

Dear Reader,

The obvious news about the war in Ukraine pertains to the war itself: what's happening on the battlefield, and the maneuverings of the major nations about the conduct of the war. There's a less obvious aspect of the war that is also of supreme long-term importance. More than a million Russians have left the country since the war began. These are not refugees (though there are those too)—they are voluntary exiles, mostly educated and relatively prosperous, who have been willing to upend their lives on account of their existential worry about what the future holds in Russia.

Paul Starobin, a veteran Russia correspondent who knows the country and its history and institutions intimately, has embedded with wartime Russian exiles, in a wide variety of locations around the world. Some of them are young Russians who didn't want to serve. Some are dissidents. Some are followers of Alexei Navalny, the anti-Putin leader. Some are Orthodox priests. Some are journalists. Some are actively providing military assistance to Ukraine, from a distance. What unites them is a hatred of Putin and a belief that a better future for Russia, without him, is possible. That is what all of them are working toward.

Starobin has created a vivid, deeply moving, and deeply informed account of an aspect of the war that most Americans haven't encountered. It is also, compared to most news about the war, more hopeful, even inspiring, because it gives us an unforgettable glimpse about what might be possible after the shooting stops.

Best,



Nicholas Lemann