

Part IV

Chapter 7. The Sacred Arts

In Russian art, the 18th century was a deep abyss. The forced opening of Russia to the West by Peter the Great brought Western artists to Russia. Italians, Germans and French dominated the new Russian art in all areas: architecture, sculpture, music and other branches of art received new impulses from the West. In the place of the sober strict Russian style came the loose forms of Western European style with their individually stamped artistic forms of expression. Two great epochs of Russian art, Old and New Russian Art, can be historically separated from one another.

The elements of Old Russian Art have been increasingly lost since that time. These developments were not limited to the building style, though this was the most obvious change, but also included the realms of sculpture and painting, and even iconography, ecclesiastical chant, church architecture and the sacred arts in the broadest sense. Indeed, since then there have also been individual epochs of the New Russian Art such as Russian Rococo or Classicism (especially in the new residences in Petersburg), then the Russian Empire [style] of Alexander I, and historicism under Nicholas I, though these styles differ basically from those of Old Russian Art. To simplify this characterization, one could call Old Russian Art "anonymous" and the New Russian Art "personal." Old Russian art was not bound to a particular artist, but rather bespoke a particular style (Novgorod, Kiev, Pskov, Vladimir-Suzdal or Moscow style) or, as in iconography, a particular school (e.g., Stroganov). Names such as the iconographer Theophanes the Greek [Feofan Grek] or Andrew Rublev (the end of the 15th century) are an exception. The general anonymity of the artists of this early period was explained by the "theology of

iconography", because icons may not be an expression of a creative, artistic individuality, but rather a manifestation of the heavenly prototype "as not painted by hand." An iconographer may not raise any personal artistic claim. The turn towards worldly motifs in the 17th and 18th centuries brought completely new styles in painting, which ultimately resulted in a change in iconography. The high point of this development was in the last decades of the 19th century, when icons were mass-produced. Individual painters specialized in parts of the painting such as faces, head, garments, lettering, etc. A naturalistic, Italian-influenced style correspondingly encroached on iconography; this new style no longer had anything in common with the Old Russian iconography. Icons from this period can be found in any number of Russian churches in the West that were built in the 19th century as embassy, memorial, and resort churches. Among these are the churches in Vienna, Bad Ems, Baden-Baden, Stuttgart, Wiesbaden, Weimar, Cannes, San Remo, Pau, and other cities. Most of these churches were built in the eccentric brickwork of Moscow's Saint Basil Cathedral. The ornamentation of the iconostasis was with icons in the "Russian realistic style" of the time, with many accessories such as frames and columns. The Leipzig Church of Saint Alexis is an exception; it was built in 1912-13 in memory of the Nations, which was fought near Leipzig [in 1813]. With its lofty central tower, it is reminiscent of the Cathedral of the Ascension at Kolomenskoe. Its iconostasis consists of six rows of icons in the Old Russian style, and consciously follows the pre-Petrine tradition. With the slender figures of the saints, the soft colors, and the clear execution, these icons are reminiscent of the Moscow School of Andrei Rublev, while the icons in the hero chapel are reminiscent of those of the Stroganov School.¹

One may differentiate between three types of churches and chapels founded by émigrés since 1918: (1) newly-built emigre churches in a Russian style, (2) churches which were rented

or loaned from other Christian confessions, (3) makeshift or provisional churches. The simplest churches are the third type, which includes all churches set up in the camps and transit stations, where the refugees remained for a short while. They were mostly located in barracks and differed from the other barracks only by small onion domes and crosses set up on the roofs. Inside, as circumstances allowed, an iconostasis was set up consisting of three tiers, but in most cases only a few icons were put in the place of an iconostasis and the altar was separated from the nave by a curtain, which inhibited the celebration of the Liturgy to an extent. These barrack churches were torn down after a few years when the refugee camps were disbanded.² Similar makeshift chapels exist today where there are small parishes consisting of only a few families. These chapels are set up in dwellings or in side chapels of larger churches rented by émigrés from other confessions. This type of church can be found most frequently in Germany and Austria, after a larger parish had been diminished by emigration and aging.³

The second type of church is more frequent. These are parishes which have their own church building for divine services; the interior arrangement meets the needs of Orthodox worship. The faithful organized their congregations within churches and chapels of other confessions, who allowed the émigrés to use their buildings. This demonstrates that the other Christian denominations, despite official ecclesiastical policies, have maintained fraternal contacts with the Church Abroad on the local level. This type of church can be found in all dioceses of the Church Abroad and is especially prevalent in North America, where, on account of the general secularization, many churches stand empty or cannot be maintained by the communities. The churches were — as far as the monument and land protection would allow — outwardly “russified,” which included adorning them with three-bar Russian crosses and small onion domes or frescos over the entrance. Typical examples of this are the Cathedral of the

Exaltation of the Cross in the Bronx (New York), the Church of the Annunciation [in Flushing,] (New York), the Saint Vladimir Cathedral in Edmonton, the Holy Protection Cathedral in Bamberg, the former Dormition Cathedral in London, the Church of the Lesna Icon of the Mother of God in Provence (France), Saint Nicholas Church in Lyon, or the Holy Protection Cathedral in Melbourne, just to list a few examples.⁴ Whereas the exterior of these churches was permitted to be changed only slightly, the interior was tailored to the needs of the Orthodox liturgy. The sanctuary is separated from the nave by an iconostasis, which, according to the financial ability of the parish, is often adorned with numerous rows of icons. There are adjacent shrines, with icons of the feasts, and candle stands, candelabras, banners, and processional crosses. The interior of these churches differ only in architectural form from other Russian churches (i.e., a longitudinal nave instead of the Byzantine cruciform).

The number of parishes that have built their own churches since World War II might be around 100-120. These were the numerically larger parishes, with 500-2,000 faithful, which were able to raise the money to purchase the plots of land upon which the churches and parish centers could be built. Added to these are yet another few dozen parishes in Eastern Europe and, above all else, in China and Manchuria, which were all lost after 1945-49. In China, most of these churches were levelled during the Cultural Revolution or turned into beer halls, clubs, and movie theatres.⁵ The willingness of the faithful that made the building of these churches possible is probably the clearest demonstration that the mass of émigrés were themselves without means and had only a modest income. Many of these churches were built using subsidies from the government and ecclesiastical institutions of the host country. A few random examples will show what enormous financial burdens are connected with the building of churches and the upkeep of existing churches. For the upkeep of churches and monasteries in the Holy Land in

1968, the following funds were expended: for renovation of the bell tower on the Mount of Olives, \$10,000; for the restoration of the foundation and brick work of the monastery church, \$60,000; for the roof and the cupola of the church in Gethsemane, \$39,000; for the remaining buildings and land, \$60,000.⁶ For the building of the memorial church in Brussels, which took place from 1938- 65, \$189,000 was paid during 1948-62. For the construction of the Saint Procopius Cathedral in Hamburg, \$115,000; and for the renovation of Holy Trinity Cathedral in Jordanville in 1960, \$40,000 was spent. The financial burdens were especially high in the United States, Canada, South America, and Australia, because the majority of the parishes were founded there after 1945. This also applies to the convents, monasteries, and sketes in those place. Holy Trinity Cathedral in Jordanville was expanded more than once: the main building, Holy Trinity Cathedral, the seminary building, the adjacent farm buildings, and the bell tower, as well as the monastery land — it originally had over 300 acres and today has 1,000 — were expanded by the purchase of more land and further construction. Likewise, there were also expansions, additions, and extensions at the Convent of the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God in San Francisco, and at Novo-Diveevo Convent near New York, where, in 1980, a home for the elderly, housing 100 people, was constructed.

The most significant and extensive building between the Wars took place in Harbin, with its churches and adjacent buildings.⁷ Another extensive building complex was the Convent in Bethany, with its own school, boarding house, and clinic. Among the larger building complexes were the Lodomirova Saint Job Monastery, the Tsar-Martyr Memorial Church in Brussels, the Cathedral of the Resurrection in Berlin (since 1945 under the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate) and the Saint Vladimir Memorial Church in Jackson, New Jersey. These are followed by several dozen smaller churches, many of which lie today in Eastern Europe, China,

and Manchuria. In Manchuria alone, the émigrés built 48 churches from 1920 to 1945, 27 of which were built from 1930 to 1945, including the Church of the Annunciation in Harbin, which accommodated 2,000 faithful.⁸

The majority of these churches were built in an Old Russian style. The size of the churches varies widely, but on the average they accommodate 300-500 faithful. There are also churches in San Francisco or Los Angeles which can accommodate 1,000 or more worshipers.

The North Russian style with its clear composition definitely predominates among the new buildings. This strict form was only broken by an entrance way and a belfry, which were built in the Pskov Style. Mostly of white stone, they are only broken by narrow arched windows. The roof is crowned by a massive central cupola, which is often surrounded by four smaller gilt onion domes. With its deep blue dark green or gilt onion domes and the gilt three-barred Russian crosses on the tiered structure these churches and chapels achieve a majestic appearance. A high point of the newer construction work was reached in 1959-62. In barely three years, over twenty new churches were consecrated. Typical examples of such churches built in the Old Russian style are the following cathedrals and churches: the All Saints Church in Burlingame, Saint Vladimir's in Jackson, Saint Seraphim of Sarov's in Sea Cliff, the Joy of All Who Sorrow Cathedral in San Francisco, the Resurrection Cathedral in Berlin, Saint Nicholas Church in Frankfurt, Saint Procopius in Hamburg, the Tsar-Martyr Memorial Church in Brussels, Dormition Church in the cemetery at Jordanville, Saint Nicholas Cathedrals in Caracas and Sao Paulo, the Church of the Resurrection in Tunis, and Saint Alexis Church in Bizerta. All these churches — except for the Berlin and Brussels churches — have been built since 1950.⁹

The walls and ceilings of a few of these churches were frescoed, e.g., Holy Trinity Cathedral and Dormition Church in Jordanville, Saint Procopius Cathedral in Hamburg, Saint Nicholas Cathedral in Caracas, and Saint Vladimir Memorial Church in Jackson.

Aside from these churches in typical Russian style, one can find a series of churches, above all in North America and Australia, which betray the influence of occidental churches. The hallmarks of this style are the longitudinal nave with a pointed roof and high belfries, crowned by small onion domes. The building activities of these parishes have not come to an end. Parishes which hitherto have had only makeshift churches are planning new buildings and community centers.

Icons, reliquaries, church utensils, altar cloths, and church banners, which are for veneration and adornment in the churches, have either come from Russia or are for the most part produced by the émigrés. The wonderworking and highly revered Kursk Icon of the Mother of God (at Synod), the Lesna Icon of the Mother of God (in France), Saint Seraphim's Icon (in the Novo-Diveevo Convent), and the Vladimir Icon of the Mother of God (in the convent in San Francisco) are all from Russia and are objects of particular veneration within the Russian Church. Refugee priests, monks, nuns, and faithful also brought many hundreds of old icons with them on their flight from Russia.

In several churches, especially successful iconostases were set up out of old and new Russian icons. For example, Saint Sergius of Radonezh Church at Synod has an iconostasis, the Royal Doors of which come from an old village church in Russia. Other of its icons were painted by the renowned iconographer, D. Alexandrov, in the same style, so that the ensemble gives the appearance as if all the icons had been brought in their entirety from Russia.¹⁰ A similar symbiosis of old and new icons can be found in the Church of the Resurrection in

Toronto. Part of the icons were painted in the Zhirovitsy Dormition Convent¹¹ and brought by refugees to the West. These icons were supplemented by a new iconostasis.¹² Similar examples abound.

Icons and relics brought by émigrés from the Russian monasteries on Athos, the Holy Land, and the monasteries on Valaam and Konevets and given to the churches enjoy particular veneration.

Among the icons which today are preserved in the churches and monasteries are those which have had miracles recorded during the emigration. In the Vladimir Icon Convent in San Francisco there are two icons, which have renewed themselves several times since the 1920s.¹³ A similar miracle took place with an icon of Saint Seraphim of Sarov, which is now venerated at the Convent in Spring Valley, NY. In 1944-45, this icon was in the Resurrection Cathedral in Berlin. During the bombings the church was severely damaged. Some of the falling debris landed upon the icon, yet it suffered no damage. During a second bombing a fire broke out; this icon alone remained untouched this time also.

The monasteries on Mount Athos, which in the time between the Wars were dependent on the financial support of the emigration, offered icons from their own workshops. They also donated icons and particles of relics to many churches founded by the émigrés.¹⁴

But the donations supplied only a small part of the icons needed for the émigrés' new churches. The majority of icons, church utensils, candle stands, ecclesiastical fabrics, processional crosses, and church banners were produced by the émigrés themselves or by ordering from specialists. The latter included primarily all metal work such as crosses, icon lamps, candle stands and bells, which had to be made in special workshops. Icons, church fabrics, clerical vestments, ornamentation, mitres, and smaller metal objects on the other hand were and are still produced in their own workshops. This work took place for the most part in the monasteries of the Church Abroad.

Laymen also painted icons and frescoes in the churches. N.N. Papkov painted the convent church in Novo-Diveevo.¹⁵ Baron N. B. Meyendorff painted the Saint Procopius Cathedral, and George Palmer, an Orthodox Englishman, painted the iconostasis of the London Convent. In Canada, the renowned iconographer S. Shelekhov, whose icons succeeded in attaining an unprecedented intensity and radiance, and of which it has been said that they “glance at and penetrate those who behold them,” painted for many years.

Fresco painting, with which many churches are adorned, is especially time-consuming and difficult. The painting is done on plaster which is still moist, so that the colors can sink in. This gives them their durability. Especially beautiful examples of this fresco painting are found in Holy Trinity Cathedral and Dormition (cemetery) Church in Jordanville, and also in many parish churches such as in San Francisco, Hamburg, and Caracas.

The most important and famous icon workshops are always located in the monasteries. In the Ladomirova Monastery, two iconographer-monks Fathers Cyprian and Gregory (Pyzhov) worked with each other during the 1930s. Laymen were able to place orders at the monastery. The monks kept the prices very low even for that time; today they seem almost incomprehensibly low. For sizes up to 10 cm -- \$1.50; from 11-15 cm -- \$2.00; from 16-20 cm - - \$3.50; from 21-25 cm -- \$5.50, and for 31-35 cm -- \$10.00! For icons with a gold background and ornamental decorations, there was an additional 25% charge; for festal icons and icons with several saints, an additional 40% charge. The monastery guaranteed the artistic and precise execution of the work.¹⁶

Both monks had studied painting in Paris and had later worked for a few years as caricaturists for newspapers before they decided to enter the monastery. Whereas Father Gregory died early, Father Cyprian resettled in the West together with the Brotherhood in 1944,

where he finally reestablished his workshop in Jordanville's Holy Trinity Monastery. In the course of his creative work, Father Cyprian has, outside an innumerable number of individual icons, also painted the iconostases and walls of numerous churches. One of his most famous works is his copy of Rublev's Icon of the Holy Trinity, which is found in the gable of the guest house on the veranda of the New Kursk Hermitage in Mahopac. Whereas this fresco is a copy, he has also painted many original icons, which have had great significance for the Church Abroad; copies of these icons hang in many churches of the Church Abroad and of other Russian and Greek jurisdictions. Included among these are the icons of the newly-glorified saints: Saint John of Kronstadt, Saint Xenia of Petersburg, Saint Herman of Alaska, and the Russian New Martyrs and Confessors of the Faith. One of the most famous icons, which can be found in numerous churches, is the Icon of All Saints of Russia.

The original of this icon hangs in the Synodal Cathedral in New York. The icon is designed as a triptych. The middle part measures 400 x 250 cm. In the middle section of this icon are the saints of the Russian Church, who are organized in groups and represent certain regions of Russia, for example, the saints of the Kiev Caves Monastery, the saints of northern Russia, and so on. On the left section of the triptych is the representation of the Baptism of Russia. On the right section are the martyrs and confessors of the latest Russian history who had not yet been canonized: believers, monks, nuns, priests, bishops, who were the victims of the Soviet persecution of the Church. Many confessors are named, including the Imperial Family, Patriarch Tikhon, Peter and Cyril, the *locum tenentes* of the Patriarch, Metropolitans Vladimir and Benjamin (of Kiev and Petrograd), and many others. This part of the icon can serve as a design for future canonizations. This part of the triptych took on a special significance when the Council of Bishops canonized the New Martyrs in October [November] 1981.¹⁷

The most extensive works of Father Cyprian were the painting in the churches of the Jordanville Monastery, the iconostasis of the Synodal Cathedral in New York, and the Saint Vladimir Memorial Church. The monk Alypius (now Archbishop of Chicago), who was trained to be an iconographer, helped with this work. He also has painted many icons. Both monks received a gold cross for their work at the New York Synodal Cathedral.¹⁸

The Church Abroad has always given iconography great attention.¹⁹ In San Francisco, in the early 1970s, the “Russian Orthodox Icon Society” was founded to help promote understanding of the artistic and theological significance of icons through exhibitions and reproductions. Many collectors’ passion for antique art has led to the theft of precious icons from numerous Russian churches in recent decades. Some of these icons have been recovered, but the loss of the rest is particularly painful for the faithful because icons are sacred objects, not mere *objets d’art*.

Church fabrics, such as altar cloths, priests’ vestments, church banners — which are renowned for their exquisite and artistic stitchery — were produced by the convents, which almost all had workshops. In the Holy Land, there are also workshops for the production of priests’ and bishops’ mitres, crosses, and fine metal work. Some convents and monasteries have candleworks. Incense is produced at the Saint Edward Brotherhood in England, the Saint Job of Pochaev Monastery in Munich, Holy Trinity Monastery, NY, Holy Cross Hermitage near St. Louis, Missouri, and elsewhere.

Special care has been given to ecclesiastical choral music.²⁰ In the Orthodox Church, hardly any services are performed without chanting. Spoken liturgies or vespers are unknown. Even when divine services served in private homes, e.g., the Office of Thanksgiving (Moleben), they are chanted, either by the priest alone or together with an acolyte. Liturgical chant is an

integral part of divine services. “The old Russians denoted the divine services simply as ‘chant’. ‘To go a-chanting’ means the same thing as ‘to attend the divine services.’”²¹ In contrast to Western Christianity, the use of musical instruments in Orthodox churches is forbidden. “Instrumental music was used by the pagans in their cult ceremonies. Christians, on the other hand, praise God not with lifeless instruments, but rather with their noblest instrument—the human voice . . . The bearer of the divine service is the Word.”²² Thus, the Orthodox service is dependent upon the support of choirs, and every parish or community has a church choir. The choirs vary in size and quality from small groups consisting of two or three people, to choirs with more than twenty people. On account of their high artistic level, many of these choirs have given public concerts and introductions to Russian Church music.

In the time between the Wars, the community in Harbin established its own music courses, which I. A. Kolchin directed. Kolchin had studied choral music at Kazan’ University and the Moscow School of Music, and later established choirs in Harbin, Shanghai, San Francisco, and New York. The courses which he instituted educated numerous singers and choir directors.²³

A second center of Russian Church music was located in Belgrade. There, Archbishop Gabriel of Chelyabinsk founded a large choir, to which A. F. Sinkevich (later Archbishop Anthony of Los Angeles) and Ivan von Gardner belonged. Archbishop Gabriel was especially concerned with old Russian ecclesiastical chant, and which included both the tradition of the Moscow Synodal choir and that of the Kiev Caves Monastery. While active, he collected, composed and harmonized numerous examples of old chants. More than thirty compositions have come down from him, which today form part of the Church Abroad’s chant depository.²⁴

There are famous choirs today in the larger parishes and cathedrals. The largest choir, which at one time had over thirty people, is at the Synodal Cathedral in New York. A. Kolchin founded the choir. From 1952 to 1975, Boris Ledkovsky conducted it. He had begun his education at the Theological Seminary in Novocherkassk and had later continued it with Professor M. Ippolitov-Ivanov in Moscow. Ledkovsky was likewise a representative of the turn of the century school of Russian choral music centered in Moscow. In contrast to most other church choirs, the Synodal choir includes paid singers. In the course of its existence, it has given many concerts, taken tours abroad, and produced recordings.²⁵ His son, Alexander Ledkovsky, now conducts this choir.

Another important choir that has also made many recordings is the Jordanville Seminary Choir, which together with the brotherhood consists of over twenty men. Above all else, the melodies of Russian monastic chant are its concern. In Europe, there is a large choir at the Geneva cathedral. It has been under the direction of V. Dyakov since 1937. The choir consists of about twelve to twenty people, including several Swiss. In his characterization of the record made by the choir (“Chœur de l’église Orthodoxe russe de Genève” Prod. BVM st. 2191), I. Gardner, who was by far the most noted expert in the field of Russian Church music, wrote: “The choir is excellent, sings liturgically and without exaggerated effects. The type of choir, a parish church choir with high artistic aspirations and performances, is in the style and spirit of the Petersburg school at the turn of the century. It is the best Russian church choir in Western Europe.”²⁶

A particularly interesting example of the performances of Russian Church music is a memorial recording that includes the funeral service for the slain Imperial Family, which was made in 1968 at the Tsar-Martyr Memorial Church; the service was celebrated by Archbishops

Nikon of Washington & Florida, Anthony of Geneva & Western Europe, and Bishops Paul of Stuttgart & Southern Germany and Nathaniel of Vienna. Archpriest V. Ostoich directed the choir and assembled singers from choirs in Belgium, Luxembourg, Holland, and Germany. This burial service recognized the fact that the bodies of the Imperial Family had not received a Christian burial, and, based on this premise, a burial service was held in the absence of the bodies of the dead. The divine service was recorded.²⁷

Russian émigré choirs have produced several hundred recordings. This number includes the records of the Church Abroad, the Paris Jurisdiction — the choir of the Cathedral in rue Daru was considered to be the best choir in the emigration — and the OCA. Patriarchal parishes in the West have also produced a few recordings. Indeed, these recordings represent only a small portion of the choirs that exist, though they only hint at the artistic performances that lie hidden behind them.

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