Research Article

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# A Russian Story in the USA: On the Identity of Post-Socialist Immigration

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**Abstract:** This article presents the problem of identity construction among Eastern European immigrants to the USA after so-called "democratic changes." It is based on the intercultural rather than multicultural approach which considers both the immigrants' interactions with the host society and their individual choices in constructing identity and selecting a lifestyle. The article is a case study analyzing a "success story" of a person of Bulgarian–Russian origin who immigrated to the USA in the 1990s and built up his identity on the basis of a Russian national narrative. This narrative is rooted in Russian history, classic literature, and art, i.e., in high Russian culture. It serves as a framework for shaping the immigrant's lifestyle as a whole and permeates the material culture of his home, reflecting the migrant's perception of what is genuine Russianness. Family relations as well as friendships and relations with people frequenting his house are also aligned with ideas expressing the dominant motifs of the national narrative as it exists in the immigrant's mind and imagination. Material for the chapter is drawn from fieldwork conducted by the author in 2015–2017 in New York and Long Island.

**Keywords:** Bulgarian, Russian, USA, institutions and organizations abroad, ethnic associations, life history of a migrant, national narrative, successful integration, role model

## Introduction

In some of my research projects, I dealt with the problem of migration from countries of Eastern Europe such as Bulgaria, Estonia, and others to Europe and the USA before and after democratic changes of 1989 (Anastasova 68–83; 288–240). These studies fall within the category of *migration studies,* and they focus on changes in migrants' identity, including a national identity under the conditions of migration. I am interested in the national identity as it emerges in the context of individual experiences and circumstances related to the mass migration of Eastern European citizens after the 1990s. I examine the *national narrative*, which, according to my hypothesis, determines migrants' attitudes to both donor and recipient states.

Theoretically, I base my research on the constructivist view of nationalism, which perceives a nation as a product of nationalism rather than *vice versa* (Anderson 51–61; Gellner 56–86; Hobsbawm 1–14; Smith 19–38). This means that nations are not historically developing communities or ethnic groups, but mythical constructs shaping, educating, and in effect creating the nation. The national myth is primarily created by urban elites who shape what they consider to be cultural, historical, and ethnic characteristics of a particular population group. This myth evolves into a national narrative that eventually takes on a reality of its own through a process which members of the cultural studies movement call "overdetermination" (Geisler XIV). Clearly, this approach puts communication and culture into focus. Elites create the "anthropology of nation" and its distinctiveness. The writing of the "official" history, creation of the national myth, popularization of the

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folk traditions, and codification of the language are essential components of this process, and education, literature, and art are its vehicles. It is the periods of "national awakening" that invigorate nation-building. The constructivist approach is the antithesis of the primordial view of the nation as a product of the evolution of the people and that is closely related to the territories, language, culture, and ethnic ties (for a detailed discussion of nation and nationalism and the theories devoted to them, refer to studies by Coakley 327–347; Walicki 611–619). Since immigrants whom I interviewed invariably reflected on culture, identity, and homeland, I could observe that whether consciously or unconsciously their opinions confirmed the views of the exponents of one of the two theories of nations and nationalism briefly outlined above.

My goal in this article is to analyze how the Russian national narrative is internalized and interpreted by individuals and how it influences their behavior. I am analyzing a story of emigration from Bulgaria to the USA of Andrei – a man born in a mixed marriage between a Soviet Russian woman and a Bulgarian man. Born in the Soviet Union, Andrei resided permanently in Bulgaria from the age of four. At the time of emigration in the late 1980s, he was a Soviet citizen. The article is written on the basis of private meetings and festive events held in New York and Long Island in the period of 2015–2017. Our conversations were informal and were not recorded. However, after each one I made notes, writing down the topics that emerged, Andrei's responses to my questions and my comments on which topics seemed to be more important than others for my interlocutor and at which turns of the conversation he became emotional. Before the text of the article was sent to the editors, my interlocutor read the manuscript, because I wanted to ensure that I did not misinterpret his utterances and did not misrepresent his opinions and beliefs. I reproduce my notes by means of free retelling.

Methodologically, this article is a case study. There are many definitions of case studies in the literature. I am relying on the one proposed by Gary Thomas:

> Case studies are analyses of persons, events, decisions, periods, projects, policies, institutions, or other systems that are studied holistically by one or more methods. The case that is the subject of the inquiry will be an instance of a class of phenomena that provides an analytical frame – an object – within which the study is conducted and which the case illuminates and explicates. (Thomas 513)

So, in the case of this article, the subject is an émigré who has left his Fatherland and settled in the USA. The object is the evolution of his identity that is influenced by the Russian national narrative, and the choice of those features of this narrative that an individual takes as his life guidelines. Since a case study can be researched using different methods, I chose an ethnographic method, as it enables us to look at the reality through the eyes of the subject. I presume that the story of Andrei's resettlement and his use of the Russian national narrative in order to feel psychologically comfortable in the USA are illustrative and emblematic examples. I chose Andrei's story among other immigrant stories because it is not only an example of adaptation of an educated but also a talented and highly motivated and successful emigrant from Bulgaria to the USA. Intellectuals made a significant part of the post-socialist migration from Eastern Europe. In my opinion, such personalities vividly demonstrate peculiarities of identity construction, both as a unique individual and as a member of an immigrant community. Together with other migrants' stories they demonstrate both the individual and the prevailing characteristics of migrants and reflect a variety of patterns in the process of adaptation and integration into new society after migration. Can we consider these examples "representative"? Could it be that differences are so significant that every person is akin to a whole social group/class? Even though one example is not sufficient for generalizations, each one is a valuable story connected with cultural associations revealing ideas and their professional, social, intellectual, spiritual, and material dimensions in the life of a migrant.

## Before Migration

Andrei (the name is changed for ethical reasons. At the time of our meetings, my interlocutor was about 55 years old) left Bulgaria legally at the end of 1988. He married an American woman after 10 years of correspondence with her. A medical doctor, he had graduated from the Medical Academy in Sofia. Numerous

complications and even anonymous threats preceded his migration. Andrei paid for his higher education as was required of legal emigrants by Bulgarian law. In fact, to the best of my knowledge, this was exceptional. The motives for his departure were related to the following:

- **Family education:** His father was a journalist and spent his childhood in France and Germany because his family had to emigrate for political reasons related to the Macedonian revolutionary movement in Bulgaria. Joining the communists as a young man, Andrei's father became disappointed in the socialist system. During the personality cult in the 1950s, he was purged, and after rehabilitation, he did not restore his membership in the communist party. He never concealed his dissident views and maintained the opinion that legal emigration to the West (not an illegal escape) was the only way to "normal life" and successful professional development.
- **General enmity to socialism and the USSR** in the period of late socialism.
- **Bulgarians' negative attitude to the Soviet citizens**: as a child born in a mixed Bulgarian–Russian family, Andrei frequently experienced prejudiced attitudes to the "Russians." This is what he said:

  "My sister and I studied at the same school. She was excellent, but I was a hooligan. Everybody used to say that she was 'Bulgarian,' while I was 'Russian'."

  The image of the Soviet tourists, who were virtually the only Soviets Bulgarians ever encountered, also affected the public opinion. It hurt him that the Soviets were laughed at, and the strengthening of the Russian elements of identity was a kind of protest for him. Their appearances provoked ironic comments on the part of Bulgarians. Andrei remembered that the "Russians" would wear "trousers that were too short, while the sleeves of their blazers were too long, and all their clothes looked ridiculous."

  I would like to note that the negative attitude toward Russians was to a large extent determined by widespread stereotypes about so-called "Russian daughters-in-law" – Soviet women married to Bulgarians who had worked or studied at universities in the USSR in that period. The myth of "the terrible Russian woman" still lingers on. She is portrayed as lazy and unable to make savings or take care of her household. Above all, she is allegedly unable to raise her children with the devotion of a Bulgarian mother or respect her husband and his parents (Anastasova 180–181). True to the folkloric interethnic slurs, she is perceived as dirty and nasty (Venkova 14). In the countryside, drunkenness is added to these sins. These stereotypes were created by women to describe women of an out-group. Whether Ukrainian, Kazakh, or Lithuanian etc., all the Soviet women were labeled as Russian. This negative vision stemmed from competition for desirable husbands: urban, educated, and respectable, as well as from different ideas about an ideal family. While an emancipated Soviet woman aspired to combine married life with career-making, a traditional patriarchal family model was still widespread among Bulgarians (for more details, cf. *Rusnatsi*, pp. 156–191).
- **Idealized image of the West:** he imagined the West as "free world with unlimited possibilities."
- **High professional ambitions** – from a "hooligan," as Andrei described himself, he turned into a highly motivated and hardworking student and graduated from one of the elite high schools of the capital city. After that, he graduated with honors from the Medical Academy in Sofia he was determined to continue his education in the USA because he was convinced that this would give him access to the state-of the-art knowledge in his chosen field. This is how Andrei described his professional intentions: "I wanted to learn everything from the primary sources, from the USA, where medicine is among the most advanced, if not the best in the world. I didn't want to practice medicine lagging decades behind the developed world."

## Today in the USA

Thirty years after moving to the USA, Andrei achieved his "American dream." He became a famous surgeon highly esteemed by his international colleagues. He has a private clinic located in one of the most prestigious areas of New York. He is a professor at one of the best private universities in the USA. Besides an apartment in a prestigious neighborhood of Manhattan, he owns a four-floor manor. Built 200 years ago, it is located on the ocean shore in a small town on Long Island (Figure 1).

**Figure 1:** Besides the main mansion, Andrei's estate includes a guest house and a doll house surrounded by the magnificent trees of the park. The Flag of Byzantine is fluttering over the Estate.

The interior design of the manor is reminiscent of Russian suburban palaces belonging to aristocrats: suites of sitting rooms used for leisure activities and numerous bedrooms for the hosts and guests. There is a wine cellar and a bar, a study, and terraces (Figure 2).

The house is filled with artifacts from all over the world and is surrounded by a beautiful park. Everything around Andrei reflects both his aesthetic views and the souvenirs of his trips. His big library includes professional literature in English, Russian classics, history books, and volumes devoted to Russian migration to America in English and in Russian. He also follows the latest publications of Russian fiction. There are many carefully chosen paintings in the house. All of this together with the beautiful nature of the estate gives

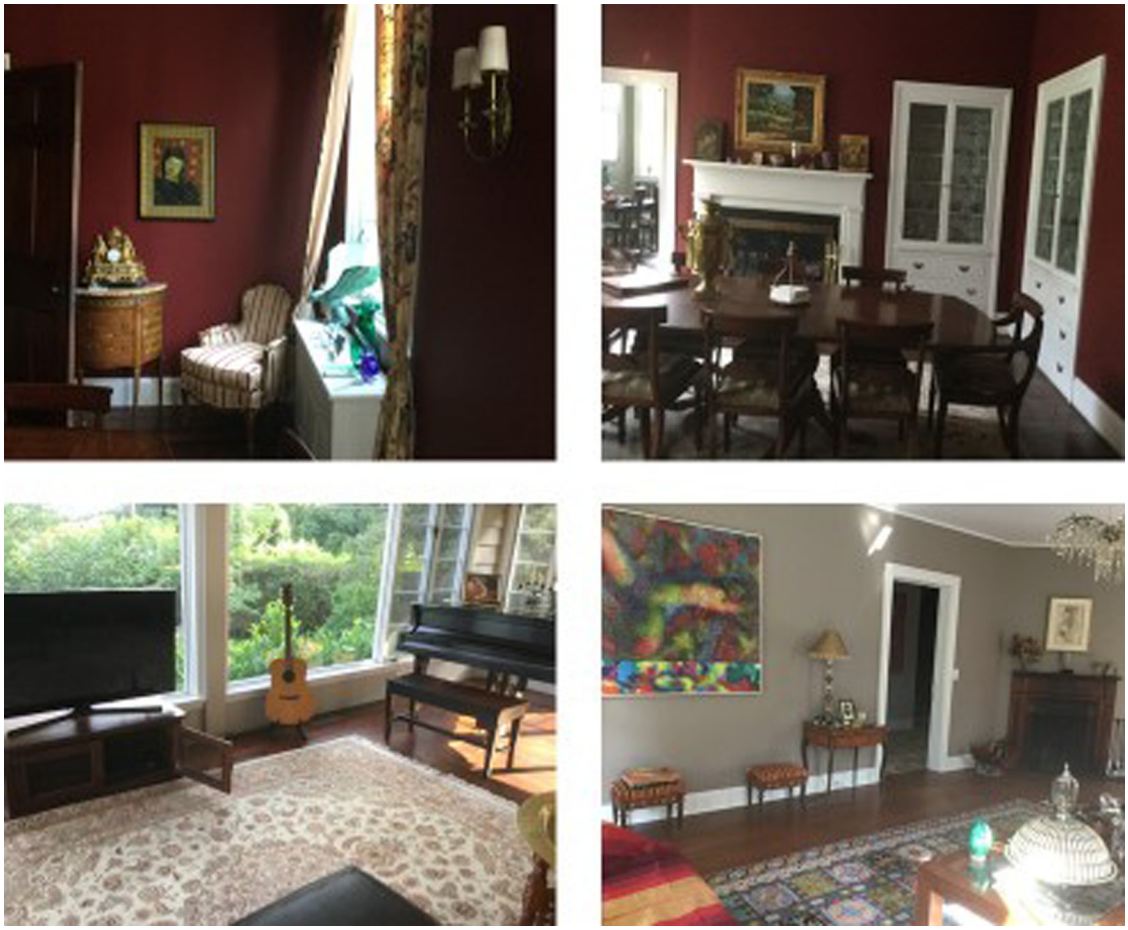

**Figure 2:** The interior decoration of the manor reflects the owner's taste and diverse interests.

an idea of how Andrei perceives the joy of life. This is not to mention expensive cars and the service staff maintaining the estate. In other words, he has made his life as successful as most of the immigrants can ever imagine. Andrei is married to an American of Mediterranean origin and has three children. The languages spoken in the family are French and English. Andrei's youngest daughter studied at a Greek Orthodox school in Manhattan and was learning Russian with a private teacher. At the time I conducted fieldwork, she was a university student, and among the courses she chose to take was the Russian language.

Immigrants' identity seldom remains the same after resettlement. Affinities formed before migration and new experiences affect migrants' worldview and understanding of the self. A child of a mixed marriage, Andrei had several identification options, and the biography of his ancestors had a strong formative effect on him. So, even before migration, he has developed a hybridity of cultural affinities. One part of his identity was based on the considerably prestigious *Bulgarian–Macedonian* background of his family. His grandfather was a pro-Bulgarian Macedonian revolutionary, a prominent figure in the history of Bulgarian education and culture, and one of the creators of the country's social security system. He was a Bulgarian politician and statesperson. Another anchor was the maternal *Russian* side of the family, typical of the Soviet intelligentsia. Its members aimed at broad education and culture, which included music and art education, book reading, and collection. One of the family treasures is a chest filled with books which Andrei's grandmother started collecting at the beginning of the twentieth century. The women of the older generations were very religious. Like other Soviet people, members of this family went through the hardships of World War II, and Andrei's grandfather was a war veteran. Contacts with this part of the family were not frequent – at most, once a year. Finally, since most of his life before emigration Andrei spent in *Bulgaria*, studied there, and had friends he absorbed Bulgarian values and knew how Bulgarian society operates.

According to some studies, people having roots in different cultures develop a dynamic, multivoiced, and dialogic self (Bhatia and Ram 224–240; Hermans 24–28). Depending on the circumstances, one or another aspect of hybrid identity may become more pronounced than the others. Moreover, migration adds new contact zones and facing integration dilemmas, immigrants may face hard choices in which loyalties, attachments, and pragmatic considerations interact and sometimes clash. In Andrei's case, the Bulgarian elements of identity have retreated at least in the self-image he wants to project and in his everyday practices. Today, he positions himself as an *American citizen* and a *Russian nationalist*.

The choice of citizenship is easy to explain by pragmatic necessities. But why has Andrei chosen a Russian instead of the other possible identifications? How was his identity constructed in the USA? Which of the Russian communities/immigration waves (White, Soviet, or post-Soviet) does he identify with? Ethnic Russians do not make the biggest part of the Russian-speaking diaspora in the USA. Immigration from ex-Soviet states, in particular Ukraine, Moldova, and Baltic states continues (cf. Puffer et al. 105–148). Russian invasion of Ukraine is changing the proportion of different ethnicities in the Russian-speaking diaspora. The number of Ukrainian refugees and political emigrants from Russia is increasing fast (Rodriguez and Batalova).

## The Story

Originally, Andrei lived in the legendary "Little Odessa" neighborhood (Kaloev), but soon he moved to other areas of NYC, following the paths of his education. It took him nearly 15 years to legalize his degree, acquire a license, and get reliable sources of income. Gradually, he established his social contacts and chose which of the Russian-speaking communities to join. He is attracted by a prestigious Russian community of the First Wave united around the Russian Nobility Association in America (*Russkoe dvorianskoe sobranie v Amerike*; russian-nobility.org/ru), a non-political and non-commercial organization founded in 1938. Its mission is charity and aid to those organizations in Europe, South America, and the USA which grant asylum and provide medical help and other services to people in need. The association was founded by the White Emigration groups. It includes representatives of Russian nobility and their heirs who have, as a rule, preserved their language and cultural traditions. Most of them are well integrated into American society (see Zatsepina and Ruchkin on NGOs founded by émigrés). It is not at all easy to join this community which includes princes and counts and

other aristocrats bearing names engraved in Russian history. Applicants have to submit recommendation letters, meet genealogical requirements, and demonstrate education and behavior that correspond to the ideals the "Great Russian culture." What are the main "pillars" shaping the worldview and behavior of the community of the Russian nobility in the United States?

First, it is *faith* and *church*. The primary attribute of "Russianness" is deep religiosity and close affiliation with the church: attending church services regularly, observing church canons and rituals associated with the life cycle as was typical of the pre-revolutionary way of life, etc. These patterns of behavior were inseparable from the lifestyle of the pre-revolutionary Russian nobility. Russian émigrés in New York are united by their affiliation with the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. The Russian Orthodox Church Abroad was founded by Russian émigrés in the 1920s. In 1927, it separated from the Moscow Patriarchate. Since 2007, it has been part of the self-governing Church of the Moscow Patriarchates. It has nine eparchies in the USA, Canada, Australia, and Europe. There are as many as 138 parishes in the USA with the center in the Monastery of the Holy Trinity in Gordonville, state of New York (*Russkaya Pravoslavnaya Tserkov' Zagranitsei,* synod.com).

Andrei had a church wedding, and today, he regularly goes to the Russian Churches in Manhattan and Long Island. He makes confessions and takes communion. One of the rooms in his house is a chapel, where he has a lot of Russian and Bulgarian icons sanctified by an Orthodox priest in accordance with the religious canon (Figure 3).

The second pillar of the noble community is the *Great Russian culture*. This presupposes deep knowledge and appreciation of Russian classic literature, music, and art. One is expected to behave following the rules of the pre-revolutionary etiquette and be a skillful dancer. The attitude to food also counts, and a noble person is expected to be a proper gourmet. Finally, it is essential to have a *prestigious social position in American society.* This can be compensated by noble birth, but as mentioned earlier, most representatives of this diaspora do not only boast noble origin but also success stories in the host country.

It is not so hard for applicants to produce proof of noble birth. In many a family people find stories or old documents testifying that their ancestors belonged to Russian aristocracy, landed gentry, served as officers in the tsarist army, or were bourgeois dispossessed by the Soviet authorities (*raskulatchennye*). Andrei also managed to find personalities of the appropriate status in his genealogical tree.

Religiosity was an essential part of the education he received from his Russian grandmother. Taking into account that the first 15 years of his American life were tough due to intensive studies, the necessity to take loans, and working tirelessly without family or friends who would support him, it was religion and faith that helped him go through all the hardships: "I'm sure that in the most terrible situations, Lord helps me." (Yurguis (*Close to God...*), shows the role of religion in the integration processes among ethnic Russian immigrants in the USA.)

**Figure 3:** The day of St. Seraphim of Sarov, Sea Cliff, St. Seraphim of Sarov Russian Orthodox Church. After the service, the parishioners are invited to lunch.

Russian culture is vitally important for Andrei. He is broadly educated, well-read in Russian and world literature, a connoisseur of art, and a music lover familiar with classics and avant-garde. He owes his education to the family, but also to the availability of Russian cultural products in Bulgaria in the socialist times. Suffice it to say that world literature translated into Russian was much more accessible than books in Bulgarian. Paradoxically, they were also easier to get in Bulgaria than in the USSR where they were in great demand. Despite his busy schedule, Andrei continues following publications not only on the professional topics but also on interesting events in Russian and world culture: "My Russian grandmother told me – every day you have to learn something new. A day spent without new knowledge is a lost day." An essential element of the Soviet auto-stereotype was that the Soviet people were the best-read nation in the world. According to my own observations, in 1983–1988, most people in the Moscow metro would read books or newspapers. Numerous Soviet tourists coming to Bulgaria visited bookshops to buy books published in their own country but unavailable in the Soviet Shops despite large editions.

Evidently, this predominantly Russian cultural profile was not only cultivated by the family but was shaped by Andrei's curiosity, self-discipline, strong will, and aspirations to see his "big dreams" fulfilled: "My grandmother Mara (the Bulgarian grandmother, E.A.) used to tell me: you always want all the very best, but in order to obtain that you have to be the very best, too."

## Identity and its Manifestations

Yet, why did Andrei choose the Russian identity? After all, he had lived in the USSR (in the Crimea) only until he was four. He grew up in Bulgaria and spent the formative years of his youth there. It was in Bulgaria that he studied, and it was there that his worldview shaped and where he found his role models. In this respect, one of the most important personalities was his uncle, a renowned surgeon with an international reputation who had everything that embodied success under socialism: a brilliant career, travels and work in the "West," an apartment, a country house, and a car. Today, the only thing that links Andrei to Bulgaria is his family and friends. He has not visited the country for 10 years and does not identify himself with Bulgaria or anything Bulgarian. There are a few Bulgarians among his acquaintances in the USA, but these ties are primarily limited to the professional sphere.

Why did Andrei choose the Russian White-Émigré community as his social network? His answer is simple and primordial: "It is a genetic call, a call of blood, a necessity. It is not a question of choice; rather it is a lack of choice." Driven by his curiosity and eagerness to find out as much as possible about his origin, Andrei had a DNA test made, including a mitochondrial one. The test showed two lines of his origin: a long Nordic, Viking line, which he often brings up in conversation, and a short one, Mediterranean, which is occasionally mentioned but only briefly. Why is he focused on the post-revolution aristocratic community? Because for him, it is this community that keeps the real charm of Russian history and culture. Where would one meet the Romanovs, the Sheremetievs, the Golitsins, the Dolgorukiis, and other glorious names in the history of Russian aristocracy if not at the traditional ball of the Russian Nobility Association? Where else can one have a conversation with a beautiful aristocratic Russian of St. Petersburg? Where else is it appropriate to show off most exquisite clothes? It is this community that embodies the high ideals of the Russian nobility, Russian classic literature, Russian spirit, Russia's world mission, and the Russian lifestyle for Andrei. (The body of literature devoted to the destiny of Russian aristocracy, which was often tragic in the period of the October Revolution, Civil War, and the USR, keeps growing. Thus, the history of two clans, princes Golitsins and Counts Sheremetevs is presented in *Nationalism and Classical Social Theory*.)

In fact, it is these ideals that shape Andrei's lifestyle and the identity he has constructed for himself. Long Island, where his estate is located, is associated with American billionaires, such as Morgan, Pratt, and others, and in the 1920s, it used to be the abode of Russian post-revolution émigrés. They liked the landscape of the island because it reminded them of their homeland and called it "American Crimea." They built churches and houses, and even today, some descendants of the White Russian émigrés live there all year round or have second homes in this area. Andrei's house has absorbed both American and Russian traditions of

homemaking. He furnished it with antique pieces, filled it with books, and adorned it with paintings. When he has time, he likes to invite guests. Not all of them are Russian; among his contacts, there are Americans, Europeans, and Asians, as well as friends from Bulgaria. Some are colleagues, and others share his interests, such as art collection. Besides art collectors, one can meet jewelers, lawyers, artists, photographers, restaurateurs, and people of other professions among his guests. Andrei inherited a passion for collecting from his parents. While his mother was primarily collecting books, his father was a numismatist, collecting coins and stamps. Andrei also collects paintings, artistic photographs, and wines.

The "Russian image" would not be complete without the Russian idea of generosity ("shirota," the notion best rendered by the French *largesse*). Andrei is a philanthropist: he supports the American Fund for Cardiac Surgery for Russian Children, the Russian Nobility Association, the Russian Church in New York, and other NGOs and projects. In addition, he gives shelter to people who need it. There is a two-floor comfortable house on his estate accommodating the family of his Cypriote friend and a successful New York restaurateur. One wing of the manor separated from the rest of the "big house" is occupied by a Russian Orthodox priest, an immigrant from Ukrainian Bessarabia, and his mother. These people do not pay for housing; moreover, other expenses of the priest and his mother are also paid by the host. This arrangement is reminiscent of the old Russian institution of *prizhivaly* (hangers-on). Impoverished relatives and poor aristocrats used to live in big nobility manors entirely at the expense of the owners. This practice is familiar to the readers of Russian classic literature and is described by Tolstoy, Chekhov, and other writers.

For the purposes of this article, the presented information may be sufficient to portray the "image of Russianness," created by an immigrant of mixed Russian–Bulgarian origin. Clearly, this image is constructed on the basis of Russian classic literature. The visible and material aspects of this image reflect the life of Russian rich people at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. Ironically, some features of the old aristocracy's lifestyle are the same as those of the new Russian aristocracy. Tycoons live in luxurious villas with antique furniture and precious works of art. They build their private chapels, donate money to monuments honoring historical figures, and organize balls. At the same time, they purchase real estate in the West, obtaining "investment visas" in case an escape becomes necessary. They send their children to study at European and North American universities, and the latter often prefer to stay rather than return home. The comparison between old and new Russian aristocracy can be made after reading the book by Shlapentoch and Woods which he shows that various features of contemporary Russia bear similarity to a feudal society, and articles about post-Soviet tycoons, e.g., Markus, pp. 101–112. At the same time, the leaders of the association of the Russian landed gentry emphasize that the main role of the Russian aristocracy was to serve as an example to be emulated by society. Landed gentry was expected to preserve the best spiritual, cultural, moral, military, and social traditions of the Fatherland (pbwm.ru/articles/aristokraty-xxi-vekatoday). While contemporary descendants of the landed gentry are still determined to be loyal to traditional Russian values and preserve the best traditions of their ancestors, the new rich seem to be little concerned with traditional values or morality.

The American perception of "prestige" is also very important for Andrei: everything is supposed to be very big and old, but at the same time look modern. The combination of the romantic Russian and up-to-date American is quintessentially what underlies the notion and the image of "national," as created by Andrei. It is important to emphasize that at the time of our conversations, Andrei felt good in the USA. Like many contemporary diasporans, he is not dreaming of going back to his home country, Bulgaria, or resettling in Russia. He says that when he returns to the USA after his trips: "I breathe in New York air smelling of the sea and petrol, food and waste… and I feel I'm home." This sounds very emotional and as sincere as his admiration for prominent Russian personalities. One of these is the recently canonized archbishop Felix of Simferopol and Crimea (Luka Voyno-Yasenetsky) whose morality and spirituality are the quintessence of Russianness for Andrei. To sum up, Andrei's Russia is an imagined construct, the foundation of his identity, and all manifestations of his personality. The USA is his home with all the links and connotations which this semantic field generates. Bulgaria is not mentioned in his conversations, yet he is often in touch with his Bulgarian friends and follows the country's news.

## Conclusion

The case analyzed in this article reflects a mythical image of Russia, actively used in choosing a lifestyle and constructing an identity in a new country. In this construct, Russia emerges as a romantic and luxurious imperial state – rich, spiritual, and merciful to those who are in need. This mythical image of the long-gone Russian Empire is part of the national narrative which my interlocutor chose to enact in his new country. Andrei is quite comfortable in the world he has created. It contributes to his feeling of stability. He does not experience nostalgia, nor does he desire to return to his homeland even for a visit. Andrei's estate, his manor and artifacts filling it, and his lifestyle are all manifestations of his identity. In fact, returning to the Russia he cherishes is impossible because it is a mythical construct shaped by "high" Russian culture but detached from reality. He enjoys his professional visits to Russia and has visited numerous interesting places there but has no need or desire to live there. He has created his Russia in the USA. Appropriate home upbringing, quality education, and professional success are essential but not sufficient components to maintain the lifestyle chosen by Andrei. It would not be feasible without big and constant investments.

The presented case illustrates a specific interpretation of history, or "history." As Hobsbawm noted, the term "tradition" should always be written in inverted commas (Hobsbawm 177–208). I am convinced the same applies to history – especially nowadays when we witness its multiple and frequent "re-writing." Andrei narrates the history of Russia the way he is eager to see it. This history is imagined (Anderson 51–61), but it is also experienced, suffered through, hard-won, and recaptured in the alien society.

Note that although Andrei comes from Eastern Europe, he constructs an identity that has nothing in common with the mythologies of the socialist national narrative. Rather socialism appears as a lacuna in his national narrative. The narrative space is filled with personal memories, comments, and critique, but there is no mention of any elements of the lifestyle worth reproducing in the new country. Marxism-Leninism that formed the basis of the socialist ideology of Eastern Europe venerated the "Great October Revolution," but Andrei views it as an upheaval that led to a cruel and total destruction of a powerful state. On the other hand, the post-socialist national narrative, related to the Great Victory in World War II and heroism of the Soviet people, is close to Andrei's heart. He condemns the "capitulation" nature of the disintegration of the USSR and the Eastern bloc which led to Russia's loss of its influence in the post-Soviet space and Eastern Europe.

Analysis carried out in this article suggests that the construction of identity in migration may follow this path:

1. a lack of identification with the official national socialist and post-socialist narrative in the country of origin (donor country);
2. identification with the literary, or rather imagined national narrative (creative, emotional, and reminiscent of a fairy tale text with a happy end) serving to form a worldview and a lifestyle;
3. development of an individual adaptation strategy and migration model, which are oriented to the specifics of the chosen national narrative;
4. choosing interesting and creative friends among Americans and immigrants who meet Andrei's professional, spiritual, intellectual, and emotional needs.

The individual strategy is based on clear goals and a clear vision of how to achieve them. It works as a formula: "work and more work" until the desired professional and social status is attained. On the other hand, the migrant model is based on striving to occupy the social niche which corresponds to the goals set. An emigrant from a socialist state leaves his country "to conquer America"; by contrast, a post-socialist migrant, in most cases, defends his/her right to live a "normal life" which is impossible at home at the moment of migration (Anastasova 228–240). Importantly, today nationalism in migration is a personal choice and an individual strategy with a lot of possibilities which are not necessarily related to either a donor or a recipient state. On the other hand, like in the time of classical nationalism (Gellner 56–86), the choice depends on education or the person's cultural capital as a whole. In other words, nationalism today has individual forms and appears to be a person's decision. Literature and folklore shaping one's perception of the nation and the narrative about it may be a dominant element of the worldview not only in the homeland but also after migration. They not only form the culture of society but also influence people's attachment to their homeland,

their mentality, and their migration strategies if they choose to leave their country. The latter conclusion testifies to the role humanities play in the contemporary world.

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