (adj.)
большевицкій - bolshevickij	большевистский - bolshevistskij	Bolshevik (adj.)

(Source: Kaverina, Leschenko, 2008: 121)

In this day we also can find out that the opposition we told about is still alive in cultural and philosophical thoughts. Many of them are provided by the Russian Nationalists, just like philosopher Dmitrij Galkovskij or the Mass Media Source *Sputnik and Pogrom*. And that idea also is used in the modern culture. For instance, Russian Rock Band from Volgograd «*Moja Derzkaja Pravda*» (*My Daring Truth*) had a song, called «*Neokonchennaja Vojna*» (*Uncompleted War*), in which we can read:

« <...>

«So it seems, that since beginning

«As a volunteer, not as a call-uped,

«I'm fighting during the war

«That was uncompleted, the Russo-Soviet.»

(Translated by the article's author).

Russian language's practice in Clerical Sphere is a question that is not so complicated. In Russian Orthodox Church was and still is used the Church Slavonic Language as the only liturgical language. In the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, the Church Slavonic Language and the languages of the lands were used, where the Russian Dioceses were (for instance, English, French, Dutch, Spanish). The Russian Parishes of the Constantinople Church uses the Russian language in liturgy (Ludogovskij, Pljakin: 2010). So, in liturgical sphere it was mostly used as Church language, but books also were published in the Russian.

Researchers mostly did not research reasons, why clerical spheres used the Pre-Reformed Orthography. We can see, that there are not so many books on clerical themes, published in Emigration (in Appendix you can find three). But, the fact itself is telling us, that the Russian Churches abroad did not want to be in connection with the *Soviet* Russian Orthodox Church of Moscow, because both Russian Orthodox Churches were officially enemies since 1920s to 2007. And it was connected with the Emigration itself, in which books on the Pre-Reformed Orthography were more popular in the first half of the XX century. So, the Russian Church Abroad used the Pre-Reformed Spelling following the tendencies which existed in Emigration.

We can make the supposition now, that the Reform affected the secular life of the Russians abroad more than the religious one. Despite the fact, that religion was one of the aspects of the ethnicity (Klejn, 2013: 25), Russians abroad were united mostly by culture, not by religion, because after 1917 there were three Churches: Russian Orthodox Church of Moscow, Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, Russian Parishes of the Constantinople Church. The Moscovian one had no influences on the Emigration at all, so the orthographical question in clerical sphere was not so important, than the liturgical one.

We can say, that political questions were more important among the emigrants, than religious ones (for instance, 98% of the Russians in the USA were active members of various political organizations; see: Nitoburg, 2005: 139). Yes, Russian emigrants were mostly theists, but they were not discriminated by the religion, because they mostly lived in Orthodox countries or in just Christian ones, and they also lived in the countries, where they were the only Russians. So, they had not to make themselves the community that differs from another in the religious sphere. And there were no reasons to be more successive in the «clerical» orthography, than in «secular» one.

#### V.

After the fall of the Soviet Union we can say that Pre-Reformed Russian Orthography has been returned back in Russia. In the current situation Russian Pre-Reformed Orthography is still used by Russians both in and outside of Russia. First of all, there are many old books, that are re-printed in Old Orthography (mostly – historical and feature works). For example, works of General Anton Denikin about the Civil War, originally published in France in 1920s-1930s (See: Appendix). In Nizhniy Novgorod there is a publishing house *Chornaya Sotnya* (lit. «Black Hundreds» - Russian far right nationalistic groups, existed in 1900s-1910s), that is publishing books in and about the Traditional Russian Orthography. Also, in Munich there is a publishing house *Im Werden Verlag*, that makes digital PDF books of Russian classic authors in Old Orthography, for example, almost all novels of Feodor Dostoyevsky could be found on their site. But outside of Russia, there is now only one publishing house, which publishes original paper books and periodics in the Old Orthography. It is the Publishing house of the Holy Trinity monastery in New York State, but it publishes mostly liturgical textes in the Church Slavonic language and a journal in Russian called «*Pravoslavnaja zhiznj*» (*Orthodox Life*) (Grigorjeva, 2004: 146).

In Mass Media there are some Internet communities that share news in the Old Orthography. Some of them exist as printed journals, for example, «*Chastnyj zhurnal*» [*Private Magazine*], which was printed in the town Pechory, Pskov Province, in 2011-2013. But mostly, they are existing as Internet communities.

But more widely the Old Orthography is shared among the Russian Monarchist movements. First of all, it is sometimes used by the Office of H.I.H. Grand Duchess Mary Vladimirovna of Russia, who claims to be

the Head of the Romanov Dynasty, in official papers and on their medals. But even in that structures it is not the officially accepted orthography for Russian language.

«I am also using the Old Russian Orthography in my private communication because of political and ethic reasons since 2012. And, basing on my experience, there is about 5 thousand of supporters of the Pre-Reformed Orthography in Russian Internet community now. This is very small but it still means, that this kind of Orthography lives in the language». (Personal note of the author of that article.)

So, was the Pre-Reformed Orthography a symbol of the Russian Identity outside of Russia? This question is very complicated to be answered in one paper, so we are planning to prepare a series of articles. In next ones we will talk about that basing on memoirs of Russian politicians, intellectuals, militants and aristocrats and with the works of Russian and foreign researchers about the Russian language in the twenty century. And in the last article in that series we will make a conclusion to all the aspects of this question. The series will be published in this Journal in next issues.

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#### **Appendix:**

**Short catalogue of books in Russian (Pre-Reformed) published in Emigration (based on Nikolay Kuznetsov's personal library)**

Aleksandrovich, V.: *K poznaniyu kharaktera Grazhdanskoj vojny [For Understanding the Civil War]*. Belgrade, 1926.

Berdyayev, N.A.: *O naznachenii cheloveka [On the Human Life Goals]*. Paris, 1931.

Cyrrill (Zajcev), priest: *Pamjati poslednjago Carja [To the Last Czar memory]*. Shanghai, 1948.

Danilov, Ju.N., gen.: *Velikij Khjaz' Nikolaj Nikolajevich [Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolajevich]*. Paris, 1930.

Denikin, A.I., gen.: *Kto spas sovetskuju vlast' ot gibeli [Who Saved the Soviets]*. Paris, 1937.

Denikin, A.I., gen.: *Ocherki Russkoj Smuty [Notes on the Russian Civil War]*, in 4 vol. Paris, 1921.

Denikin, A.I., gen.: *Russkij vopros na Dalnem Vostoke [Russian Question on the Far East]*. Paris, 1932.

Guilliar, P.: *Tragicheskaja sudjba Rossijskoj Imperatorskoj Semji [Tragic Fate of the Russian Imperial Family]*. Constantinople, 1921.

Il'jin, V.I.: *Prepodobnyj Serafim Sarovskij [The Saint Seraphim of Sarov]*. New York, 1971.

Iohannes, hieromonk: *Iudejstvo i Cerkov' po ucheniju Jevangelija [Judaism and the Church according to Gospel]*. Berlin, 1934.

Ivanov, V.F.: *Imperator Nikolaj II [Emperor Nicholas II]*. Harbin, 1939. (Without Final -б).

Kersnovskij, A.A.: *Mirovaja Vojna [The World War]*. Belgrade, 1939.

Kovalevskij, P.I., prof.: *Nacionalizm i nacionalnoje vospitanije v Rossii v dvikh chastjakh [Nationalism and the National Education in Russia: in 2 parts]*. New York, 1922.

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Melgunov, S.P.: *Sud'ba Imperatora Nikolaja II posle otrechenija [The Fate of Emperor Nicholas II after Abdication]*. Paris, 1951. (Without Final –b).

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Mosolov, A.A., gen.: *Pri Dvore Imperatora [Near the Emperor Court]*. Rīga, 1938.

Oldenburg, S.S.: *Carstvovanije Imperatora Nikolaja II [The Reign of Emperor Nicholas II]*, in 2 vol. Vol. 1, Belgrade, 1939; Vol. 2, München, 1949.

*Protokoly Sionskikh Mudrecov (po tekstu S.A. Nilusa). Vsemirnyj Tajnyj Zagovor [Protocols of the Elders of Zion (according by the S.A. Nilus' Text). A Secret World Plot]*. Berlin, 1922.

[Romanov] Nicholas Nikolajevich, Grand Duke: *Nashe Buduscheje [Our Future]*. Paris, Undated.

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