

**Immigrated Russian Jewish Elites in Israel and Germany after 1990
– their Integration, Self Image and Role in Community Building**

**(Russisch-jüdische Eliten in Israel und Deutschland nach 1990 -
Integration, Selbstbild und Rolle in Immigranten-Netzwerken)**

-Dissertation-

*zur Erlangung des Grades des Doktors der Philosophie (Dr. phil.)
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Olaf Glöckner, M.A.

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Für Karin, Manfred, Gabi, Margi, Micha und Sergej

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Preface

This PhD dissertation compares those Jewish emigrants and their families, who once belonged to the professional, intellectual and cultural elites of the Former Soviet Union (FSU) and resettled after 1989 in Israel to those who went to Germany. The study covers migrants from the territory of the former USSR in general, but in accordance with international research, the term “Russian Jews” - or to be more precise – “Russian speaking Jews” (“RSJ”) is used for the *whole* group.¹ Indeed, the Russian language was one of the common denominators of inhabitants of the Former Soviet Union.

About 1.7 million Jewish citizens have left the crumbling Soviet Union since 1989/90, and hundreds of thousands of them did so after the final dissolution of the Soviet Union. Thus, starting from 1992 it would be correct to speak of “Jewish Emigrants from the Commonwealth of Independent States (C.I.S.)”, but again this term cannot cover the complete group, as for example, the Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) never became part of the C.I.S. The term “Russian Jews” or “Russian speaking Jews” will therefore cover all citizens who left the territory of the Former Soviet Union since the fall of the Iron Curtain, or who still live there or even returned there. However, since the end of the Cold War, Israel and Germany (until 2004)² have been the only two countries worldwide which welcomed Jewish migrants from the (former) USSR throughout the 1990’s without restrictions just *because they were Jews*.³ These two states differ to a great extent in their history, culture, climate, composition of population, and in politics of immigration, as well as the role of religion in society. Hundreds of thousands of former Soviet Jews resettled in *both* of these countries, willing to build up a new life either at the shores of the

¹ I use the term in accordance with most of the contemporary sociologists, political scientists, cultural anthropologists and historians who do research on this specific group of migrants and subsume as Russian Jews all those Jews, who originally had their place of residence on the territory of Tsarist Russia / the Former Soviet Union or are still living there. See for example: Ben Rafael et al. In: Lewin-Epstein/Ro’i/Ritterband (1997), Schoeps/Jasper/Vogt (1999) and Remennick (2006).

² In 2005, Germany turned the “Contingency Refugee Act”, valid for Russian Jews from 1991-2004, into a much more restrictive regulation that sets special requirements on Russian Jews – except Holocaust survivors - and that has caused an almost complete end to the former immigration wave. See chapter II for details.

³ The United States of America also welcomed Jews from the former East Bloc until 1989, but did it primarily on the principle to guarantee a new home for political refugees. About new US regulations since 1989 see chapter 2.

Mediterranean Sea or at the heart of Europe. There is no significant difference between the groups migrating to either Israel or Germany – not in the occupational structure, nor in the age structure, in world views, religion, cultural or political preferences. Similarities in most of these aspects might appear to be surprising, but to a great extent they provide favorable conditions for a comparative analysis of the immigrants and their situation in both countries.

This study focuses on the following three main questions: How successfully did the Russian Jewish elite integrate into Israeli and German society? To what extent do they continue to consider themselves as belonging to the (Russian Jewish) elite? What is their role in Russian Jewish community building in Israel and Germany? The latter question arises from the fact that Jews from the Former Soviet Union who left the country after the breakdown of the Communist system show strong tendencies of cultural self-assertion wherever they move. From this perspective, this study analyzes to what extent the Russian Jewish elites have taken over a key role in the process of community building as opinion leaders, as social and political lobbyists, or as initiators of debates on future identity.

The Russian Jewish emigrants of the late 20th century and the early 2000's are in the unique situation of building up not only one single strong community outside the Former Soviet Union and its successor states, but at least three – in Israel, in the USA, and in Germany. It is of special interest to what extent the various Russian Jewish camps tend to intensify transnational and trans-continental networks. These networks are, as this study confirms, indeed very extensive, especially with regard to cultural ties, but also with respect to family and friendship relationships across the borders: from Russia to Israel, from Russia to Germany, from Germany to Israel – and in the same way between the states of the Former Soviet Union and the US. In this way they symbolize an exciting example of *Russian* and *Jewish* Diaspora at the same time.

The Jewish Diaspora is, however, anything but a new phenomenon in either ancient or modern history. As Gitelman (2006) remarks, Jews have been a transnational community since at least 722 and 586 BCE and certainly since 70 CE, long before the term was invented and became fashionable. Jews had also strengthened transnational umbrella organizations across the 20th century. For former Soviet Jews – and Eastern European Jews in general, these networks and umbrella

organizations weren't available during the Cold War, because the Iron Curtain had cut off their ties to the modern Western world. Jews had moved in increasing numbers since the late 19th century from Eastern Europe towards the new Jewish centers – the American Jewish community and Israel (since 1948) initiating a very dynamic development. But at the end of the 1980's and the beginning of the 1990's the Iron Curtain fell, and it appeared to be the easiest way for Russian and other Eastern European Jews to promptly join the successful and experienced Western and Israeli Jewish structures and frameworks. Some of the migrants behaved accordingly, but a considerable part of them looked for a path of their own. They rejected the “melting pot” in Israel and founded their own community centers in America or established their own clubs in German Jewish communities.

This resulted in a new characteristic phenomenon in the global Jewish associations, the Jewish communities in the countries of destination and to a certain extent also in the host societies in general: a strong willingness to remain in contact with Russian culture and language *alongside* with Jewish culture and tradition; choosing only certain cultural elements from the respective host societies rather than adapting a complete culture.

This leads to another important aspect considered in this PhD thesis: Russian Jews, or at least their elite, are not only motivated to preserve former cultural patterns, their roots and values, but also to install some of these patterns in their new environment, for example in the area of education and in the arts. One might even say that in this respect, Israel has become a “cultural laboratory” where the one million Russian Jewish newcomers during the 1990's not only reject any demands for their cultural assimilation, but – to the contrary – are actively shaping parts of society in accordance to their own conviction. Yet the Russian Jewish elite did not succeed to become part of the national elite in Israel, and in Germany they have not yet succeeded to become a substantial part of the Jewish leadership. But in both cases, time is in favor of the immigrants.

Certainly, immigrant elites are not representative of a whole migration group. But cultural orientations, strategies of integration and public appearance allow to some extent conclusions to be drawn on the potential and the resources of the whole group. Therefore the instrument of choice for this study is a qualitative research approach based on 70 half-structured expert interviews conducted in Israel and

Germany between 2003 and 2009. The range of interviewees included former and present members of the Russian Jewish elite – mainly professionals and intellectuals. In spite of the fact that the selected interviewees are not representative in the narrow meaning of the term, the snapshot claims to represent to some extent the characteristics of Jewish and Russian elites in Israel and Germany. This study intends to serve as another building block in the analytical framework of Russian Jewish integration into Israeli and German society with all of the similarities and differences. At the same time, it provides answers on what the Russian Jewish emigrants can contribute to the further development of local Jewry and how this can affect global Jewry.

I'm very grateful to all the emigrants from the Former Soviet Union who donated their time and attention to the expert interviews, often describing their individual experiences in a very open-minded way. In most of the cases they related the interviews to problems, success stories and perspectives of the whole group of RSJ immigrants in Israel or Germany.

According to the Code of Ethics of the American Anthropological Association (AAA Code of Ethics), approved in June 1998, researchers have to guarantee that research will not in any way damage the interviewee's standing in public.⁴ When performing personal interviews, this means first of all to guarantee the anonymity of the interviewee in case this is requested. All interview partners were asked whether they wish to remain anonymous or whether they agree to be quoted by full name. Those interview partners who preferred to remain anonymous (or to be quoted with initials) are anonymized in this research, either by just naming a profession and a location (for example: "an RSJ engineer in Beer Sheva" or "a RSJ student in Berlin"), or they were – in particularly volatile contexts – given an unrelated pseudonym, indicated as such.

Irrespective of the differences in the style of source quoting, I found it worthwhile to cite the names of those participants who agreed to it. This gives their statements and narratives a special status of authenticity and plausibility.

⁴ Concerning the AAA Code of Ethics see: www.aaanet.org/committees/ethics/ethcode.htm. [Access on March 5, 2010] See reflections about it in: Fialkova/Yelenevskaya (2007), p. 17 and 36.

I. Introduction

1. Historical background

One of the unforeseeable consequences of the end of the Cold War and the downfall of the Iron Curtain was the number of unrestricted, large scale outflows of ethnic minorities from the territory of the Former Soviet Union (FSU). Apart from the emigration wave of ethnic German repatriates (Aussiedler)⁵, the second largest wave of exodus comprises Soviet and post-Soviet Jews, counting more than 1.5 million individuals who migrated to Israel, the United States, Germany, Canada and Australia. This exodus has more or less completed the collapse of a demographic and cultural Jewish centre which at the end of the 19th century comprised almost half of the total Jewish population worldwide.⁶

Beginning in 1881, there have been recurring strong waves of emigration of the Jews from the territory of the late Tsarist Empire, the Soviet Union and the successor states of the USSR (organized in the Commonwealth of Independent States /C.I.S.). At least five were connected to dramatic historical breaks: the anti-Jewish pogroms in Russia and the Ukraine from 1881 until the eve of the Bolshevik revolution; the takeover by the Bolsheviks and the subsequent civil war; World War II and the Shoah; the emergence of a Jewish national movement of Soviet Jews in the 1960's and 1970's (when Israel gained substantial power in the Middle East and encouraged Jews in many countries of the Diaspora to make Aliyah); and finally the breakdown of the Soviet regime which was accompanied by a vast erupting of widespread anti-Semitism on the street.⁷

⁵ Between 1987 and 1999 2.7 Mio. *Aussiedlers* (most of them from the FSU) came to Germany. (Statistical Year Book of Germany)

⁶ At the end of the 19th century the Jewish population in Eastern Europe (especially Poland and Russia) numbered about five million. See: Gitelman (1988), p. 3. According to Tolts (2003), more Russian Jews (1.1 Mio.) are now living in Israel than remained in the Former Soviet Union. Counting former Soviet Jews who immigrated during the Cold War, the total size of the Russian speaking Jewish population in the USA is estimated to amount to 600,000 to 750,000 (Remennick 2007). This number also surpasses the number of those Jews still living on the territory of the former USSR.

⁷ Gitelman (2006) has described the Soviet Jewish efforts to leave the crumbling USSR at the end of the 1980's and the beginning of the 1990's as a kind of a "panic migration". Many of the Soviet Jews feared being in existential danger, as their ancestors had been 45 years before (in World War II and under the repressive rule of the late Stalinist era) and 70 years before in the endless fights between the Bolsheviks and the counter-revolutionaries.

Apart from the steady decrease in the Jewish population in Russia and the Soviet Union and the dramatic decline of Jewish religious and cultural life in most cities and rural areas, Russian Jewish newcomers have had an enormous impact on their countries of destination. Many of those Russian Jewish refugees who had settled to the USA already at the end of the 19th century succeeded to join the American middle class in the second and third generation and became an important cornerstone of modern American Jewry. They affected religious and cultural life and also strengthened the emerging Zionist movement in the United States which gave strong support to the foundation of a Jewish National Home in Palestine.

Only a minority of those Russian Jews who had left their home country after continuing pogroms and anti-Semitic attacks in the late Tsarist Empire and in the aftermath of the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, tried a new beginning in the then British ruled Palestine. But those Zionist and Socialist activists were well educated and highly motivated pioneers (*chalutzim*) and emerged to take leading roles in the Zionist project. Russian Jews made up the majority in the first three Zionist Aliyot to Palestine (1882-1903, 1904-1914, 1919-1923).

When David Ben Gurion declared the State of Israel in May 1948, 18 of the 37 members of the Provisional State Council were Olim from Russia, Ukraine or from the Baltic areas. Some of the new Russian Jewish immigrants in Israel – especially intellectuals – are eager to argue that a considerable “Russian imprint” had already been made in the initial stage of the Jewish State. Indeed - in the early years of the State of Israel, Russians and other Eastern Europeans not only took on leadership roles in society, but formed a considerable part of the Ashkenazi elite. Many of them were both Zionists and socialists, and it was no surprise that Russian and Eastern European Jews were also the protagonists of the Kibbutz movement and formed a considerable part of the Israeli Army leadership.

However, in the country of origin, Russia, many Jews had joined the revolutionary forces of 1905 and 1917 and were convinced that a new social order would also end the century old repression and discrimination of the Jewish minority. Indeed, after the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, Jews, together with all other ethnic and cultural minorities, received legal emancipation for the first time in Russia, (a right at least *formally* fixed in the Soviet constitution). Now Jews who did not stand in direct opposition to the Communist regime faced social and professional

opportunities their ancestors had never seen before.⁸ Already in the 1920's many Soviet Jews with high school and university degrees became entitled to enter higher social and professional positions. For the first time in Russian history, Jews became a part of the social and intellectual elites. Soon they were very successful in science and technology, and they entered the cultural and arts scene as well. In a certain way, this trend could be compared to what German Jews had attempted from the 18th century until 1933, to become part of German society and its elites, giving the best resources and abilities they had, and to a certain extent starting to assimilate into the culture of the major population. It has to be noted that the Russian Jews – like the German Jews 150 years before – were *not* only looking for an “entrée billet” into high society by adopting the established culture. In many cases they identified with the culture of the establishment.⁹

So there was a way that worked for many individuals in the FSU – ignoring for a moment, that in social reality a wide range of top positions in politics, diplomacy, in the military - and even partly in the arts and media – have never been available for Russian Jews who were recognizable as Jews (and might it be “only” by ethnic origin), while the pressure to assimilate into Soviet Communist society gradually increased. Official Jewish religious and cultural institutions soon came under pressure by a regime that more and more aimed to form and socialize a “new Soviet citizen” without ethnic, religious, ideological or cultural peculiarities. Starting in the 1930's, the Communist regime began its fight to destroy all religious congregations and ethno-cultural deviations.¹⁰ Jews, Christians, Muslims and liberal intellectuals suffered the same pressure and persecution and were finally forced to make a very difficult and painful decision: either to accept the Communist cultural dominance by giving up their unique cultural and religious patterns, which in many cases meant a kind of “inner emigration”, or to leave the country. The peak of

⁸ Slezkine (2004).

⁹ A remarkable difference was that German Jews adapted to a German-Christian culture. The Russian Jews under the Soviet regime had to adapt to, or at least to accept a Communist political system and a secular ideology which denied all kinds of religion. Concerning the German-Jewish attempts to integrate in a Christian culture and society, see: A. Elon, *The Pity of it All*, London 2003.

¹⁰ Thus the number of working Jewish synagogues decreased tremendously over a span of many decades. In 1956 there were still 450 synagogues all over the country, but in 1963 there were only 96, and in 1983 only 50.

oppression was reached in the late ruling years of Stalin¹¹, but oppression of self-sustained ethnic, religious and cultural groups remained until the mid of the 1980's. Taking into account this constant pressure, it is very noteworthy that even in the 1960's, 1970's and 1980's a generation of Soviet Jews consciously decided to take the risk of discrimination, victimization, observation or even sentencing by (Communist) state courts to learn Hebrew, study Jewish history, philosophy and Zionism, celebrate Jewish holidays (even outside the few still existing synagogues), form informal Jewish networks and finally - in many cases – apply for emigration to Israel.¹² Prisoners of Zion and refuseniks had the courage to oppose the anti-Israeli policy of the Soviet governments especially since 1967 and demanded a free exit to Israel. Ida Nudel, Anatoli Sharansky, Eduard Kusnezow and others were the protagonists of these movements, frightening the Communist establishment with the specter of a Jewish and Zionist revival in their own country.¹³ In turn, the respective American governments and international human rights organizations strongly supported the prisoners of Zion and the later refuseniks of the 1970's and 1980's, but in general the Soviet regime gave exit permission only to a limited number and in individual cases. At the same time it remained a widespread practice of the regime to obstruct Jews accessing positions of the elite. That pattern seemed to be rooted in political fears, but also general practice of ethnic discrimination and of anti-Semitism, what could in many cases mean that young Jewish high school graduates were never allowed to study their preferred field or to complete a PhD thesis.¹⁴

¹¹ Under Stalin, the Communist regime began to close Yiddish schools, Yiddish theaters, Yiddish umbrella associations and Yiddish language newspapers and journals. Hebrew also became a forbidden language. During the late 1940's and the early 1950's famous Jewish personalities like dramatist Shlomo Mikhoels were murdered in order to destroy the "heads" of Jewish and Yiddish culture and arts. Stalin died in 1953, before he could even intensify his ethnic purges against the Soviet Jews and before conducting the so called "doctor's plot". In fact, after Stalin's death, political murders stopped or their number decreased. But the situation did not significantly improve for the Jewish population under Khrushchev, Brezhnev or Andropov. See: Lustiger (2003).

¹² However, the overwhelming majority of Soviet Jews avoided showing Jewish behavior and lifestyle openly, being aware of the high risks of harming their own career, losing their job or being discriminated against by the State authorities in several other ways.

¹³ Concerning the motives of the prisoners of Zion and the refuseniks and individual fates see: M. Gilbert, Sharansky: Hero of Our Times, London 1986.

¹⁴ A few of my own interviewees in Israel reported aggravating problems passing the entry examinations to high ranking universities in the FSU. In several cases the academic examiners did even not dissemble their personal antipathies towards the Jewish population (for example, by making ironic remarks concerning the Jewish names of the examinees). Irrespective of the fact that many Jews in the Former Soviet Union were never permitted to enrol for their preferred study it could also happen that they experienced subtle or open discrimination in later stages of their professional life.

The majority of Soviet Jews who were allowed to leave the Soviet Union during the 1970's and 1980's opted for the United States, but there were still about 170,000 Soviet Jews who went to Israel. In both countries the highly qualified emigrants made remarkable contributions to local science and technology and were absorbed by the labor market with only few problems. A part of the emigrants in both countries became internationally active to fight for the right of *all* Russian Jews to leave the Soviet Union.

Meanwhile it became clear that a great number of Soviet Jews were ready to leave the country right from the moment when the Iron Curtain would fall and the Communist restrictions against the individual would stop.

By his general politics of glasnost and perestroika, Soviet reformer president Mikhail Gorbachev widely liberalized domestic politics toward Soviet Jews, but these efforts came obviously too late. What remained in the Jewish minds was the experience of having been stigmatized by state authorities over three generations - just because of their ethnic origin and religion.

At the end of 1989, even before the final crisis of the Soviet Union started, the Great Russian Jewish exodus began. America soon limited the number of Eastern European Jewish immigration, justifying the new regulations by arguing that Jews (and other minorities) in the Eastern Bloc and in the Soviet Union were not to be considered as political refugees any more. But suddenly being confronted with a few thousand Russian Jewish asylum seekers (mainly in East Berlin) during the years 1989/1990, the East German government decided to welcome Russian Jews and to permit them permanent asylum.

What took shape at this dramatic point of time was an "Exodus" that nobody had expected in this dimension. Approximately 1 million Jewish citizens from the Former Soviet Union have emigrated to Israel in the last 20 years, and more than 300,000 to the United States (despite the new, rather restrictive U.S. regulations). An additional 200,000 Russian Jews, however, preferred to go to Germany – straight into the heart of Europe.

For Israel, it was the fulfillment of an old dream. After all the repression and stigmatization, Russian Jews (and Eastern European Jews in general) could make Aliyah without any restriction. It became the single largest Aliyah in history, the largest Jewish immigration to the United States since the early twentieth century, and

the most significant Jewish immigration to Germany following the Shoah.¹⁵

Israel received a very strong group of immigrants and witnessed an increase of the total Jewish population by about 18 per cent. For a couple of years the United States still saw Eastern Jewish immigrant rates between 30,000 and 40,000 a year – and most of the newcomers were from the territory of America’s chief rival in the Cold War! The German Jewish Community has more than tripled since 1989, and nearly 90 per cent of the current Community members are of Russian or other Eastern European origin now. A constant Jewish influx was coming from a country (FSU) where the Germans and their allies killed 26 million people, including about 1.5 million Jews or more. Such are the imponderable ironies of history.¹⁶

That Israel and the United States have received another strong wave of Russian Jewish emigrants wasn’t much of a surprise after the developments in the 20th century and the image of both countries as safe havens for Jewish refugees. Much more astonishing was the relatively large influx into Germany, the country that initiated the Shoah 45 years before. As the result of this continuing influx, Germany today has the third largest Jewish community in Europe, after France and Great Britain. This development has inspired several scholars - as the French historian Diana Pinto - to expect the (re-)emergence of a flourishing European Jewish community “in a quite new cultural and historical dimension”.¹⁷ In this expected Jewish renaissance in the “Old World”, Germany receives a key role. In a wider sense, Pinto's hypothesis gives headway to discuss whether a third strong Jewish demographic and cultural center can emerge in the 21st century.¹⁸

2. Reasons to leave and countries of destination

Considering 120 years of more or less continual Jewish emigration from Russian and wider Eastern European territory (and also from parts of Middle Asia), we have to note that the group of Russian Jewish emigrants has never been a homogenous one. Motives to leave the Former Soviet Union – and later its successor states, were very different. Thus, some of the Russian Jews left the young Soviet State during the

¹⁵ Gitelman (2006), p.7.

¹⁶ Gitelman (2006), p.8.

¹⁷ Pinto (1999), p. 18f.

¹⁸ See also in this context: Pinto (2006), Pinto (2000).

1920's for family reunification in America, while others left as political refugees for Western Europe or as Zionist idealists for Palestine and left to build a free, liberated Jewish national home.

Divergent motives to leave the USSR have occurred also in later times. When the Soviet Union – during a phase of thaw between the superpowers USA and USSR – allowed Jewish citizens to leave the country for Israel, a considerable part of them dropped out in the Vienna airport and moved to the US. Irrespective of the activities of American Jewish organizations to attract some of the Russian Jews for a new beginning in the US, and thus easily coming into conflict with the Jewish Agency for Israel (“Sochnut”), there was a remarkable difference between those who aimed for a new life in America's competitive society (but with quite solid professional skills) and those who preferred Israel as a small, trouble shaken, threatened country with limited economic resources, but a Jewish State with a Jewish population majority and a complete absence of anti-Semitism.

The traditional migration research concept of push and pull factors can at least be partly applied to the divergent motives of post-Soviet Jews emigrating to Israel, the United States and Germany. As mentioned above, a significant push factor to leave the crumbling USSR at the beginning of the 1990's – no matter in which direction – was the growing anti-Jewish atmosphere in the country and the emergence of anti-Semitic and/or fascist movements like Pamyat in Russia and – once again – the Black Hundreds in Ukraine.¹⁹ Surveys and qualitative studies inside the Commonwealth of Independent States (C.I.S.), in Israel, the US and Germany came to the conclusion that the anti-Semitic threat had become a less important emigration motive since the middle of the 1990's, but emigration continued in remarkable size (at least to Israel and Germany). Other common driving motives to start a new life outside the home country were political chaos (tangibly the clashes between the Russian president Yeltsin and a Communist-dominated Parliament in the fall of 1993 and the following bloody charge of the White House in Moscow in October 1993); economic crises; the emergence of civil wars in some post-Soviet states in Middle Asia; the late consequences of the Chernobyl disaster in Ukraine; and an insufficient system of medical care (especially for elderly people). Except for anti-Semitism, all the other negative factors caused the accelerated (re-)migration of other ethnic

¹⁹ Laqueur (1995).

groups as well – as, for example, ethnic Germans went back in greater numbers to Germany and Greeks moved backed to Greece.

It could be imagined that the high level of education among Soviet Jews would predestine them to enter leading positions in many social and cultural fields after the breakdown of the USSR. But as *Steiner* (1997) concluded, in the Russia after Gorbachev “there was hardly any change among the elites in science, culture, the armed forces, foreign policy or the religious communities, not even personnel changes.”²⁰ In general, elite circulation became a long-winded and difficult process in the post Communist states of the former “Eastern Bloc”, and especially in Russia a considerable part of the “Nomenklatura”, including former Communist functionaries, were able to remain in elite positions.²¹ Such a development might have intensified the wish of many Jews with formerly restricted career opportunities, then once and for all to leave the country. Nevertheless, some Jewish protagonists got their chances in national politics – and used them.²² Other Jews succeeded in municipal politics and became mayors of several bigger towns in the Former Soviet Union.²³ Still others could improve their status in areas where individual initiative is necessary like in private business and the media. But as we will see later, some of the most successful businessmen and also media moguls moved abroad in the 1990’s or early 2000’s, while others stayed and proved to have continuous success.

However, the average Soviet Jew at the end of the 1980’s and the early 1990’s shared the general populations’ problems of deficient food supply, deficient medical care, political and economical instability, and beyond this, a certain governmental arbitrariness against the individual person. Individual vulnerability characterized every post-Soviet citizen, almost helpless vis-à-vis the abuse of power, corruption and a public life often affected, or even controlled by criminal structures.²⁴ Even a decade after the breakdown of the USSR there was no guarantee for individual integrity, even not for persons in extremely influential positions. Among other things this became obvious by the expulsion or conviction of prominent new businessmen,

²⁰ Steiner (1997), p.116.

²¹ Wasner (2004), pp. 199-213.

²² Two of Russia’s prime ministers in the 1990’s, Sergei Kiriyenko and Evgeny Primakov, had Jewish ancestors, and so Michail Fradkov, from 2004-2007 in office as Russian Prime Minister under Putin.

²³ An illustrative example is Eduard Gurvitz who became mayor of Odessa. Gurvitz was one of Odessa’s first private entrepreneurs in the late 1980’s under former reform President Mikhail Gorbachev’s policy of economic freedoms.

²⁴ Shlapentokh et al. (1999), pp. 17-20.

not a few of them with Jewish background. It is striking with what harshness Vladimir Putin, successor of Boris Yeltsin and President of Russia from 2000 to 2008, removed political enemies like the oligarchs Boris Berezovsky²⁵, Vladimir Gusinsky²⁶, Leonid Nevzlin²⁷ and Mikhail Khodorkovsky²⁸. At first glance, there are no convincing arguments that Putin's hostile activities against these people were driven by anti-Semitic motivations. Similar acts against non-Jewish oligarchs could be expected as well.²⁹ On the other hand, the cases mentioned reveal that emigration from the FSU for political reasons could, and still can, be the last option for Jews and non-Jews from a very different background and social strata.

Throughout the 1990's, anti-Semitism remained a factor not to be underestimated. In 1999 the Duma (Russian Parliament) deputy Albert Makaschow could openly express "wishing the Jews into the grave" without any subsequent punishment. Even in June 2005, 500 Russian politicians, including 19 members of the Duma demanded that the attorney general forbid any activity of Jewish organizations in Russia, a demand which was based on their "analysis" of one of the most important Jewish religious scripts, the Shul'han Aruch.³⁰

A certain mix of negative experiences with the force of the state, inhibited career opportunities, social tensions and unfavorable economical and educational perspectives fostered the emigration. In contrast to other Returning Diasporas, the Russian Jewish dispersal was directed to very different countries caused by quite

²⁵ Boris Berezovsky emigrated to England in 2001.

²⁶ Vladimir Gusinsky emigrated to Israel in 2003.

²⁷ Leonid Nevzlin emigrated to Israel in 2003.

²⁸ Mikhail Khodorkovsky, the former chief of the oil company Yukos, has been sentenced to 8 years of jail for tax fraud. Whatever Khodorkovsky was blamed and indicted for, it became clear in the eyes of the whole world that the Russian court of justice had passed a political sentence against Khodorkovsky and in favor of President Putin.

²⁹ A differentiated view on the problem has been provided by Marshall I. Goldman (2007) during the late Presidential era of Vladimir Putin. Goldman writes: "Despite Putin's willingness to associate himself and appear frequently with Rabbi Lazar [one of the two Russian Chief Rabbis], there is every reason to believe that anti-Semitism still thrives in Russia and that the Jewish oligarchs who have survived thus far should not assume that they will never someday feel the wrath of the Kremlin. The odds seem to suggest that that may yet happen, given the prominence of the oligarchs and the lingering resentment over how they acquired their wealth. But if and when that occurs, the chances are that while anti-Semitism may never be completely absent as a motivating force, at least as long as Putin is around, any pressure on Jews will be more political and economic than anti-Semitic." See: Goldman (2007), p. 281.

³⁰ Elias/Bernstein (2007), p. 14, footnote15.

distinct pull factors, as well as for reasons to avoid specific countries of destination, described in table 1 below.

Table1. Pull factors and problem factors for Russian Jews opting for Israel, the USA or Germany

	Israel	USA	Germany
Pull factors/ Advantages	Jewish national homeland; immediate access to Israeli citizenship, great variety of Jewish cultural and religious life; strong initial support for newcomers during the first half year after Aliyah (absorption basket)	Strong and sufficient Jewish communities; Experienced Jewish networks and well organized help organizations (HIAS, Joint, AJC, UJA); promising occupational perspectives for professionals	Speedy and unbureaucratic accommodation procedure for emigrants who prove Russian Jewish origin (until 2004); mid-European culture and climate; relative proximity to former home land; generous welfare system
Mentioned reasons for avoiding emigration to the respective countries	Continuing Middle East Conflict, dominating Middle East (Levantine) culture in daily life, religious influence on civil society, hot climate	Absence of a sufficient welfare system; geographic distance to Europe and the Former Soviet Union	Absence of strong and sufficient Jewish organizations and networks, Jewish life and culture – except some bigger towns; infamous German history: Holocaust

Source: based on own interview material

Table 1 renders insight into the complexity of motivational factors amongst potential Russian Jewish emigrants who could decide on a specific country of destination. In the interviews I've conducted I was told that several opinions were present in one and the same family, sometimes causing internal conflicts.

General demographic data gave almost no indications for significant correlations between education, profession, religiosity, age and geographic origin (inside the Former Soviet Union) and the then chosen countries of destination. The exceptions were that at the beginning of the 1990's, a majority of Middle Asian Jews (Caucasian Jews, Tats, Mountain Jews) definitely preferred immigration to Israel³¹

³¹ Several scholars explained this by the Sephardic Jewish tradition which could better survive in Middle Asian Soviet republics (at the margins of the FSU) and the strong (Jewish) family cohesion in this area (if a decision for Aliyah is made, the whole family emigrates – a distinct difference to Jewish families in European parts of the FSU where not a few families have been split by emigration in several directions.) See, among others: Mertens (1993), Remennick (2007).

and that a slightly older group of Russian Jews came to Germany.³² It has to be taken for granted that after political consolidation in Russia and some other successor states of the USSR since the middle of the 1990's, potential Jewish emigrants were able to prepare more carefully for moving to any of the possible countries of destination. However, RSJ immigration to the USA significantly dropped at that time, overridden by a greater annual influx of Russian Jews into Germany, while Israel stayed on the top with annual rates between 50,000 and 60,000.

Shortly after the millennium change it appeared that the peak of the Russian Jewish exodus from the Former Soviet Union has already passed. However, the losses for the Jewish communities on the territory of the Former Soviet Union have been dramatic. At the beginning of the new millennium only about 233,000 Jews were still residing in the Russian Federation and only about 104,000 in the Ukraine.³³

3. Unique characteristics of the Russian Jewish migrants

As outlined, the demographic and occupational profiles of the Russian Jewish emigrants to Israel, Germany, the USA and Canada appear almost similar. One of the remarkable similarities is that they are presenting the probably best qualified emigrants' group worldwide, with approximately 70% holding an academic degree.³⁴

Compared with other contemporary migrant groups, Russian Jewish emigrants are also characterized by a strong will to preserve parts of their culture and language of origin.³⁵ Most radical interpretations of these efforts have led to terms like cultural "enclaves"³⁶ or even "ghettos".

What can be taken for granted is that the intensity of Russian (Jewish) cultural retention and the cohesiveness of the RSJ communities put them in line with a social formation that *van Hear* (1998) defines and describes as modern

³² Ben Rafael et al. (2006:120,157) figured out a median age of RSJ immigrants in Israel to be 46.3, while for the RSJ immigrants in Germany a median age was 54.7. However, Cohen and Cogan (2005:259) had stated from the German Micro Census of 2000 and the Israeli Income Survey 2001, that "in general, immigrants to Israel are slightly older than those to Germany."

³³ Tolts (2005), p.17.

³⁴ See. Remennick (2007), p.17.

³⁵ Gold (1997), Kessler (1998), Leshem/Shuval (1998), Schoeps/Jasper/Vogt (1999), Borschevsky/Belozersky (2006), Cohen (2001, 2006).

³⁶ Gold (1997), Lissak/Leshem (1998).

Diasporas.³⁷

Since Russian Jews (as individual persons *and* as organized communities) outside the FSU keep strong personal, cultural, and partly even economic and political, ties with their co-ethnics in the respective Diaspora countries, continuing cross-border activities are a logical consequence. This cross-border engagement is by no means a single, peculiar phenomenon of the Russian Jews, but rather one example among many of the socio-cultural crossroads in the age of globalization. But to visualize trans-national characteristics featuring contemporary Russian Jewish emigrants, and also characteristics in their relations to different host countries, to non-Jewish Russians, to their countries of origin (successor states of FSU) and to Israel, a deeper insight into current migration research is necessary.

4. Globalization, migration and transnationalism

According to the United Nations' statistics, migrants in general make up 2 percent of the current world population³⁸, this means in total numbers that approximately 132 million people have moved from their original home places.³⁹ According to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, nearly 20 million of them are refugees.⁴⁰ Apart from refugees who escape from war, civil war, starvation and natural disasters, a large share of current migration flows is driven by the ongoing process of globalization. Very often additional demand on certain labor forces in highly developed industrial countries (especially in North America and in Western Europe) meets huge numbers of workers looking for economic opportunities outside their underdeveloped countries (many of them from Latin America, but also from Eastern Europe and from parts of Asia). According to *Levitt and Glick Schiller* (2004) "most

³⁷ Van Hear (1998) has referred to the significant growing number of ethno-national diasporas since the begin of the 1990's, describing 10 of them including their initial causes - among them the expulsion of Ghanaian and other West African migrants from Nigeria in the early 1980's, the earlier mass expulsion of Asians from Uganda in 1972, the exodus of Palestinians from Kuwait and of Yemenites from Saudi Arabia during the Gulf crisis in the early 1990's, Muslims obliged to leave Burma for Bangladesh and ethnic Nepalese forced to leave Bhutan for Nepal, both also at the begin of the 1990's. Van Hear has also investigated the exodus of ethnic Turks from Bulgaria in 1989 and of Albanians from Greece in 1990-94.

³⁸ Ben Rafael et al. (2006), p.5.

³⁹ Basis for the estimation: Total world population of about 6.6 Billion in 2007. See: US Census Bureau, Statistics World Wide. www.census.gov/ipc/www/worldpop.html

⁴⁰ World Development Report of the World Bank ("Workers in an Integrating World"), Washington / Oxford 1995, p 65. See also: Han (2000)

migrants move from a place where the state has relatively little power within the global interstate system to a more powerful state”.⁴¹ Worldwide labor migration seems to be a process which is increasing rather than decreasing. In a globalizing world where economic intertwining and political interconnectedness have substantially grown since the end of the Cold War and the implosion of the Communist system in the East, the highly industrialized Western countries seem to become an even stronger focus of reference for underprivileged populations that seek out a new geo-social destiny.⁴²

Consequently, there is a growing interest in understanding global migration and in the groups involved. Especially those Western states which are highly frequented by migrant movements and experience a steadily increasing share of foreign population (as the USA and several European countries like France and Germany) are forced to redefine their concept of nation and nationality, and to define their concepts of multi-culturalism or alternative models in societies with different ethnicities, religions, cultures and values. In general, Western democracies’ liberal constitutions provide a wide range of possibilities for cultural independence, for building ethnic communities and even for making one’s own politics – “Diaspora politics.”⁴³

All these are quite new opportunities for contemporary migrants which would have been unimaginable one or two generations before. Even once migrants are successfully integrated into the labor market and enter higher positions in the host society, their wish for cultural retention can remain intact by keeping up intensive ties to their sending countries. Today’s permeability across borders foster transnational ties, be it between the United States and Latin America, between South and North or between Western and Eastern Europe. The “revolution of communication and traffic technology” has given an additional strong impact for people’s present ability to practically get each other – at least virtually – to every place in the world at every moment. A few scholars introduced the term of “time-space compression”⁴⁴ for this development which has sped up transnational activities in an unexpected manner. Summarizing the new political conditions and the technical

⁴¹ Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004), p. 1013.

⁴² Ben Rafael et al. (2006), p. 8.

⁴³ Sheffer (2003).

⁴⁴ Giddens (1996), Albrow (1996).

opportunities, one can state that contemporary migrants to the West are provided with an almost ideal hardware for transnational activities. The complementary questions are: How is the software of transnational activities designed? Who are the activists, and what does transnational engagement mean for individual careers, collective identities, group and state belongings, for their self-image, their relatives and friends?

The masterminds of a first transnationalism concept, *Glick-Schiller, Basch and Blanc Szanton (1992)* defined transnationalism as a “process by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement.”⁴⁵ In their concept, transmigrants develop and maintain multiple relations – familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political - that span borders, thereby acting and being involved in nation-building twice. Glick-Schiller, Basch and Blanc Szanton believe that current forms of transnationalism mark a new type of migrant existence and “that only by more fully developing a global perspective on the transnational life experience of migrants, will social scientists be able to understand the similarities and differences between past and present migrations.”⁴⁶ With this hypothesis Glick-Schiller, Basch and Blanc Szanton have initiated a vital debate that has been continuing for one and a half decades now and has attracted disciplines like sociology, political science, ethnology, cultural anthropology and history.

Some of the scholars engaged in the debate have focused on objective conditions which could enhance new forms of transnational activities, as *Levitt/Dehesa (2003)* did with regard to Latin American and Caribbean transmigrants’ rights to vote in elections of the sending countries and as *Soysal (2002)* did with regard to the impact of dual citizenships facilitating the involvement of transmigrants in political participation on both countries. Other scholars have dealt with the specific *kinds* of cross-border activities, just to get a better typology of the agents of transnational activities and the fields they act in. *Guarnizo and Smith (1998)* suggested a distinction between “transnationalism from above” (reflecting the growing interconnectedness of corporations and political bodies) and “transnationalism from below”- encompassing the growing exchange between

⁴⁵ Glick-Schiller/Basch/Blanc Szanton (1992), p.1.

⁴⁶ The latter perspective is criticized, among others, by Sheffer (2003), who doesn’t consider ethno-national diasporas as a recent, modern, but rather a perennial phenomenon.

individuals, cultural networks and grassroots movements. A third group of scholars has mainly concentrated on the reciprocation of transnational movements, “in-between spaces” and the development of new identities.⁴⁷

Irrespective of these various streamlines and approaches a certain confusion about the general concept of transnationalism was soon stated across all disciplines.⁴⁸ Critics complain about a lack of a sufficient answer to the question of what actually is new compared to transnational migration movements of decades or centuries ago (of course, except new technologies and widened opportunities to communicate). Another critical debate occurred around the question whether current transnational phenomena could be covered by existing theories of assimilation and multiculturalism or not.⁴⁹

Important contributions to systematize the discussion came from *Portes* who also delivered a sophisticated comparative historical perspective that was, according to *Kivisto (2001)*, lacking in the concept of Glick Schiller and colleagues. Together with *Guarnizo* and *Landolt*, *Portes* suggested concrete circumstances that make it useful to apply a concept of transnationalism. These circumstances are: (1) a significant percentage of immigrants involved in the process; (2) the activities they engage in exhibit persistence over time; (3) already existing concepts fail to capture the content of these activities.⁵⁰ *Portes (2003)* also concluded that it is “not the case that assimilation and transnationalism are at odds since it is often the better established and more secure immigrants who engage in these activities.”⁵¹ However, the question remained as to what share of people are indeed “transnationally active” in contemporary migration groups. *Portes, Guarnizo and Haller (2003)* came to the conclusion that only a distinct minority of migrant groups (a maximum of 30%) are in fact involved in transnational activities.⁵²

⁴⁷ See: Markowitz (1995).

⁴⁸ Morawska (2005), p. 214.

⁴⁹ An especially critical view on the transnationalism concept as “decisive break” with former concepts of migration research and as supposedly presenting a new phenomenon in the age of globalization, is formulated by Waldinger and Fitzgerald (2004).

⁵⁰ See: *Portes et al. (1999)*, p. 218f.

⁵¹ *Portes* in: *International Migration Review (IMR)* 3/2003, p. 887. *Portes'* findings have been confirmed by *Remennick (2002:524)* who investigated transnational activities among Russian Jews in Israel, also finding more transnationally active persons among those who were already better integrated than average.

⁵² Based on her own survey among Russian Jews in Israel, *Remennick (2002)* again confirmed the small amount of migrants, indeed involved in transnational activities (ca. 20%).

However, certain criticisms remained of the claim that current transnationalism would be a quite new and unique phenomenon. Leading critics referred to (Eastern) European migrants who settled in America at the dawn of the 20th century but kept life-long intensive ties to their former living places.⁵³ Another weak point in the theoretical structure of Glick Schiller and colleagues (1994) seems to be their construct of “de-territorialized nation states”⁵⁴ – described as a result of today’s cross-border permeability and the existence of Diaspora communities, whose members are counted as state citizens of the sending country. Appadurai even suggested that in the context of ongoing globalization “the nation state, as a complex modern political form, is on its last legs.”⁵⁵ Instead of Benedict Anderson’s concept of “imagined political communities” (Anderson 1991) as the driving force for national movements in the 19th century, Appadurai (1996) attempts to apply the concept of “imagined worlds”, that is, “the multiple worlds that are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe.”⁵⁶ For Appadurai these “imagined worlds” consist of five scapes of cultural flows: ethnoscapas, mediascapas, technoscapas, financescapas and ideoscapas. On the other hand, Appadurai’s cosmopolitanized view tells us nothing about potential forces and frameworks which might compensate the states’ responsibility for civilizing structures, and it furthermore ignores, as Bodemann (2005) notes, the local institutional structures supporting ethnic communities and their networks.⁵⁷ Instead of an “agony” of the nation states, it turns out that governments of several sending countries develop vital and close relations to their citizens outside, hereby strengthening their own position. By offering special privileges (e.g. tax regulations) and in some cases granting the possibility of dual citizenship – as described by Guarnizo (2001) for the contemporary Dominican and Colombian migrants in New York and for Salvadoran migrants in Los Angeles -, the sending states officially

⁵³ Historian Eva Morawska criticizes that Glick Schiller’s claim of a new transnational phenomenon “rests on several incorrect assumptions about the last great wave of immigration to the United States, from 1880 to 1914.” Morawska expresses also doubts on Basch, Glick Schillers and Szanton Blancs perspective that this late 19th century emigration wave “lacked a transnational sphere in which immigrants engaged political leaders in the home countries.”(See: Morawska 2001:177). Faist (2000) also refers to the strong transnational ties which were developed by European settlers to America 100 years ago.

⁵⁴ Glick Schiller et al. (1994), p.269.

⁵⁵ Appadurai (1996), p.19.

⁵⁶ Appadurai (1996), p.33.

⁵⁷ Bodemann (2005), p.364.

accept the status quo, and invite their permanent migrants to political participation and try to gain them as cultural ambassadors of the sending nation.⁵⁸

Governments of sending countries, however, need competent points of contacts, i.e. organized groups of former citizens, and in a wider sense organized *ethnic* Diasporas. *Sheffer* (2003) defines them as “social-political formations, created as a result of either voluntary or forced migration, whose members regard themselves as of the same ethno-national origin and who permanently reside as minorities in one or several host countries.” For *van Hear* (1998) the minimal criteria to speak of a Diaspora include *firstly* the existence of an ethnic group or population dispersed from its original homeland to *two or more* other territories; *secondly* an enduring presence abroad (exile is not necessarily permanent); *thirdly* a remarkable kind of exchange – social, economic, political or cultural – between or among the spatially separated populations comprising the Diaspora. *Sheffer* (2003) asks for sufficient explanations *when and where* such ethnic Diasporas are built in present times – and when and where they are *not*. He acknowledges that migrants generally “wish to promote the well-being and ensure the continuity of their [*emigrants*’, OG] communities in their host countries” and “the wish to increase their ability to support the former homelands and co-ethnic diasporas in other parts of the world”, but argues that current theoretical approaches (primordial/essentialist approach; instrumentalist approach; psychological/ethno-symbolic and mythical approach, constructionalist approach) are not sufficient “for disentangling the vexing riddles surrounding ethno-national diasporas’ identities and their formation and growth.”⁵⁹

Taking it for granted that many transnational migrants are not nationalists or ideologists at all, but rather culturally interested in several social fields, Appadurai’s concept of imagined worlds seems to make sense for *cultural* trans-nationalism, concurring with *Ulrich Beck’s* idea of a cosmopolitan society.⁶⁰ As the nation states, as essential links for such an imagined world community become much more culturally pluralistic, first of all by continued immigration and a remarkable ethnic revival of population minorities (as, for example, the African Americans in the USA), transmigrants often develop bicultural identities, being rooted in two

⁵⁸ Needless to say that these kinds of home government – migrant – ties can only work in and in combination with countries led by more or less democratic and liberal rules.

⁵⁹ *Sheffer* (2003), p.19.

⁶⁰ *Beck* (2000), p. 100.

cultures/societies (or even more) at the same time. Apart from processes of internal group forming, ethnic communities are also defining themselves in contrast to their surroundings. In this context *Ben Rafael et al. (2006)* suggest a model of collective construction, based on common collective identity and defined as the “joint outcome of both subjective views, perceptions and interpretations, and practical elaboration of patterns of behavior and modes of organization”,⁶¹ the latter with regard to *Bourdieu's* (1987) notion of the habitus.

Identical ethno-cultural groups which emigrated from one and the same country and who establish Diaspora communities in quite different host countries can shape different identities and develop different strategies of integration, but can still hold transnational and trans-continental ties that strengthen their self-confidence as a unique ethno-cultural group. Sometimes efforts are undertaken to give these intentions an institutional form, as we will see in the course of this study at a later point of time, the “World Congress of Russian Speaking Jews” (WCRJ).⁶²

5. Russian Jews outside the FSU – a transnational community?

Current research on transnationalism is clearly dominated and further developed by US sociologists and anthropologists, mainly concentrating on the transnational activities and ties between ethnic diasporas in mostly US American metropolitan cities (New York, Los Angeles and others) and their former Latin American home countries (Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Colombia, El Salvador, the Philippines, Mexico). Other scholars concentrate on the exploration of transnational, and there's also taking place a debate on reformulating notions of space and social structure.⁶³ Although a cross-Atlantic dialogue on research and theory in the study of transnational migration - comparing previous American and European results - has begun (*Portes and DeWind 2004, Pries 1999 and 2008*), the field is underexposed. Though, for analyzing the Russian Jewish migration since 1990 – with Germany as one of the most important host countries - a European perspective seems to become

⁶¹ Ben Rafael et al. (2006), p.13.

⁶² The founding events of the World Congress of Russian Speaking Jews took place in Moscow and Jerusalem in 2002, which underlines the interest of Jewry in Russia to keep contact with the co-ethnics outside the country, too.

⁶³ See: Levitt / Glick Schiller (2004), p. 1004f.

quite necessary.⁶⁴

Admittedly, Russian Jewish migration has been under focus for decades; for example, from a historical perspective (Morawska 2001, Faist 2000) - but almost never in the context of transnationalism. The limited interest in Russian Jewish or modern Jewish Diaspora activities in the current discussion on transnationalism is all the more surprising, as we could find transnational (and even trans-continental) ties and activities between certain Jewish Diaspora groups even at the beginning of modernity and before.⁶⁵

In the context of immense Jewish population shifts across the 20th century, Russian Jews have been the outstanding migration group, dispersing in different directions and forming new networks abroad. It would take until 1995 when *Fran Markowitz* – as the first scholar - applied the term of “transnational diaspora” to the growing RSJ communities outside the FSU then followed by other researchers as *Remennick* (2002), *Schoeps et al.* (2005), *Cohen* (2006).

Markowitz (1995) has applied a cultural approach to describe the motives and concepts which generate and hold this transnational community together. First of all she refers to the phenomenon that many Russian Jewish emigrants who experienced persecution or at least subtle discrimination *as Jews* in the Former Soviet Union have undergone a process of “ethnic ascribing” in the respective host countries, where they are often considered as “*Russians*” (so even in Israel). But, according to *Markowitz*, the Russian Jews also started *to feel* primarily as “*Russians*”. In this context it is important to clarify that the migrants do *not* have a critical view of clichés and stereotypes of “*Russians*” that are circulating among the host populations.

Ethnic and transnational Diaspora identities are not necessarily at odds with a successful individual integration into the host society. *Berrys'* (1999) definition of

⁶⁴ Russian Jews have also settled to a few other European countries, but in a very much lower number than to Germany. A few hundred settled, for example, in Scandinavian capitals and in Vienna.

⁶⁵ Mention should be made of a few kinds of distinctive, multifaceted, Jewish, transnational activities, rooted in early modernity, the late Middle Ages or even in ancient times: Jewish trade relations and corporations, established in Europe, the Middle East and Asia; the development of transnational banks, fostered by kinship relations (as among the Rothschild families in Europe); the further development of a globally accepted Jewish theology, formed by locally AND trans-locally acting Jewish scholars and Rabbis (some of them permanently travelling, for example between Europe and Palestine).

integration⁶⁶ implies that the immigrants adopt the host language and culture successfully, at the same time retaining substantial elements of their culture of origin (here: Russianness), thereby being rooted in two cultures or more. But irrespective of a clear trend towards multi-culturalism in many countries of immigration, consistent biculturalism might still cause serious conflicts with host societies. Though, *Eisenstadt's* (1954) paradigm, that a complete loss of former identities will fit as the “the best index of full absorption” in the host system and guarantee integration success, has been heavily challenged by the recent Russian Jewish immigration wave to Israel.⁶⁷ Much more than in other host nation debates – as for example the inner-American discourses on the concept of “melting pot“ versus “salad bowl” or the periodic inner-German discussions about “Leitkultur” – the Israeli case reflects not only cultural differences but a distinct contest of power balances. Regardless of their current social situation in the respective host countries, contemporary Russian Jewish migrants feel well aware, if not even proud, about their “otherness” – on the one hand vis-à-vis the host societies, on the other hand vis á vis the Jewish communities in the host countries.

Ethnic or cultural minorities which are motivated and enabled to resist cultural assimilation are normally leveraged by a strong leadership. Such a leadership usually institutionalizes or supports existing co-ethnic networks, works as a source of inspiration and as opinion maker and gives advice on how to handle certain problems emerging in the host society. From the contemporary Russian Jewish communities we know that they crowd around RSJ elites who formerly often belonged to the Russian / Soviet intelligentsija. These elites, however, also had to undergo processes of economic, social and political integration that have influenced their new identities remarkably. It is also to be taken into account that the Russian Jewish elites - especially in Israel - are not a homogenous group, but have different territorial,

⁶⁶ The *sociopolitical* notion of „integration“ implies an ongoing process for the immigrants (or other members of society) with the final aim of equal material and social participation at social life as it is guaranteed for the general host population (see: Schmidt, Dictionary Politics, 1995:431). Esser (1999) emphasizes that each part and layer of society is expected to offer an “integrative contribution”. For Esser, a (successful) social integration is the result of active acting, and the persons integrating can normally choose between several options (of societal acting). Nevertheless, even a considerable part of Western politicians appeal to arriving migrants to conduct or develop a socio-cultural lifestyle which is more or less in accordance with that of the dominating host population (i.e. a call for assimilation). However, the socio-political definition of integration, as shortly described in this note, has no direct relevance for the study presented here.

⁶⁷ Galper (1995), p. 120f.; Lissak/Shuval (1998).

cultural and occupational backgrounds. In this study, only three segments of the RSJ elites will be under focus: The *intellectual, cultural and professional* Russian Jewish elites who emigrated to Israel and to Germany. They constitute an important part of RSJ migrants' leadership which is expected to have the resources for community building, for establishing links with the respective host societies and for building up transnational ties between the FSU and the several RSJ communities outside.

Some of the Russian Jews who settled to the United States, Canada, Germany or Australia during recent years speak of the Former Soviet Union as their original "home country". Some maintain intensive ties to the former countries of residence (now C.I.S.), and a considerable number of migrants hold dual citizenship, keep property (including flats) in the FSU and often travel there – which is totally different from the situation of Soviet Jewish emigrants who opted for Israel or the United States during the 1970's. On the other hand, RSJ migrants' *political* commitment with the FSU appears rather low. This is a significant difference to other transnational migrant groups under focus, as for example the Dominicans and Mexicans residing in the USA, who are strongly involved in political developments in their sending countries.⁶⁸

An even more apparent difference exists regarding the primary motives for migrants' permanent residence abroad. As studies by Levitt (2003), Portes (2004) and Guarnizo (2001) have shown for several Latin American migrant groups, many of their members settled as (relatively low qualified) labor migrant workers to the United States, remained in low-income groups but became able to permanently support relatives and friends in their home countries. Considering these ongoing mechanisms and processes of mutual interdependency, Glick Schiller et al. (1992) and Basch et al. (1994)⁶⁹ claim that transnational activities are, first of all, "a product of world capitalism."⁷⁰ However, this theoretical concept does not work in the case of the Russian Jews. Indeed, several studies since the mid 1990's revealed that in the complexity of motives to leave the USSR and its successor states, economic aspects played a certain role, besides anti-Semitism, political instability, outbreaks of civil war (especially in the Caucasus region and in Middle Asia), ecological disasters and

⁶⁸ Compare: Levitt and de la Dehesa (2003), p 604, 606.

⁶⁹ Glick Schiller et al. (1992), p. 5-12; Basch et al. (1994), p. 30-34.

⁷⁰ See also: Kivisto (2001), p. 553.

an extremely insufficient system of medical care. However, not one of the studies in the countries of destination revealed a “hurrying ahead” readiness of the highly qualified RSJ emigrants to accept occupational downgrading by doing “labor migrants’ jobs” in heavy industry, the service industry or other branches of the host societies with a significant labor force demand. A gap in current transnationalism theory occurs at this point, because RSJ ambitions in the host societies do not fit with labor migration expectations. *Kivisto* (2001) rightly remarks that in such a theoretical building there’s no space for the so called “brain drain migrants”, who are, nevertheless, “an important component of some contemporary immigrant communities.”⁷¹ The case of current Russian Jewish migration gives evidence that existing theoretical concepts have to be “liberated” from a merely economic approach, but rather to be enriched by analyzing cultural reproductions inside ethnic communities and cultural ties that help forming trans-national collective identity construction in the modern world.

6. Elite’s structures & opportunities in West and East

As we have seen, Russian Jewish émigrés and their communities are outstanding with regard to the level of above-average education, strong informal networks and cultural cohesion. Such a strong preservation of Russian-Jewish ethnicity at the new places of residence requires strong leadership as well as a certain number of immigrants with an elite background. Such elites might have developed their cultural and intellectual competency long ago in FSU times even if they were not allowed to apply it under Communist rule. This leads to the question of the specific features of such elites.

Until today, the notion of *elite* is not exactly clarified in research and literature. Elites are normally associated with persons or groups of persons who hold a privileged position and are likely to have more influence on political outcomes than ordinary people. Elites are present in all societies and fulfill specific functions. Different theories have been developed along the question on who they are, how they recruit themselves, how strong their influence is in society and how the various elites

⁷¹ Kivisto (2001), p. 561.

relate to the other.

The first scholars developing theories of social elites were Gaetano *Mosca* (1896), Wilfredo *Pareto* (1915-19) and Robert *Michels* (1911). Only Pareto, however, was anxious to work on a clear definition of “elite”.⁷² Very much of the discussion of these scholars circled around the issues of ruling classes and layers of society. Soon it became clear that modern elites and their roles cannot be explained by models of a “ruling class”. In the 1950’s a much more differentiated discussion arose, in which the elite status was characterized as specifically depending on the respective criteria of general social positions and their acquisition (“position elites”), the accumulation of economical and political power (“power elites”), or outstanding achievements (“functional elites”). At that point, the next level of elite theory was very much pushed by American scholars on the one side and by Germans on the other. German scholars focused much more on the context of elite formation and social structure compared to their American counterparts. It was the American sociologist C.W. Mills though who refined elite theory in his well-known model of *Power Elite* (1956) defining three elite power centers ruling society: economic, political and military elites.

Taking up early works by *Mannheim* (1935), however, the Germans came up with the theoretical concept of “functional elites” in which elitist groups fulfill their assigned roles to lead in society according to individual achievement and at the same epitomize role models with social values and attitudes necessary for future social development. A convenient definition of elites covering up these views, was developed by *Stammer* (1951), who considers elites as “more or less closed social and political groups of influence which crystallize from broad layers of society and their bigger and smaller groups on the ways of delegation and competition, in order to take over a certain function in the social and political organization of the system.”⁷³

Especially in *Dreitzel’s* (1962) concept, members of the elite can reach top positions due to their own achievements. In those positions they have the power and influence to conserve or change the social structure and to impart norms and values that are helpful for the further development of society. However, *Dreitzel’s* model of

⁷² Hartmann (2004), p.37.

⁷³ Stammer (1951), p.1.

“functional elites” requires a general openness of elite positions and a certain permeability for newcomers that are qualified to take key positions in society. Very much going into detail, *Dahrendorf* (1961) differentiated between seven elites as distinct “functional elites”, namely economy; politics and administration; science/research/education; church; arts/culture/leisure-time-industry; judiciary and military. According to Dreitzel and Dahrendorf, modern societies are *not* characterized by monolithic elites. There are rather pluralistic elites competing with each other on one hand and depending on each other and mutually controlling each other on the other. A very contrastive view to the approach of “functional elites” is presented by *Higley* (2007) who suggests a much more narrow definition of elites. Higley’s definition does “not equate high occupational, educational, or cultural status with ‘elite’, even though this ‘high status’ definition is often employed.” Higley sees “elites in a much more restricted sense – as the few thousand of people who occupy a modern society’s uppermost power positions.”⁷⁴

American sociologist *Suzanne Keller* (1963) belongs to the advocates of the concept of “functional elites” and proclaims their heterogeneity. Keller developed a specific model of “Strategic Elites”. She describes elites as being mutually interconnected rather than being a hierarchic system or a monolithic bloc as suggested by *Mills* (2000). In her perspective, respective groups of elites can interlock and overlap but are more or less confined to specific functions and responsibilities to maintain and advance society.

Keller’s theory is geared towards Talcott Parsons “AGIL”-model (1959) that identifies four basic demands for leadership in modern societies: **a**daptation (a), **g**oal attainment (g), **i**ntegration (i), **l**atent pattern maintenance (l), and these demands have to be fulfilled by elites. Here Keller differentiates – due to the expected impacts outside or inside society - between *external* and *internal* elites, which are qualified to perform leading functions. In her concept both categories of elites consist of two subgroups, due to their specific functions:

⁷⁴ In Higley’s (2007) view, elites in its close sense number only about 10,000 people in the United States, roughly 5,000 in middle-sized democracies like France, Australia and Germany and even less in smaller democracies. It is quite obvious that on the basis of such a narrow categorization, *émigrés* would play a certain role only in very exceptional cases. (Higley 2007:251). Other scholars associate elites primarily with “individuals, who occupy positions of authority” (Dye 1983:7), as “people at or near the top of the pyramid of power” (Putnam 1976:14) or as people that “have a high potential to influence national policy making” (Moore 1979:674).

- *External elites* are subdivided in a) economic/diplomatic/military/scientific and b) political elites, including bureaucracy, responsible for goal attainment.
- *Internal elites* are subdivided in a) integrative elites (intellectuals, religious authorities etc.) and b) artistic elites, responsible for latent pattern maintenance.

Similar to Dreitzel (1962), also in Keller's view elite recruitment by (individual) achievements is increasingly important. In this perspective functional elites improve their positions and influence in a notable way, a process which some observers consider for professional elites as a "third revolution" (Perkin 1996).

In later works Suzanne Keller has described the "*internal elites*" of her concept as "*expressive elites*" and characterizes them as "less tangible objectives pertaining to public moods, morale, and states of mind".⁷⁵ Keller regrets that elite analysis would typically feature goal oriented, "instrumental elites", while "expressive elites" would be more or less neglected, despite of the fact that "the two are interdependent in profound ways".⁷⁶

However, Keller (1963) went so far to apply her ideas also in the context of former *Soviet elites* – despite the fact that the USSR was the strongest strategic rival of the United States for decades and had not very much in common with Western democracies. Keller described Soviet elites after Stalin as a "traditional triumvirat" of the Communist party, the armed forces, and the secret police, but also as "heads of various ministries and high-ranking *intellectuals, artists, and writers* (...) increasingly considered as potentially semi-autonomous forces cross-checking and competing with one within the general framework of Soviet Communism".⁷⁷ Keller's view on such internal elites as "semi-autonomous" might appear to look a bit too bright. The question remains to what extent intellectuals or artists, not to mention "heads of ministries" had, in fact, the freedom to act beyond the Communist guidelines. The fact remains that these elites (intellectuals, artists, writers) *did exist* in the Soviet Union and were respected in the population. At least in the "thaw period" after Stalin's death, the Communist regime included a "sprinkling of

⁷⁵ Keller 1999, p. 363. Emphasises O.G

⁷⁶ *ibid.* A basic condition for the applicability of Kellers theory is a minimum of heterogeneity of elites.

⁷⁷ Keller (1963), p.118. Emphasis O.G

scientists, artists and the like” in the highly prestigious Central Committee of the Party (KPSS).⁷⁸ Scientists, artists and intellectuals with independent ideas and suggestions were well respected amongst the non-conformist Soviet people. It is proven that the share of Jews amongst these was relatively large and one could categorize them on the basis of Keller’s model of “strategic elites” more or less as “internal elites” inside the Soviet society. I have taken Keller’s model of Strategic Elites as a starting point of my PhD thesis in order to find out to what elites in the former country and in the current country of residence groups of Russian Jewish émigrés could unequivocally be assigned. A model with detailed subgroups is introduced in chapter III.

Beyond Keller’s model an overlapping of the categories of scientists (belonging to the “external elites”) and of intellectuals (belonging to the “internal elites”) might easily happen, sometimes embodied in one and the same person. Previous research also did not clearly indicate a rule of how to divide between both groups, while there have been a lot of attempts to differentiate. In the following I will take the intellectuals as the starting point.

7. Intellectuals, professionals and RSJ intelligentsija

Lipset (1960) has characterized intellectuals as those, who “create, distribute, and apply culture”. *Eyerman* (1994) suggests considering intellectuals as “part of an historical process in which human actors reinvent cultural traditions in different contexts.”⁷⁹ It is almost consensus that intellectual elites should be considered as a social category or collective which takes form in varying social and cultural contexts in relation to norms and traditions reaching back to pre-industrial society (Gela 1976, Bauman 1987). Thus, *Gramsci* (1971) sees intellectualism not as isolated *quality* but also as an *activity* bound to distinct social movements, most likely to initiate social change. This definition seems to be nearest to the original starting point of political intellectualism in Western Europe, as marked by the French “Dreyfusards” backing the Jewish officer Alfred Dreyfus after his sentence to imprisonment for alleged (and

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Eyerman (1994), p.4.

later successfully rejected) military conspiracy with Germany⁸⁰ – and later on continued in liberal and left wing intellectual circles across all Western Europe. *Bourdieu* (1988) assumes that intellectualism cannot exist without an “intellectual field”, i.e., a terrain where intellectuals contest for recognition and reward. But in the course of the 20th century the pre-conditions of the “intellectual field” have remarkably changed. Thus, *Eyerman* (1994) describes the growing dependence of contemporary intellectuals on certain connections to media, publishing houses and cultural institutions what forces them to professionalize or even *to sell* their “intellectual labor”.⁸¹ Strategic alliances with other social and professional groups have become much more important than in former times.

Needless to say, emigrated intellectual elites have to invest much more efforts to gain recognition *as intellectuals* from the side of the host society – and not only respect as migrants.

But what does this mean for a profound distinction between intellectual and professional elites? Taking a tighter definition just of the group of (perceived or self-defined) intellectuals, *Eyerman* (1994) makes a useful differentiation of *two notions* of the intellectual: The first just describes specific cognitive attributes of an individual, but the second sees the intellectual as a “social function” and subsequently as a “position, present to a greater or lesser degree in any society, which must be performed.”⁸² The latter type of intellectual had an obviously strong importance for processes of social and political transformation in the 19th and 20th century.⁸³ But at least after the end of the Cold War (which included a more or less complete disillusionment for socialist and Communist intellectuals in the Western world as well) the role and position of the intellectual has been continuously changing. Embedded in the mechanism of (Western) mass production and the demand of “intellectual labor”, a new type of intellectual is emerging: the “expert-intellectual”, serving either as adviser to power or manipulator of public opinion.”⁸⁴

⁸⁰ See: Pierre Birnbaum (ed.), *L’Affaire Dreyfus*, Paris 1994.

⁸¹ *Eyerman* (1994:13): “The means to intellectual recognition, and thus to public standing as an intellectual, flows through them and ‘intellectuals’ form strategic relations towards and on them.”

⁸² *Eyerman* (1994), p. 187.

⁸³ *Eyerman* (1994) includes in his study short biographies of outstanding intellectuals of the 20th century – thus for example John Maynard Keynes in England, Walter Lippmann and Daniel Bell in the USA, Gunnar and Alva Myrdal in Sweden and Arne Naess in Norway. In a historical perspective he also refers to the top Russian revolutionary elite at the beginning of the 20th century.

⁸⁴ *Eyerman* (1994), p.191.

Such a shift might cause a narrowing of intellectual's range of activities and of social impacts.

In summary it appears to be very hard to find “pure” types of (academic) professionals and of intellectuals right now. This holds true even more so when dealing with the Russian professional elites. It is a historically grown tradition among the RSJ professionals – for example natural scientists and technical professionals – that they have *often* been involved in creating culture and arts (i.e., as writers, poets and dramatists in parallel to their main professional activities) and sometimes they were also concerned with social and political issues.

The combination of cultural creativity and political commitment is also a special characteristic of those Russian elites that have been, and are still, considered the “Russian intelligentsija”. As in many European countries of the 19th century, also in Russia a critical intellectual milieu developed that was hard to integrate into conform state structures and institutions but felt as the conscience of the people.

These intellectuals appeared as critical voices outside the corridors of power, expressing special responsibility for social justice and human progress, trying to improve education of the masses and to inspire public discourse. Though, real opportunities to create an intellectual field (*Bourdieu 1988*) remained, with short interspaces between 1905 and 1917, relatively small in Russia – and then also in the Former Soviet Union. Moreover, Stalin “succeeded” in annihilating almost the whole original intelligentsija, considering its adherents as a potential threat for his dictatorial regime. Nevertheless, the myths about Russian and Soviet intelligentsija have outlasted the times, and there are Russian intellectuals in present times who clearly re-orientate themselves towards certain traditions of the intelligentsija. This trend is *not* limited to Russia and other successor states of the FSU, as this study will show.

Originally the term of intelligentsija was introduced into the Russian public in the 1860's by a minor novelist named Boborykin, and became current almost immediately.⁸⁵ In its early stage comprising a rather small number of idealistic priests, writers, civil servants and educators, this group of people obviously shared a deep concern for problems and issues of public interest, a sense of guilt and personal responsibility for the state and the solution of social problems, a propensity to view

⁸⁵ Malia (1961), p.1.

political and social questions as moral ones, and a sense of obligation to seek ultimate logical conclusions – in thought as well as in life – at whatever costs.⁸⁶ The activities of the intelligentsija increased when the Tsarist Empire slid deeper and deeper into social and political crisis during the last decades of 19th century.

In the stormy dawn of the 20th century, new opportunities evolved to initiate and to take part in far-reaching processes of social transformation. Commonalities with the critical intellectual scene in Europe were obvious, as the attention paid to the Dreyfus-trial in Paris proved. In February 1898 Russian writer and playwright Anton Chekhov wrote to his brother Mikhail: “You ask my opinion of Zola and his trial. I first of all take the obvious in consideration: on the side of Zola is all the European *intelligentsia*.”⁸⁷

Parts of the intelligentsija in Russia underwent a process of radicalization and supported the upcoming revolutionary movements.⁸⁸

It is likely that most figures of the “intelligentsija” also supported the bourgeois February revolution of 1917 but were against the Bolshevik revolution in October of the same year.⁸⁹ When the Red Terror came into operation, many liberal intellectuals and academics were killed by the new rulers⁹⁰, were expelled from their home country or had to adjust to the new system in order to survive. Interestingly the myth of Russian intelligentsija continued to be in people’s mind, what has caused that the clear difference to the “*Soviet intelligentsija*” – a term first of all applied for professional experts in the Soviet State – became partly blurred. Assessments of the

⁸⁶ Compare: Confino (1973), p.118.

⁸⁷ Confino (1973), p. 138.

⁸⁸ At the eve of the (failed) revolution of 1905 the “intelligenty” played an important role as opinion leaders and were very articulate. Their journals – notably the “thick variety” – were on the main avenues of dialogue and debate about the pressing political problems of the Empire, and their authors and editors produced potent networks geared to communicating and promoting their views.

⁸⁹ Compare in particular: Beyrau (1993), p. 27. Nevertheless there are different theories to what extent the Russian intelligentsija was involved in the revolutionary processes of 1917. Confino (1973:140) suggests that the intelligentsija did *not* play a leading role in the revolutionary parties, and that those who did were a minority in the intellectual stratum as a whole, as well as in the membership of the revolutionary parties. This perspective seems the more convincing when considering Lenin’s disparaging view on the intelligentsia associating it with “instability, flabbiness, wishy-washiness, opportunism and anarchist phrase-mongering”, thus depriving any ability to lead a political movement. (Compare: Confino [1973], p. 138). Especially the share of Jews inside the finally successful Bolshevik party was relatively low. Among the 24,000 members of the Bolshevik party at the eve of the revolution of 1917, only about 1,000 were Jews. Compare: Margolina (1992), p. 51.

⁹⁰ Especially in the 1930’s and late 1940’s, many outstanding Soviet intellectuals who were either too critical or too creative in the eyes of the regime paid with their lives, among them the well-known Jewish writers Osip Mandelstam and Isaak Babel and the director of the famous Yiddish Theater “Goset” in Moscow, Shlomo Mikhoels.

adherents, features and real meanings of the “Soviet intelligentsija” are controversial until today.⁹¹ In the concept of Soviet rulers, intelligentsija should mean nothing more than all those who toil with their minds instead of with their hands, that is, the technological, liberal-professional, managerial, administrative, or merely white-collar personnel of the state.⁹²

But at least a part of the Soviet intelligentsia was intended to act or feel beyond such Marxist-ideological classifications, tried to use small niches of independent discourse and communication and also raised their voices against the inhuman treatment of independent and critical intellectuals and artists. Jews took part in such actions with a disproportionately large share.⁹³ And whereas the intelligentsija in the late Tsarist Empire could rarely be joined and molded by Russian *Jews* due to their lacking access to leading academic institutions, during Soviet times, Jews presented a disproportionately high share in the *Soviet* intelligentsija. This is also statistically evident⁹⁴ while possibly in different shares in the several professional groups.

However, historians point out that those intellectuals and human rights activists who raised critical voices in the public or joint protest campaigns remained a clear minority throughout the Soviet era. For not a few of the famous non-conformists like Alexander Solzhenitsyn⁹⁵, Lev Kopelev⁹⁶ or Josef Brodsky⁹⁷, exile

⁹¹ Oswald (2000), p. 16.

⁹² Malia (1961), p.3.

⁹³ Small, half secret circles of academics and some critical milieus in the fields of arts remained the only possible niches and laboratories of free exchange, for discussing reform or just for broaching the issue of human rights violations. Discussions and debates normally necessary in the political arena were just shifted to the cultural and literature scene, and even here only a minority of intellectuals was ready to risk confrontation with the official Soviet guidelines. However, starting in the late 1960's a few protest campaigns (against several forms of State repression) and networks of a human rights movement took shape, primarily backed by scientists, artists and writers. It is important to note that the share of Jews among the signatories of political petitions or of solidarity declarations for persecuted dissidents was disproportionately high: approximately 30 percent of the protesters were Jews, while the share of Jews among academics in the USSR of that time was lower than 10 percent (Beyrau 1993:21, 221) Other activities of oppositional Soviet Jews fighting for their right for emigration, partly intersected with the general human rights movement in the USSR.

⁹⁴ Goskomstat Rossii 1995, quoted from: Oswald (2000), p.17.

⁹⁵ Alexander Solzhenitsyn (1918-2008) was one of the most famous Soviet writers, dramatists and dissidents, and won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1970. In the Western world he became well-known by his monumental historical work “The Gulag Archipelago” which describes the brutality of the Soviet labor camp system intended to break political opponents and dissidents. For critical utterances about Stalin in private correspondence he suffered in several Soviet labor camps from 1945-1953. From 1974-1994 he lived in exile (USA, Germany), but then returned to Russia. Especially in his later years, Solzhenitsyn was very close to Russian national history and to orthodox Christianity.

became the only way out, whereas others turned into a kind of inner emigration, among whom the writer Boris Pasternak⁹⁸ was one of the prominent examples. Verbal propaganda, samizdat and illegal radio broadcasts became helpful at least for highly educated and politically interested Soviet citizens to keep in touch with the ideas and viewpoints of critical intellectuals.

Since the late 1980's, a lot of formerly forbidden literature has been published for the first time in the FSU, and it became important spiritual nourishment for many (ex-)Soviet citizens even in retrospect. Thus, the myths about Russian and Soviet intelligentsija have outlasted the times, and there are Russian intellectuals in present times who clearly re-orientate themselves towards certain traditions of the intelligentsija.

However, critical observers noted, that the late Soviet intelligentsija had failed its challenges and roles during perestroika completely. *Firsov* (1997) stated that "immediately after the establishment of the Soviet power, representatives of the intelligentsija became directly involved in activities of all institutions of power, the repressive apparatus included" - and thus assessed future opportunities of critical intellectuals in the new Russia with great skepticism. *Firsov* (1997) also claimed that "the experience of selling intellectual services" would be something new in Russian life, but quickly taking root. "Being superior to taking money" would be an attitude "that is slowly becoming history".⁹⁹

Such harsh criticism of the Soviet intelligentsija did not hinder the term's

⁹⁶ Lev Kopelev (1912-1997), son of a Jewish agronomist, was a famous Soviet writer, literature critic and expert in German studies. For criticism of atrocities of Soviet Army committed on German civilians in East Prussia at the end of World War II he was sentenced to 10 years labor camp, but was rehabilitated in 1956. Kopelev worked as a lecturer for international press history and as a researcher at the Moscow Institute for History of Arts. In 1966, Lev Kopelev showed solidarity with the imprisoned Soviet writers Andrei Sinyavsky and Yuli Daniel, and in 1968 he protested against the (Soviet) dismissal of the "Prague Spring", whereupon the regime banned him from his scientific work. In 1981, Kopelev was expatriated from the USSR and settled to Germany.

⁹⁷ Joseph Brodsky (1940-1996), born in a Jewish family in Leningrad, developed a great lyrical talent already in his early years. He never started an academic career, but become famous as a levitated poet in Leningrad. In 1964 he was sentenced to several years of labor camp, and in 1972 he was expatriated. Brodsky settled to the USA and won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1987.

⁹⁸ Boris Pasternak (1890-1960), offspring of a famous Jewish artists' family in Moscow, became a well-known Soviet poet and writer. In the West he is best known for his novel "Doctor Zhivago" which had never been published in the USSR before the Gorbachev era. In 1958 Pasternak won the Nobel Prize for literature but was not permitted to receive it in Stockholm. In Russia, Pasternak was also famous for his translations of Goethe and Shakespeare.

⁹⁹ *Firsov* (1997:143). In such a statement, however, the extremely idealistic approach of the very early Russian intelligentsija shines through, implying a certain distance to material wealth but instead emphasizing cultural and moral values.

applying for RSJ immigrants in the “Russian Diaspora”. *Lissak and Leshem* (1995) suggested already in the mid 1990’s that the Russian intelligentsija in Israel would aim to reconstruct a Russian cultural *identity*. The authors noted “a very heterogeneous group including, first and foremost, writers, poets, artists and journalists, but also scientists and professionals with an ongoing interest in the arts, such as art, literature and philosophy.” Parts of these immigrants would “claim the term ‘intelligentsija’ for themselves – especially high qualified groups coming from metropolitan areas of the FSU and the Slavic region in particular.”¹⁰⁰ This corresponds to a great acceptance of the intelligentsija inside the wider RSJ community until today,¹⁰¹ and there are strong connections to the RSJ artists’ scene.¹⁰² *Rapoport and Lomsky-Feder* (2002) do even write of a “habitus of intelligentsija” that would be still present in the young generation of the immigrants.¹⁰³

Political scientist Ze’ev Khanin stated for the 1990’s in Israel that “a very substantial part of the immigrant population identified themselves with the intelligentsija. Not only the intellectuals, but first of all ‘intelligentsija’ in the Russian meaning of this word, which focuses that group which is implemented in the production and reproduction of the culture.”¹⁰⁴ According to Khanin, among many RSJ immigrants “culture is seen in its widest sense: including political culture, social culture, economical culture, environmental culture (...) That means, people who formulate the agenda, who move it forward and who make an opinion, are

¹⁰⁰ Lissak and Leshem (1995), p.25.

¹⁰¹ An illustrative example on how much appreciation is shown to political scientists, sociologists and groups of social scientists who intervene in politics dates back to the mid-1990’s when the RSJ community made preparative steps for forming a political party (Israel ba Aliyah). An inner-Russian survey conducted in 1994 brought out, “that it was important for the new party to be led by professionals, professors from the Former Soviet Union, who would analyze and advise on the genuine common grounds that could be used in drawing up the programme of the new party. In other words, politicians must be scientists themselves.” See: Siegel (1998), p. 147.

¹⁰² Authors and poets of the 1970’s, like Nina Voronel, the satirical poet Igor Guberman and the literary critic Maya Kaganskaya have been standing in the Israeli public eye for three decades, but writers from the recent immigrants wave like Dina Rubina, Anatoly Alexin and Gregory Kanovich - have quickly found *their* Russian readership in Israel as well. See: Remennick (2007), p.112ff.

¹⁰³ Rapoport and Lomsky-Feder (2002) who got their results on the basis of narrative interviews with 43 Russian Jewish university students in Israel concluded that the cultural attitudes of the “intelligentsija” inculcated by the respective families continued to be the students’ main capital in their adolescence in Russia, and later on in Israel. Removed from its historical and socio-ethnic origins, the habitus of the “intelligentsija” would serve the students in selecting forms of conduct that provide them with a distinct sense of place as newcomers. See: Rapoport/Lomsky Feder (2002), p. 245.

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Zeev Khanin in Herzliya on March 16, 2008.

intelligentsija.”¹⁰⁵

8. Previous Research

Research on Russian Jewish immigration into Israel and into the USA reaches back to the 1970's, while this became an issue in Germany – obviously – only since the mid-1990's. As one can expect when current wave of migration occurs, special attention has been paid by sociologists, ethnologists, political scientists, and also by historians, cultural scientists and researchers in Jewish studies.

The number of publications on the RSJ immigration to Israel since 1989 has outnumbered those dealing with RSJ immigration to Germany by far, which is not surprising for several reasons. First, the total number of RSJ immigrants having migrated to Israel, is five times the number of migrants to Germany. For Israel nowadays RSJ immigration has a serious demographic, political, economical and cultural relevance (see chapter 3). From this perspective it is less surprising that research in Israel has already dealt with very specific issues, as for example integration of teenagers, health problems among RSJ or integration of certain professional groups. Such a wide range of analysis is for Germany, of course, unrealistic. Nevertheless, first comparative analyses concerning the new immigrants in both countries have already been conducted (see below here), and a future extension of this comparative research is very likely to take place.

The mass of empirical studies that deal with Russian Jewish immigration to Israel – and in this context I mainly focus on immigration since the end of the 1980's – is hard to overlook. A few experienced scholars already carried out research on Russian Jewish immigration in the 1970's and 1980's and continued then with the Great Russian Aliyah, as for example *Gitelman* (1978, 1982, 1988, 2003, 2007) and *Horowitz* (1979, 1986, 1989, 1999, 2003). A new “research boom” developed in the course of the 1990's. As time went by, the number of cultural studies increased alongside those which reflected social, economical and political problems in the context of the new Aliyah. A real stream of analyses was then published at the end of the 1990's and the early 2000's. *Leshem* and *Sicron* explored the Russian Jewish community by demographic patterns, labor market integration and self-formation

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*

(1999, 2004), whereas *Jones* (1996), *Khanin* (2002, 2003, 2007) and *Shumsky* (2002) focused on the political dynamics among Russian Jews. The cultural anthropologist *Siegel* (1998) presented a first *cultural* profile of the RSJ community, whereas *Fialkova* and *Yelenevskaya* comprehensively enriched the research on the RSJ *cultural* profile in 2007 (“Ex-Soviets in Israel”). Scholars like *Rapoport* (2000, 2002) and *Sever* (1997) focused on challenges and developments among RSJ children and youth in Israel, while *Remennick* focused on several groups of professionals and their new challenges (2002, 2003).

This short list should make clear that, in relation to very diverse topics of interest, there’s a logical demand to include very distinct groups of scholars (political scientists, sociologists, ethnologists, cultural anthropologists, psychologists) in the ongoing research and to interconnect them as much as possible, thus promoting profound studies with interdisciplinary approach. Since the last few years, in Israel it can be differentiated between a considerable group of researchers who stem from the recent Aliyah itself (among others: Remennick, Khanin, Elias, Epstein, Fialkova, Yelenevskaya, Lissitsa, Feldmann), and between those who study this migration wave and its impacts without belonging to the FSU group (among others: Gitelman, Leshem, Al-Haj, Sicron, Siegel, Rapoport, Ben-Rafael and Troen). Some of the RSJ scholars who explore their own migrant group and its perspectives emphasize specific advantages in having the “inside view”, i.e. being a part of the field that is explored.¹⁰⁶ There is no doubt that having grown up in the same society and language and being familiar with the whole range of cultural codes (including the specific sense of humor), is facilitating researchers’ movements in the same ethno-cultural field. However, it is not proven that these co-ethnic advantages automatically signify when it comes to the stage of drawing objective conclusions from the collected material, especially as former socio-cultural internalizations might be an influencing

¹⁰⁶ Larissa Remennick, one of the outstanding FSU scholars doing research on the RSJ immigrants in Israel for many years, writes in the preface to her comprehensive study “Russian Jews on Three Continents” (2007): “The insider perspective significantly alters the researcher’s standpoint, access to informants, and data resources in the native language, and can also redress the interpretation of the finding.” In another publication (“Russian Jewish Emigrants after the Cold War”, 2006) she underlines: “I am an immigrant myself, having moved to Israel from Moscow (...) Mine is perhaps the optimal standpoint for a migration scholar, as I have both first-hand migrant experience and cultural competence to study my fellow Russian Jews.” Larissa Fialkova and Maria Yelenevskaya (2007:28) refer to advantages in qualitative studies (interviews, participant observations) when scholars and interviewed people belong to the same ethnic or “folk” group: “the more folklore groups the interviewer and the interviewee share, the more they rely on allusions and lingo familiar to both.”

factor when *individual* analyses and interpretations of the material have to be done.

Here it seems that there is a quite different advantage to have a perspective without preconceived notions, i.e. having the *outside* perspective that helps to avert certain biases of research which could theoretically result from (co-ethnic caused) emotional involvement or unconscious motives to paint a specific picture of one's "own group". Thus, it rather looks promising to study migration issues in interdisciplinary teams which include experts from sociology as well as from other fields (as mentioned above) and furthermore to add scholars from "inside" and from "outside" the group.

Ben Rafael, Olstein and Gejst (1997) put emphasis on remarkable differences that characterize the Russian Jews having come after 1989 compared to other groups of Jewish immigrants of the young Israeli history. On the basis of a comprehensive survey, the authors had elaborated and analyzed the RSJ's acquisition of Hebrew and its use in society. The survey revealed a strong bilingualism (Hebrew/Russian) and biculturalism (Israeli-Jewish/Russian), which, in fact, appeared to be a serious challenge for the original state concept of merging the Diaspora cultures into the Israeli "melting pot" ("Mizug Galujot"). *Ben Rafael, Olstein and Gejst (1997)* emphasized that this remarkable cultural self-assertion of the Russian Jews would clearly object to a demand of assimilation, but would at the same time enable a successful "insertion" into Israeli society, i.e. a rather pragmatic form of integration which nevertheless includes a relatively fast acquisition of the host language and a remarkable interest in the culture of the new setting. These features, as well as a low degree of religiosity, human resources warranting social upward mobility and a tendency to hyphen the identity of origin with that of the new setting, are the basis for a new self-image as "Returning Diaspora" which at the same time preserves, at least, cultural independence. These bicultural patterns of many RSJ immigrants in Israel have contributed to a rather unique collective identity, compared to previous groups of "Olim" (Jewish Returnees) – an identity that also significantly differs from the former Russian-Jewish immigration waves. The findings of *Ben Rafael, Olstein and Gejst (1997)* have then been confirmed in other studies, especially with regard to RSJ's willingness and ability of cultural self-assertion, to distinctive networking

(*Leshem/Shuval* 1998, *Siegel* 1998¹⁰⁷, *Leshem* 2007). However, it seems not yet clear whether the specific cultural cohesiveness of the RSJ immigrants will remain a specific phenomenon of the first generation only or whether the same patterns and attitudes will be inherited by the RSJ offspring. Furthermore, it seems not adequately explored whether the strong RSJ cultural self-assertion is, among other factors, *also* induced by the host population's indifference or veterans' hostility – a question previously unanswered in Germany as well.¹⁰⁸

The formation and social role of “post-Soviet” or “Russian” intelligentsija in Israel has been analyzed – among others – by *Lissak and Leshem* (1995) and by *Epstein and Kheimets* (2000), while *Rapoport and Lomsky-Feder* (2002) suggest that “intelligentsija” is – as an “ethnic habitus” (following Bourdieu, 1987) – also inculcated and imparted in the generation of the young RSJ immigrants. But except for a partial study by *Khanin* (2003a) mainly dealing with political power of the Russian Jews in Israel, there is no research existing that deals specifically with the RSJ immigrant elites.

Research on Russian Jewish immigration to Germany is still in its early stages and only dates back to the mid-1990's. *Schoeps, Jasper and Vogt et al.* (1996, 1999) undertook two Germany-wide empirical studies, based on a nation-wide survey among RSJ immigrants, but focused mainly on aspects of Jewish community transformation. *Harris* (1997) analyzed the legal framework and the political conditions in which the Russian Jewish immigration to Germany took shape, also in the comparative perspective to the return of ethnic German repatriates (“Aussiedlers”) to Germany. Adaptation strategies among Soviet Jewish immigrants in Berlin during the early 1990's have been investigated by *Doomernik* (1997). *Spülbeck* (1997) conducted a field study in an East German village hosting Russian Jewish immigrants and analyzed German hosts' attitudes towards the “aliens”. First profound cases studies that focused on the impacts of RSJ immigrants to greater Jewish communities and especially the relations between “Germans Jews” and “Russian Jews” (Cologne, Berlin) were offered by *Silbermann* (1997) and *Kessler* (1998). When it turned out that the Russian Jews in Germany would face

¹⁰⁷ Siegel (1998) even claimed that “the adaptation of Russian Jews in Israel is a phenomenon without parallel in the existing sociological literature.” See: Siegel (1998), p.189.

¹⁰⁸ See in this context the study of *Elias and Bernstein* (2007), dealing with negative stereotypes of the Russian-speaking Jews in the FSU, Israeli and German media.

disproportionally large problems on the labor market, studies of their socio-economic integration attracted more interest. *Gruber and Rüssler* (2002) provided a profound case study for highly qualified Russian Jews in the federal state of North-Rhine Westphalia and sketched problems of labor market integration typical also for their co-ethnics in other parts of Germany. In recent years, a German-Israeli team of sociologists (*Cohen and Kogan*) focused intensively on progress and setbacks of Russian Jewish immigrants entering the German labor market, and put it into comparative perspectives with the situation of the RSJ immigrants in Israel (*Cohen/Kogan 2005, 2007*).¹⁰⁹

The ethnologist *Becker* (2001) focused on biographical re-constructions and identity search among Russian Jewish newcomers with regard to certain impacts of (German) migration policy, but combined it at the same time with a content analysis of German (non-Jewish) mainstream coverage on Russian Jews across the 1990's. The sociologist *Körber* (2005) undertook a qualitative case study in an East German Jewish community completely consisting of Russian Jews, and she analyzed power struggles as well as conflicts about acceptance of RSJ immigrants inside and outside the synagogue community. An early empirical analysis on identity among Russian-Jewish youth in Germany – unfortunately not continued as longitudinal study - was done by *Hess and Kranz* (2000), originally based on a survey in Jewish holiday camps.

However, studies on host-immigrant-relations, inside or outside the Jewish communities remained rare or were completely lacking. Thus, until today there is not a single study on the German host population's attitudes toward the Russian-Jewish newcomers. There is also a complete lack on research about *emigrated* RSJ elites. The topic of post-Soviet *Jewish* intelligentsija “abroad” is only touched in other works, for example, in a study of *Oswald* (2000) about the role of ethnicity after the breakdown of the USSR.

At the beginning of the new century a shift to more comparative studies became trendy. Eastern European expert *Dietz* (2000) compared the situation of Russian Jewish immigrants who came to Germany during the 1990's with that of the

¹⁰⁹ A comparison of the labor market integration of Russian Jews in Germany and in the United States has been presented by Madeleine Tress (1997, 1998).

ethnic German repatriates arriving at the same time. On the basis of a longitudinal study, *Schütze and Rapoport* (2000) analyzed trends of integration patterns of young Russian Jewish newcomers (students, later on also graduates and professionals) in Jerusalem and Berlin. *Ben-Rafael* and colleagues conducted a comparative analysis of Russian Jewish community building in Israel, Germany and the USA (“Building a Diaspora”, 2006), which was a combination of quantitative and qualitative research, based on standardized methods in all three countries (community studies by expert interviews, survey among the RSJ newcomers, content analysis of non-Russian and newly established RSJ print media). Almost at the same time, Israeli sociologist *Remennick* (2006) conducted her own study “Russian Jews on Three Continents” which covers results from extensive (personal) quantitative and qualitative research on Russian Jewish immigrants in Israel and at certain places in the United States, Canada and Germany. Berlin ethnologist *Hegner* (2008) conducted a comparative analysis on Russian Jewish newcomers and their integration in several frameworks in Chicago (USA) and in Berlin.

In the near future, one can expect that bi-national teams of sociologists and related fields of research will direct increasing interest especially at the similarities and differences of the development of RSJ children and youth in Israel and Germany. This coming generation is raised and socialized in the new environments yet still anchored in the ethno-cultural networks of their families of origin. A second focus of research – already in operation – is directed at specific images of Russian Jews in Israeli and German mainstream media (*Elias/Bernstein 2007, Elias 2008*).

Presently, the number of scholars from the ranks of the RSJ immigrants doing research on their own group *in Germany* is rather low, at least compared to Israel. What is rather striking is that two “lines” of research have become a trend: One line especially focuses on the Russian Jewish immigration into the Jewish communities – including the resulting impacts for all Jewish sides (*Kessler, Körber, Kiesel, Hegner, Polian*) -, whereas a second group is focusing on the general social and cultural integration of the Russian Jews in Germany, with different aspects such as labor market integration, identity, youth or media coverage (*Cohen and Kogan, Dietz, Schütze, Elias*).

However, there are no studies on self-organization of the RSJ immigrants comparable to the research done in Israel for example, by *Khanin* (2003 a),

Remennick (2007) and *Leshem* (2007). RSJ elites have not yet been a topic of research; there are also no existing studies on single groups like professional elites or intellectuals.

9. Hypothesis, leading questions and methodical approach

This PhD work analyzes how RSJ professional and intellectual elites in Israel and Germany define themselves after resettlement and where do they see their scope of action – and perhaps even their “mission” -, presumed these elites have managed to integrate into their host society but remained interested in Russian Jewish issues (i.e., did not go the way of total assimilation).

According to previous studies (*Ben-Rafael et al. 2006, Remennick 2007*) Russian Jewish elites’ commitment is not only concentrated on the countries they settled to but also on transnational ties in order to preserve Russian cultural ties and networks. This constellation in mind, and by interpreting results and conclusions from other previous studies on the RSJ emigration after 1989, the following hypotheses are proposed:

I.) Russian speaking Jews who emigrated from the territory of the Former Soviet Union develop distinct forms of bilingualism and biculturalism in Israel as well as in Germany. This also predestines them for shaping a “trans-national Diaspora from below” (Guarnizo/Smith 1998) that is most of all based on *cultural* bonds. This trans-nationalism does not hinder a successful socio-economical integration in the respective host countries. Members of the RSJ elites strongly support and identify with this trend.

II.) The Russian Jewish bilingualism and biculturalism averts assimilation into the respective host societies and becomes manifest in specific structures and institutions (like cultural and educational institutions, the media, political organizations and ethno-markets). Russian Jewish cultural, intellectual and professional elites who have immigrated with the overall group initiate and support this process, which is much further in Israel than in Germany.

III.) Compared to other ethnic, cultural and religious Diaspora communities the Russian Jews are *not* fixated on a single “home land”. There are economical, cultural and political connections with the successor states of the USSR as well as with Israel. A numerical minority of religious/observant Russian Jews considers exclusively Israel to be their “home land”.

IV.) The strong tendency of Russian Jewish cultural self assertion has lasting impacts on the local Jewish communities and also on the transnational Jewish world. Significant factors are the demographic consolidation of Jewish communities in Western countries and Israel, and at the same time more pluralism and also partly secularization. Also here Russian Jewish elites play a key role.

V.) In Israel, the Russian Jewish community is highly politicized compared to those in Germany. Russian Jewish elites with academic and artistic backgrounds who are politically active are seen in the tradition of the original “Russian intelligentsija”, and some immigrants consider them as the new (spiritual) vanguard for the Israeli society. Among the Russian Jews in Germany, however, the “Russian intelligentsija” is irrelevant.

Methodology

The interviews with representatives of the Russian Jewish elites (35 each in Israel and Germany) have been designed as half-structured expert-interviews. This kind of interview guarantees for both a great gain of expert-knowledge concerning the RSJ elites and also provides for the opportunity to delve into single aspects of immigration and integration in both countries, even enabling a switch into narrative aspects. (Bogner/Littig/Menz 2005).

The interview sample was gathered from the following professional groups: scientists, artists, writers, educationists/teachers, engineers, social workers, journalists/editors, and politicians. With the exception of a few additional questions for the RSJ respondents in Israel (for example: membership in a “Russian” political party or IDF experiences of the children) the questionnaires in Israel and Germany

were applied in an identical form (see Appendix). The standardized questionnaire circled around the three major complexes:

- a) the respondent's own integration experiences (labor market, host-migrant-relations, cultural integration etc.)
- b) the respondent's anchoring and individual activities inside the respective RSJ community (hereby with the focus more on local and less on the national level)
- c) perceived impacts of the RSJ immigrants group on the host societies (in Germany: on the established German-Jewish community) and finally the self-image, the aims and (actual) realistic opportunities of the emigrated Russian Jewish elites ("intelligentsija"), presumed my interview partners felt as a part of such elites (and confirmed, more or less, their real existence)

In order to figure out the respondent's individual position between culture of origin versus host culture, co-ethnic networks versus host environment, self perception as Russian elite versus elite member/citizen of the host nation, and additional in order to reflect individual activities inside/for the RSJ communities, the following main aspects were incorporated into the questionnaire¹¹⁰:

- self-image as representatives of intellectual elite *before* and *after* emigration¹¹¹
- anti-Semitism as formative experience to "return" to one's Jewish roots
- original expectations to country of destination and current index of satisfaction
- remaining co-ethnic contacts after emigration/Aliyah
- ethno-cultural behavior/language patterns (in the new country)
- perception of culture of origin versus host culture
- perception of relations between Russian Jews, non-Jewish Russians and host society
- group identification and political orientation (especially in Israel)
- transnational activities and specific ties to the sending country (FSU) *and* to Israel

¹¹⁰ See the complete questionnaire in the Appendix.

¹¹¹ This topic was, of course, only to apply for those age groups of 45 and over.

Interview partners were recruited in three age categories, i.e. people below 30, between 30 and 60, and over 60 years, and a balance of sex was aimed for. In the age groups 30-60 and over 60 years people prevailed who had received a professional education – and mostly an academic degree – already in the Former Soviet Union and its successor states (C.I.S.).

As it soon emerged, many of the interviewees were, alongside their professional work, also active in culture/arts, volunteering in immigrant (or generally Jewish) organizations or even in politics. Thus, in the last series of the interviews there was a specific look for interview partners who were socially active, committed in Russian-speaking professional/intellectual associations, cultural projects or political groups (the latter only in Israel), in Germany also for those who had a special status in the Jewish communities. Migrants who were, beyond this framework, additionally active on a trans-national level aroused special interest.

The interview partners were identified by a “snowball” system. In *Germany* initial contacts were made in greater Jewish communities/organizations (among others in Berlin, Bremen and Potsdam); in a Russian language publishing house (Berlin); in a RSJ cultural center (Potsdam) and furthermore the Berlin office of the World Congress of Russian-Speaking Jews (WCRJ). The first contacts in Israel were done with the “Association of Scientist Repatriates from the Former Soviet Union”, RSJ scientists and scholars in several departments of universities (Jerusalem, TAU, Technion Haifa), furthermore RSJ employees at the Brookdale Institute, teachers staff at the Mofet school in Tel Aviv (“Sheva Mofet”) and a special sample of highly qualified immigrants living and working in the area of the town Mizpe Ramon (Negev).

A majority, but by far not all of the interviewees in *Germany* have been members of the local Jewish communities. Among the non-members have been scholars, artists, one of the most prominent journalists, a medical doctor and a coordinator for social work. In fact there are loose networks between those RSJ committed in the local JC’s and those who are not. It was very important to have both groups of people belonging to professional and/or academic elites in the sample: Both groups are widely perceived in the RSJ community, and both have “key players” in their rows.

At the beginning of the interviews the respondents got time to reflect on their

first experiences in Germany/Israel, in cultural as well as in economic concerns (entry into labor-market, possibilities of professional self-realization, or first encounters with host population). After the respondents had “made up a balance” of their initial stages of integration into Israeli or German society (where also room was given to express disappointments or contentedness with the previous course of integration¹¹²), it was normally switched to the community-oriented questions, such as on interviewees' current activities in religious communities, cultural clubs, welfare organizations and the like - but here strictly differentiating between Russian, Jewish and host (German, Israeli) structures. In the case that the Russian/Russian-Jewish identity had remained strong and the individuals' anchoring in the RSJ community was obvious (surprisingly often in parallel with a very successful integration into structures of Israeli/German society), it was then insisted on the respondents' motivation, individual plans and planned contributions *for* strengthening and continuing RSJ structures. An additional set of questions focused on specific contributions of the respective RSJ immigrants' group to Israeli and German society (positive and negative contributions) and on an individual assessment concerning the host country's migration policy.

The interviews took between 45 minutes and three hours, depending on how many biographical aspects came in, or on how intensively the talk went on about specific issues and characteristics of the immigrants group or about social and political problems in the respective country. In Israel all interviews were conducted in English, in Germany the majority of interviews were held in German.

In addition, there was the possibility of several kinds of participant observation when Russian Jewish immigrants gathered for distinct occasions. Thus I visited several services in the Jewish community of Rostock (North-East Germany) events which in fact were made up of 100 percent immigrants (except for the Rabbi, an old German Jew in his 80's), religious and cultural events supported or aligned by the Jewish community of Potsdam (also 100 percent “Russian”) and Hanover (Reform community), and I collected experiences “from inside” as an employee of a Russian publishing house in Berlin (2005/2006), which amongst other publications produces the monthly “Evreyskaya Gazeta”.

¹¹² In this context, the respondents were asked to express their individual satisfaction with four specific aspects of current life – 1) living standard; 2) cultural life; 3) contacts with hosts; 4) acceptance by hosts -; using a scale from 0 (totally unsatisfied) until 5 (completely satisfied).

The content analysis of the interview data was oriented on methods described by *Corbin and Strauss* (Corbin 2008) and *Gläser and Laudel* (2004), *Huberman and Miles* (1994) and *Meuser and Nagel* (2005). Meuser and Nagel (2005) suggested a model of analysis of expert interviews proceeding in six steps including transcription, paraphrasing, titling, thematic comparison, sociological conceptualization and theoretical generalization.

The interviews were completely transcribed; some parts of the material significantly deviate from topics related to the applied questionnaire. The extended material, however, gave important insights into biographical changes affected by transition from the FSU to Israel / Germany, into socialization experiences by the ones formerly fighting the Communist dictatorship, into changed attitudes towards religion (including some interviewees that had distinctly become Orthodox), and into individual perspectives on their host society as well as on the Middle East conflict.

Since the general interview analysis focused on RSJ elites' integration and RSJ elites' role in community building – i.e., less biographical narratives -, there was no explicit need for a contextual interpretation of the meanings of the interviewee's statements, and also no need for sequential reconstruction of the text. It was rather important to interpret units that are connected thematically. According to Meuser and Nagel (2005) the functional text is, from the very beginning, embedded in a context of institutional-organizational conditions of acting, which guarantees the comparability of the respective interviews.¹¹³

At the same time, the interview questionnaire served as the appropriate tool to select relevant topics and sequences which could be applied for a rough structure of paraphrases. These topics were condensed and categorized along the main theses of this PhD work and along the subdivided questions above.

The *half*-structured questionnaire theoretically provided for room to enlarge on other aspects not directly connected to the RSJ elites and the experiences of integration. For example, some interviewees in Israel answered quite pragmatically concerning the question of specific RSJ contributions to the host society (including in science, sports, or medicine), but also enlarged on the heterogeneity of the RSJ group itself, stressing on geographical and cultural differences, and mentioning differences between Halachic Jews and non-Jews. In the course of such interviews,

¹¹³ Meuser and Nagel (2005), p. 80.

this could lead to statements on non-Jewish loyalties or disloyalties towards the *Jewish* state, which in turn provided for an insight into the interviewees' perspective of how to shape future Israeli society and also what forms of integration/assimilation could be expected from non-Jewish immigrants.¹¹⁴ In Germany, however, some interviewees (Halachic Jewish) turned it the other way around and criticized that there is *not enough done* for the non-Halachic RSJ immigrants to keep their (in some cases quite strong) Jewish identities and to erect bridges to the local Jewish communities – an aspect which is of great concern to the structure and work of today's local Jewish communities in Germany.

When doing paraphrasing, titling and thematic comparison of the respective interview materials it soon appeared that respondents in Israel and Germany focused on quite different points in their statements and explanations¹¹⁵ which then made an adequate conceptualization and generalization only possible for some single aspects. However, a few adequate remarks came up in both countries, for example touching the general problematic social situation of the elderly RSJ immigrants and the criticism of mainstream media reports on the RSJ immigrants.

Narrative/biographical aspects that flowed into the interviews were not systematically interpreted. This material, however, could give indications for trends and attitudes in the respective RSJ groups as well, and some of it is presented here together with significant quotes.

Before going straight into the research and into the comparative analysis, it is useful to provide the necessary background of both countries, their motivations to adopt RSJ émigrés in greater numbers and the frameworks provided for a successful integration into the host society.

¹¹⁴ There were almost no RS non-Jews in the sample, which made it consistent that most interviewees reflected their expectations towards the non-Jewish FSU immigrants, but not the other way around.

¹¹⁵ Thus, the interview material in Israel contained frequent paraphrases touching RSJ criticisms or compliments for RS political parties, the notion of homecoming, the lack of disengagement between the state and religion, and major scientific and educational achievements of the Russian Jews. This seldom overlapped with highly frequent remarks in the German interview material, where – for example – much criticism was directed at the Central Council of Jews in Germany, but also co-ethnic self-criticism concerning a lack of individual flexibility at the German labour market.

Chapter II: The historical and political context in Israel and Germany

1. The Israeli Historical Context

The creation of Israel as a modern nation state has almost completely been based on Jewish immigration. The regulations of the Law of Return, adopted by the Israeli parliament, the Knesset, in 1950, guarantee immediate citizenship to every Jew of the Diaspora who settles over to Israel. This policy is shaped by the Jewish experience of about 2,000 years of persecution and discrimination in several continents, countries and regions of the world. The Zionist idea and principle, to found and consolidate Israel as a safe haven and as a world-wide insurance for Jewish individual integrity, has dominated immigration politics from the very beginning. The political Zionist movement was formally established by the Austro-Hungarian journalist Theodor Herzl in the late 19th century following the publication of his book “Der Judenstaat” (“The Jewish State”), in which he projected a modern state on the territory of the ancient state of Israel - a state made by Jews for Jews. In parallel to Herzl's diplomatic efforts to gain worldwide support for such a project, the Zionist settlement to the land of the fathers – until World War I part of the Ottoman Empire as the province Palestine – came into operation, flanked by massive purchases of land property by the Jewish National Fund. From the very beginning, the Zionist concept of building a modern Jewish State and the subsequent, goal-oriented settlement to Palestine was strongly affected by strong waves of anti-Semitism, which already at that time showed some deadly consequences and was especially virulent in Eastern Europe, first of all in the Tsarist Empire. From this point of view, there is a logical historical explanation why Eastern European Jews, and Russian Jews in particular, dominated the early Zionist movement and most of the first settlement waves (“Aliyot”) from 1881 to 1933 (before Hitler came to power in Germany).

However, only after the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 did the Jewish population gain the demographic majority. Since then, Jewish immigration has been the main cause for the six-fold increase in the population until today. The dynamic character of the country, ongoing anti-Semitism in the Diaspora and the consequent endeavor of all Israeli governments to uphold the Jewish character of the State have

led to a constant policy and reality of Jewish immigration. In terms of its inner structure, Israel has become one of the most pluralistic and multicultural societies in the world. Today the total population of nearly six million includes a Jewish majority of about five million, whose origins lie in about 100 countries, a minority of about one million Palestinians¹¹⁶, tens of thousands of Christians from church congregations that hold pilgrimage places and real estate in the Holy Land, and a few hundred thousand contract workers, mainly from Asian countries.¹¹⁷

As most of the early Zionist immigration waves preparing and constructing the Jewish State were Ashkenazi Jews from Eastern Europe, they also formed the social and political establishment. A considerable part of the political, military and religious elite of Israel were either born in Russia or are offspring of former Russian Jews – including prominent former and current leaders like David Ben-Gurion, Chaim Weizmann, Golda Meir, Yitzhak Shamir, Shimon Peres, Yitzhak Rabin, Ariel Sharon and Benjamin Netanyahu. At the same time, most of the protagonists of modern Israeli culture were born in Russia, among them Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, the “father” of Modern Hebrew, the writers Chaim Nachman Bialik and Shalom Aleichem and the actress Hanna Rovina.

Thus, many facets of political, social and cultural Jewish life in the state of Israel have been shaped and influenced by Russian Jews from the very beginning, which makes it less surprising that at least a part of recent Jewish immigrants from the FSU see themselves in a historical continuity with the generation of their great-grandparents – not concealing a certain pride in the co-ethnics that laid the groundwork for the Zionist project more than 100 years ago. However, the historical pre-conditions for Russian-Jewish immigration to Palestine/Israel in the late 19th and early 20th century, the motives of the early Zionist pioneers from Kiev, Lvov, Odessa or Minsk (“chalutzim”) and the concepts of how to shape a future society, were understandably quite different. Israeli society had undergone many transformations and inner changes since 1948, as the Soviet Union did after 1922 (the year of its establishment) until 1991 (the year of its final downfall). The compartmentalization of the complete, Soviet-dominated Eastern Bloc during the Cold War almost completely inhibited cultural exchange and cross-border communication. There was

¹¹⁶ Timm (2003), p. 20; Al-Haj (2004) p. 67.

¹¹⁷ Estimates of the number of foreign workers in Israel are around 200,000. See in this context: Timm (2003), p. 67.

enough information in Israel, as well as in the whole Western world, that the Communist regime tried to suppress all tendencies of cultural self-reliance in the USSR, that the state was aiming to bring religious life (no matter which religion or congregation) to a standstill and that it thus was extremely difficult to retain a certain ethnic, religious or culturally different identity. Relief organizations like “Lishkat Hakesher” (“Nativ”) in Israel, the Union of Councils for Soviet Jewry in the USA and the “Committee of 35” in the United Kingdom tried to do everything possible to help free Jewish refuseniks and dissidents from the USSR and, in the small scale of available opportunities, to support Jewish education behind the Iron Curtain. However, in general, it became in the course of the decades, more and more difficult to get a coherent picture of the real situation of the Jews in the Soviet Union, their beliefs, attitudes and ambitions until they suddenly were released from political and ideological pressure.

During the 1950’s and 1960’s immigration to Israel was composed totally differently, now primarily formed by Jewish refugee groups from the Middle East (Iraq, Iran, Yemen) and North African States (Morocco, Ethiopia). This changed the composition of the inner Israeli-Jewish society gradually much more into an Middle Eastern influenced place, and an influx of 170,000 Soviet Jews during the 1970’s in a short period of thaw between the superpowers USA and USSR did not much alter this trend. At the end of the 1970’s, 38% of Israel’s Jews had an Euro-American background, 42% were of Afro-Asiatic descent, and 20% were “Zabarim” (born in the country).¹¹⁸ In the Knesset elections of 1984, for the first time in Israeli history, “European-American” and “Afro-Asiatic” Jews were neck and neck by number of voters.

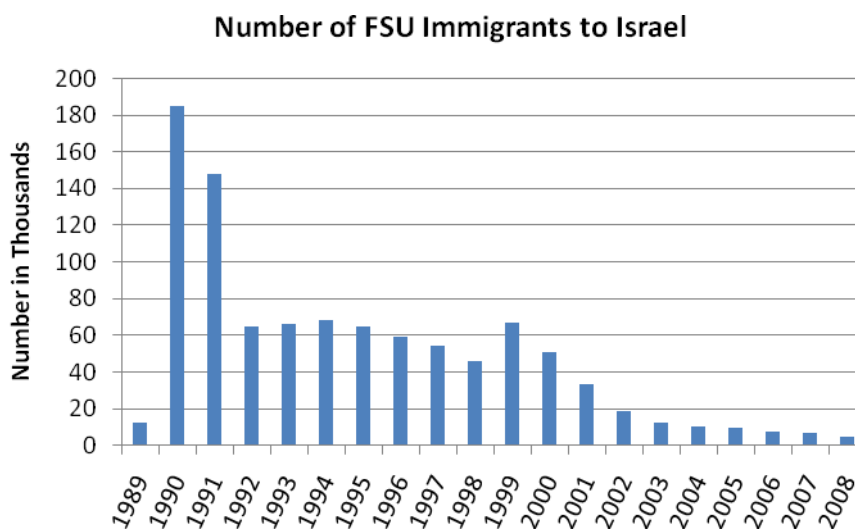
The Great Russian Aliyah began in the late ruling years of Soviet reformer Mikhail Gorbachev and reached its peak in the years of 1990 and 1991, when in total more than 300,000 Russian Jews entered Israel and changed the ethno-cultural landscape of the country once again. In 1999, 40% of Israel’s Jews were of Euro-American background, 34 % were of Afro-Asiatic descent, and the share of “Zabarim” had increased to 26%.¹¹⁹ In other words: The Israeli society has again become more “European”, but of course not in the dimension of the pre-State era. Due to a much

¹¹⁸ Wolffsohn/Bokovoy (2003), p. 303.

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*

higher birth rate among the Jews with a Middle Eastern or Northern African background in Israel, it is likely that this trend of “Europeanization” will remain rather short-lived. The (post-) Soviet immigration since 1989 has been, however, noted in modern Israeli history as the biggest “Aliyah” from one country in such a short span of time. Alone in the years 1990-1991, more than 300,000 Jews came from the crumbling USSR, and in the following decade around 50,000-60,000 post Soviet Olim each year.

A clear drop in the annual rates took place in the years 2000-2003, from originally about 51,000 newcomers down to about 12,500. A correlation with the peak of the second Intifada seems obvious, but also that the peak of the Great Russian Jewish exodus had been surpassed, along with political and economical stabilization in some of the successor states of the USSR, especially in Russia.¹²⁰ However, in recent years the RSJ immigration fell to below 10,000 per year.



In fact, Israel has become the place in the world where now the greatest total number of Russian Jews resides, counting about 1.1 million people, which makes up about 40% of all Jews originating in the Former Soviet Union.¹²¹

¹²⁰ According to Tolts (2005:20), in 2002 there were still ca. 412,000 Jews living in the successor states of the Former Soviet Union. It is to note that Tolts is using here the criteria of “core Jews”, i.e. those Jews who are Jewish according to the Halacha and see themselves as Jews. Most of the Jews remaining on the territory of the former USSR are living in Russia.

¹²¹ Khanin/Chernin (2007), p.21.

2. The German Historical Context

Germany, established as a nation state with coherent territory only in 1871, has a certain immigration tradition, too – including a remarkable Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe during the 1920's. However, the historical backdrop compared to Israel couldn't be more different, in other words: there is almost nothing comparable between the two countries.

Germany was throughout the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century one of the preferred living places of the Jewish world population. Although civil rights emancipation of the Jews in Germany was only established after 1871, i.e. much later than in France, England or the United States, the country was seen as relatively tolerant towards the Jewish minority. About 500,000 Jews had their home here until 1933 and seemed to be more or less well integrated. But then Jewish life in the country was almost completely destroyed within 12 years under Nazi rule, starting with increasing discrimination and persecution in the 1930's, and then by extermination in World War II. The prominent German Rabbi Leo Baeck, one of the founders of the "World Union for Progressive Judaism" at the end of the 1920's, but then exiled to England, was quoted in December 1945 with the words: "The era of Judaism in Germany has definitely passed."¹²²

Indeed, few Jews or non-Jews doubted these words, and the leading international Jewish organizations called up all remaining Holocaust survivors to leave post-war Germany. Those who stayed and re-established Jewish communities, as, for example, in cities like Berlin and Frankfurt, were expected to leave in the long run, and were seen as people who had to sort through estates and bequests, or were considered as too old and too weak for the burdens of emigration. However, during the following decades, the Jewish community in Germany remained constant counting around 30,000 members in total, and decreases were compensated by thousands of Jewish political refugees who came in periodic waves from Eastern Europe (Hungary 1956, Poland 1968) or from dictatorial regimes in the Middle East like Iran after the Islamic Revolution of 1979. However, until the 1980's, only very optimistic people gave Jewish life in Germany a real perspective for the future.

¹²² Gidal (1988), p. 426.

A new development started in the summer of 1990, when the first Soviet Jews used the transit ways from Soviet metropolitan towns to East Berlin, and called for political asylum in the still existing “brother state” G.D.R.¹²³ The decision of the last East German government led by the conservative Prime Minister Lothar de Maizère to allow Soviet Jews permanent residence arose from the fact that hundreds of Soviet Jews tried to escape an increasingly conflict ridden country with rising popular anti-Semitism and the threat of civil war which had in modern Russian history almost always been connected with anti-Jewish pogroms. These people had complex reasons not to take the Israeli or the American option. East Germany was in the stage of reworking its own, 40 year old anti-Israeli and also partly anti-Jewish politics, and was now searching for reparations toward the Jewish people and Israel, at least in a symbolic way. Thus, the decision to offer Jewish emigrants from the Soviet Union political asylum had a logical and also moral component. Later on, when German re-unification became a reality and the Soviet Jewish influx to Germany appeared to continue, the conference of the Federal Ministers of the Interior passed in January 1991 the so called “Contingency Refugee Act” (“Kontingentflüchtlingslösung”), a political regulation that was supported and welcomed by the Central Council of Jews in Germany, but also by many non-Jewish organizations and public figures. It was assumed that a re-vitalization of Jewish community life in Germany would also improve the country’s international reputation, presenting new German society as rather protecting and promoting minorities which formerly were ostracized, persecuted or even murdered. At this point the Berlin Republic, itself in 1990 still grappling with the process of political re-unification, became increasingly attractive for Soviet Jewish refugees who tried to escape as soon as possible from a crumbling state that was politically extremely instable (as shown by the Communist putsch in August 1991), unable to control “the anti-Semitism of the street” and unable to damp lots of ethnic conflicts flaming up in several parts of the still existing USSR.¹²⁴

¹²³ However, the summer of 1990 was the period of intensive negotiations to unify West and East Germany, and it was expected that the G.D.R. would give up its state sovereignty and join West Germany (F.R.G.) in a couple of months.

¹²⁴ Several studies and my own interviews are proving that the years 1989-1992 were estimated by many Soviet/post-Soviet Jews as “critical” – especially in face of re-awakening populist anti-Semitism that fatally remembered to the pogrom atmosphere in the late Tsarist Empire.

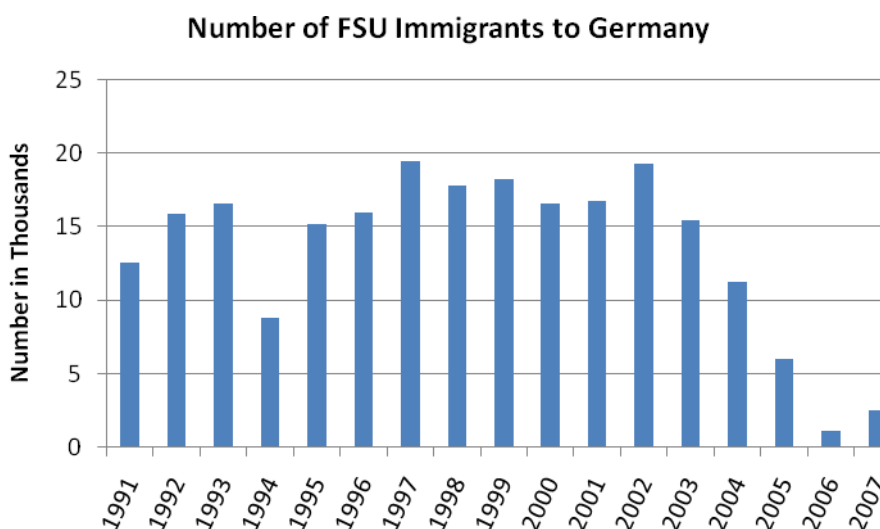
However, the way to appropriate legal provisions allowing Russian Jews a more or less unrestricted immigration to Germany was not planned, and several efforts and fights mainly carried by liberal/left-wing movements and by a very attentive media had been necessary to reach a political agreement for the Russian Jewish immigration.¹²⁵

In addition, the Russian-Jewish influx into Germany, as it took place especially during the 1990's, remained to be accompanied by a lot of controversial discussions inside the global Jewish community and especially between Israeli and German state officials. Media reports have never stopped presenting rumors about Israeli-German diplomatic resentments since the beginning of the 1990's until recent times. Although a diplomatic "tug of war" could be assumed, official politicians never made a direct complaint, and the situation of the 1990's could – at least partly – be compared to that of the 1970's, when a distinct majority of Soviet Jews "dropped out" in Vienna and turned to the United States, supported by American Jewish organizations like HIAS and JOINT. However, a slightly higher annual migration rate of Russian Jews to Germany (compared with Israel) only occurred in the years 2002, 2003 and 2004, i.e., during the peak of the second Intifada, and it has to be noted that in sum the relation between Russian Jews immigrating to Israel and those to Germany (since 1989) remained 5:1.

At the end of the 1990's, Russian Jewish immigration to Germany had reached such an extent that Jewish community life stabilized at least in bigger and middle sized towns. This became also visible for the non-Jewish public by the construction of new synagogues and community centers and the emergence of Jewish cultural places and networks around these centers. At the turn to the new Century, Germany did - pro forma - witness the second fastest increase of Jewish population after Israel, while integration problems at the scene significantly increased but were not transparently discussed. Thus, a lot of irritation and rumor remained about the reasons why RSJ immigration to Germany then ceased relatively abrupt.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Glöckner (2006).

¹²⁶ Russian Jewish media in Germany tried to explain the sudden turn of German immigration policy towards Russian Jews in 2004/2005 (with installing a lot of gradual restrictions) by Israeli intervention. In the "Evreyskaya Gazeta", journalist Pavel Polian, accused in this context the former Soviet Jewish dissident (and that time Israeli Minister for Diaspora Issues) Nathan Sharansky for hindering current emigrants to go to any country of their own destination (Evreyskaya Gazeta, August 2005). Sharansky publicly denied the accusation.



Euphoric media reports yet during the years of 2003 and 2004, not only in the German, but also in the international media picturing a flourishing new Jewry in Germany or a “new love between Jews and Germans”, very soon were relativized. At the end of 2004 German officials stopped the immigration procedure, and then a steep slowdown took place in Germany - as a result of the new, restrictive regulations, put in place in 2005.¹²⁷ In sum, substantial rates of RSJ immigrants are not expected for the US, for Israel nor for Germany at least for the next few years.

3. Russian Jews and the Israeli immigration scene

Russian Jews have dominated the annual Aliyah rates in Israel since the beginning of the 1990's. Their constant influx since the end of the Cold War, at least until the end of the 1990's, has important demographic impacts. The Jewish population of Israel

¹²⁷ In 2005, after negotiations with the Jewish umbrella organizations in Germany, the German government passed new regulations for the entry of Jews from the Former Soviet Union in Germany. Except Holocaust survivors, now all applicants have to prove that they won't be depend on social welfare in the long run, that they have acquired a basic knowledge of German language (which is tested already in the FSU) and that they proclaim their belonging to the Jewish religion. Furthermore, the opportunity to adopt the applicant in one of the local Jewish communities in Germany has to be attested by the Central Welfare Board of Jews in Germany (ZWST). The so called “integration prognosis” is measured for each applicant by a special point system, in which the applicant has to reach at least 50 of 105 possible points. Until the age of 30, the applicant is granted 15 points, then loses one point with each additional year. An academic degree is granted with 20 points, professional experience with 10 points. Commitment in a Jewish community is honoured with 10 points, and a job offer before migration with 5 points, 5 points are also given for relatives already living in Germany. Finally, up to 25 points can be acquired by good German language competency. The point system is clearly aiming to prefer young applicants, highly qualified and at the same time with very close bonds to Jewish community life. More information about the new regulations and it effects: www.migration-info.de/mub_artikel.php?Id=080402 (access by April 19, 2010).

enlarged by about 18%, and Russian speakers present now about 15% of the total population. This meant not only a strong backing for the Ashkenazi Jews in Israel, but also a remarkable enlargement of the Jewish population in comparison with the non-Jewish. The RSJ immigrants are quite aware of their strategic importance.¹²⁸

In stark contrast to those Russian Jews who emigrated to the United States, Germany, Canada or Australia, Russian Jews in Israel became members of the majority society, i.e. the dominating Jewish population group. At the same time, the Russian Jews present one additional segment in the current Israeli “mosaic society” (Timm 2003), along with ethno-cultural subgroups like the Edot Misrachi (oriental Jews originally from the Middle East and Northern Africa), Druzes, Olim from the West (mostly American and Western European Jews) and Israeli Arabs (Muslims and Christians). The early concept of the Zionist State founders targeting cultural homogenization in the “melting pot” for all immigrants – and then creating the “new Israeli”, has lost its relevance and feasibility step by step. *Kimmerling* (2004) noted the slow end of “hegemony” in Israel, the gradual collapse of the united, uniform and powerful social “center”. He described Israeli society at the beginning of the new century as “an aggregate of cultures and counter-cultures with varying degrees of autonomy and separate institutional development within a common framework”.¹²⁹

Inside the multi-faceted and multi-culturally segmented Israeli society, the Russian Jews are discernible by some very particular features. In demographic terms they are characterized by a considerable share of elderly people who distinctly raise the median age compared with the native Israeli population. At the same time, there is a much lower fertility rate among the FSU immigrants (1.7), compared to the total Jewish population (2.7) in Israel.¹³⁰ These features indicate a Westernized orientation and life style, but also the late after effects of the Communist regime. The general high level of qualification predestines Russian Jews for successful careers in the so called PTM-jobs (professional, technical, managerial) and for a usually high social upward mobility. Rather a novelty for the host population is the striking

¹²⁸ In a quite similar way Russian Jews in Germany are well aware of their key role for demographic consolidation of the Jewish communities in Germany.

¹²⁹ Baruch Kimmerling: *Immigrants, settlers, natives: the Israeli state and society between cultural pluralism and cultural wars*. Tel Aviv: Am Oved (Hebrew). Quoted in: Horenczyk/Ben-Shalom (2007), p. 295.

¹³⁰ Leshem/Sicron (2004), p.84. Tolts (2005:39) has referred to a recent trend among the FSU immigrants in Israel which indicates at least a gradual increase of the birth rate along with duration of residence in the country.

secularism of most of the RSJ immigrant.¹³¹ Of course, the secular character of the new Russian Aliyah is connected with 70 years of the Communist Soviet Union, where the regime acted extremely hostile to each form of religion and “successfully” alienated at least the recent two generations from Jewish religion and tradition.¹³² However, within the recent 20 years, many post-Soviet Jews have remained atheists.

Due to their high professional competencies, the immigrants have set many remarkable imprints on Israeli economy, science, culture and the arts, medicine, military and sports already during the 1990's. At the same time many RSJ immigrants are not willing to merge too deeply into Israeli culture and society, rather they set boundaries by their own lifestyle and daily life culture. In this context it might be significant to mention two different, but significant numbers: Russian Jews have opened about 500 (Russian language) book shops across the country¹³³, but at the same time opened also about 600 pork-selling shops.¹³⁴ The relatively large size of the group clearly provides more opportunities to resist expectations of assimilation into the established social structures. Some scholars claim that the Russian Jews would present the first immigrants' group in Israeli history which proves to be able to ignore the formerly omnipresent integration concept of the Zionist melting pot, in other words: to resist a more or less total assimilation into the host society.¹³⁵

Admittedly, German Jews, who came as political refugees to Palestine during the 1930's (after the takeover by the Nazis), had developed similar patterns of cultural self-assertion as the RSJ immigrants now: preserving a (in their mind) somewhat higher cultural lifestyle, indulging in German classical arts, literature, philosophy but also keeping daily-life patterns as German cuisine and special dress-codes. Some of the German immigrants maintained elements of German culture even after the Shoah¹³⁶, but this phenomenon persisted only in the first generation.

¹³¹ According to Remennick (2007b:6), over 90% of the Russian immigrants see themselves as non-religious. A detailed overview on Russian Jews's behavior towards religious and traditional values is described by Liebman in: Gitelman/Kosmin/Kovács (2003), p. 309.

¹³² Lustiger (2003).

¹³³ Ben Rafael et al. (2006), p. 58.

¹³⁴ Liebman in: Gitelman/Kosmin/Kovács (2003), p. 301.

¹³⁵ Lissak/Leshem (1995), Leshem/Shuval (1998).

¹³⁶ An interesting phenomenon is in this context that young Israelis who are offspring of the German Olim of the 1930's in the 3rd and 4th generation develop an increasing interest to travel to Germany and to get to know the country, thus looking for their own familial roots. See: Fania Oz-Salzberger, *Israelis in Berlin*. Berlin 2001 (in German).

Though, in the political arena in Israel, the Russian Jews are not the first minority group which started practicing a kind of interest lobbying by straightforward ethnic policy.¹³⁷ Already in the 1980's Israeli Jews of Middle Eastern or North African origin (Sephardim) and strong religious beliefs had consistently voted for the Shas party, which has won around 10 Knesset seats in all parliament elections since then until today. It seems to be no coincidence that the Shas party and the strongest Russian parties ("Israel ba Aliyah", as "Israel Beitanu") are extremely different in their intentions and programs, and have great conflicts with each other.

This political fight reflects the problematic socio-cultural relations between Russian Jewish, mostly secular, highly educated immigrants by Ashkenazi origin on one side and Oriental Jewish Israelis (originally from countries like Morocco, Ethiopia, Yemen), mostly religious, less educated and practicing a very non-Western life style, on the other.

In towns where both groups live in greater numbers side by side, social tensions and sometimes even violent conflicts have outburst, what provoked a Russian newcomer to comment: "If there are no contacts, then there are no problems."¹³⁸

In fact, Russian Jews appear to be different compared to the other immigrant groups and minorities first of all by their remarkable social upward mobility. Many RSJ immigrant families remain only a few years in their first residencies, often in so called development towns (as for example, Mizpe Ramon in the Negev or Kiriath Shmona in the north), afterwards settling into wealthier towns and suburbs where they live side by side with people of the Israeli middle class. Among the Sephardic population groups certain anger has been sparked about specific state sponsored

¹³⁷ The politicization of ethnicity is a world wide phenomenon – especially in the Western countries, which has gained increasing scientific attention since the 1970's. According to Kiesel (2004:82), ethnicity often appears as a reaction to experiences of exclusion, by then emphasizing ethnic boundaries, the formation of ethnic institutions and the promotion of an ethnic consciousness. As Kiesel (2004:82) notes, "ethnicity becomes a resource, used for the mobilization of specific interests." In the USA, Glazer and Moynihan (1975) realized processes of political ethnicization in the aftermath of the (partly) failed Civil Rights Movement, including the Black Civil Rights movement. Vertovec (1995:150) illustrated how Hindus from Trinidad have become political ethnicized in Great Britain (see furthermore: Körber (2005:51). In Israel, a first ethnically politicized movement emerged during the 1970's with the "Black Panther Movement", represented by frustrated and underprivileged young Sephardic Jews, before oriental Jewish parties as Tami and Shas appeared.

¹³⁸ Friedlander/Israelowitz (1999).

support programs for the RSJ newcomers which is combined with social jealousy, but cultural prejudice as well.¹³⁹

In the encounters of secular Russian Jews and religious, Oriental Jews, not only completely different cultures meet each other. It's often also a clash of imaginations of how to shape society and how to contribute to the well being of the country. *Fialkova and Yelenevskaya (2007)* quote an elderly RSJ immigrant (woman) who reconstructs her annoyed dispute with an Oriental religious Jew (man) who blamed her for shopping in a non-kosher food store. Here is a part of the dialogue¹⁴⁰:

Religious Oriental Sabra: "You are Jewish, so why do you go to this [pork-selling] store?"

RSJ Immigrant: "Why do you go to the synagogue?"

Religious Oriental Sabra: "I go there to pray."

RSJ Immigrant: "And I go there to buy food. That's it. If you don't like it, how can I help you? I can't. (...) There are many things which I don't like either. For example, I don't like that you don't work. I don't like that your children don't serve in the army. I don't like it that you don't do anything, and that you live off us (...) Why does my son have to go to the army and be a target for bullets while yours stay here?"

Religious Oriental Sabra: "We pray for it [Israel]."

RSJ Immigrant: "Ha-ha, then I'd rather have my son stay here and pray too, without having to fight. [But] if they don't fight, if they don't serve in the army, if they don't work, who will produce some, well, goods for this country? Who will defend the country if everybody is like this, like you, if everybody joins, so to speak, your Shas party, if everybody converts to your orthodox faith? There will be nobody left here to..."

The dialogue offers a sharp view on the almost incompatible attitudes and worldviews of some of the "Mizrachim" and some of the "Russians". RSJ immigrants who are fully aware of their very substantial contributions in economical

¹³⁹ In the course of qualitative studies it can easily happen that a hundred percent opposite view is presented by Russian Jewish immigrants who lament about privileges for other immigrants' groups. Thus, Lev Tsitlovsky, a neurobiologist from Moscow, now researcher at the Bar Ilan University in Tel Aviv, said, "I do not understand why American and also Ethiopian immigrants receive more money and more possibilities for their integration than the Russians get. The difference is that the state thinks, rich immigrants – normally the Americans - have to receive better conditions in their new surroundings again. On the other hand they give large privileges to people from Ethiopia - with the argument that they come with less equipment, education, with almost nothing. So, why is there the greater support for both groups the Americans and the Ethiopians and discrimination for the Russians?" (Interview with Prof. Lev Tsitlovsky in Tel Aviv on Sept. 1, 2003)

¹⁴⁰ *Fialkova and Yelenevskaya (2007)*, p. 118.

life and in military security of the country¹⁴¹, are not willing to see studying and praying in yeshivot and synagogues as “equal service” for the country, and are especially outraged by the state funding for religious men, exclusively studying religious scripts and not contributing with their own work to the state tax yield at all. The “mosaic society” (Timm 2003), however, leaves space to live and act more or less in parallel, to avoid each other, and not necessarily to start a daily “clash of cultures” (“Kulturkampf”).

In contrast to these more or less complicated cultural relations between secular Ashkenazi Olim from the FSU and religious Oriental veterans, the relations between the RSJ newcomers and the Arab minority in Israel (almost similar to the FSU immigrants, about 20% of the total population) are additionally overshadowed by the long standing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Arguably, there are many formal contacts because of geographic neighborhoods, especially in the north of Israel, where a large share of the Israeli Arab population lives. *Siegel* (1998) has described some well functioning contacts between the Russian Jews in Israel and the Arab minority, partly conditioned by work relations.¹⁴² However, a survey by *Al Haj* (2004) made very clear that the Arabs are the ethnic group inside Israel to whom the Russian Jews definitely feel the greatest distance. One might assume that lacking experiences with multi-cultural societies of the Jews in the Former Soviet Union and the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict have cemented the distant attitudes towards the Arab population also on the local level.

It seems logical that the RSJ immigrants feel the relatively closest bonds to the Ashkenazi middle and upper class due to at least three commonalities; a common (Ashkenazi, often Eastern European) background, a high level of education and a more or less open-minded, often pragmatic political world view. Irrespective of some different opinions regarding state and religion, foreign policy and economic

¹⁴¹ A disproportionate high share of young RSJ immigrants serve in combat units and as sharpshooters.

¹⁴² *Siegel* (1998:122ff.) reports on cheerful contacts between Israeli Arabs and Russian Jews during the 1990's, when RSJ immigrants in greater number settled to northern Israeli places with a large share of Arab population, for example in Akko, Haifa and Nazareth. Israeli Arabs and Russian Jews came in contact, for example, by work relations in the service industry; aside from this, Russian musicians started jobs as music teachers in Arab towns and villages. In some cases quite friendly relations are based on common memories of attendance at the same universities in the USSR (where many Palestinians were invited to study during Communist times). Other studies have come to different conclusions about the Russian-Arab relations in Israel. Typical Russian stereotypes on Arabs/Israeli Arabs are elaborated in: *Fialkova/Yelenevskaya* (2007), pp. 135-150.

policy¹⁴³, it can be presumed that the Ashkenazi elites are feeling a big bulk of commonalities as well. However, the distinct secularism of most RSJ immigrants and their remoteness from Jewish culture is also the reason for a certain aloofness held by the Ashkenazi elites. All in all one has to note that the Russian Jews, who came in great numbers since 1989/90, are anything but shying away from group conflicts. They have quickly reached the status of a respected minority establishing their own boundaries between themselves and other minorities, the majority of Sabras, and – as far as it is possible – the state institutions.

4. Support for Russian Jewish Olim in Israel

Russian Jews who make Aliyah are granted full access to political, social and economic benefits like all other Jewish citizens and Olim. Complete socio-political rights are also granted to non-Jewish partners and to immigrants who can at least prove one Jewish grandparent. It goes without saying that in such a wide-stretched frame for people entitled for Aliyah a considerable part of the immigrants are “in the group” who are not Jewish according to the Halacha, and subsequently missing some crucial religious rights in Israel which directly involve civil rights (such as marriage or burial)

Until the early 1990’s, Israeli immigration policy revolved around a system of centrally organized support. In this system, immigrants arrived at special absorption centers (Merkazim Klita) and received initial help for settlement, housing, language courses and professional training. Officials were also more or less empowered to place the new Olim in especially prepared towns and places across the country. This system, however, was replaced in the early 1990’s by the so called direct absorption, based on the “absorption basket”. This basket covers all the basic financial needs of the new immigrant for the first six months of residence, followed by supplementary financial benefits for an additional two and a half years. The benefits included in the absorption basket are support for housing (subsidizing rent), tax reductions in purchasing a house and car, scholarship programs at universities, special retirement

¹⁴³ The Ashkenazi elite that had set ground for the State of Israel was, to a considerable part, left wing-oriented, or brought in Social Democratic values, and so a part of the succeeding generations. In contrast to this, Russian Jewish immigrants of the 1990’s show major affinities to conservative or even neo-conservative economic policy, which is typical for the co-ethnics in the United States as well.

programs for older immigrants and benefits in health care, language courses, and more. Under the conditions of the direct absorption, repatriates are enabled to choose by themselves where they want to live from the very beginning. By and large, the RSJ immigrants aim to settle in cities and areas with a well developed industrial and social infrastructure, and where a large number of Russian Israelis already live. This has changed and affected the municipal structures in many Israeli towns tremendously. RSJ immigrants became a significant part of the population in ca. 100 cities. Today 38.5% of them live in the central part of Israel (Tel Aviv and central regions), 30% in the northern region (including the industrial center Haifa), 24.7% in the southern region and 4.8% in Jerusalem and its surroundings.¹⁴⁴ Less than 2% of the RSJ immigrants decided for settling outside the Green Line, i.e. in the West Bank or (until 2005) in Gaza.¹⁴⁵

Table2. RSJ immigrants in selected Israeli towns

Town	Total population	Number of immigrants	
		Total	percentage
Ma'a lot	15,000	7,100	50%
Sderot	23,000	11,200	50%
Nazareth-Illit	51,000	23,000	45%
Carmiel	46,000	17,400	38%
Ashdod	170,000	56,000	33%
Beer Sheva	185,000	59,000	32%
Haifa	270,000	59,000	22%
Tel Aviv – Jaffo	355,000	49,500	14%
Jerusalem	650,000	45,000	7%

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, Jerusalem 2003.

¹⁴⁴ Moshe Sicron, Immigrants from the Former Soviet Union in the Israeli Population and Labor Force. In: Gitelman/Ro'I (2007), p.367, table 16.8.

¹⁴⁵ According to Al-Haj (2004), only 1.7% of the RSJ immigrants have settled into the West Bank and Gaza, despite expectations that a greater part of the Russian newcomers would strengthen the Jewish presence in "Judia and Samaria" (the Hebrew terms for the West Bank). At the beginning of the 1990's, the Israeli Ministry of Interior had worked out a general settlement plan for the immigrants based on demographic, economic and ideological assumptions. It was thought that a considerable part of the RSJ immigration would be directed to settlements in the Palestinians territories in the West Bank and Gaza. Based on this assumption, the master plan for the settlements in the territories was based on the projection that, in the year 2010, 1.3 million Jews would live in these territories. See: Troen (1994), here quoted by: Al-Haj (2004), p. 156. In August 2005, the Jewish settlements from the Gaza Strip were completely removed.

5. Russian Jews and the German immigration scene

Before 1945, Germany had a relatively low share of non-native population, compared with other European countries like England and France whose population included greater numbers of immigrants or commuters from former colony states.¹⁴⁶

After the occurrence of the so called economic miracle in post-War West Germany (an unexpectedly strong economic boom beginning in the 1950's that led to full employment), foreign (manual) workers were invited to Germany in greater numbers, especially Turks, Greeks, Italians and Yugoslavians.¹⁴⁷ It is also to be noted that post-War (West) Germany practiced a very liberal immigration and asylum policy until the late 1980's and the early 1990's. Political refugees from different parts of the world found a safe haven here – as for example refugees from South Vietnam and other South Asian states, Iran, but also dissidents from several Eastern European countries who had had very bad experiences with national Communist regimes. During the 1990's Germany also witnessed the arrival of large groups of civil war refugees from areas of the former Yugoslavia, especially Bosnians from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Albanians from Kosovo.

7.3 million foreigners live in Germany today, making up nearly 10 per cent of the total population. Among significant groups like the Turks, Greeks, Italians, Vietnamese, Balkan immigrants and others, the Russian speaking Jews, who today number about 200,000, present a very small minority. Moreover, also in the Russian speaking population of Germany, which counts about 3.2 million people¹⁴⁸ and is dominated by the ethnic German repatriates from the Former Soviet Union (“Spätaussiedler”), Russian Jews remain a “minority in the minority”.

In general, many German natives seem not well informed about the heterogeneity of the Russian speaking population, which aside the Russian Jews and the Spätaussiedlers also includes former Soviet dissidents (mainly living in the Western part of Germany), former employees of the Soviet military administration in

¹⁴⁶ A distinct exception were Polish guest workers which had settled especially in the industrial area in North-Rhine Westphalia, which remained one of the most important industry centres of Germany throughout the 20th century.

¹⁴⁷ East Germany hired Vietnamese people and workers from several African States, as Angola and Mozambique.

¹⁴⁸ High Commissioner for Foreigner's Issues at the Federal Government of Germany.

East Germany (who were allowed to stay in Germany after the complete troop withdrawal in 1995), Russian speaking spouses and students.

As the Russian language seems to be the most common denominator among all these immigrant subgroups, German hosts seldom differentiate into any subgroups. Thus, Russian Jews can be considered as a hidden population subgroup, as long as Jewish issues are not of essential public interest. However, if clichés or hostility emerges against Eastern European migrants in general, Jews are affected in the same way like other people from the Russian speaking group.¹⁴⁹

Table 3. Highest concentration of RSJ immigrants in German federal states

Federal state	Total number of Immigrated FSU Jews	Size of the Total population	% of FSU Jews in the total population
North-Rhine Westphalia	49,780	18,005,235	0.28%
Bavaria	30,835	12,492,568	0.25%
Hesse	18,013	6,070,425	0.29%
Baden-Württemberg	17,803	10,747,479	0.17%
Lower Saxony	17,737	7,973,800	0.22%
Rhineland-Palatinate	11,337	4,046,860	0.28%
Germany total	225,572	82,263,000	0.27%

Source: Statistics of Federal Office for Migration and Refugees BAMF/ Federal State Statistics, 2006

The distribution of Russian Jews across Germany, a steered procedure called the Königstein key, is conducted appropriate to general population size / tax income of the respective federal states. Subsequently, only about 20 percent of the RSJ immigrants were settled in the five new federal states, i.e. into the territory of the former G.D.R. However, a remarkable trend occurred already during the 1990's. Many immigrants tried to settle, at least in the long run, into conurbations of Western Germany (as for example, Munich, Frankfurt, Cologne or Stuttgart), or, alternatively, in Berlin. According to several studies, the reasons for this intra-migration from East

¹⁴⁹ One of my RSJ interviewees in Germany, a woman in her mid-forties, described a very unpleasant situation at a bus stop in Potsdam: "Once I was standing with my mother at a bus stop and we talked in Russian, and a young woman beside us started to blame as in a very angry mood. She didn't look like a right wing radical or xenophobic, but she started to blame our language and then she claimed that we would have no culture, and we should look for another country. And that's what made me scared here." (Interview with RSJ immigrant, engineer, in Potsdam on February 22, 2003).

to West are complex and include economic perspectives, family re-unification, but also a feeling of being less threatened by xenophobia in the Western part of Germany.¹⁵⁰

6. Support for Russian Jewish immigrants in Germany

General German immigration policy has undergone a drastic change since the beginning of the 1990's, even if it is not comparable with such immigration restrictions as they have been established in conservatively ruled countries like Denmark. While general German immigration policy became much more restrictive, for example, towards asylum seekers, the country continued to promote the influx of Russian Jews, who thus became the second most privileged group of immigrants, right after the Spätaussiedlers.¹⁵¹ For both immigrant groups, social welfare and educational benefits are granted to the same extent as for the veteran population. Like the Spätaussiedlers, Russian Jews are also entitled, and in fact obligated, to pass a six-month-course of German language which is sponsored by the labor office. Russian Jews who remain unemployed after the course are granted the standardized social welfare rate, which can usually cover an individual's basic needs (including health insurance, rent subsidies, child care benefits and student grants).

The social benefits, as guaranteed for unemployed native Germans, ethnic repatriates and Russian Jews are, despite several recent cuts, still sufficient enough to prevent a single person from falling out of the system. This makes Germany, objectively, still very attractive for migrants from all over the world. Theoretically it is possible to live on social welfare for decades in Germany, because basic costs (like rent and health insurance) remain covered by the state for the time a person remains dependant on welfare. However, remaining dependant on the welfare system nevertheless means clearly to live below the official poverty line, to lose access to important social resources (as, for example culture and the arts, special educational programs) and often to be stuck in residential areas which are at the margin of social and communal life.

¹⁵⁰ Schoeps/Jasper/Vogt (1999), p. 58 and 63.

¹⁵¹ See in this context: Harris (1997).

Though, even under relative difficult conditions when remaining dependant on social welfare, young people from immigrant families can easily enter a successful education, in many cases completing a solid university study. This is possible mainly by the (still) very low - or even no - tuition fees at German universities and by generally having access to state-sponsored student grants. Several state-sponsored programs are in place for further vocational training, especially for immigrants between the ages of 30 and 50.

Whatever the complex reasons might have been, throughout the 1990's Russian Jews in Germany had distinctively larger problems to overcome the basic problems of integration, compared with their co-ethnics in Israel and in the United States. Their difficulties in the German labor market even exceeded those of other immigrant groups (see chapter 4). And there have been problems with a certain kind of homemade character. Until 2005 many pensioners had no possibility to join a state-sponsored language course, and especially older people complained about lacking contacts to the host population and about cultural barriers to the host society.¹⁵²

Such continuous problems of integration into the host society induced larger German Jewish communities to establish additional programs of support. Such support measures reached from German language courses, legal advice, family consultation, and psychological services to occupation-oriented seminars to self-sustained job agency services. These offers and aid measures have been frequently used by the immigrants during the last years; especially when they felt that the state organized programs were not sufficient or when additional problems of acculturation stress arose. Especially for the elderly immigrants the Jewish local communities offer a welcome shelter.

It should also be noted that a state contract was signed between the German government and the Central Council of Jews in Germany in 2003, guaranteeing three million Euro (now five million Euro) per year mostly dedicated to integration measures for RSJ immigrants.

¹⁵² A considerable part of the immigrants saw the main reason for having no contacts to the German host population in lacking language fluency.

7. Self assertion and making new homes – a first balance

In all the countries where Russian Jews emigrate to, the host societies and their officials don't have to fear facing a group that would increase social problems or widen social gaps. It seems that the high rate of academics among the immigrants alone prevents the danger of poverty or social decline. Russian Jews are expected to learn the rules of the respective host societies quite quickly, being highly motivated to acquire the host language to enter the labor market as soon as possible and to meet demanding challenges in the respective professional fields. Of course, there is also the aim to considerably improve the living standard. In terms of employment and income, however, the Russian Jewish emigrants in the USA could reach until the early 2000's much better results than their co-ethnics in Israel and definitely much better than those in Germany.¹⁵³ There is evidence that progress in the integration of the Russian Jews has started much earlier in the USA and in Israel than in Germany.¹⁵⁴

However, it is undisputable that some socio-economic problems of Russian Jews in the respective host countries would turn into a national problem. It is also obvious that the immigration of Russian Jews has not undermined social stability and has not caused social or ethnic disturbances. Admittedly, incidents of disastrous clashes between youth groups of Russian immigrants and Oriental groups in Israel were reported during the 1990's¹⁵⁵, but have not led to wide spread riots or longstanding violent conflicts. As described above, the RSJ immigrants rather followed a model of social insertion, but at the same time living in a kind of ethnic separation at least from the oriental groups and from the Arab population, whereas the structure of RSJ communities and the range of cooperation with other ethnic and cultural groups can vary from town to town.

¹⁵³ In the early 2000's, the unemployment rate among the Russian Jewish immigrants was only 3% in the USA, 10% in Israel and about 40% in Germany. (See: Remennick 2007:164; Ben Rafael 2006:338, 340). 61% of the Russian Jews in the USA reported their current income higher than prior migration, 31% confirmed this in Israel, but only 23% in Germany. (Ben Rafael et al. 2006:121;141;159).

¹⁵⁴ See in this context especially chapter 4, with details concerning the labor market integration of RSJ immigrants in Israel and Germany.

¹⁵⁵ In 1997 two RSJ adolescents were stabbed to death by a Moroccan Sabra in Rechovot, and in 1998 a 21 year old Russian speaking Army soldier was killed after scuffle conflict with Moroccans in a restaurant in Ashkelon. See: AJW, November 26th., 1998. In contrast, the northern town of Haifa is reported as a place of closer cooperation between the different population groups, including closer cooperation also with the Arab population.

In Germany, one spectacular incident of native population's resistance against the settlement of Jews was reported during the 1990's - the so called "case of Gollwitz".¹⁵⁶ In most of the cases, however, settlement and initial integration of the Russian Jews took place rather unnoticed, especially in metropolitan areas which anyway had experience with immigration and multi-culturalism for decades.¹⁵⁷ By and by RSJ immigrants moved to quarters with a better standing and found support from the local Jewish communities. Conflicts with other ethnic groups or with the German local population are almost not reported – but conversely there seems to be also only very sporadic contact to other cultural or ethnic minorities.

Irrespective of the different paths of integration that were taken and certain integration problems in the period following the RSJs arrival in Israel and Germany, the low rates of re-migration or second migration are almost equivalent. *Tolts* (2005) states that until 2001 only about 6% of the FSU-Olim left Israel again, which is in total about 68,000 people.¹⁵⁸ In Germany there are no official statistics on re-migration of Russian Jews available, but following reports and single statistics of the Jewish communities, cases of return are very rare. These low numbers can serve as a reliable indicator that immigrants might still grapple with formerly inflated expectations towards the respective countries, but at the same time are willing to continue to reside in the new surroundings.

The coherence and relative stability of the RSJ communities – compared with other minority groups in both countries – as well as the low rates of re-migration appear explainable by different external and internal factors. External factors are to be found in the relatively favorable social conditions (in Israel also in the granting of full civil rights from the very beginning), the initial support and integration measures

¹⁵⁶ The village of Gollwitz, in the federal state of Brandenburg near Berlin, made drastic headlines in 1997 in the German media when the local municipal council refused to host Jewish immigrants from the FSU. Although the municipal council later rescinded this decision, a long debate started in the German media as to whether the original resistance was influenced by anti-Semitism or just as an act of local political disagreement. Whereas the Central Council of Jews in Germany sharply attacked the local politicians, Brandenburg's Minister-President of that time, Manfred Stolpe, declared the incident as a result of failed local policy (bad preparation of the settlement/design error, lack of information for the local population etc.). The village had 400 inhabitants at that time and was to host 50 Jewish contingency refugees.

¹⁵⁷ As a problem mentioned by several interviewees of my own study appeared the unfavorable site of first lodgings of the RSJ immigrants, especially in middle sized or small towns. In many cases ethnic German repatriates, asylum seekers and Russian Jews were housed together. These accommodations were in some cases described as poorly secured from possible attacks by criminals and right wing extremists. Indeed, several homes of asylum seekers were severely attacked by right-wing extremists.

¹⁵⁸ Tolts (2005), p. 31.

by the Israeli and the German state and, last but not least by the public expression of welcome (even if a part of it could be interpreted just as a form of political correctness or of lip service). Internal factors that ease the integration of the Russian Jews are:

- RSJ immigrants are very energetic in aiming towards professional success and in social upward mobility.¹⁵⁹
- Russian Jews are able to use their ethnic networks for self organization and mutual support (as, for example, in several professional organizations, but also in lots of social initiatives, informal networks and the like (see chapter V)
- Where Russian Jews see and get a chance for making a political impact they consequently use it.¹⁶⁰

An obvious source of pride among the Russian Jews derives from their consciousness to come from one of the two big superpowers in the Cold War, and despite the fact that the Soviets finally lost the Cold War it remains in memory that the Former Soviet Union had been able to mutate within a few decades from an underdeveloped agricultural country (even under the last Tsars) to a modern, economically strong state that became a driving force in global politics until the end of the 1980's.

Conversely, devaluation of human resources has been a very particular shock for FSJ immigrants, at least for the highly qualified, and especially among the immigrants in Germany. Public statements have increased where Russian Jews complained of the fact that the German officials wouldn't be really interested in exploiting the huge professional knowledge of the RSJ immigrants. At the same time they lack a political lobby for pushing their issues straight into centers of decision

¹⁵⁹ Concerning the ambitions in social upward mobility, some home-grown critics and commentators in Israel expressed very harsh assessments on the group of the Russian Jews. For example, the famous Israeli writer Amos Oz wrote about the Russian Jews at the beginning of the 1990's: "Most of them come hoping to find a mini-America in Israel. The sooner they can get a house and a car – preferably two cars – and a good refrigerator full of good food, the sooner they will become solid citizens. They are survivors of the Marxist fantasy. They come here aspiring to a middle class fulfillment." See: Jones (1996), p. 123.

¹⁶⁰ Leon Litinetsky, a leading political figure of the Labor Party ("Avoda"), said in this context: "There is a conviction that the Russian speaking Jews in Israel want to influence the state policy in a positive sense, and if they really want to do that, they have to enter the structures of Israeli society, playing the rules that have been acceptable here for a long period of time, create an atmosphere of unity where people the same cause, and bring the knowledge and the culture into Israeli establishment." [Interview with Leon Litinetsky in Tel Aviv on March 13, 2008]. The self demand to change and improve Israeli society by implementing Russian specific contributions is coming from both sides – left wing and right wing.

making. Though, the perceptibly less favorable conditions for Russian Jews in Germany wanting to enter the political stage do not mean that the RSJ immigrants feel a political or social passivity.

As will be described in chapter V, the process of self organization and networking has been enormously advanced. During the last ten years a quantum leap has also become visible in the Russian media sector where Russian Jews are in some of the key positions. Jewish editors in chief or publishers of Russian Jewish or general Russian speaking print media in Germany are simultaneously members of the local Jewish communities, at the same time expressing political attitudes and/or impelling lobby work. However, compared with Israel, it remains a fact that Russian Jews in Germany did not (yet) remarkably affect their surrounding, irrespective of their enormous weight in the local Jewish communities. Only a few sections of RSJ elites have bridged the gap to German host society whereas the ongoing pervasion of Russian Jewish elites into several fields of Israeli society is remarkable. The specific political and judicial conditions in Israel allow Russian Jews to participate almost equally in political life (first of all: full voting rights and rights to be elected), whereas they are in Germany, at least for the first seven to eight years of residence, sentenced to political passivity (at least in party politics). In both countries a considerable part of the Russian Jews tend to remain – at least in the first years – in Russian speaking networks and structures. Closer contacts to other ethnic minorities; for example, to the Ethiopian or Moroccan Jewish immigrants in Israel or to the Turkish population in Germany, seem to be rather the exception than the rule.

As many of the RSJ immigrants, especially those from the metropolitan towns in the former USSR (Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Odessa, or Dnepropetrovsk to name a few), have come with a highly developed self consciousness, based on high professional qualifications and strong bonds to Russian culture and the arts, they see little or no need for cultural assimilation. The strategy of integration without acculturation is clearly preferred. *Khanin and Chernin (2007)* state in this context about the immigration wave of the 1990's in Israel: "The 'Russians' became yet another sector in the Israeli society – a sector that, not only because of its size, but also because of its degree of isolation, was similar to the Arab and Jewish ultra-orthodox sectors, with their separate cultural and educational systems. However, in contrast to the Arabs and the ultra-Orthodox, these new Olim are already integrated

into and active in all systems of Israeli society, including the educational system and the army.”¹⁶¹

In Germany, cultural self assertion seems also a comfort for those RSJ immigrants who failed to integrate into the labor market or to come into closer contact with the host population. *Kessler* (1998) sees a tendency to withdraw from host society and to try to survive in ethnic colonies. Though, while *Kessler* (1998) primarily refers on individuals who failed initial integration into German society and search for additional backing, *Bodemann and Bagno* (2008) presume that those 50 percent of RSJ immigrants who never joined a local JC have reached – in sum – already more success to fit into the German labour market.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ Khanin and Chernin (2007), p. 19.

¹⁶² Bodemann/Bagno (2008), p. 161.

Chapter III: Immigrated RSJ Elites and their characteristics in Israel and Germany

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, Suzanne Keller’s model of strategic elites (1963) is appropriate for exploring Jewish elites originating in the Former Soviet Union who managed to position themselves in Israel and Germany. In Israel we find today even well-established RSJ immigrants who play an important role in the economy, in politics or in the donating arts and sciences. These protagonists often acquired their important skills in the FSU, were sometimes economically outstandingly successful and had a sound societal position even in the successor states of the USSR. Others were starting their careers only after Aliyah, but altogether those RSJ protagonists holding top positions in the Israeli economy and in politics exactly fit the criteria for Keller’s category of “external elite”. Indeed, there is aspiring Russian elite in economy, and we meet political highflyer like Juli Edelstein and Avigdor Lieberman that have the FSU background as well. Though, it were the “internal elites” (first of all scholars, intellectuals, artists and journalists) that became of special interest in this comparative analysis, the more so as they are to find in both host countries (Israel and Germany).

Table 4: FSU Strategic Elites according to a slightly modified classification by Keller ¹⁶³

Russian Jewish Elites in Israel						Russian Jewish Elites in Germany					
External Elites			Internal Elites			External Elites			Internal Elites		
Political	Econom.	Science	Intellect.	Media	Arts	Political	Econom.	Science	Intellect.	Media	Arts
Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	-	-	Present	Present	Present	Present

A first comparative glance reveals that the Russian Jews in Israel have entered to a much greater extent the spheres of public life than they did in Germany. In the Israeli economic sector, not only some Russian tycoons attracted attention. Russian businessmen did also create an ethnic market for the wider Russian speaking

¹⁶³ Keller’s model of strategic elites is slightly modified here. Thus, diplomacy/bureaucracy and military have been taken off from the category of “external elites”, and religious authorities have taken off from the category of “internal elites” due to the fact there wasn’t access for the RSJ immigrants *in both countries* until now, or because of lacking educational possibilities in the FSU (as is the case with religious personnel). Instead media was implied in the internal elites of both countries as an additional category, here as RSJ media, i.e. Russian language media.

community combined with a very strong import-export business. Such tendencies might have appeared as a problematic tendency in the sense of a Russian “Parallelgesellschaft” (parallel society). But these misgivings and anxieties of an ethno-cultural rift in the economy have proved to be unfounded, and the number of Israeli-Russian companies and research projects seems rather being on this rise. Though, groups of Russian scholars, artists and technical experts seem to be much more in the public foreground than the businesspeople, having visible merits beyond the country as well.

In Germany, Russian Jewish scholars, artists and technicians have taken a leading role in co-ethnic networks, but – except for some individuals - almost not beyond these limits. Russian Jews are hardly visible in the German political scene, not even on the municipal level, and it’s hard to find any large commercial business in Germany exclusively run by a Russian Jewish leader or consortium (except for smaller companies in the import-export trade connected with companies in the successor states of the Former Soviet Union). The potential of science is enormous among Russian Jews in Germany, but due to different obstacles, almost not used until now, and hardly used at the universities.

From this point of view, there remain rather single segments of Russian-Jewish elites in Israel and Germany that can directly be compared in their new positions, scope of action and meaning for the co-ethnic community. Though, also in Israel, it would be exaggerated to speak of complete layers of elite, and at present it’s rather appropriate to focus on special people, projects and formations.

Russian Jewish Elite Subgroups in Israel

1. Russian Businessmen in Israel

As already mentioned in the introductory chapter, some Jewish economists became very successful in the late Gorbachev era in the USSR and then fully developed their talent in the Yeltsin era in Russia. Businessmen like Michael Cherney, Vladimir Gusinsky, Mikhail Fridman, Mikhail Khodorkovsky, Roman Abramovich and Leonid Nevzlin started their business in one of the booming branches under post-Soviet privatization legislation (such as the oil, metal, or car industry) and managed to

create and stabilize their trusts by dwelling on other industries and high-performing private banks. Of course, not all of the businessmen mentioned settled in Israel. Some remained in the Former Soviet Union, others like Berezovsky emigrated to the West, and another group prefers to live as permanent commuters between the FSU and Israel. Some of the emigrated Russian oligarchs in Israel started new economic activities in the Jewish State, like Gusinsky, others became great philanthropists, as Nevzlin and Cherney¹⁶⁴. Huge sponsoring by the ex-Russians impacted parts of the Israeli media¹⁶⁵, sports and education.¹⁶⁶ Aside from the recently emigrated oligarchs, there are those businessmen who came to Israel already in the 1970's, had learned about the Israeli system quite well and built up successful connections to the post-Soviet territories after 1989. The most prominent example in this group is Levi Levajev, owner of the big Israeli holding Africa-Israel. Levajev has also become known as the founder and sponsor of the Federation of Jewish Communities in Russia (FJCR) which is closely cooperating with the Chabad Lubavitch movement¹⁶⁷ and was already in 2001 running 17 Jewish schools, 15 Jewish kindergartens and 41 Sunday schools in Russia.¹⁶⁸ Aside this, Levajev is considered to hold ownership of

¹⁶⁴ Mikhail Cherney, an Uzbekistan-born entrepreneur and industrialist, established in 2001 the Michael Cherney Foundation in Tel Aviv. Cherney defines the mission of the foundation to help democratic nations in their war on terrorism and assist fellow émigrés to Israel from Russia and other post-Soviet nations realize their intellectual potential and become successfully integrated into the Israeli society. Critical intellectuals consider Cherney as the “major sponsor” of Avigdor Lieberman’s right wing party “Israel Beitenu”.

¹⁶⁵ After settlement in Israel, Gusinsky got involved in the Hebrew language newspaper Ma’ariv and the cable TV company Tevel. Besides this, Gusinsky has been successful in establishing the Russian cable TV channel ntv, which is seen by 120 million Russian people worldwide, including tens of thousands of Russian speaking Israelis.

¹⁶⁶ Promoting Jewish and Israeli education is a special brand of Leonid Nevzlin. Nevzlin is one of the founders of the NADAV Fund, which supports projects in Jewish studies and education and Israel-Diaspora relations. He installed a “Nevzlin Program for the Study of Jewish Civilization at Tel Aviv University”. In cooperation with the Israeli government, Nevzlin also created a relief fund in 2004 to help preserve Beth Hatefutsoth, the Nahum Goldmann Museum of the Jewish Diaspora in Tel Aviv. During his high period in Russia, Nevzlin had also served as head of the Russian Jewish Congress.

¹⁶⁷ After Vladimir Putin had taken over the Russian presidency from Boris Yeltsin in 2000, the Federation of Jewish Communities in Russia (FJCR) succeeded in becoming the leading Jewish umbrella organization, replacing the Russian Jewish Congress (RJC). The Chief Rabbi of FJCR, Berl Lazar from Chabad Lubavitch, is also seen a Chief Rabbi of Russia, although formally Rabbi Adolf Shaevich from the Congress of the Jewish Religious Communities and Organizations in Russia (CJRCOR), a partner of the Russian Jewish Congress, is authorized for the same position. Lazar has very close connections with the Kremlin, and in a certain way this example shows how far Kremlin politics is (still) able to intervene into Jewish community politics. For more details see: Goldmann (2007), especially pp. 277-278.

¹⁶⁸ Semen Charnyi, Russian Jewish Community: Current State. In: “Jews of Euro-Asia”. The Information and Analytical Edition of the Euro-Asian Jewish Congress. Online: http://www.eajc.org/publish_print_e.php?rowid=3 (access on August 14, 2009)

TV Channel 9, the only all-Israel-based Russian-language TV channel.

Another category of elitist RSJ businessmen moved to Israel in order to strike roots in this country.¹⁶⁹ Some of them clearly attempted to be part of the Israeli business elite as well as the Israeli political elite at the same time. The most prominent example in the recent years has been *Arkady Gaydamak* who established a political movement in Israel called “Social Justice” in 2007 and even tried to become mayor of Jerusalem, but failed dramatically in the municipal elections of 2008.

Since these several groups of Russian Jewish businessmen with an undoubtedly tremendous economical power are based in different networks, follow complex interests and have a rather trans-national scope of action, it appears quite difficult to assess their real impacts on Israel society in the long run. In fact, some of them will have huge importance as great benefactors for Israel and for Jewish institutions worldwide in the long run, while others might have used the “donor’s role” just for serving their own interests and then disappeared from the scene.

Not a few Russian Jewish entrepreneurs in Israel concentrating on booming branches like construction had to face strong headwind from host competitors. This might have been a decisive reason for the establishment of a Russian “Association of Entrepreneurs” supporting their own patrons who had experienced uncomfortable encounters with parts of the veteran business establishment in the 1990’s.¹⁷⁰

2. Russian politicians in Israel

The emergence of a Russian political elite in Israel is a process which probably nobody would have predicted before the recent Aliyah. The roughly 170,000 Soviet Jews who immigrated to Israel during the 1970’s had no intention of political self-organization. Many of the RSJ immigrants of the 1970’s and 1980’s were willing to integrate as far as possible, or even to assimilate, into Israeli society, due to their own Zionist (and sometimes religious) motivations and beliefs. Additionally, Soviet Jewish immigrants from the 1970’s and 1980’s were well integrated into the Israeli labor market, and this in a short period of time. Thus, until the late 1980’s, for the majority of Russian Jews, there was simply no need to think about organizing

¹⁶⁹ Compare details in: Khanin (2003a).

¹⁷⁰ For negative RSJ experiences with host business companies see examples in: Siegel (1998).

Russian politics – irrespective of the activities of Nathan Sharansky and his friends who established in 1988 a Zionist Forum for Soviet Jewry, as an umbrella organization of Former Soviet dissidents which soon turned into a social movement that should help Russian Jewish newcomers in Israel to overcome social and cultural barriers.¹⁷¹

In national elections, RSJ immigrants from the 1970's had preferred to support Israeli mainstream parties, and individuals who were determined to start a political career could try this in parties like Likud, or Avoda. Experimental Russian lists, which nevertheless came on the electoral lists in 1981 and in 1992, did not succeed in passing the electoral threshold.¹⁷² An accumulation of problems angering the RSJ population in Israel only emerged under Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's late government from 1990-1992, in a period when Israel received a total of about 350,000 Russian Jewish newcomers. The new arrivals were enthusiastically welcomed, but it came out that some basic problems such as housing and integration into the job market could not be solved quickly. In the first quarter of 1991, Israel had to grapple with an unemployment rate among the RSJ newcomers of about 30% among men and about 60% among women¹⁷³. The country could not accommodate all newcomers in houses and apartments. Some immigrants had to live in campers, hostels and other provisional billets over a long period of time.

Also under the government of Yitzhak Rabin (1992-1995), a period where the immigrants expected substantial progress concerning their integration, the situation improved rather slowly. Obviously this was the moment when many immigrants came to realize the necessity of having their own immigrant political lobby. Leading figures of the RSJ immigrants' groups from the 1970's and from the 1990's put aside their differences and finally came up with the concept for a political party called "Israel ba Aliyah" that entered the Knesset at its first elections and immediately joined the government. In 1999 Israel Beitanu, a second very successful Russian party, led by Moldavian born Avigdor Lieberman, saw similar success. For a couple of years both parties gathered in sum about 50 percent of the complete Russian electorate. Popular political figures appeared including Nathan Sharansky

¹⁷¹ By attracting many RSJ grassroots initiatives during the early 1990's, the Zionist Forum became a kind of umbrella for the (politically) organized Russian Jewish community in Israel.

¹⁷² Thus, for example, two small Russian lists at the Knesset elections of 1992, "Da" and "Tali" were not able to overcome the hurdle of 1.5% of the votes.

¹⁷³ Paltiel/Sabatello/Tal (1997), p. 312, tab. 14.7.

and Yuli Edelstein on the side of IBA, Avigdor Lieberman and Yuri Stern on the side of IB and Roman Bronfman on the side of the left-wing party “HaBira HaDemocratit” (“The democratic choice”), which was temporarily present in the Knesset as well.

Soon after joining government coalitions, Israel Ba Aliyah could help to push through the first improvements for the RSJ immigrants, namely the establishment of the long-term scholarship Kameya for highly qualified scientists¹⁷⁴ and the installment of “engineering houses”. Beyond this, the party worked on compromise regulations for non-Jewish Russian immigrants (for example, in the case of joint burial with their Jewish spouses) and tried to start a housing-construction program for elderly immigrants with low incomes. However, RSJ voting patterns in the elections of 2003 and 2006 rather indicated that the model of pure “Russian” parties has passed its peak, possibly underlying the fact that for many of the RSJ immigrants the socio-economic situation had improved very much in the course of the last decade.¹⁷⁵

3. Russian Scientists in Israel

With the Russian Aliyah during the 1990’s, Israel has been enriched by an enormous professional capital. Those groups which came with the greatest total numbers were engineers (75,000) and teachers (40,000).¹⁷⁶ Beside this, about 15,000 medical doctors and 25,000 people of related medical professions (mostly nursing) made Aliyah.¹⁷⁷ As a result Israel has become a country with a system of medical coverage with the highest density of service worldwide. Highly professional RSJ immigrants contributed greatly to Israel’s annual economic growth that rose to about 6% during the mid-1990s.¹⁷⁸ At the same time the number of patent applications had multiplied, and the number of Israeli quotes in international scientific journals had doubled by the end of the 1990’s.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁴ Schoeps et al. (2005), p. 322.

¹⁷⁵ See more about the three parties Russian-oriented Knesset parties in chapter V.

¹⁷⁶ Remennick (2002), p.521.

¹⁷⁷ Remennick (2007), p.80.

¹⁷⁸ Lewin-Epstein/Ro’i/Ritterband (1997), p. 134, 310 and 318.

¹⁷⁹ Robert Stone, Israel Hits Rich Seam in Ex-Soviet Immigrants. In: *Science*, 17. Mai 1999, p. 892 ff.

About 14,000 Russian scientists¹⁸⁰ gave unprecedented impulses for research fields like physics, mathematics, engineering, computer science, biochemistry and neurophysiology. However, it was clear from the very beginning that not all of the professionals would find a job appropriate to their employment in the FSU/CIS, and also that the chances to return to their original profession would be distinctly smaller for scholars from the humanities or from the social sciences than for those from the natural sciences.

At least during the 1990's, many RSJ scientists had almost nothing to lose in the successor states of the Soviet Union.¹⁸¹ Thus, despite the inconvenient circumstances of transition at least at the beginning of the 1990's, RSJ scientists found more favorable institutional structures in Israel, and at least a part of the newcomers could continue their career without any pause. Today, some departments of the Weizman Institute in Rehovot (like the departments of math and physics) and at the Bar Ilan University in Tel Aviv are considered more or less "russified" by experienced and talented scientists from the FSU.

4. RSJ Media Professionals in Israel

Already in the early 1990's, a huge number of Russian language newspapers and magazines sprouted in areas with large Russian speaking populations in Israel. *Leshem and Sicron* (2004) referred to ca. 50 regularly-appearing periodicals in Russian¹⁸² already in 1993. But the Russian media market in Israel is very dynamic and very competitive. Especially during the 1990's new newspapers and journals appeared sometimes each month, while others disappeared at the same speed.

¹⁸⁰ Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, Scientists and Researchers, p 3. Internet Version see: http://www.moia.gov.il/nr/rdonlyres/a40ea264-d440-4607-8644-2875d8408d0c/0/scientist_en.pdf (access on July 23, 2009)

¹⁸¹ It is less surprising that a relatively large number of RSJ scientists had left the crumbling USSR and its successor states, compared with other professional groups. At the beginning of the 1990's they had to face especially worse conditions. Governmental policy tended to conduct immense cost cutting programs, and this also at the expense of science, research and development. Due to the economic situation at the universities and research institutes, appointed scholars had to fear for their future career and their scientific self-realization in general. Another very unfavorable factor was the extremely low payment for the scholars. At the end of the 1990's, the salary of the President of the Russian Academy of Science was equivalent to that of a bus driver, and only ca. 0.6 percent of Russia's gross national product (GNP) had been allocated to science, a percentage for lower than in all other developed countries of the world. (Zakharov 1999:319).

¹⁸² Leshem and Sicron (2004), p.110.

Ongoing competition, but also changes in readers' attitudes led to hardening structures in recent times, which finally blessed only one *daily* with the gift of survival¹⁸³: "Vesti", still read by about 65% of the Russian Jews in Israel, whose general political lines are considered as right-wing oriented.

Besides "Vesti", today there are still about 20 weeklies, monthlies or magazines (in total) available as national print media, and in addition about 50 local ones offering a wide range of cultural, social and political perspectives.¹⁸⁴ In line with a former, popular Russian tradition, literary journals asserted a special function not only as a mirror of the literary scene, but also as a medium of societal and political discourse on a high intellectual and philosophical level.

Russian print media is not the only "mouthpiece" and means of mass communication for the immigrants. The popular Russian radio broadcast REKA has been delivered by a private based competitor ("Pervoye radio") in 2002, and in 2003 an Israel-based Russian TV channel was established, paralleling the Russian language channels sent from the FSU or from the United States: "Israel plus", also operating under the name "Channel 9". It is very remarkable that "Channel 9" provides Hebrew subtitles to many programs, thereby addressing not only Russian-speaking Israelis, but also native Hebrew speakers.¹⁸⁵ Finally, Russian language internet papers (like that of mignews.com in Israel) or just general Russian websites with international character (like www.rambler.ru; life-journal.com or ru.net) extend the flow of Russian/Russian-Jewish information and communication tremendously for Israel and abroad. *Mignews* appeared as the most popular Russian language online-newspaper¹⁸⁶ - with an average of 22,000 visitors per day, increasing to 60,000 during political or security crises.¹⁸⁷ *Mignews* covers the various aspects of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict often already on the front page, with a powerful emphasis on Israeli foreign policy and other key issues of the public agenda.

The huge variety of the RSJ media in Israel guarantees not only a pluralism of opinion and information, but serves at least three other important demands: Firstly,

¹⁸³ However, the former newspapers "Russkij Israilitanin", "Globus", "Novosti Nedeli", "Vremja" and "Panorama" were able to survive as popular weeklies.

¹⁸⁴ Ben Rafael (2006).

¹⁸⁵ "Channel 9" has doubled its ratings within a few years. See: Niznick (2009), p. 291.

¹⁸⁶ www.mignews.com

¹⁸⁷ Elias (2008), p.34.

this media is stable enough to resist and correct disparagements and stereotypes about the Russian Jews when spread via boulevard press or even national mainstream media as it often happened in the 1990's. Secondly, there is huge support for those former immigrants who still grapple with serious problems of social integration; for example, via background information reports, progress reports, practical tips for everyday life and the like. Thirdly, the RSJ media is – like other media too – a podium for opinion making and for the discussion of identity. The latter function, no matter whether intentional or not, is primarily delivered by *leading* journalists or even by opinion makers from the outside, like guest commentators for example. Opinion makers in RSJ media should be in sum considered as an elite group that expresses RSJ attitudes towards the whole society and at the same cares for debates on internal (“Russian”) issues.

5. Artistic and Cultural Elites in Israel

Aside from research and the economy, arts and culture in Israel are the societal spheres most transformed and altered by the Russian Jewish immigration. Especially during the 1990's the country faced an enormous enrichment in theater, ballet, classical music, art and literature to just mention a few categories. More than 14,000 of the RSJ newcomers identified themselves as artists on their immigration forms, among them about 10,000 musicians¹⁸⁸, which caused the popular joke that those Russians who leave the airplane without a violin can only be pianists. Here the relation to native professionals was even more extreme than in many other branches. At the beginning of the 1990's, only about 1,200 people worked in Israeli orchestras and music halls. By 1997, the number of professional musicians with job contracts had increased to 1,600, after the government had tried to organize some relaxation, for example with the establishment of at least seven new orchestras in small cities throughout the country and the opening of more than a dozen music education centers in Arab villages inside Israel.¹⁸⁹ A few new local orchestras such as the WIZO Olim Symphony Orchestra and the Olim Orchestra of Tel Aviv were comprised exclusively of new immigrants from the FSU. Aside from this, a boom of

¹⁸⁸ Remennick 2005 in: Schoeps et al. 2005, *Russische Juden und Transnationale Diaspora*, p.289; with a reference to Israeli Ministry of Absorption 1998.

¹⁸⁹ Los Angeles Times, Nov. 20, 1997. See also: Siegel (1998), p.134ff.

new music schools occurred. However, some of the RSJ musicians had no other choice than taking places in amateur orchestras¹⁹⁰ or even to turn into street musicians. Thus it became clear that a lot of the newcomers, irrespective of their proven talent and national and international renown had no choice than to rely on their own, self-sustained projects. This was the case in music, theater, ballet and also in the visual arts. Nevertheless these extremely difficult first steps could become starting points for success stories that led to the starry sky of Israeli arts. The best known example of RSJ artists' self made success in the 1990's is the theater Geshher in Tel Aviv, founded by Russian dramatist Evgenye Arye, which was already considered to be the best theater in Israel in the mid of the 1990's and which attracts a wide audience in Israel and abroad.¹⁹¹ Other Russian artists' branches faced much greater complications in rapprochement with the Israeli arts scene and audience, here in particular in the visual arts. Many avant-garde artists from Russian metropolitan areas like Moscow and Leningrad/St. Petersburg came to Israel in the beginning of the 1990's and formed their own *groups*, as for example the artist's colony "Sa-Nur" or the artist's group 'Battle Elephants' (the latter avant-gardists from Leningrad). However, the Israeli galleries and the Israeli audience remained more or less distanced which prompted not a few immigrant artists to leave the country after a couple of years, often moving to the West.¹⁹²

6. *Intellectuals and "Intelligentsija"*

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, in some Russian circles a traditional distinction is made between intellectuals and "intelligentsija". The RSJ immigration waves of the 1970's and the 1990's included protagonists who might be assigned to both. *Oswald* (2000) affirms the rather vague definition and imagination of "Soviet intelligentsija" describing it as "different professionals whose (specialist) traditions already existed in pre-Soviet times, also habitual intellectuals (in a rather Western understanding), who did not much care for formal educational titles, and also single

¹⁹⁰ See: Siegel (1998), p. 46ff.

¹⁹¹ www.gesher-theatre.co.il (access July 12, 2008)

About the successes and problems of Geshher see also chapter 7.

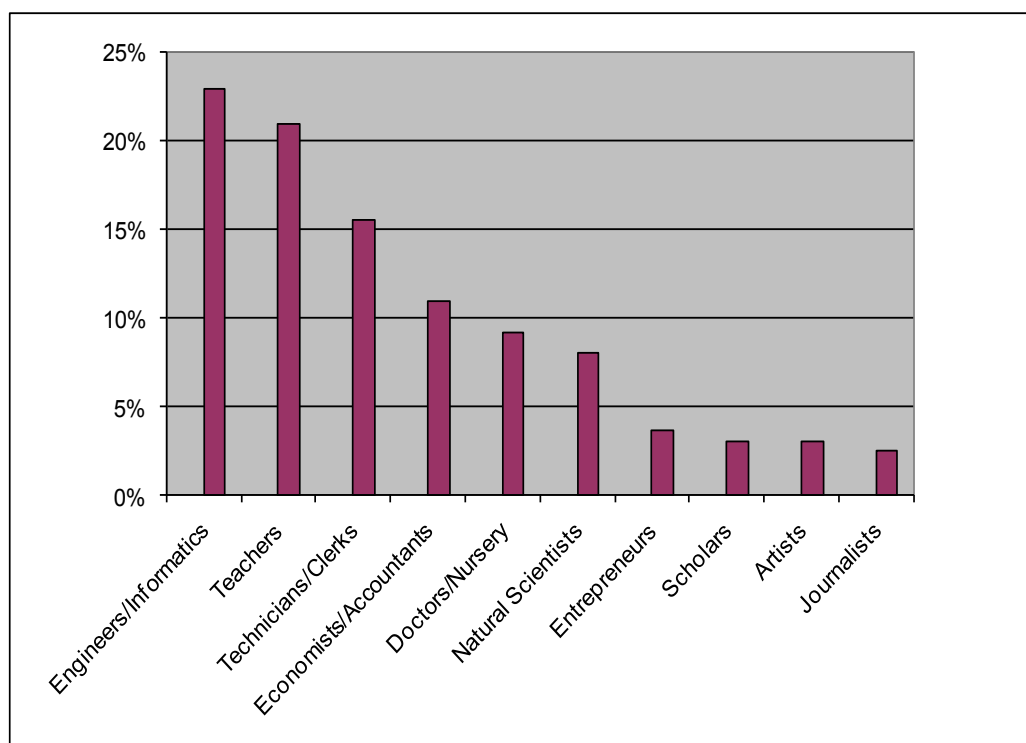
¹⁹² Interview with Art Critic Marina Genkina in Jerusalem on March 12, 2008.

leading figures in administration and economy.”¹⁹³ However, as a significant difference to the former, pre-revolutionary Russian intelligentsija, Oswald remarks that the former was only a small group, while under the hammer and sickle the latter became even a kind of mass phenomenon. In such a wide definition of Soviet intelligentsija entire professional groups can be included, as for example engineers and academically trained administrators¹⁹⁴, and therefore it becomes clear that probably more differences than similarities exist between the “old” (pre-revolutionary) and the “new” (Soviet) intelligentsija.

Russian Jewish Elite Subgroups in Germany

The professional structure of Russian Jews in Germany does not only reveal many parallels to their co-ethnics in Israel, but shows also that a considerable share has to be attributed to *professional elites*.

Graph 3. Russian Jewish Elites in Germany by Profession (in percent)



¹⁹³ Oswald (2000), p.16.

¹⁹⁴ The change of elites during the first years of Soviet power and the regimes’ powerful efforts to modernize and industrialize the still undeveloped, mostly on agricultural economy based country, caused a high demand of new experts in many professional fields. This opened great opportunities for the Jewish population especially in economy, technics and science, who used the chances thoroughly.

What is quite remarkable in this overview is the (expected) huge share of engineers, furthermore a surprisingly large share of teachers¹⁹⁵, but also a remarkably low share of entrepreneurs. The latter coincides with the finding that Russian Jewish entrepreneurs at least as heads of larger businesses or companies remain exceedingly rare.

7. Russian Scientists in Germany

Nearly half of the RSJ immigrants in Germany have professions which are related to industry and technical fields. In those branches some of them have successfully joined the research and development departments. However, this seems not to be the *general case* for highly qualified RSJ employees at the German universities. Moreover, it seems still quite difficult to find greater numbers of RSJ specialists who have joined the ranks of university staff, let alone those who have received a professorship. Locally successful scientists are, of course, also found at the universities.¹⁹⁶ However, it remains a real problem to detect a whole group of Russian Jewish professionals united in one and the same laboratory, university department or institute – as we can find it, for example, among RSJ mathematicians at the Weizman Institute in Rehovot, among RSJ physicists in Givat Ram (Hebrew University) or among RSJ chemists in Haifa.

8. RSJ Intellectuals in Germany

Among the Jewish immigrants in Germany, there are more than a few who are predestined to form an RSJ intellectual strata in the long run due to either their professional resources or their specific competencies in high level communication. But compared with their co-ethnics in Israel, the term *intelligentsija* is applied less¹⁹⁷ in public, which is probably caused by the small size of the group, modest attitudes,

¹⁹⁵ An especially difficult situation appears for the many RSJ teachers in Germany. This job in Germany presupposes fluent German, and also luck, because the German educational system has had rather a surplus of teachers during the last years.

¹⁹⁶ There are a few Russian Jewish scholars who have succeeded as lecturers or even professors in the fields of Slavic studies or Russian literature and arts, also in sociology, and a few in the natural sciences.

¹⁹⁷ However, individuals can understand themselves as representatives of the *intelligentsija* as well.

or, moreover, in the low degree of self-organization until now. Certain individuals, however, have tied their own intellectual networks, also across borders, as the Hanover mathematician and historian Evgueny Berkovitch has proven with his Internet portal “Zametki po Evrejskoj Istorii” (“Notes on Jewish History”).¹⁹⁸

Others have started to build up successful *educational* networks, which also mainly focus on voluntary work, trying to reach a wide Russian Jewish audience and to attract interest in Jewish history and modernity, but Jewish religion and tradition as well. An illustrative example is the association “Gesher – Integration by Education & Culture”, founded and lead by Tatyana Smolianitski, a Moscow historian who resettled to Germany in 1992. Living in the North-Rhine Westphalian city of Dortmund and being a member of the Jewish community of Duisburg, Smolianitski increasingly dealt with national Jewish educational work and extended the project to several towns in North-Rhine Westphalia. Currently she is organizing lectures and seminars for general audiences, but also seminars for librarians of Jewish communities. As Tatyana Smolianitski emphasized some events of Gesher “are highly frequented also by those Jews who usually avoid contact to synagogue and religious life”.¹⁹⁹

However, the current bulk of intellectual discourses among Germany’s Russian Jews is rather reflected in certain rubrics of the established Russian language/Russian Jewish papers in Germany.

9. RSJ Media Professionals in Germany

Although several million Russian speaking people have been living in Germany since the 1990’s, the Russian print media market has developed rather slowly. In this still very narrow media segment in Germany, Russian *Jewish* outlets are more or less an exception. Admittedly, a big group of Jewish community journals are published today in Russian, or at least bilingually (German/Russian), but Russian *Jewish* print-journalism for the general public is very rare, let alone Russian *Jewish* TV or

¹⁹⁸ www.berkovich-zametki.com

¹⁹⁹ Dr. Smolianitski understands her commitment not least as an opportunity to encourage Jews in Germany, and in particular immigrant Former Soviet Jews, to rediscover their roots by dealing with Jewish education and tradition. (Informal talk with Tatyana Smolianitski in Dortmund on May 22, 2007).

radio²⁰⁰.

The only nation-wide Russian Jewish paper which is currently on the market aside from some local publications²⁰¹, is the “Evreyskaya Gazeta” (“Jewish paper”), an independent Jewish monthly, produced in Berlin and sponsored by a businessman formerly from Moldavia.²⁰²

Nevertheless, Russian Jews play a major role as editors and/or journalists in several Russian language weeklies and monthlies, which target a general Russian speaking readership. Thus, the weekly “Russkaja Germania” (with a Berlin issue called “Russkij Berlin”), founded in the mid-1990’s, is run by the brothers Boris and Dmitri Feldmann, who emigrated to Germany from Riga in 1990.²⁰³

Another prominent example is Michail Vaysband, editor in chief of the monthly “Partnjo” (“Partner”) that came on the market in 1997, with the official goal to be a paper for Russian speaking immigrants and to accompany them on their way into German society.²⁰⁴ “Partnjo” is printed in a bilingual version (Russian/German) and circulates in the large German state of North Rhine-Westphalia. The fact that “Russkaja Germanija” as well as “Partnjo” target various groups of Russian language readers does not necessarily contradict with the possibility to cover on Jewish issues. At least “Evreyskaya Gazeta” and “Partnjo” are committed to reflect immigrants’ opinions from a quite independent perspective, giving the immigrants their own voice and *not* to write only *about* them. For example, both of them have conducted their own surveys among RSJ immigrants. In a certain way, functions are taken over that would normally be done by RSJ elites or strong ethnic leadership, but exactly this RSJ leadership has a thin staffing level and is objectively limited in its current radius of action.

²⁰⁰ In general, there are no Jewish TV channels or Jewish radio stations in Germany, neither German-Jewish nor Russian-Jewish. A few state funded radio stations include short Jewish programs, mostly on Friday night.

²⁰¹ Former and current local Russian Jewish papers have been, among others, “Nasha Gazeta” in Hanover, “Aleph Bet” in Potsdam and “Krug” in Cologne (the latter folded in 2002).

²⁰² Nicholas Werner, a businessman from Moldavia, started at the end of the 1990’s and the beginning of the 2000’s as the publisher of the Russian speaking weekly *Evropa Express*, later establishing regional issues of this weekly and in parallel publishing a lifestyle journal called *Vsja Evropa*. In 2002 he decided to establish the *Evreyskaya Gazeta* as well, which has, according to the editor in chief, a circulation of about 40,000. (Interview with Michail Goldberg, editor in chief of the *Evreyskaya Gazeta*, on July 28, 2004.)

²⁰³ Dmitri Feldmann is also involved in the establishment of the Berlin-based radio station “Radio Russkij Berlin”. Concerning the activities of the Feldmann brothers see also chapter 7.

²⁰⁴ The subtitle of the journal is: “Zjel: Integrazia” (“Target: Integration”).

10. *RSJ Artistic and Cultural Elites in Germany*

Professionals from arts and culture make up a share of about 3% of the adult RSJ immigrants in Germany. Comprising “only” a few hundred writers, artists from the visual arts, musicians, dancers and actors, they nevertheless represent their own artistic scene especially in bigger German towns, and some are meanwhile well-perceived by German audiences as well.

Young and talented writers appeared on the scene, whereby some of them definitely prefer to write in German – as Wladimir Kaminer²⁰⁵ and Lena Gorelik²⁰⁶. Singers of Jewish and Russian folk have made a successful career, as, for example, former Ukrainian pop star and actor Mark Aizikovitsch²⁰⁷ who specialized in the field of klezmer music in Germany and is meanwhile also very successful abroad. Some painters of the middle and elderly generation who had a huge reputation and remarkable success already in the Former Soviet Union, as for example Ilja Kleiner from Moscow, turned after emigration to Germany increasing attention to historical Jewish or Biblical Jewish motifs²⁰⁸, and the new generation of painters, represented for example by Pavel Feinstein²⁰⁹, has become well-known for their experimental style with Jewish motifs.

The field of arts in Germany which seems to receive the strongest impact by the Russian Jewish newcomers is probably classical music. Aside from such shining

²⁰⁵ Wladimir Kaminer, born in 1967, emigrated from Moscow to (East) Berlin in the summer of 1990. He still succeeded to get East German (!) citizenship and soon became well-known in (unified) Germany as the DJ in a popular disco in Berlin (Russendisko). At the end of the 1990's he increasingly became known as the bestseller-author of multi-cultural short stories. See also chapter 6.

²⁰⁶ Lena Gorelik is a representative of the new RSJ generation in Germany. Born in 1981 in Leningrad, she came with her family to Germany in 1992, and studied journalism in Germany. Her first novel “My white nights” (2004) was granted the Bavarian Art Prize. In 2007 followed the novel “Wedding in Jerusalem”, in 2008 “Fallen in Love with St. Petersburg”. See also chapter 6.

²⁰⁷ Mark Aizikovitsch is breaking the cliché that Jewish klezmer music in Germany or Western Europe is completely dominated by non-Jewish musicians. Aizikovitsch's audience spans several generations, and he also has created songs for children. About his intercultural experiences in Germany see: chapter 6.

²⁰⁸ Ilja Kleiner, who was well-known in the Former Soviet Union for portraying public figures and landscapes, started to create in Germany paintings with motifs in the sense of Sholem Ajlechem, painted a Rabbi, but made also a whole collection of paintings in Germany dedicated to the Shoah.

²⁰⁹ Pavel Feinstein was born in Moscow in 1960 and grew up in Dushanbe in Tajikistan where he attended art school. In 1980 he moved with his parents to West Berlin where he continued his studies of art and painting. Feinstein's works include among others individual portraits, still lifes, group and biblical scenes, especially the latter in a very unconventional style. The people Feinstein paints play on stereotypical Jewish characters and live in a world which vacillates between humor and terror. A subversive game involving Jewish traditions, the conventions of painting, and the expectations of the observer is embarked upon. See: www.pavel-feinstein.de/

stars like the pianists Elena Bregmann and Wladimir Mogilewski, many young immigrants from the “1.5 generation” are already enrolled at the established music schools in Germany, some making their first steps as soloists, others filling the existing, high level philharmonic orchestras. In cities like Frankfurt am Main there have been enough RSJ musicians to form a whole orchestra as the chamber orchestra “Hatikva”.

Very popular among Russian Jews are also amateur theaters ²¹⁰ (partly organized under the umbrella of local Jewish communities) and local poetry circles. In metropolitan towns, Russian Jewish artists form a considerable part of the general Russian arts scene, which is also manifested in many local Russian Cultural Associations, partly grant-aided by the respective municipalities, where the boundaries between Jewish and non-Jewish artists probably don't have any importance.

11. Russian Jewish Politicians in Germany

Due to the long waiting period for German citizenship, until now it has been almost impossible for Russian Jews to play an active role inside German *party politics*. At the same time it is unclear to what extent even young RSJ immigrants predestined to start a political career would like to run for *Russian Jewish community issues*. A single exception, at least at the moment, seems to be political scientist Sergey Lagodinsky, who emigrated as a child with his family from Astrachan (Russia), later studied law and politics in Boston, worked for the American Jewish Committee in Berlin, and recently founded a Jewish task force in the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), one of the mainstream parties of the country with historical Jewish traditions that date back to the end of the 19th century.²¹¹

However, currently even *veteran German Jews* are hard to find among the political elites of the country, let alone as members of the German parliament (Bundestag). When the German government recruited a delegation to take part at the 60-year-anniversary-celebrations of the State of Israel (May 2008), they could *not*

²¹⁰ Impressive examples are the youth theater group of the club “Raduga” in Düsseldorf, the Rostock Jewish theater “Mechaje” and the Bremen University theatre “Russkaja Aktjorskaja Schkola”, led by the famous Moscow dramatist Semjon Arkadjevitch Barkan. A description of the “Russkaja Aktjorskaja Schkola” is presented in chapter 7.

²¹¹ More about the “Task Force of Jewish Social Democrats“ in chapter 6.

find one single person among 600 Bundestag deputies with a Halachic Jewish origin. Finally, two members with partly Jewish ancestry joined the delegation.

Thus, it is to be expected that RSJ politicians, if any, will appear in the long run from the younger generation, and start to be active firstly in communal and regional parliaments. Inside the Russian Jewish community, leading Jewish functionaries in Germany, at least in the umbrella organizations on national level, are also considered politicians, though acting just as representatives of purely Jewish organizations (Central Council, or the Central Welfare Board of Jews in Germany). But also in these bodies, Russian Jews – at least those from the immigration wave that started at the beginning of the 1990's – are rather an exception.

Chapter IV: RSJ elites' perception of integration processes in Israel and Germany

Highly-qualified immigrants, whatever their ethnic and cultural background might be, have distinct advantages compared to their companions, due to better skills in the labor market, often better language competencies and a general higher flexibility enabling them to adapt at least to basic conditions and principles of their new environment (i.e. a more advanced ability of reorientation). *Remennick* (2005) noted that the group of the Russian Jews in Israel, who are deeply and permanently involved in certain trans-national activities (travelling, communication, trans-national business, work commuters), mainly stem from big cities, have higher educational degrees, have multilingual skills, earn a high income and have a general orientation towards Western civilization.²¹² We presume here that most of the features of the “transnationals” also apply to the RSJ *elites* emigrated to Israel, Germany and other countries of destination in the West.

Educational advantages have their specific effects in daily life during the initial stage of establishing a new life in the respective host country. A professor, publicist or engineer, who is well acquainted with the history, culture and political system of the country to which he emigrates, is better prepared and more “immune” against alienation or disappointments than somebody who had only a shallow (mostly media-based) impression of the country of destination before settling there. A general, additional advantage of RSJ immigrant groups, compared with others, is the density of their informal networks, visible in all countries of destination. It is a fact that Russian Jewish immigrants, at least in the larger and medium-sized towns of their host countries, in general gain fast access to essential information they will need for a good start in their new environment: local conditions, juridical legislation and the specific characteristics of society and neighborhood.

Thus the general conditions for establishing themselves are promising for RSJ émigrés in the West, though often not in the first years after resettlement. For the RSJ immigrants in Israel – as “invited Olim” - it is a great advantage to have access to specific support programs by the Ministry of Absorption, and in Germany the local Jewish communities try to do their best by initiating additional support to

²¹² *Remennick* (2005), p. 295.

complement the integration programs of the German State.

However, each story of individual and family integration is different, and a complexity of individual and objective variables influences the success or failure of individual integration.²¹³ In the initial months of “settling down”, in Israel as well as in Germany, the RSJ need time for finding appropriate housing, suitable kindergartens and/or schools for their children, setting up initial social relations in the new neighborhoods, get in touch with the local culture and daily life and passing a host language course. Normally the “initial” stage is not longer than a few months or one-two years at most, in most cases connected with attempts to enter the labor market. Here, immigrants with elitist professions face noticeably more problems than immigrants who arrive as “blue-collar” workers, presuming that they wish to get back into their original profession.

The dream of returning to their original profession has been fulfilled only by a minority of the Russian Jewish émigrés. Previous studies across the post-Soviet Jewish diaspora indicate that the share of professionals who were able to regain their original occupations lies between 15% in Germany and 30% in Israel and in the US.²¹⁴ A second glance, however, reveals that things have developed differently not only by country, but also among distinct professional groups. A whole complexity of objective factors could affect the success – or failure - of certain professionals in both countries, as for example the capacities to adopt professionals in existing frameworks, resources of ethnic business, opportunities for self-help and support programs offered by governmental institutions.

This Chapter will reflect the successes and setbacks of RSJ professional groups in both countries, setting the focus especially on scientists, engineers/technicians, media, medical doctors, artists and – to a smaller extent – pedagogues and scholars from the humanities. In a second step light will be shed on strategies and programs created in Israel and Germany to catch or compensate the manifold problems connected with the huge numbers of highly-qualified immigrants

²¹³ As individual variables we can consider: age of the immigrant, professional education, state of health, family status, and psychological constitution. As objective variables we can consider: familial/friendship ties in the country of destination, co-ethnic networks, political conditions/eventual state support for the immigrants, specific situation at the local labor market (this can be different for each professional group), relations to host society and to other ethnic minorities. Compare in this context: Chrystaljeva (1996).

²¹⁴ Remennick in: Ben Rafael/Sternberg (2009), p. 276.

unable to use their competencies in the respective professional fields.

1. Elites' Integration in Israel

Scientists. The outflow of former highly educated professionals from the crumbling USSR, especially those in the natural sciences and all technical fields, can be considered as one of the most dramatic breaks in post-Soviet societal life. Subsequently, the question arises as to what extent the host countries are able to turn this enormous human capital into a “brain gain” for their own society.

According to the Israeli Ministry of Absorption (MIA), the number of Former Soviet scientists who entered Israel since 1989 is around 14,000 ²¹⁵, among them a majority of experts in technical fields, in math, physics and chemistry, but also in such specialist fields as neurophysiology. Taken the smallness of the country and the sudden wave of professionals into consideration, the structures of Israeli academic world and research were *not* prepared to use the arriving human capital potential from scratch. The “only” five universities of the country (Tel Aviv University and Bar Ilan University in Tel Aviv, Hebrew University Jerusalem, University of Haifa, Ben Gurion University Beer Sheva) as well as the existing research institutes simply did not have the capacities to absorb all immigrating experts in their departments and laboratories. Aside from this, some professional groups inside the academic field got scared of the new competition, which indeed was a new, objective factor of competition – as in other occupational fields as well.

Within a very short time span, Israeli politics and science were confronted with the challenge of integrating thousands of experts at universities, in research institutes, laboratories and scientific enterprises. The Ministry of Immigrant Absorption (MIA) in cooperation with other ministries (including the Ministry of Science and Ministry of Industry and Trade) started to develop several strategies to ease the situation and to avoid a drastic “brain waste”. As one of the most important instruments in the MIA strategy the “Center for Absorption in Science” (CAS) was revived. This CAS had already been established in 1974, during the first Soviet Jewish immigration wave to Israel, but during the early 1990's became of crucial

²¹⁵ Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, Scientists and Researchers, p 3. Internet Version see: http://www.moia.gov.il/nr/rdonlyres/a40ea264-d440-4607-8644-2875d8408d0c/0/scientist_en.pdf (access on July 23, 2009)

importance for backing the newly arrived. The CAS has a double function: on the one hand to prepare the immigrant scientist for new challenges in science or industry (for example, by general advice, personal assessment, supporting applications), on the other hand to bring the scientists into specific scholarship programs, if immediate job offers remain unrealistic. From 1974-2004 about 15,000 immigrants got support, and according to Shmuel Adler, Director for Planning and Research at MIA, the Center aided at least 12,000 scientists with a special grant.²¹⁶

The scholarship programs procured by the “Center of Absorption in Science” enable the immigrants to work in their field of academic research for a limited period of time, not as personal staff of the respective universities and institutions but as collaborators at the same departments and laboratories, and they are paid by several Israeli ministries in combination. As a first basic grant, the “Schapiro grant” was introduced in the early 1990's, with a maximum possible duration of up to four years.²¹⁷ After the respective scientists had worked quite successfully in the Schapiro program, employment could be continued by means of a second scientists grant, called “Giladi”, paid for a time span up to five years. This program was competitive, required post-immigration publications and worked only with a co-financing of 50 percent by the respective universities or research institutes.²¹⁸

However, already during the middle of the 1990's it became clear that many of the highly-qualified and very successful Russian Jewish scientists had made enormous imprints on several research fields, but finally would have been “condemned to leave the field” after the “Giladi” grant. Pressured by politicians of “Israel ba Aliyah” (Sharansky, Edelstein), but also by some prominent native scholars and politicians – especially Dan Amir, at that time Rector of the Tel Aviv

²¹⁶ Interview with Shmuel Adler, Director Planning and Research at the Israeli Ministry of Immigrant Absorption [MIA] in Jerusalem on March 6, 2003.

²¹⁷ For the Schapiro grant every immigrant scientist can apply. The Ministry of Absorption pays 68 per cent of his/her salary. The condition, however, is the patronage and guarantee of an Israeli scientist, who is ready to act as a kind of mentor and ready to work with the immigrant scientist. The only requirements for being entitled to apply for this grant was a certain number of self-published articles and the recommendation by an Israeli mentor from the academic field or from the economy. See: Siegel (1998), p. 81.

²¹⁸ Yelenevskaya / Fialkova (2009), p. 624. It has to be noted that for some of the immigrant scientists, the Schapiro and Gilad programs have not been sufficient to support themselves or their families. Jewgenij Katz, a solar energy specialist doing research in Sde Boker (Negev Desert) and in the Giladi fellowship program, admitted: “But the salary from this grant is extremely low. So I was lucky that I could use a few other grants and parallel jobs right from the beginning. Otherwise it would be very difficult, and I know that other immigrant scientists even left the Shapiro program.” (Interview with Jewgenij Katz in Sde Boker on March 26, 2003)

University, and the former Minister of Science, Yuval Ne'eman - the Israeli government decided to establish a third grant, named "Comeya". The Comeya grant is given to a limited number of outstanding successful scientists who have already "passed through" the Schapiro and Giladi programs, but are generally gauged as almost indispensable at certain university departments or high level institutes. The whole program is limited to 500 places, entitles the promoted persons to remain "inside" until retirement, and is considered as a great success. Thus, Professor Moshe Belinsky from the Department of Physical Chemistry at the TAU, head of the "Association of Scientists-Repatriates of Israeli Universities" and one of the initiators of the "Comeya" program, concluded: "Maybe this is the most successful project which has ever existed to put immigrant scientists into university departments. I don't know any other project of this type. We have about 500 Russian-Jewish scientists now in this program, and that means about 10 per cent of the personnel staff of all Israeli universities."²¹⁹ *Yelenevskaya and Fialkova* (2009) emphasize that although the "Comeya" program was meant for the long-term employment of the best immigrant researchers, the contracts have to be renewed annually, and "every year 'Russian' members of the Knesset have to fight for its [continuing] funding."²²⁰ Since the battle around the continuation of the "Comeya" program has been appearing in the media, it has become an important indicator of real influence of the RSJ scientific communities. All umbrella organizations of RSJ scientists regularly mobilize their supporters for rallies and political campaigns emphasizing the enormous scientific input into Israel society and beyond that "Comeya" enables. Thus, in September 2009, hundreds of Russian speaking academics demonstrated in front of the Knesset, and a few weeks later in front of the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption in Jerusalem. "It is a permanent fight, because constant, dependable promises by the government remain unfulfilled", said Jewgenij Kamenetskii, one of the leading activists in the campaign. "Only a very few of us can plan their research projects systematically".²²¹

Irrespective of the fights for the continuation of scholarship programs for outstanding RSJ scientists, there is a controversial debate until the present as to whether the integration of the immigrants' scientists of the 1990's has been

²¹⁹ Interview with Professor Moshe Belinsky at the Tel Aviv University on March 1, 2004.

²²⁰ *Yelenevskaya and Fialkova* (2009), p.624f.

²²¹ Informal talk with Professor Jewgenij Kamenetskii in Beer Sheva on November 26, 2009.

successful or just failed. And whereas Shmuel Adler from the MIA drew parallels between the successful integration of FSU scientists of the 1970's wave and the Great Aliyah of the 1990's, Professor Valentin Fainberg, the former vice mayor of Haifa (for "Israel ba-Aliyah") claimed just the opposite, with explicit reference to the situation of immigrant scientists in Haifa: "A myth exists that the Technion in Haifa and other Israeli universities successfully absorb immigrant scientists from the Former Soviet Union. This is not true. I estimate that about 19,000 immigrant scientists are not working in their original profession, and that seems for me like a real big waste."²²² Other prominent immigrants applaud the several scientists grants (Schapiro, Giladi, Cameya) that offered a chance for thousands of RSJ scientists to find employment according to their qualification, but criticize at the same time that the fellowship holders are not enlisted in decisions of the academic administration and that they are only partly enabled to affect or steer the direction of their individual research.²²³ But irrespective of the difficulties and ambivalences that might be inherent in the scholarship programs, effects on Israeli research and economy became visible. Shmuel Adler (MIA) stated: "If you look at the universities today, especially at mathematics, physics, even chemistry (...) so it's good to see that they [the immigrants and Israeli returnees] developed the whole biological field, biochemistry, bioengineering, everything (...) *it's quite difficult to imagine how the economy would look today without the Russian scientists.*"²²⁴

A complete different integration program for highly qualified RSJ immigrants, remote from the universities, but nevertheless successful, are the so called "Technological Incubators". This program was (re-)established by the Ministry of Industry and Trade in 1991²²⁵ and works at the "interface" of research and market

²²² Interview with Valentin Fainberg on March 13, 2003 in Haifa. It should be noted that Fainberg is referring to a very high number of FSU scientists in general (19,000) which differ from official statistical sources. In the interview, Fainberg was speaking as a vice mayor of Haifa and as political representative of "Israel ba -Aliyah". On the other hand, he worked as a chemist in Israel during the 1990's and knows the Technion in Haifa "from inside".

²²³ Thus, Professor Jewgenij Kamenetskii from the Ben Gurion University Beer Sheva, concluded: "If you have a permanent position on the university staff, you are more or less allowed to do research, to do science independently. But if you are on a grant, on a special program outside the university framework, you are not allowed. You cannot leave the main direction of research which is given beforehand by the academic staff." (Interview with Professor Kamenetskii in Beer Sheva on Sept. 5, 2003).

²²⁴ Interview with Shmuel Adler, Director Planning and Research at the Israeli Ministry of Immigrant Absorption (MIA) in Jerusalem on March 6, 2003. Emphasis O.G.

²²⁵ A first program of "Technological Incubators" was established in 1979, but failed and was closed in 1981.

economy. “Technological Incubators” are companies for research, which normally include up to six research projects in a special scientific field. The companies are (mainly) State sponsored for two years. 85% of the costs are taken by the Ministry of Industry and Trade, the rest usually comes from private business. Interested universities, municipalities and private individuals can also invest in the projects. The central aim of each project inside the “Technological Incubators” is to develop a patent, a high-class product or any technology that can be placed on the national or even international market with such success that the project(s) become self-sufficient. Most of the “Technological Incubators” established since 1991 were in electronics, computer science, medical technology, chemistry, biology and biotechnology. According to the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption Statistics (MIA), from the original 600 “incubator projects”, about half of the incubators have developed as self-subsistent high tech companies²²⁶, a few of them also being successful on the international market. For example, “Compugene” has become one of the leading companies in biotechnology, “Phonor” has become a cooperation partner of the international cell phone market leader “Motorola”, and “Nanomotion” has become a famous subcontractor for PC- and microchip-producers.²²⁷

The fact that about half of the “incubator projects” finally failed to be transformed into self-subsistent companies does not contradict the effect of a good professional training for *all* participating scientists. In any case, the success rate of the Technological Incubators in Israel appeared to be about four to five times more successful than the comparable projects in the USA and in Western countries.²²⁸

However, neither the Schapiro, Giladi and Cameya grants, nor the “Technological Incubators” could provide perspectives for *all* the immigrated scientists and academically trained professionals. Some of the highly qualified, after

²²⁶ <http://www.incubators.org.il> (access on April 19th, 2010). According to Rina Pridor, the coordinator of the Technological Incubators’ Program, 41% of the incubators graduates are still up and running since the beginning of the program in 1991.

²²⁷ Interview with Rina Pridor, the coordinator of the “Technological Incubator Program” at the Ministry of Industry and Trade in Tel Aviv, March 19, 2003. Rina Pridor estimates that about 500 of the 600 original project ideas for the already granted “incubator programs” came from FSU immigrant scientists (the program is open for all Israeli scientists).

²²⁸ Comparable projects have been tested in big combines in the USA and in Great Britain, - for example in North Carolina and in the South East of England - but have reached only success rates between 5 and 10 per cent. Adler said, concerning possible “secrets” for the Israeli success: “Maybe it’s the special sense of the responsible persons at [Israeli] Ministries which had to check and to decide which project applications will be financed and which ones will be rejected.” (Interview with Shmuel Adler in the Ministry of Immigrants Absorption, Jerusalem, on March 6, 2003).

having realized the almost insuperable difficulties involved in finding their way back into scientific jobs, turned their activities to business and economy (*Leshem/Shuval* 1998), looking for alternative professional possibilities instead of the “overcrowded scientific fields” in Israel. Aside from this, there are numerous attempts to build up new professional existences by using trans-national structures - for example as a computer scientist, working for companies in the United States, in Europe, Russia and in Israel at the same time. Computer science and high tech also belong to the rapidly expanding branches in Israel, which have been mainly dominated by Russian programmers since the 1990ies.²²⁹

RJS scientists feel confident about their contribution to and impact on research and development in Israel. Professor Jewgenij Kamenetskii emphasized that not only the sheer number of immigrated scientists guarantees a certain dynamic, but also the presence of a peculiarly Russian scholar’s way of thinking. Kamenetskii said that the RSJ scientists’ mentality “should be distinguished from the scientific mentality of people from such a country like Israel. So even in the formation of new ideas in science, discussions from people who have a different type of thinking, this can bring a very strong impact to an established society. And for such a small country this is very crucial.”²³⁰

Engineers, economists and technologists. Engineers, economists and technologists, as the biggest professional group that came with the Great Aliyah during the 1990's, had to face very specific hardships. Many of them were specialized in fields demanded in the FSU economy, but not in Israel; for example, hydroelectricity, metallurgy or the mining industry. It was also the fact that many economists had comprehensive experiences in a planned economy, but not in the free market.

Until the year 2003 only about 35 percent of immigrant engineers had found employment as engineers in Israel again, either in their old specialty or in a new one after retraining.²³¹ The government then picked up suggestions from the Russian politicians (Sharansky, Edelstein) to promote so called “Engineering Houses”. These houses are physically located at respective municipalities but the “Ministry of

²²⁹ According to Remennick (2007), over 40 percent of the employees of Israeli high-tech companies in Israel are Russian immigrants, making a significant professional contribution to the global success of Israeli IT and computing industries. See: Remennick (2007), p.78.

²³⁰ Interview with Professor Jewgenij Kamenetskii at the Ben Gurion University on September 5, 2003.

²³¹ Remmenick (2007), p.79.

Immigrant Absorption” is providing most of the expenses. Engineers and technologists can meet there, discuss and develop new ideas and exchange information about companies where they are involved. In 2003, “Engineering houses” were open in 40 Israeli towns.²³² Aside from this, some engineers and professionals, specialized in military technology, succeeded in finding new tasks and opportunities in the Israeli Army (Zahal) or in the arms industry.

Medical doctors in Israel. As a surprisingly successful story appears the integration of the RSJ medical doctors into the established Israeli health care system. The demands of the Israeli Ministry of Health and of the professional bodies of the medical doctors in Israel were quite high in the 1990's. Nevertheless, about 50% of the RSJ medical doctors succeeded in coming back into their original profession.²³³ This result is even more impressive, bearing in mind that many RSJ medical doctors did not try to retrain for the Western medical doctors' license in Israel. Even considering that a proportion of the Russian physicians work in less prestigious specialties than those they worked in before, their return-rate to their original profession has often been described as a little miracle. FSU immigrants' doctors today comprise fully half of all Israeli practitioners under the age of 45 and one quarter among those aged 45-65.²³⁴ Many observers and RSJ doctors concerned were enthused. Thus, a medical researcher hired at the Hebrew University stated:

“To integrate such a great number of doctors here, that was one of the most problematic stories of the 1990's. The established medical association in each country would try at first to reject too many newcomers. It's like a kind of competition because it is connected to money. Maybe there's even a little bit stronger competition among doctors than in other fields of professionals. But even in this situation a huge number of the medical doctors from the former Soviet Union succeeded. Of course you have to be flexible. But I don't know any unemployed medical doctor from Russia who has received the professional license in Israel.”²³⁵

Teachers, journalists, scholars of social sciences/humanities. Compared with the relatively successful integration of the RSJ medical doctors in Israel, the achievements to date of the teachers, journalists and especially of the scholars in social sciences/humanities are meager if not to say disappointing. Among the

²³² Interview with Shmuel Adler (Ministry of Immigrant Absorption) in Jerusalem on March 6, 2003.

²³³ Naveh/Noam/Benitas (1995)/Israeli Ministry of Absorption 1995, footnote 13. Quoted in: Remennick in: Schoeps et al. (2005), p.289

²³⁴ Remennick (2007), p.82

²³⁵ Interview with medical researcher at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem on March 10, 2003.

immigrated teachers; for example, less than 20% have been employed in their original profession.²³⁶ And it is evident that in all these professional groups there is no chance to find an adequate job without being almost perfect in the language of the host society. Furthermore, teachers have to be familiar with the culture of the environment; journalists need a lot of insider knowledge and informal networks/sources, and scholars of the humanities/social sciences face an even bigger problem with the small academic capacities than do their colleagues from the natural sciences.

However, some of the RSJ teachers have found appropriate possibilities to come back into their profession by enhancing their creative activities, but hereby wittingly targeting their own immigrants group. Many parents of RSJ pupils have become very disappointed with the Israeli school system, after learning that educational and pedagogical principle in Israel classes are differently weighted in comparison with Former Soviet / Russian schools. Special criticism has been directed at a perceived lack of teachers' status and authority, a lack of subject matters in disciplines like math and physics, a general low level of homework and a total lack of talent promotion.²³⁷ In the growing networks of RSJ immigrants teachers, educationists and parents in Israel there grew quickly common sense of the necessity to complement or even reform the Israeli school system. One of the most prominent pedagogues of the Former Soviet Union, Yacov Mazganov, gathered compatriots from former elitist Soviet schools and began to offer supplementary after-school classes for Russian-speaking pupils and students in several Israeli towns. In 1991 Mazganov and his friends founded the school network "Mofet". Mofet now runs a half-dozen day schools and more than 20 supplementary afternoon and evening schools around the country. The most famous of them is "Shevah-Mofet" in Tel Aviv, which has about 1,300 students. Four junior-high schools have been opened in Jerusalem, Ariel, Haifa, and Ashdod. "Mofet" brings together first-rank teachers from the Former Soviet Union's specialized math-and-science-schools with the gifted

²³⁶ Remennick (2005b), p.189.

²³⁷ Thus, Menachem Tsindlekht, a physicist formerly from Donetsk (Ukraine) and now working at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, remembers his and his wife's irritation when getting to know how the Israeli school system works: "It seemed for us that most of the children attended school just to have a good time. But a child in Russia or in the Ukraine first of all goes to school to learn something, to work hard. Also the relationship between the teachers and the pupils in Israel seemed unacceptable for us. I think that immigration could change something now." (Interview with Dr. Menachem Tsindlekht at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem on March 9, 2003).

Russian-speaking children.²³⁸ The schools are acknowledged by the Israeli Ministry of Education, the teaching language is Hebrew. Since many of the “Mofet” school leavers complete with excellent grades, but also in accordance with the general standards, there is a trend among Israeli “Sabra” families to enroll their children in Mofet schools as well. In case that the successful Russian school model of “Mofet” will break ground in Israeli society, this could open a wider range of professional opportunities for (unemployed) RSJ teachers as well.

In a similar manner to the teachers, RSJ professional journalists faced integration problems on the labor market that have a lot to do with language perfection. Even now the number of RSJ immigrants who are employed in Hebrew language media is rather low. On the other hand, the “mushrooming” of Russian print media in Israel since the early 1990's has offered wide opportunities to work as journalist in the “home” language. On the other hand, the rapid ups and downs on the Russian language media market until the present time have made journalism not the most secure bank for the immigrant writing guild. Another problem is that most of the journalists in Russian language print media are – at least in comparison with their colleagues of the established Hebrew language media – remarkably underpaid.

While there is still a dynamic in the media branch, immigrated scholars from the humanities and the social sciences are in an even more problematic situation. Capacities in the social sciences and in the humanities nowadays appear as limited as in the Western academic world. *Yelenevskaya and Fialkova* (2009) suggest that the integration of migrated researchers from the humanities “is much harder than that of their peers in mathematics, technology, and natural sciences. Some of the reasons might be incompatibility of skills, differing academic cultures, immigrants' weak proficiency in the host language and in English.” However, as additional obstacles appear “distrust of the Soviet social sciences and humanities by Western academics as overwhelmingly saturated by ideology, and hence largely useless.”²³⁹ According to TV journalist Mikhail Djaginov, RSJ scholars from the humanities and artists in Israel are “those professional groups which didn't enjoy any kind of support or promotion from the authorities” in Israel.²⁴⁰

²³⁸ Epstein/Kheimets (2004), p. 471.

²³⁹ Yelenevskaya and Fialkova (2009), p. 622

²⁴⁰ Interview with Mikhail Djaginov in Jerusalem on March 12, 2008.

Artists. The “artist’s market”, of course, is much more characterized by self employment and freelancing work, especially for musicians, actors, visual artists and entertainers, than it is the case in other branches. Bearing in mind the large group of Russian Jewish newcomers in Israel during the 1990's, it could be presumed that the RSJ artists would meet once more a culturally very interested audience among their co-ethnics. At the same time it was clear that an exclusive concentration on the Russian audience wouldn't be enough to make ends meet. Thus, even many internationally successful RSJ artists had to start “at zero” after Aliyah. Many artists, who did not succeed in finding employment ad hoc, continued to engage in orchestras, theatres and other creative places of art by *volunteering*, thus keeping in practice and not losing their contact to the scene. But getting employment in established cultural institutions remained a dream for many of them also in the long run. In this context, a shocking example of occupational downgrading has been described by Siegel (1998) who reported an internationally-famous organist who continued to give concerts in cathedrals abroad but was forced to earn his daily living in Israel driving a garbage truck.²⁴¹

Also, for the many visualizing artists, an additional problem emerged: It became very soon clear that the artistic conceptions of Israeli and Russian visual artists – and in line with this the expectations of the Israeli native and the Russian Jewish audience – differ enormously and don't have much in common even until today. Thus Marina Genkina, a well-known art critic formerly from Moscow, and then collaborator at the Library of Art at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, critically asked in an essay of 2007: “Why, after so many years, does a ‘wall’ still separate ‘Russian-speaking’ artists from Israeli artists? *This separation exists not only between the arts, but generally between immigrants and veteran Israeli citizens.*”²⁴²

Genkina went on, criticizing an obvious gap between politically correct statements and the reality of daily life. In sum, Russian-speaking artists' existence in Israel would still be “marginal, in spite of the fact that the mass media, politicians and representatives of the Israeli art establishment continuously spout the mantra of the ‘immense contribution of Russian Aliyah to Israeli culture.’ The questions then are: What is the contribution by Russian-speaking artists to Israeli art, and, indeed, is

²⁴¹ Siegel (1998), p. 87f.

²⁴² Marina Genkina, Catalogue Artsession 2007: Contemporary Israeli Artists from Russia. See: www.zeek.net/803genkina/index.php?page=2. Emphasis O.G

there a contribution? What is the place of Russian-speaking artists in the Israeli art establishment, and, do they, in fact, have a place there?”²⁴³ According to Genkina (2007), many RSJ got the feeling that their creations were not only different in taste but also not really welcomed.

On the other hand, the Russian artists did not hole up as though they were inside a snail shell. From the middle of the 1990's a continuous rise of “Russian” art groups and galleries - mainly based in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa - increasingly influenced the local, national and even international scene. Some of the artists opted for a second migration to the West in the hope of finding better professional opportunities. Others enhanced their activities abroad (while staying in Israel) or renewed their connections with Russia.²⁴⁴ Russian Jews also continued to create novelties in the spheres of modern theater, music and ballet – together with natives or on their own -, but greatly enhancing Israel’s reputation in these fields.

Twenty years after the beginning of the Great Aliyah from the Former Soviet Union, some of the RSJ immigrants’ elites tend to express very much appreciation of the support offered by the Israeli state, especially when having had the chance to improve their professional skills and to build up now carriers in in the academic, professional, technical, managerial and – in a few cases – artistic area.

Thus, one of the interviewed RSJ physicists at the Tel Aviv University proudly stated:

“The big problems which occurred with the mass influx at the beginning of the nineties – they are almost completely eliminated. It’s not that every problem was solved – but that’s normal if you consider the big number of immigrants until today. But if you have a look on my group, people, which came ten or twelve years ago – their unemployment rate is more or less quite the same like that of the veteran population today. I don’t see real aggravating problems which couldn’t be solved in a certain time.”²⁴⁵

A RSJ geophysicist, also from the Tel Aviv University, concurred: “From those friends and acquaintances that came with me to Israel more or less at the same time – maybe with a difference of plus or minus one year -, almost all of them, let’s say

²⁴³ *ibid.*

²⁴⁴ Thus, for example, in 2006 Ilya and Tina Bogdanovsky organized an Israeli artists group that took part at the 3rd International Biennale of Graphic Art in St. Petersburg - and won important prizes there.

²⁴⁵ Interview with RSJ physicist at the Tel Aviv University on March 23, 2003.

80-90 percent, are working in their speciality again.”²⁴⁶ Aba Taratuta, a former Soviet Jewish dissident and aerospace researcher, considered the integration of the Great Russian Aliyah “in general a success”, and so did Eudard Kusnezow, former editor-in-chief of the Russian online weekly “mignews”.

At the same time there were also thoughtful voices, which regreted either brain waste or a certain kind of exploitation of Russian Jewish intellectual resources. Thus, for example, Valentine Fainberg, former vice major of Haifa, criticized:

“It is evident that well educated immigrants in lower professional positions create an economic rise and stabilization for many companies. Our [veteran] professor at the Technion had 20 papers by the time he was sixty. Now he has 300 publications with his team which mainly consists of Russian scientists, and everybody works for him. You can see similar developments in many spheres of high tech and culture. But what makes me a bit sad is the disparity between all of these contributions and the social positions of the Russians in general. It sometimes looks like giving Israeli society a lot of progress, but by yourself you have the feeling of gowing down.”²⁴⁷

Fainberg describes a process that can also be interpreted as sealing-off by the veteran elites. Immigrants’ contributions in research and development are welcome as long as the veterans’ own positions within the academic elites are not threatened. For some immigrants, the sore point, however, remains the inadequacy between professional specialization and actual work.

2. Elites’ Integration in Germany

From the very beginning, RSJ immigrants in Germany faced a much greater extent of integration problems than the co-ethnics in Israel, and RSJ elites were particularly affected. The disparity between the original hopes and the actual experiences in the country of destination might have affected the elites even more than the over-all group. It was the exception to the rule that highly qualified immigrants succeeded in making a smooth transition from one high ranking professional position in the FSU to another in Germany. Throughout the 1990’s (and beyond) the majority of RSJ

²⁴⁶ Interview with RSJ geophysicist at the Tel Aviv University on September 1, 2003. Statistical data gives evidence for this assessment. In 2007 the unemployment rate of those RSJ immigrants who came to Israel in 1990/1991 was already lower than the unemployment rate among the Israeli average population: 7,2% versus 8,4% . See: Statistical Abstract of Israel (Shnaton) 2007, No. 58/Labor and wages; p. 12.23 and p. 12.28.

²⁴⁷ Interview with Professor Valentin Fainberg in Haifa on March 11, 2003.

immigrants had to face enormous difficulties on the job market that was undergoing a serious crisis partly caused by unsolved problems of German re-unification.

Official statistical data on employment and income, sorted for Russian Jewish immigrants in Germany, are *not* available, at least not in a way comparable to that which the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) in Israel is providing annually.²⁴⁸ Empirical studies dealing with employment and income among the new immigrants had either to omit certain sub-groups not reachable at all or to construct probabilities by using the general German census, including immigrant groups.²⁴⁹ However, analyses conducted from the middle of the 1990's onwards provide an almost adequate and problematic picture and indicate that about 35-40% of the Russian Jews in Germany are unemployed²⁵⁰ - which is four times the average unemployment in Germany.

Kogan and Cohen (2008) who analyzed the German micro-censuses of 1996 and of 2000, and analyzed in parallel the Labor Force surveys in Israel for 1996 and 2000, confirmed the extreme disparity in the labor market integration of FSU immigrants in both countries during the 1990's. They also confirmed an almost similar share of FSU immigrants with academic degrees during their years of study in both countries and searched for explanations for the extremely different unemployment rates of the FSU immigrants (in 1996 for immigrants who arrived in 1990-1995: 8.0% in Israel, 46.3% in Germany; in 2000 for immigrants who arrived in 1996-1999: 14.7% in Israel, 58.5% in Germany).²⁵¹ Three factors were considered as less advantageous for the immigrants in Germany: the distribution of the RSJ immigrants across the whole country (i.e. fixed allocation of first place of residence),

²⁴⁸ Because of the fact that about half of the Russian Jewish immigrants have completely “disappeared” into the German population, not registered as RSJ immigrants in any offices, organizations or communities at all, it is extremely difficult for researchers to gain a *complete picture* on an empirical basis. Subsequently, almost all analytical material in Germany stems from surveys which are randomized via support of the Jewish communities or by snowball in local case studies.

²⁴⁹ Cohen and Kogan (2005) tried to get representative socio-economic data on Russian Jewish immigrants in Germany by taking that part of the German micro-census which comprised inhabitants with FSU citizenship, and arrived in Germany in the time span from 1990 to 2000. Cohen and Kogan took as a basic consideration that the FSU citizenship group could be composed of only two groups: German Ethnic Repatriates and Jewish Quota Refugees (both immigrating on a legal basis). As German Ethnic Repatriates (“Aussiedlers”) normally get German citizenship within one year, but Russian Jews not before 7 or 8 years after arrival, at least the FSU citizens with arrival time from 1992 until 1999 could be assumed as *almost all* Jewish Quota Refugees (JQR). See: Cohen and Kogan (2005), pp. 249-265.

²⁵⁰ Schoeps et al. (1999), Gruber/Rüssler (2002), Ben Rafael (2006).

²⁵¹ Kogan and Cohen (2008), p.111.

a more rigid German labor market in the 1990's and less opportunities for developing an “ethnic market”, compared with Israel. On the other hand, Kogan and Cohen refer to the clearly greater social benefits for unemployed Russian Jews in Germany following the first year of initial integration (where the support programs and benefits are quite comparable)²⁵² and conclude: “FSU Jews in Germany are able to wait for agreeable jobs, while their counterparts in Israel are forced to take whatever job is offered to them, for state benefits are no longer available one year after emigration.”²⁵³

Indeed, for the years 1990-1995, RSJ immigrants in Germany clearly surpassed their co-ethnics in Israel in the percentage of holding PTM (“Professional-Technical-Managerial”) occupations (38.8% versus 26.9%).²⁵⁴ Since the differences in the social security systems in Israel and Germany have continued since that time, it could be expected in the long run that a certain percentage of the high qualified RSJ in Germany will finally also enter the labor market with jobs more or less appropriate to their education and skills. Moreover – *Cohen and Kogan* conclude from their analysis of the German micro-census of 1996 and 2000 and from the Israeli CBS labor force surveys in 1996 and 2000 that “in about ten years after migration, Jewish immigrants in Germany will have the same chance of being unemployed as demographically comparable natives. With time, apparently, FSU immigrants in Germany learn the language, integrate in some social networks, and make impressive progress with respect to getting out of unemployment.”²⁵⁵

The extremely limited opportunities in the German labor market during the 1990's – when the country underwent an economic crisis, as well as the huge rate of permanent unemployment, was a situation that many immigrants obviously had not expected. Since many of the RSJ immigrants have *never* succeeded in getting a longer term work contract, the number of social welfare recipients (including retirees) appeared even much higher than the unemployment rate. In 2005, experts estimated the rate of RSJ welfare recipients to be between 60% and 85%.²⁵⁶

²⁵² Kogan and Cohen (2008) estimate that the welfare benefits for unemployed FSU immigrants in Germany are in the years after the initial 12 months 3-7 times higher than in Israel. See: Kogan and Cohen (2008), p.105.

²⁵³ Kogan and Cohen [2008], p.116.

²⁵⁴ Kogan and Cohen (2008), p.112.

²⁵⁵ Cohen and Kogan (2007), p. 165.

²⁵⁶ Estimation of the German Ministry of Interior published in: Jüdische Allgemeine, Dec. 23, 2004; DIE WELT, Jan. 20, 2005.

Logically, the different development of labor market integration of Russian Jews in Israel and Germany affects the household income situation. Thus, while the average household income of RSJ immigrants (i.e. including the employed and the non-employed), who arrived in Israel at the beginning of the 1990's has reached 87% of the income of the native population, that of the RSJ co-ethnics in Germany has reached only 62%.²⁵⁷

Not a few RSJ immigrants with academic degrees face specific difficulties in returning to their original profession, due to the lack of recognition of their professional license in Germany. The decision to accept or reject a former Soviet professional license is normally in the hand of local ministries (for science and culture) and of professional associations.²⁵⁸ Some native scientists, professionals, or artists of course perceive the newcomers as competitors (as in Israel as well), thus trying to influence the professional associations in their policy and patterns towards the immigrants.

Taking the generally high unemployment rate among Russian Jews in Germany, it was to be expected that the percentage of RSJ immigrants in highly qualified, elite professions would even surpass the average line. But in contrast to Israel there have been not yet specific studies in Germany which deal with the labor market integration of single professional groups of the RSJ immigrants.²⁵⁹

Several studies in Germany have referred to the enormous waste of intellectual and professional potential among RSJ professional experts, who are

²⁵⁷ However, Cohen and Kogan figured out by using the German micro-census of 2000, that – at least at that point of time – the RSJ immigrants' purchasing power, as an absolute economic term, has been higher in Germany. The authors conclude: "Immigrants face a choice between improving their relative income (Israel) or their absolute income (Germany) but usually cannot have both." (Cohen and Kogan 2005, p.264f.)

²⁵⁸ Things become even more complicated when we consider that the recognition procedure for professional experts among the Ethnic German Returnees from the FSU ("Spätaussiedler") can be managed differently to those procedures for the Russian Jewish immigrants. An Ethnic German scientist can be recognized concerning his academic qualification, while his Jewish colleague from the same university or institute in the FSU is not.

²⁵⁹ In order to get detailed numbers from relevant professional groups, I have analyzed the German RSJ survey-sample from the international project "Building a Diaspora: Russian Jews in Israel, Germany and the USA" (see: *Ben Rafael et al. 2006*) by checking correlations of stated profession and current status of employment/unemployment. This analysis of the project sample did confirm a very high unemployment rate at least for the groups of engineers (42.6%), scientists (42.1%), medical doctors (55.6%) and teachers (37%). Also an overwhelming majority of the immigrated RSJ artists in this German sample was out of work, and the only branch where more immigrants were back in their field than unemployed was computer science/IT. Interestingly, a large proportion of RSJ engineers, teachers and even scientists had decided to change into other fields, mostly into social work, the economy (their own business) or even unskilled work, but obviously fewer than in Israel.

highly motivated for new professional challenges but don't get any chance to prove the quality of their achievements.²⁶⁰ In general, the German state had no support measures comparable to the Israeli scholarship programs "Schapiro", "Giladi" and "Cameya" or the Technological Incubators.

Though, there are certain training programs for specific professional groups with academic degrees; for example, engineers, medical doctors and lawyers - organized by the "Otto Benecke Foundation", a subcontracting institution of the Federal Ministry for Education and Research (Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung / BMBF).²⁶¹ Russian Jewish respondents in Germany, who normally do not hesitate with their criticism toward German integration policy in surveys or interviews, almost unanimously commend the work of the Otto Benecke Foundation.²⁶²

The students of OBF programs in the age range between 30 and 50 normally receive good training to gain their professional license at Western standards, get language training in English (or other languages necessary in their specialty), and a vocational practicum is often organized in local institutions, companies or clinics. Some of recent OBF-courses have been reported as so successful, that a majority of the participants – up to 80 percent - could enter into an appropriate job immediately after finishing the program.²⁶³ On the other side, at the end of the 1990's, less than 30% of the applicants for participating in an OBS program were accepted²⁶⁴, and throughout

²⁶⁰ See in particular: Gruber/Rüßler (2002).

²⁶¹ See: <http://www.obs-ev.de>. The programs of the Otto Benecke Foundation are not specifically for Russian Jews, but also open for German Ethnic Repatriates and asylum seekers. Aside from basic courses of professional re-orientation and German language courses suitable to the respective occupation, there are specific courses for different professions (with the aim to pass the license examinations). There are also basic courses of Technical English for Engineers in the fields of construction, electronics, machinery and mechatronics. See in this context: Gruber in: Schoeps/Jasper/Vogt (1999), p.288. The Otto Benecke Foundation works in a couple of the larger towns and centres of industry and science (Bonn, Berlin, Hamburg, Munich) and is mainly concentrating on young immigrants who want to prepare for their college degree in Germany, but especially on immigrants already having an academic degree and in the 30-50 age group. Generally, the programs of the Otto Benecke Foundation are considered as constructive and very fruitful.

²⁶² See also: Gruber/Rüßler (2002).

²⁶³ Gruber/Rüßler (2002:59), nevertheless, had critical remarks concerning some details in the overall successful statistics of the course participants' placement into jobs. After direct inquiry, they learned that the high rates of placement only applied to single courses, such as a supplementary course in machine-building. The authors concluded: "Although the results have to be considered as quite successful, they very much contrast with the unemployment rates among the immigrants from the former East Bloc, and they make rather clear that an extension of the [OBS] offers is necessary."

²⁶⁴ At the end of the 1990's, each year about 5,000 Russian Jews, Ethnic Germans and Asylum Seekers applied for a place in the OBF program, whereas all in all, about 1,300 applicants were accepted. See: Gruber in: Schoeps/Jasper/Vogt 1999, p. 288. Furthermore: Gruber/Rüßler (2002), p. 58.

the 1990's the OBF budget was continually cut.

Apart from the efforts of the Otto Benecke Foundation, a few regional and local projects came into operation whose initiators have recognized the high potential of the RSJ immigrants groups and try to combine further vocational training and maximum possible placing of the immigrant experts in regional branches of demand. Thus, the Ministry of Work in North-Rhine Westphalia developed a program for former Russian technical engineers which have been re-skilled to construction engineers, and there are pilot projects of expedited professional re-training for Eastern European medical doctors in the federal state of Brandenburg. As we had stated above, the percentage of RSJ immigrants in Germany having medical professions is almost nearly 10 percent, and all previous studies indicate that this professional group is extraordinary motivated.²⁶⁵

Though, in recent years the extremely high unemployment of the Russian Jewish immigrants became a problem also for the Jewish communities. A considerable number of the new members remained stranded in their general social integration which was cause for much of frustration inside the RSJ group.

On the other hand, the Jewish communities had to deal with the fact (which they are still facing), that as many members were dependent on welfare, they weren't paying sufficient religion taxes. The persistent unemployment of the new members motivated Jewish roof organizations and bigger JCs; for example, in Berlin, to start their own activities in order to water down the problems. Thus, for example, the Central Welfare Board of Jews in Germany has organized several occupation-specific seminars, finally trying the same approach. Visual artists from the C.I.S. were brought together with directors of art institutes or with designers, writers were brought together with publishers, and musicians with native music producers.²⁶⁶

Local communities established their own job agencies, trying to bring together especially sufficient Jewish employers of very different branches and potential

²⁶⁵ The initiators of this state-supported program also have in mind that especially the medical care system in rural areas of Eastern Germany will worsen dramatically during the next years and decades because many former G.D.R. medical specialists will retire, and most of the younger medical specialists avoid "settlement" outside the bigger cities. On the other hand, the existing law does not allow non-German/non-EU medical specialists to open up their own practices and companies. See: http://www.epd.de/ost/ost_index_62450.html (access on March 7, 2009); furthermore: Jüdische Allgemeine, March 12, 2009, p.20.

²⁶⁶ Edward Serotta (1995), p. 121.

Jewish employees – however, the effects remained rather small.²⁶⁷

In the overall context, support programs to ease RSJ immigrants' entrance into the German labor market as described above remained rather a drop in the bucket. In the course of the years of long-term-unemployment, psychological problems increased. Local studies among the immigrants brought out a lot of dissatisfaction and frustration, especially among the middle-aged and the older generation still in the work force. Some highly-qualified professionals blistered “bureaucratic obstacles”, some perceived an unwillingness of the officials to help in the right way, and some also criticized “administrations’ failure” to ease the legal and professional requirements for the professionals.”²⁶⁸

For the Russian Jews this seems to be less a problem of general existence and economical survival, but rather more a problem of identity and self-esteem. Numerous Russian Jews, especially in Germany, lament on the psychological problems they need to overcome due to the fact that they are just not needed in the field of individual competency anymore. Some of the highly qualified but unemployed immigrants are “only” disappointed by the situation of the (in their field overcrowded) labor market, others express their annoyance about what they consider to be the fulsome presentation of the host country in the media, a third group just

²⁶⁷ For example, Judit Kessler, editor in chief of the Jewish Community journal “jüdisches berlin”, and herself working 10 years in the Social Services Department of the JC, reported on efforts and results of the Job Agency run by the JC: “The idea wasn’t bad, because we have a lot of Jewish entrepreneurs in Berlin. That was a good basic idea – to appeal to Jewish group solidarity and to tell the entrepreneurs: ‘If you need labor – just take them from our people here!’ We have written to lots of entrepreneurs, we organised a special JC assembly, and soon the first job offers came in. By the way, jobs with a quite different profile – everything from highly qualified to very simple. But then the first problems arose because we had indeed problems to find appropriate people and interested people. Some of them still had language problems, some were lacking the skills demanded, and not a few of the immigrants were not ready to take the offered jobs at the conditions provided. You can probably imagine that the pool of Jewish companies in Berlin is not endless, and so we tried another strategy: We moved up to non-Jewish companies, as for example to SIEMENS or IBM, looking for open-minded partners there, we placed ads in the media and so on. In parallel we contacted the immigrants and tried to motivate them to check out the new opportunities. Certainly, the special situation in Germany has its own impact. It’s not like in the US or in Israel, where you often have to pick up the first job available, just to survive. In Germany, obviously, you don’t have this pressure. Especially when a job offer was connected with a greater relocation – this has been often rejected by our people. We had really good offers from South Germany, from Stuttgart and Esslingen for example, for medical doctors and the like – *but nobody wanted to move out of Berlin!* Thus, in recent time the job agency [of the JC] has been more or less wound down, despite the fact that we made all the offers very public. Then I really think contentment is a very relative thing, but not a few of the immigrants have failed to develop realistic expectations.” (Interview with Judith Kessler in Berlin, Oct. 27, 2003, Emphasis O.G.)

²⁶⁸ Conclusions from a group interview in the Jewish Community of Leipzig, conducted by the author of this work in summer 2004. See also: Ben Rafael et al. (2006), p. 98-99, including footnote 7.

insists that their professional competencies are not recognized.

A typical representative of the latter group was interview partner Mikhail Shvarts, a former Moscow Professor of Hydro-Mechanics who settled to Potsdam and then was the head of the local Jewish community from 2002-2006. After coming to Germany, Shvarts tried to attract German research institutions for a project of desalination of sea water, which had already been in progress with participation by Russian, American and Israeli scientists. He described his experience in the following way:

“In Moscow some colleagues and I had conceptualized a big project of desalinating sea water, and to gain precious elements, for example calcium, lithium and bromide. 27 institutes were involved. Our cooperation with Israeli officials at that time was quite good, and Ariel Sharon [at that time minister for ecology, O.G.] had already given instructions to build up a plant for experiments in Haifa. Experiments with sea water took place in parallel in Moscow. Within the project we had already been given Russian, American and Israeli patents, and subsequently I tried to attract German research institutions as well. *And now I have to give some hard criticism. It seems that Germany doesn't need any ideas or patents of immigrants; they just don't have any interest. It's a real disadvantage for the country. Before our emigration to Germany we really thought that Germany would appreciate and apply our ideas and our knowledge. But it's not so.* Of course there is social security, but we are constantly told that there is no money to support more research, and that there are only a few jobs, which are already competed for among the native Germans.”²⁶⁹

RSJ writer Lena Gorelik lamented in a similar way on missed chances to make the Russian Jewish “brain drain” a German “brain gain”:

“When the first wave of immigrants came here [in the early 1990's], a lot of people were in the midst of their life, around 40, and with very good qualifications. And they have been really raring for new professional challenges, they wrote application after application. But Germany did not make use of it. Now the state is lamenting about a trend of ‘brain drain’, lamenting the lack of specialists. I think these specialists have been here, but they didn't get a real chance. (...) And for the immigrants, the devaluation of their skills was a big disappointment. But for the German society it has become its drawback as well. Many professionals could be good tax payers now, but the chance was missed to open some professional perspectives for them. And I think it's not very nice when the immigrants are seen then as a group that just came ‘to gain some social benefits’.”²⁷⁰

²⁶⁹ Interview with Mikhail Shvarts on May 5, 2007 in Potsdam. Emphasis O.G.

²⁷⁰ Interview with Lena Gorelik (Munich) on February 10, 2009 (by phone).

As the unemployment rate among Russian Jews in Germany has not significantly decreased since the 1990's – a fundamental difference to the situation in Israel – there is a lengthy ongoing debate concerning the deeper causes for this obvious failure of integration in the German labor market.²⁷¹ Comparing with the Israeli support measures, some observers conclude a “lack of flexibility” in the official German integration policy, not risking at least a few pilot projects with highly-qualified Russian Jews, just to check the possible effects on research, development and the economy in Germany. On the other hand, pragmatic observers warn of exaggerated expectations from the German state and expect that “time will solve the problems”. Finally, there are also voices which see the main cause of high unemployment, especially among the highly-qualified RSJ immigrants, in their lack of willingness to start with employment below their former professional levels. These critics especially refer to the relatively low unemployment rates of Russian Jews in Israel *and* the United States, putting it into a context with the much more generous welfare system in Germany. In other words, Germany is the only country of destination where Russian Jews are enabled to continue with attempts of return into their original profession without being forced to accept employment below this level thanks to a social security system that maintains more-or-less acceptable living conditions even as long-term unemployed. In this respect, clear criticism of the co-ethnics was expressed by several interview partners who are to be counted among the RSJ professional elites. Thus, a RSJ immigrant residing in south-east Germany near Dresden, meanwhile a medical assistant director, commented on the situation of some of his co-ethnics: “Some of the immigrants prefer to keep to their former professional status in any case. If you have been a Professor of Linguistics in St. Petersburg or a Chief Engineer in Moscow, vocational re-training to become a network administrator or to take a job as an old people’s nurse or caretaker remains unacceptable. Instead of this, they prefer to stay at home, especially then, when you know that these jobs are not much better paid than the social welfare income in Germany.”²⁷² Igor Ladyshenski, a former head physician in Moscow and now a successful psychotherapist in Berlin, stated: “My motivation to come back into the

²⁷¹ Also Cohen and Kogan (2005) state that “evidently something is very wrong with the employment situation of recent JQR (RSJ immigrants, OG) in Germany” and try to explain it by both “the greater rigidity of the German labor market, as well as to the greater public assistance offered to unemployed immigrants as compared to Israel. See: Cohen/Kogan (2005), p. 263 and 265.

²⁷² Interview with RSJ medical doctor in a town near Dresden on May 25, 2008.

same professional field was very high. But the general conditions in Germany are quite contradictory in this respect. In general, the immigrant can just pick out his preferences: ‘Shall I try this or that or rather that...? But maybe I can live with welfare as well’. In Israel, this is unthinkable, but here [in Germany] I have acquaintances back from 1990, they are now patients in my medical office, but they have never had a job throughout 18 years.”²⁷³ Evgeniy Potievsky, a graphic artist from the Ukraine, but now living in Chemnitz (in southeast Germany) said: “Of course, I see that so many immigrants are still grappling with problem of unemployment. But I also think that the huge rate of unemployment also comes from the inflexibility of some of the immigrants. Some of them are just not thorough enough when learning the German language. And it’s also making problems if someone interprets the relatively generous system of state support as a sanitarium or pioneers camp.”²⁷⁴

A certain inflexibility of RSJ immigrants was also criticized by Russian elites in Israel. Roman Polonsky, former spokesman of IBA-leader Nathan Sharansky, stated: “Our society [i.e. Israeli society] is very fast in blaming itself if somebody doesn’t succeed in individual integration. On the other side not a few of the immigrants just think that they made a great gift for the State of Israel by coming here. This is true, but it’s not enough to get a foot on the ground in this country.”²⁷⁵ Professor Jewgenij Kamenetskii from Beer Sheva reckoned:

“Migration is a real struggle, because nobody likes to shift just because somebody else is coming. And a potential emigré has to create a very strong internal position. A crucial question is: What do you really want? Sometimes I can even understand Israeli officials and professionals in their attitudes (...) If the newcomer doesn’t know what he personally really wants, then it’s difficult to help him in any case. And the newcomer has to recognize before that he has to fight for his own position for many years. (...) In such a way of migration you have to change a lot – your expectations, your mentality, your perspectives. And in the beginning it’s hard.”²⁷⁶

Nevertheless, it seems to become a kind of oversimplification when interpreting highly-qualified Russian Jews’ hesitation to take jobs unrelated to their professional skills, as “individual inflexibility” or as getting comfortable just by using the German welfare system benefits. Aside from RSJ criticism of lacking, or suboptimal state

²⁷³ Interview with Igor Ladyshenski in Berlin on May 27, 2008.

²⁷⁴ Interview with Evgeniy Potievsky in Chemnitz on May 24, 2008.

²⁷⁵ Interview with Roman Polonsky in Jerusalem on August 28, 2008.

²⁷⁶ Interview with Professor Jewgenij Kamenetskii in Beer Sheva on September 5, 2003.

support measures, there are also allegations that host milieus are simply blocking a more dynamic competition.

Thus, Professor Lev Tsitlovsky from the Bar Ilan University criticized:

“When a foreign scientist enters the field, the local scientists fear some changes and some consequences for their own positions. They have the networks, they have the positions. So it’s difficult for a newcomer to find any suitable scientific arena (...) During the last few years I have seen something similar to that what was in Soviet society and economy during the last years of the USSR. This is not a very pleasant statement, I know. But I think that many people in the Israeli society do not work hard. And there are structural problems which hinder a better development, too. One other worse thing is “Kwijut”. “Kwijut” means the guarantee of a permanent position at the labor market or in administration. (...) It’s going until pension, even if the person doesn’t do good quality work. In many cases it functions like string-pulling (“protektzia”). And now almost one million people have this kind of permanent position in Israel, and they are not the best part of the country. I think that some of them receive a higher salary, but work less than other people in Israel. And that can cause a serious stagnation all in all.”²⁷⁷

Wherever the deeper causes of RSJ immigrants’ dilemma on the German, and to some extent the Israeli, labor market are to be found, it came out in former studies²⁷⁸ and by my own research that those highly qualified Russian Jews who have lost all chances to return to their professional field are at great risk of facing an identity crises. Soviet Jewish identities have often been characterized by an outstanding high work ethic, whether based on a huge number of technical patents, an outstanding number of articles in scientific journals or having the responsibility of leading a big clinic or factory. Accepting occupational downgrading for the long run – i.e. the dismissal of a life-long dream - would mean for those immigrants the loss of a considerable part of themselves.²⁷⁹

Another factor possibly encumbering successful integration at the German labor market is the existence of cultural barriers, sometimes combined with lack of

²⁷⁷ Interview with Professor Lev Tsitlovsky at the Bar Ilan University (Tel Aviv) on September 1, 2003.

²⁷⁸ Several studies confirm that Soviet-trained professionals often perceived their occupational role as the core of their self-image. See: Remennick (2005b), furthermore: Epstein/Kheimets (2000).

²⁷⁹ The problem might be even stronger among those who worked in top positions in the sciences, in the academic field and in the economy. The conclusions of my own interviews with RSJ immigrants in medical professions suggest that here is a greater readiness to go backwards in the medical sector, even to lower levels, and to try to get employment as medical doctors at a later time again. Some of those RSJ immigrants who face permanent unemployment, but live in metropolitan German towns like Berlin (which include a visible Russian-speaking community), are looking for work in the niche of the “ethnic market” (Kessler 1997), comprising jobs in real estate, casinos, Russian food stores, marriage offices or small service businesses, ethnic catering and the like. This might be helpful also for highly-qualified RSJ immigrants to help them bridge certain critical times and slightly supplement family household income. However, this does *not* look like a serious alternative to the former, professionally-challenging occupational life of the RSJ elites.

language fluency. Knowledge of the host language is a function of improving one's own positions in workforce and society, but can also be an expression of cultural identification – and here significant differences between Israel and Germany have been revealed in former studies. About 65% of the RSJ immigrants in Israel consider their knowledge of Hebrew as “very well” or “fair”, whereas only about 40% of the Russian Jews in Germany responded similarly.²⁸⁰ Constant language problems, the lack of contact with natives and persistent stereotypes might additionally hamper Russian Jews in getting established into the German labor market, thereby creating a vicious circle. *Friedmann et al.* (1993) refer to the immigrant's psychological strategies of compensating negative experiences and unexpected problems in the new surrounding (such as cultural uprooting, feelings of isolation and being homeless, subtle discrimination) by re-orientation to the own immigrant community.²⁸¹

Currently there is no academic, scientific, economical or otherwise related field in German society where Russian Jewish elites have set their own, unmistakable imprint as a *professional group* as compared to Israel. The share of highly-qualified Russian Jews who switched to the free economy seems also to be low, possibly because of the lack of an appropriate promotional program and the lack of a more dynamic market.²⁸² Obviously the issue of long-term unemployment has also contributed to relatively high rates of psychological and psychosomatic disorders at least among the middle-aged and the elderly FSU immigrants in Germany. In 2003, the Central Welfare Board of Jews in Germany (ZWSt) conducted a conference in Frankfurt am Main, exclusively dealing with the topic “Psychological and psychosomatic problems of Jewish immigrants from the Former Soviet Union”. Here community heads, scholars, doctors, social workers and psychologists gathered to look for ways “out of the dilemma” of being permanently underchallenged.²⁸³

However, some of the high-qualified RSJ immigrants have made their way

²⁸⁰ Rafael 2006, p. 134 and 167.

²⁸¹ Friedmann et al. (1993), p. 143.

²⁸² Polian (2007:154) estimates the share of self-employed Russian Jews in Germany at 2.7%. Leshem/Sicron (2004:96) referred to a share of 5% self-employed Russian Jews in Israel, vis-à-vis 15% of the total population.

²⁸³ However, psychological stress among immigrants can be rooted in different and very complex reasons, whereby unemployment and professional devaluation emerge as only two of many factors. *Horenczyk and Ben-Shalom* (2006) refer to studies in Israel, which also attest a constantly higher psychological distress for the FSU immigrants, compared with long-term Israeli nationals. Higher scores revealed, for example, in somatic distress, more suicide ideation, higher levels of experienced loneliness and also less life satisfaction among FSU immigrants' adolescents. See in this context: *Horenczyk/Ben-Shalom* (2006), p. 300.

very successfully, either as professors of physics, assistant medical directors, top technicians, scholars, entrepreneurs but also as meanwhile well-known writers, artists or editors in chief. In order to demonstrate that the integration of Russian Jews had made progress in Germany too, the German branch of the “World Congress of Russian speaking Jews” (WCRJ) published a book “We in Germany – 15 years of Russian-Jewish Immigration to Germany”, presenting about 40 short-biographies²⁸⁴ of people who were very successful in their occupationals and were also identifiable as self-confident adherents of the RSJ community.²⁸⁵ Some of these chosen successful personalities had kept a special bond to the immigrants’ community, as Michail Vaysband, the editor in chief of the bilingual monthly “Partnjour” (Russian/German) who helped to establish the Russian literature journal “Zarubeshnye Zapiski” (“Notations from abroad”).

In sum, this chapter should have made clear that the integration of RSJ immigrants in Israel since the beginning of the 1990’s was definitely more efficient and successful than in Germany. This is the case for the general group of immigrants but in particular for the professional elites who in Germany had often only a choice between occupational downgrading and remaining permanently unemployed. It was also my intention to show in this chapter that the Israeli officials established far more programs to ease skilled integration, then conversely harvesting the fruits of new high-level achievements especially in science and technology, but also in the economy and not at least in medical science. This in no way asserts that the immigrants’ absorption has worked in an optimal way, and not a few observers relate that the system of support programs for highly-qualified RSJ Jews in Israel is an important element in the strategy to guarantee continuous Jewish immigration, therefore being under relentless pressure to succeed. Though, the expenses of Israel’s ministries of immigration, of science and of industry and trade are assigned to a state policy that is not afforded by other countries of destination, not from the US, nor from Germany, nor from Australia or Canada.

Conversely, the question might be appropriate which German strategies of

²⁸⁴ „Wir in Deutschland. 15 Jahre russisch-jüdische Zuwanderung nach Deutschland – Eine Erfolgsbilanz. Herausgegeben vom Weltkongress russischsprachiger Juden e.V. (WCRJ), Berlin 2007.

²⁸⁵ However, even in the WCRJ publication, the average unemployment rate among Russian Jewish immigrants in Germany was estimated at nearly 40%.

integration policy failed to end the dilemma of the consistently high unemployment rate among the Russian Jews in Germany irrespective of financial factors, and furthermore which models of successful labor market integration in Israel actually would have deserved notice with regard to possible applicability in Germany but never came to the test. Thus, it can be noted that from the very beginning the “dispersal” of the RSJ newcomers across the country (partly into rural areas) obviously contradicted the professional structure of these ex-Soviet urbanites; contradicted the opportunities to connect them with sufficient, established Jewish communities (i.e. in metropolitan towns); contradicted furthermore their intellectual and cultural interests and skills (which are, objectively, *not* easy to gratify in villages or small towns). The impression comes up that the “dispersal” of the RJS immigrants, based on the “Königsstein distribution key”, laid the ground for subsequent problems in the labor market, as did the reported low quality of some basic German language courses, but – much more significantly - the insufficient backing of the successful programs of the prestigious Otto Benecke Foundation (OBS) which proved to have both the knowledge and the practice of high quality courses of professional further training, very much fitting the profile of the RSJ immigrants but being placed in the dilemma of not having enough class capacities. Finally, it appears regrettable that there have not been any single attempts by the ministerial offices or in the high tech sector to trial a few technological incubators with the best qualified RSJ scientists that had come to Germany - attempts that would have had at least a theoretical chance of becoming success stories.

On the other hand, also in Israel, leading Russian Jews made it publicly clear that the state has just used a fraction of the RSJ human and intellectual potential provided by the new immigrants wave of the 1990’s. Thus, the former Deputy Mayor of Haifa, Valentin Fainberg, resumed: “I think all the programs and grants [provided by the state] only reached a minority of the Russian Jewish immigrants, and the scientists in particular. We understand that Israel did not need so many scientists and specialists at once. (...) But at the moment everybody of us is alone and not capable to create such a system – without language, without experience here in this country, without money. But the state, in my opinion, is obliged to do a few decisive steps in

this direction.”²⁸⁶

Professional devaluation became a hotly discussed topic in the growing RSJ community in Israel throughout the first half of the 1990’s, and it was one of the most driving factors for the immense politicization. Many of the immigrants understood, that the Israeli labour market was not directly compatible to their individual resources, but they felt definitely too less endeavours of the national institutions to solve or water down the problems. Gennady Riger, presently Chairman of the Israeli branch of the “World Congress of Russian Speaking Jews” and a formerly Knesset deputy for “Israel ba Aliyah”, remembered in the interview:

“With demonstrations [in the early 1990’s] we wanted to call attention to so many unsolved problems of the Russian immigrants in Israel at that period of time (...) and my special topic as political activist (...) was the professional, appropriate integration of highly qualified immigrants into the Israeli labor market (...) My consideration was that especially the immigrants from the Former Soviet Union, when they came to Israel, they already brought a high level of professional skills with them. So the main idea was to use all thinkable possibilities in finding jobs and employment for their ‘brains’ – not just anywhere, but in the fields related to the former professions of our repatriates.”²⁸⁷

What Riger and his compatriots tried beginning in the early 1990’s resulted in effective co-ethnic structures, embodied in professional associations of Russian Jews, self-help organizations and finally even political parties in Israel. In the coming chapter, some of the most significant organizations are briefly described, and at the same time an overview is given to how Russian Jewish immigrants in Israel assess the usefulness, success or failure of RSJ political forces from today’s point of view.

²⁸⁶ Interview with Prof. Valentin Fainberg in Haifa, March 11, 2003.

²⁸⁷ Interview with Gennady Riger in Tel Aviv on August 26, 2008.

V. Self-organization, cultural networking and identity construction

As already mentioned in previous chapters, Russian Jews outside their country of origin obviously form distinct co-ethnic communities which reject assimilation, develop hyphenated collective identities (e.g. Russian-Jewish-German, Russian-Jewish-Israeli), practice bilingualism and biculturalism, but overall insert themselves more or less successfully into their new surroundings. The driving forces for building Russian speaking communities, which finds its continuation in transnational (Russian Jewish) networks as well, seem to be manifold and reach from general adherence to Russian culture and language (not to be confused with Soviet culture), lingering enthusiasm for Russian arts, self-confidence of having inherited an elitist culture (especially in comparison to “Levantine” culture) to pragmatic intentions to push through ethno-political and lobby interests.

The “Russian (Jewish) community” is a quite vexed term (as is the term “elites”) and instead of forming a clear model or coherent definition it appears as much easier to approach to the phenomenon by analyzing typical elements and features of the community. Leshem (2007) goes so far to suggest a model of “community empowerment” that significantly differs from the experience of other immigrant groups in Israel, coalescing into a solid RSJ community with highly ramified structure. *Leshem (2007)* identifies within this community

“the activity of hundreds of local and countrywide non-profit organizations that focus on social issues, welfare, education, health, and culture, organized in national umbrella organizations; in supplementary and alternative educational networks for preschool, elementary, and secondary education; a network of cultural centers and unique cultural services that are based on imported and autonomous activity; community radio and television channels, including pirate stations; Russian-language newspaper chains that encompass dozens of regular publications – dailies, weeklies and monthlies; a broad ethnic-based market for products and services; ethnic political parties.”²⁸⁸

This recital of RSJ networks and institutions illustrates that the degree of self-organization in the RSJ community is very high and definitely not limited to cultural issues. Such structures and networks are not necessarily impermeable constructs. On the contrary, veteran Israelis have integrated into organizations and institutions

²⁸⁸ Compare: Leshem (2007), p. 334f.

originally founded by Russian protagonists, originally exclusive ethnic Russian groups, and FSU immigrants were integrated into institutions and organizations that were set up to serve the population as a whole.²⁸⁹

However, at the core of the Russian Jewish communities in Israel as well as in Germany, we find cultural and artistic institutions ranging from bookshops, libraries, small and large theaters, galleries, cinemas, literature clubs and intellectual circles. Closely connected with these places are educational institutions for all age groups (chess groups for kids and teens, night schools for the gifted and talented, inventor's clubs and humanistic seminaries for the adults). The greater the number of Russian Jews, their relatives and friends, the more comprehensive the networks of Russian (Jewish) institutions appear. At some places, Russian Jews even create their own religious centres parallel to host Jewish communities, as known from a few places in the United States (Gold 1997, Belozersky/Borschevsky 2006).

Though, Russian Jews have a prevalent allergy against binding memberships and institutional structures that could remind them of anything Soviet. Thus, it is precisely the looseness of the RSJ networks that they enjoy and which offers them opportunities for participation whenever they want. The social and cultural shape of the RSJ communities shows – especially in metropolitan towns – a remarkable overlap with that of the non-Jewish Russian population, and the “Russian street” is obviously not only frequented by immigrants who (still) lack an approach to the culture and networks of the new surroundings. On the contrary: my own research revealed that a considerable number of Russian Jews also tend to involve themselves in RSJ networks and milieus long after having succeeded to insert into the host society, having built up social network with many veterans and being very successful in their professional field. Reliable indicators for this consistent interest in and felt connectivity with the RSJ community are the frequent use of Russian (Jewish) media (print, TV, RS dailies, RSJ journals), of cultural offerings in Russian and the relatively large share of Russian speakers among the closest friends, all of which was ascertained in the expert interviews.²⁹⁰

Many of the interviewees said that they continue to use cultural and artistic

²⁸⁹ Compare: Leshem (2007), p. 353.

²⁹⁰ The respective questions for these issues were the following: “Do you use more Israeli (German) cultural/artistic offers, or more Russian?”; “Is there a language preference concerning Print Media, TV, radio...?” “Are your five best friends at the new place of living co-ethnics/natives/others...?”

offerings in Russian, have a high appreciation of quality and some of them declared to be ready for paying even above-average ticket prices for their Russian favorites. A 28 years-old RSJ student in Potsdam said: “Russian and Ukrainian culture are very important for me, even more important than the German culture. When Russian speaking theatres or show companies are staging here, then I really enjoy going. Of course I watch Russian videos and Russian TV. (...) There are, in my opinion, enough artistic offerings in Russian here in Berlin-Brandenburg. I can use it better than I could in Ukraine. At least some of the Russian events are affordable here, but in present Ukraine they’re not.”²⁹¹ Jewgenij Katz, a solar energy researcher from Moscow, now living in Sede Boker in the Negev, explained:

“You know, we were born in a very closed country, not only very closed politically. Also very closed in a kind of culture. I even think this was not only in the Communist time, but already before. The Russian culture has something special, and it’s very closed, and we kept it more or less – for example me; I am still reading a lot in Russian, modern Russian literature.”²⁹²

In Germany, some of the respondents even admitted that a primary reason for being active in the local *Jewish* community is *Russian* culture. Larissa Lyssenko, a chemist from St. Petersburg now living in Bremen, said that she found a great challenge for herself, by starting to organize high quality *Russian* cultural programs just in the local Jewish community. Lyssenko reported:

“At any point of time I have been looking for quite a different challenge, and I found it in the Jewish community [of Bremen, O.G.] Here I organize some of the cultural program, first of all with Russian speaking artists, but by no means only from here [Germany, O.G.] I try to organize a lot of events with artists from abroad, and most of them are Russian and Jewish in one. By the way, I think that about 70 percent of the Russian speaking artists, writers and poets outside Russia are of Jewish origin (...) And of course, we are inviting people from Israel. Igor Guberman, for example and Dina Rubina. Wladimir Woinowitsch from Moscow was also here (...) We then started to establish a ‘Club of music playing poets’ here in the community. About 100 people have come, mainly young people. Music and poetry belong together, and that’s why there are these Russian Poetry-Music-Festivals, for example in Berlin (...). I think this artistic movement is, until now, undervalued in Germany.”²⁹³

²⁹¹ Interview with RSJ student, formerly from Dnepopetrovks, in Potsdam on February 10, 2003.

²⁹² Interview mit Jewgenij Katz in Sde Boker on March 26, 2003.

²⁹³ Interview with Larissa Lyssenko in Bremen on March 12, 2003.

Another member of the Jewish community in Berlin, a retired medical doctor, said in a similar way: “The main reasons to attend the Jewish community are the *common cultural interests* with the other people here, the *Russian culture* if you like. But of course, there are also interesting offerings about Jewish culture in the program.”²⁹⁴

A prominent Russian Jewish artist from Düsseldorf expressed his strong belief that “the Russian Jews are now forming a new culture. In this cultural space, Jewish religion and tradition as well as Russian culture and language are creatively connected. This development has a good future, because it’s uniting us, it does not divide.”²⁹⁵

Also in Israel, immigrant households strongly keep in touch with Russian culture, arts and intellectual traditions, and this for all ages. Thus, a RSJ computer scientist at the Technion in Haifa, formerly living in Ukraine, admitted: “From Ukraine we brought a big library with classical and modern Russian literature, and we can order by internet the new publications interesting for us (...) and that’s just like a little treasure for us.” Marina Kon, a student of education in Jerusalem, confirmed: “If I look at it from the side of drama or theater then I’m still closer to Russian culture. And the books, especially poetry – I’m definitely reading more Russian writers.”

Alla Shayinskaya, a leading biochemist from the Weizman Center in Rehovot, stated: “At least you can see that guest performances of Russian theatres; for example ‘Lenkom Theater’ Moscow, are well attended by young Russians, as well. There is a flow of Russian artists, philharmonic orchestras, ballet groups, famous singers, other theaters and they are always fully booked.” Miron Amusia, a physicist at the Hebrew University, reported: “Every week my wife and I attend a chamber music concert in the Theatron main concert hall here in Jerusalem (...) going to a great concert once a week, that makes me happy and satisfied. Russian culture and life can be seen in other spheres as well. The Russian book- and newspaper market in Israel is flourishing, as you know. People can write and publish, and some of them can make a living from this. I think that’s quite ok.”²⁹⁶

Public communication plays an important role in the RSJ community. Aside from their strong interest in Russian culture and arts, many of the interviewees

²⁹⁴ Interview with RSJ retired medical doctor in Berlin on May 13, 2003.

²⁹⁵ Interview with RSJ artist in Düsseldorf on August 24, 2004.

²⁹⁶ Interview with Miron Amusia in Jerusalem on March 9, 2003.

enjoyed using Russian media in parallel to the Hebrew/German, either from Russia itself (especially cable TV) or from channels and publishing houses based in the host countries. Many of the interviewees in Israel especially were consumers of the Russian-Israel TV Channel 9 ('Israel plus') and the Russian newspaper "Vesti". In Germany, the offers of Russian language media are smaller - and often a combination of Russian medium with Jewish contents in particular, compared with what is offered in Israel. Not of few of the RSJ immigrants consume what's coming from cable TV from the FSU. A RSJ social worker from Kischinjev (Moldavia), now living with her whole family in Potsdam, said: "At home we read the 'Potsdam News' but my husband also reads a whole variety of papers from Russia – for example the 'Komsomolskaja Prawda', the 'Argumentuj I Faktuj' and the 'Iswestija'". A medical doctor, also from Moldavia, and now practicing in a middle sized town near Dresden, reported: "Most of the news about what happens in the world my wife and I take from the Internet. But from time to time we also read 'Argumentuj i faktuj', and when we are visiting our parents, then we also read the 'Evreyskaya Gazeta'".²⁹⁷

Moscow cable TV even seems to control daily life for some immigrants. A veteran community worker of the Jewish community in Berlin stated, not without irony: "Take the time and count how many of the immigrants have bought and installed a satellite dish for Moscow based TV channels! I would assume almost all of them. And even when an interesting [JC] community event is happening, you can witness that some immigrants fail to appear or leave earlier just because Moscow is broadcasting a popular Russian soap-opera at the same time."²⁹⁸

However, it is obvious that Russian language media is frequently used for both: to enjoy cultural entertainment, but also to acquire comprehensive political information. A young RSJ sociologist from Jerusalem reported: "At home, we read 'Vesti' as a daily and also the 'Vesti' weekly, and on Friday in addition 'Yediot Achronot' or 'Ma'ariv' (...) The TV consumption is 70 percent Hebrew and 30 percent Russian. (...) And my husband, he says that we have to know what happens in Russia, because it's very important for the whole world (...) We receive Russian political news and Russian political talk shows, and I, for myself, like to watch

²⁹⁷ Interview with RSJ medical doctor near Dresden on May 25, 2008.

²⁹⁸ Interview with JC community worker in Berlin on October 27, 2003.

Russian movies sometimes, it's very interesting to see the differences.”²⁹⁹ Valentin Fainberg, the former Vice Major of Haifa, commented: “You can ask all the Russian repatriates, and they will tell you all news about Putin or Jakowlev, maybe much more than about Sharon. But I think this is not only a question of the language. I think the Russian channels have a qualitatively better content.”³⁰⁰ Former Soviet dissident Lev Utevski, today living in Gilo near Jerusalem, said about his media consumption: “I read newspapers only in Russian. Listening to the radio I prefer Hebrew, but I watch TV in Hebrew, in Russian and also CNN. I regularly read ‘Novosti Nedelji’ and ‘Vesti’. But I don’t like either of them very much, because they are very right wing oriented. But on the other hand, they reflect the opinion of most of the Russians in Israel.”³⁰¹

Leshem and Sicron (2004) have gone so far to conclude that the RSJ press “has played a significant role in the crystallization of the heterogeneous immigrant population and its evolution from an imaginary to an actual community.” Moreover: The RSJ press should not only have served “to supply the immigrants with information they needed, but also to give expression to their social and personal distress, to supply the opportunity to present their problems, to point out those who were to blame for the problematic situation, and to emphasize their common symbols and heritage while at the same time delineating the boundaries of the community and giving its speakers and leaders a platform.”³⁰²

As it turns out, Russian and Russian Jewish media is also used for forming political opinion. Even the political satire magazine “Beseder?” edited by the Russian journalist and playwright Mark Galesnik, sees one of its tasks as helping to form public opinion. Mark Galesnik explained in the expert interview: “Entertainment? A maximum of 10 percent! I really view satire as a serious challenge. It’s continually reflecting our opinion and our view on actual, ongoing political and social processes – in Israel as well as in other parts of the world. And this is the case in each week. (...) ‘Beseder?’ has about 30,000 to 35,000 readers, and we estimate that about 600 to 700 people read it exclusively in order to establish and to form their own political

²⁹⁹ Interview with young RSJ sociologist in Jerusalem on September 7, 2003.

³⁰⁰ Interview with Valentin Fainberg in Haifa on March 11, 2003.

³⁰¹ Interview with Lev Utevski in Gilo/Jerusalem on August 31, 2003.

³⁰² Zilberg and Leshem (1999), quoted in Leshem/Sicron (2004), p. 110.

opinion.”³⁰³ However, this role and self-understanding of the RSJ media is being controversially discussed even among leading RSJ journalists in both countries. Eduard Kusnezow, former editor-in-chief of “Vesti” and of “mignews”, explained:

“My personal attitude to the role and limits of a newspaper are rather strange, I would say. In my opinion a newspaper has no right to influence political situations, and also not the readers’ opinions. That means a newspaper should be, first of all, the medium which provides – more or less - objective information to its readers, and only on the ‘opinions pages’ can the authors express their opinion, but that shouldn’t determine a position for the whole newspaper. That’s why I, for example, refused to write the column of the Editor. And that’s a principle for me. Well-known authors and personalities should have the possibility to present their opinions, but it shouldn’t be an ‘opinion making’ by the newspaper. It’s not the task of a newspaper. A newspaper should just be a medium to provide information, to reflect different aspects. But this is an unaccustomed attitude in today’s journalism, and that’s probably one of the reasons why I have been hated by many politicians.”³⁰⁴

Michail Golberg, the editor-in-chief of the “Evreyskaya Gazeta” in Berlin, more or less agrees with this attitude. Even with regard to existing problems between veterans and newcomers inside the Jewish communities, Goldberg stresses that “nobody can reflect the issues absolutely objectively, also not the 'Evreyskaya Gazeta'. We can only write our view on the topics, and of course we write about topics in which our readers in the new country are very much interested. But if there are different opinions then we try to give room to the full range of them. And then we prefer to let our readers draw their own conclusions after reading different statements and reports.”³⁰⁵

When considering established RSJ print media as platforms of political and intellectual discussion one cannot ignore those Russian *literary journals* including considered societal reflections. The most well-known of those Russian literature magazines in Israel is “Dvadzat dva” (“Twenty-two”), edited by ex-Soviet dissident Alexander Voronel and his wife Nina Voronel (a Russian language writer and playwright). “Dvadzat dva” understands itself as a “socio-political and literary magazine of the *Jewish intelligentsija* from the C.I.S. in Israel” – so the subtitle. The journal started in 1994 and is grant-aided by the Israeli Ministry of Science and Culture. While published with a relatively low circulation, “Dvadzat dva” has to be

³⁰³ Interview with Mark Galesnik, editor in chief of “Beseder?” in Jerusalem on August 29, 2008.

³⁰⁴ Interview with Eduard Kusnezow in Moza Illit / Jerusalem on March 13, 2008.

³⁰⁵ Interview with Michail Goldberg in Berlin on July 28, 2004.

considered as one of the most influential opinion making journals for the Russian Jewish intellectual elites in the country.

Similar cultural and artistic enthusiasm, the common former history in the USSR, a common language (Russian) and mental similarities obviously result in close interpersonal networks with a strong share of co-ethnic immigrants. Such a composition of the individual networks and circles of friends were not necessarily to be expected among immigrants with immense professional success, huge upward mobility and manifold contacts across the host society. Though, as my interviews confirmed for *both* countries, precisely such types of immigrants were also eager to hold especially close ties with other Russian Jews and to take over leadership.

Thus, Lydia Belotsky, a linguist and lawyer from Moscow, who has been living in Jerusalem for almost 20 years, said: “The ‘Russian’ families are closer to us, because we share a common history, common experiences in the Former Soviet Union and also similar ‘cultural codes’. But there are also Israeli people with whom we are befriended, also three German, two Hungarian and two Dutch families.”³⁰⁶

Jewgenij Kamenetskii, professor of physics and senior research fellow at the Ben Gurion University in Beer Sheva, explained: “You have to understand, we are closer in our mutual understandings, this is also a question of our mentality, of our culture, of our traditions maybe. We – the people from St. Petersburg and Moscow – didn’t know very well each other before. But we got to know each other here again, and became close friends.”³⁰⁷

Yakov Schechter, a former engineer from Odessa, now a writer who has been living in Israel since 1987, stated: “My closest friends are religious Jews born in the former Soviet Union.”³⁰⁸

Many of the interview partners in Germany expressly emphasized the mixed, inter-cultural composition of their circles of friends but in fact did also enjoy maintaining friendships with RSJ immigrants. It is again to be noted that these interviewees could not be considered to be marginalized or isolated persons, in general they had good working contacts to the host society, and in some cases also to the Jewish communities – thus, a threat of entrenchment into a kind of “Russian ghetto” was not a real possibility for them, but the “Russian street” was enjoyed.

³⁰⁶ Interview with Lydia Belotsky in Jerusalem on March 12, 2008.

³⁰⁷ Interview with Jewgenij Kamenetskii in Beer Sheva on September 5, 2003.

³⁰⁸ Interview with Yakov Schechter, Tel Aviv, April 2009 (by Email).

Long ago, the discussion on new identities began inside the Russian Jewish networks – a discussion that touches three different cultural worlds: That of the Russian culture and language, that of the host societies and that of the heritage of Judaism and Jewishness. Some of the interviewees in Germany even admitted that for them the Russian culture has a greater importance than Jewish culture. A 47-old artist who settled in Potsdam in the mid-1990's declared: "I live in the Russian culture much more than in the Jewish one, the Russian is simply inside me."³⁰⁹ Another RSJ immigrant in Potsdam, a retired technician and member of the JC, frankly declared: "Of course we are Jews (...) [but] we are not religious (...) For me the Russian culture is more important than the Jewish. We grew up in the Russian culture – and I think, anyhow we stand in the tradition of the Golden Age [Russia between 1810 and 1910; O.G.], and the Russian culture will continue to accompany us."³¹⁰

In two interviews, however, the respondents spoke with respect about the Russian culture, but considered a too close connectedness with Russian culture as rather cumbersome for a successful integration either into the Jewish community (in Germany) or into Israeli society. Thus, Julia Konnik, a 30-year-old German philologist and teacher born in Kiev, now living with her family in Berlin, explained:

"I am absolutely not surprised about the fact that most of the Russian Jews are living a totally secular life style. How should they realize it, when they still live in their certain *Russian world*? Although everybody in Russia would say: 'Boo, a djid!' But many immigrants still like it, here in Berlin as in other cities, to care for their *Russianness*. And on Sundays they still prefer to send their children into a Russian language class instead of bringing them to the Sunday school [of the Jewish community, O.G.]"³¹¹

Ex-Dissident Lev Utevski commented with regard to the RSJ immigration wave to Israel since the 1990's:

"The people of the Great Aliyah of the nineties - these are people of Russian culture. First and last. For them Russian literature, Russian music is all – but not for me. My favorite poets from a very young age were Rudyard Kipling and Edgar Allan Poe. So I am not a person of Russian culture. I have nothing against Russia, and as you know, my best friends are Russians (laughs). *But I consider that Russian culture is kind of hampering for assimilation.*"³¹²

³⁰⁹ Interview with RSJ artist in Potsdam on February 17, 2003.

³¹⁰ Interview with RSJ technician in Potsdam on Februar 17, 2003.

³¹¹ Interview with Julia Konnik in Berlin, February 12, 2009. Emphasis O.G.

³¹² Interview with Lev Utevski in Jerusalem, August 31, 2003. Emphasis O.G.

Since Russian Jews do maintain dense cultural, communicative and private networks in the countries of destination mentioned, it is quite likely that they also get together in special interest and lobby groups with those who share their concerns, especially when societal and political problem affect the *whole* community. Although having left a decaying empire where the Communists over decades had demolished manifold cultural traditions, had almost destroyed the intellectual scene and had been unwilling to destroy the roots of anti-Semitism, a considerable part of the RSJ immigrants' community is showing an above-average self-confidence.

1. Self-Image and Self-Confidence

This self-confidence seems to be based on at least three conditions: A strong awareness of one's own skills, pride in Jewish *and* Soviet history and finally a favorable combination of Jewish and Russian culture and traditions.

a) A general strong (self-) awareness of high professional and cultural/intellectual skills

When interview partners in both countries were asked about unique or special contributions of the RSJ immigrant group to the host societies, some of them offered a wide range of positive impacts. For example, an RSJ physicist and senior research fellow at the Tel Aviv University stated: "It's not only science and technology. It's also culture, the best theatre of Israel is Russian right now (...) In politics that was a real success – many members of the Knesset came from the former Soviet Union, and all of them came with a higher qualification, at least B.A. or M.A.; and do not forget sports and education! The Wingate Institute where lots of Russian work now is pushing the development of competitive sports; do not forget the trainers and coaches, and then there is the Mofet school system, as a real innovation for the educational system of this country."³¹³ An RSJ biologist working at the Ben Gurion University in Beer Sheva, vividly illustrated the way how the city radically re-shaped its appearance and dynamics just within a decade. The interview stressed that "it's

³¹³ Interview with RSJ physicist at Tel Aviv University on March 23, 2003.

not only the new houses, its new architecture. And the university, of course, had a great boom in many disciplines since the beginning of the 1990's. There have also been changes in simple details of day to day life: It is good to see that people, even the veterans, dress with much more variety now. A lot of new shops have opened, life is more colorful. I'm not saying this all is only due to the immigrants, but together it works quite good."³¹⁴ A computer scientist from the Ukraine, now working at the Technion in Haifa, explained:

“The contributions in science and economy you can see everywhere. Even here in our faculty. (...) Then you shouldn't underestimate what we brought in kind of new mentality and special celebrations. I think the people never celebrated New Year's Eve here before – now they do it. But more culture definitely came in, and in a many, many forms. You have a boom now of theater, and there are a lot of good actors from Russia. But even if there are non-Russians on the stage or playing in a music hall – the places are mostly filled by a strong interested audience, and many of them are immigrants. I also think we influenced the Israeli society a little bit in kind of well-dressed fashion (I see this especially among young woman). It's a bit nearer to Europe now.”

A certain change of Israel everyday culture towards a “more European-style” was mentioned in several interviews, and “European” was often associated with cultural offerings, education, fashion and maybe also secularism.³¹⁵ RSJ immigrants, also those with non-academic qualifications were considered to be flexible and achievement-oriented, and a special “Russian” impact was seen in the high tech branch. A formerly Ukrainian engineer, then residing and working in Mizpe Ramon (Negev desert) pointed to the useful conjunction of veteran and newcomers' experts especially in this field: “Israelis are normally very good business makers and entrepreneurs, and together with the Russian brains it brings a lot of success in the high tech branch (...) and don't forget: A considerable part of the Israeli military industry is now run by Russian engineers.”³¹⁶

³¹⁴ Interview with RSJ biologist at the Ben Gurion University Beer Sheva/Midreshet Sede Boker on March 26, 2003.

³¹⁵ However, the “Westernization” of Israeli society is also a very contentious issue, and for some of the Russian Jewish intellectuals rather a sign of certain decadence. Thus, former Soviet dissident Eduard Kusnezow stated: “We have tried to become a very consumerist country – and, in fact, we succeeded in this. People are tired of all the wars, conflicts and daily tensions, so many of them turned into a quite consumerist life, and this is also understandable and quite natural. It has happened many times in the history of human beings. And at present there is no such idea to unite people of so many different backgrounds and mentalities.” (Interview with Eduard Kusnezow in Moza Illit/Jerusalem on March 13, 2008).

³¹⁶ Interview with Ukrainian engineer in Mizpe Ramon on March 27, 2003.

Several interviewees referred to the educational innovations within the “Mofet” school system, others to Russian enrichments in the arts, and a former Russian officer of high-rank mentioned that “about 25 percent of the [Israeli] soldiers come from Russian immigrant families now, which is much more than their general share of the Israeli population. In some special units you find a share of 75 percent, and among sharpshooters about 80 percent.”³¹⁷

Even when considering that much of the RSJ immigrants’ skills, resources and potential has never been used until now, Russian Jews are aware that they have stabilized, enriched and modernized many different spheres of Israeli society.

These are achievements and positions Russian Jews in Germany can only dream of. Statistically for a country like Germany, the group is rather small and inconsiderable. Nevertheless, the first RSJ scientists have taken university chairs, prominent musicians and poets inspire a wide German audience, the first medical doctors have succeeded to become chief physicians. Lots of technical patents have been filed, some doctors and scholars have offered to respective institutions even to work for free (if no other opportunities appeared). But obviously high qualified Russian Jews suffer enormously from the sheer insurmountable problems to enter the German labor market as described in chapter 4. Nevertheless, the self-awareness of bringing a lot of “brain and culture” is wide-spread among the immigrants, and experts in their respective fields enjoy at least a high appreciation in the RSJ community itself.³¹⁸

However, RSJ scientists and artists, regardless of which positions and jobs, have developed their own networks, clubs and associations, normally also permeable for non-Jewish Russians and for host Germans. A Russian infrastructure is taking shape in some metropolitan towns, with a more or less complete service sector, including Russian (or Ukrainian, Georgian, or Kazakh) restaurants, hotels, casinos, food stores, shops, real estate and marriage offices, import-export companies, but

³¹⁷ Interview with immigrated Russian high-ranking officer in Tel Aviv on August 26, 2008.

³¹⁸ Hegner (2008), who has analyzed RSJ community centers in Chicago and Berlin, writes about the latter: “They [the elderly, highly-qualified RSJ immigrants] can present here now all their talents, talents which possibly they were not allowed to develop in the Soviet Union. And finally, with open performances [in the community center] they compensate for the loss of social status that came with the resettlement. True, they are no longer the responsible medical doctors, construction engineers or computer experts. As artists they have no public performances any more in well-known opera and theater houses. But, instead of this, they are celebrated as sought-after writers, musicians or composers, here, in their own community.” See: Hegner (2008), p. 145.

finally also a flourishing artistic and cultural scene that wants to link itself with non-Russians and non-Jews in the wider surroundings as well. In general, there is a strong motivation among RSJ professional and amateur artists, musicians, poets or the interested audience to have closer contacts with the local population – especially via joint cultural events.

Nikolai Epchteine, former head of the (Russian) Jewish cultural center “Kibuz” in Potsdam described how RSJ immigrants that are plagued by permanent unemployment in Germany, nevertheless try to impart their own culture and arts to the city life. Epchteine spoke about formerly successful musicians, scholars and scientists in town, drastically losing self-esteem. “Many of them receive welfare, and this can easily lead to societal disregard. Of course, we are grieving over that, and we want to show to the city and its inhabitants that we are able to do much more than just receive welfare. That’s why we try to get involved as much as possible German visitors on our regular cultural and artistic events, just to show them our resources.”³¹⁹

b) Pride in Jewish and in Soviet history

Especially among the elder generation of the RSJ immigrants, which still includes veterans of World War II, there is a strong consciousness and memory that nearly a half million Jews were fighting in the Soviet Army that ultimately bore the brunt for defeating Nazi Germany. While this historical fact is, on the one hand, a source of Russian Jewish pride – and so among the RSJ émigrés in very different countries of destination -, in some of the greater German Jewish communities it has led to disputes on how to commemorate Jewish history in the Nazi era (1933-45) in the right way.

Thus, while veterans in the German Jewish communities rather set priorities on Remembrance days like November 9th (pogrom night of 1938) or January 27th (the day of liberation of the death camp Auschwitz in 1945), Russian Jews tend to pay special attention to a historical day like May 8th (the day of the Nazi capitulation in

³¹⁹ Interview with Nikolai Epchteine at the cultural centre “Kibuz” in Potsdam on July 20, 2004.

1945).³²⁰ While the Russian Jews worldwide are proud on the contributions their ancestors (or themselves) have given in the fight against Hitler, those in Israel are also eager to refer to the huge share of Russian speaking Jews in the immigration waves before State founding on May 14th 1948, and especially their large share among the founding fathers. It seems that some of the Russian Jews see a contemporary revival of Russian Jewish impact on the Jewish State.

Professor Lev Tsitolovsky from Tel Aviv stated: “You know that this country was built up mainly by Russian Jews about 100 years ago. Then there came the big break, when the Soviet Communist system did not let our people go. Now it’s turning into a kind of situation like it was before.”³²¹

In the same context, it appears more easily explained why not a few of the RSJ leaders plea for a “New Zionism”, different to the classical one. The New Zionism, suggested by Russian Jewish leaders like Nathan Sharansky, requires equal respect between Israel and the Diaspora communities, at the same time close interconnectedness and mutual support. In any case, a strong emphasis is set on the Jewish character of the State of Israel, which marks a totally reversed position to that of the post-Zionist intellectuals.³²²

³²⁰ Among old War veterans, there is a deep consciousness of heaving made major contributions to the defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II. These are, of course, specific experiences of the elderly immigrant generation not shared by the veteran German Jews, and also rarely shared or perceived by the young RSJ generations no matter in which country they are residing. In Germany, however, exactly these experiences in World War II cause significant differences concerning memorizing World War II and the Shoah. For former soldiers and officers of the Red Army or other Allied troops it’s easier to remember as “victors of history” while a big part of the Jews in Europe – and so the veteran Jews in Germany – have dominating memories as being victims, because an overwhelming majority of the European Jews were not enabled to fight the Nazis in a comparable way. However, within the young RSJ immigration in Germany, some changes in memorializing and attitudes are expected, too. For example, young Russian Jews in Germany seem to be less concerned with remembrance to (Soviet) heroic deeds in World War II, just as the great-grandchildren of the Holocaust survivors with German-Jewish and Polish-Jewish background might be less concerned with the Shoah.

³²¹ Interview mit Professor Lev Tsitolovsky in Tel Aviv on September 1, 2003.

³²² Post-Zionism, as a younger intellectual phenomenon in Israel, is marked by the conviction that the Zionist movement has fulfilled its historical destination – to establish a national home for the Jewish people - but is now, in view of the historical developments of the last decades, outdated. According to the Post-Zionist intellectuals, Zionist ideology would nowadays even be counterproductive. The most promising future for Israel would be the creation of a multi-cultural society that should offer a complete equality of civil rights for all population groups, including the Israeli Arabs. Most prominent representatives of the Post-Zionists come from the ranks of Israeli historians, as for example, Tom Segev. The Post-Zionists criticize, among others, the retention of historical myths in the Israeli public and in the schools’ curricula, such as that of the formerly “Jewish people without a country that gained a country without a people.” Aside from their distinct critical historiography of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Post-Zionists also promote ideas of cultural pluralism as a consequence of globalization, and in this case also criticising the partly gearing of State and religion in Israel.

c) *Living Russian and Jewish traditions together*

Finally, Russian Jewish intellectuals in Israel and Germany are emphatic that in their self-understanding and identity, Russianness and Jewishness inevitably belong together. Rafael Nudelman, former editor-in-chief of the literature magazine “22” in Tel Aviv, defends his identity against all pressure from outside with the following words:

“They say that we are Jews by nationality but Russians by culture. Are culture and nationality like an outfit on a mannequin or water in a glass? When a mighty press drives one metal into another, it is then impossible to separate them, even by slicing them? We were put under enormous pressure for decades. My national feelings have no other expression than through my culture. (...) If you divide me up, I should like to know, which cells of my soul are colored in Russian, which in a Jewish color? It is not true that I relate to a Russian either as a Russian or as a Jew and to a Jew as a Jew or as a Russian. I relate to both integrally, as a Russian-Jew, with love and doubt simultaneously.”³²³

One very aesthetic pronouncement on how the qualities of Russian culture might affect culture and life in the countries of emigration was provided by the second editor-in-chief of the “Evreyskaya Gazeta” in Berlin, Michail Rumer-Sarajew. On an international conference on Russian Jewish immigration, Sarajew expounded:

“The wedlock between the Jewish intellectual passion and articulateness and the Russian spiritual peculiarity has developed – in its best variants – into a bond of mighty power and exquisite potential. This bond which was covenanted in the second half of the 19th Century and which has continued until today, has impacted on all fields of social and cultural life in modern Russia, and it has created a multitude of prominent writers and creative artists. *The same bond is accompanying also the present emigration wave of Russian Jewry*, it is foliated by its wind and warmed up by its sun. This bond is coming with the Russian Jews into the new host countries, it gains currency and can very much enrich and stimulate the spiritual life, the science and the culture of the new homelands.”³²⁴

All the above mentioned elements of a very specific, self-confident self-image of the RSJ community have resulted into some mythological axioms, which are highly valued in the RSJ media. The first axiom is that the Russian-speaking community widely shares social, political and economic interests. The second axiom seems to say that the large majority of Russian-speaking immigrants are educated, cultured,

³²³ Quoted in: Epstein/Kheimets (2000a), p. 469.

³²⁴ Michail Rumer-Sarajew, *Evreyskaya Gazeta*. In: Schoeps et al. (2005), p.188. (in German, emphasis: O.G.)

hard-working and patriotic. The third axiom is that the massive immigration from the FSU has been a great advantage for Israeli society, but their potential has not been maximized. Niznick (2009) adds that “the former Soviet immigrants perceive themselves as the bearers of European culture.”³²⁵

In sum, it seems that the negative and at times hostile media coverage about Russian Jews in Israel especially during the 1990’s could enrage the RSJ newcomers, but could not really shatter the self-confidence of the RSJ groups as a whole. This is the more noteworthy when taking into consideration that according to *Elias and Bernstein* (2007) the Hebrew-language Israeli newspapers had created a triangular image of the Russian-speaking immigrants as being a) “non-Jewish”, b) “criminals”, and c) “prostitutes” at the beginning of 1990’s.³²⁶ Obviously the over-all self-image of the RSJ immigrants was and is stable enough to take a relaxed stand towards lop-sided and at times denigratory mainstream media coverage. When interview partners were asked about the prejudices and stereotypes of the yellow press and parts of the mainstream media during the 1990’s, they usually answered unemotionally, pragmatically and with very analytical thoughts.

Nevertheless, some interviewees assumed that a part of the problems in this context were for whatever reasons being clearly exaggerated in the Israeli mainstream media. Michael Djaghinov, himself a leading journalist at the international, Russian language TV transmitter RTVi, gauged mainstream media reporting in the 1990’s:

“The Israeli society, including its mass media, wasn’t able to cope with a large group of Russian Jewish immigrants who had their own habits and social patterns of behaviour. And it seems they were scared by the fact that almost 60% of the newcomers had a higher level of education – twice as much as the percentage of the first academic degree holders in Israel. The initial reaction to this was distrust, which generated numerous accusations and stigmas.”³²⁷

³²⁵ Niznick in: Ben Rafael / Sternberg (2009), p. 291. In the same context Niznick suggests that “among the few things its members have in common is their hesitant attitude towards the local culture, a certain cultural arrogance and the almost total lack of ‘melting intentions’.” (ibid.)

³²⁶ However, Elias and Bernstein (2007) also state that with the outbreak of the Second Intifada in late 2000, a significant change in the representation of Russian-speaking immigrants took place in Israeli newspapers. Massive terrorist attacks like that on the discothèque “Dolphinarium” in Tel Aviv caused a disproportionately high share of Russian-speaking victims, and at the same time general respect was granted to RSJ courage and pain in these difficult, conflict-ridden years.

³²⁷ Interview with Michael Djaghinov in Jerusalem on March 12, 2008.

A leading physicist at the Tel Aviv University, who came from the Former Soviet Union already in 1991, soberly stated:

“I think media is, to generalize, working immorally. Media is very often not interested in a subject or a person, it is rather interested in a scoop. There’s a scoop if you find prostitutes, criminal persons and acts (...) Unfortunately, when this huge bunch of Russians came here, native born Israelis very seldom came into contact with them here, because of the different language, geographical distance etc. (...) I don’t think that the Israeli media was especially anti-Russian during the nineties (...) so they did their professional jobs, and they reported in detail about prostitution, about crimes, not all of the people reported about were Russian Jews. (...) But in this way a problem was created.”³²⁸

A young sociologist from a Jerusalem institute looked back:

“I clearly remember that there was a big flood of crime stories in the media when the Russian immigration began. This was really made like scandal journalism, and of course it was dirty. On the other hand, I know today that these organized crime groups exist here, and there are Jews included as well. But there are also a lot of people involved which have no relations to Jews and to the Jewish state, but they are living here. So it’s a part of international crime. The question is, how much do we really know?”³²⁹

A social worker from the Jewish community in Berlin also remembered the quite uncomfortable times at the beginning of the 1990’s when the media begged for sensational stories involving the immigrants. The interviewee said: “Media coverage on the Jewish community here is seldom detached from general coverage of [Eastern European] immigration. There are still these Mafia stories which saw a big boom at the beginning of 1990’s, but have become less frequent (...) However, in most of the cases, an immigrant is only then interesting when he plays a role in the Mafia or – the other extreme – he has just won a Nobel prize.”³³⁰

Aside from a lot of pride in the own group, interestingly, a considerable number of the interviewees also did not hesitate to find critical words for certain problems they saw accompanying the wave of FSU immigration in the 1990’s. Solar physicist Jewgenij Katz from Sde Boker stated: “There are a few [problematic] things which our group brought with it. For instance, heavy Russian drinking, maybe not as heavy like the average in Russia, but still much heavier than usual in Israeli

³²⁸ Interview with RSJ senior physicist at the Tel Aviv University on March 23, 2003.

³²⁹ Interview with young sociologist in Jerusalem on September 7, 2003.

³³⁰ Interview with social worker of the JC Berlin on October 27, 2003.

society. Some problems are also remarkable in the context of crimes (...) But some people don't see that we are not a homogenous group. There are very different immigrants inside the group from the former Soviet Union, some of them tend to more kinds of petty crime, are very weak in social standards. But on the other hand this is a very large group of immigrants. And immigration is a big aim of the Israeli state, so it's a problem of optimizing, achieving a better integration policy as well."³³¹ The Tel Aviv writer and former Odessian engineer Yakov Schechter stated: "Russian Jews taught Israelis to drink. Twenty years ago vodka bottles gathered dust on supermarket shelves, kiosks at military bases freely sold beer and wine and police did not hunt for drunken drivers on the roads. Today all this has changed radically, and that is the Russian Aliyah's most detrimental contribution."³³²

Though, how suddenly and detrimentally RSJ immigrants could and can be stigmatized with the "alcohol stereotype" was experienced by Professor Alexander Voronel, the editor of "22", already decades ago. Voronel reported:

"About 25 years ago, an Israeli TV station wanted to make an interview or a feature with some Russians, and I was part of the group to be interviewed. So they came with equipment and personnel staff, and started the interview. At some point one of the cameramen was looking around and put a bottle of vodka on the table – just to shoot it as well. "Without vodka, Russian society is hardly imaginable", he commented. But, sorry: I do not drink vodka! So, what was the purpose of this TV film? They really wanted us in the image and stereotypes they had been accustomed to."³³³

Irrespective of the certain troubles and smaller frictions, almost all of my interviewees considered the RSJ immigration of the 1990's and the early 2000's as enriching and beneficial for the host societies, especially referring to human capital, artistic resources, work ethics and in Israel, also as a demographically strategic factor. Thus, the group had and has enough self-assurance to form its own initiatives and organizational bodies in order to improve its own issues, and those of the overall society.

Russian Jewish cultural self-assertion and ethno-cultural self organization

³³¹ Interview with Jewgenij Katz in Sde Boker on March 26, 2003.

³³² Interview with Yakov Schechter, Tel Aviv, in April 2009 (Email).

³³³ Interview with Professor Alexander Voronel in Tel Aviv in March 17, 2008.

often goes in parallel with activities beyond the community, and some of the RSJ institutions consciously aim to attract and involve non-Russians interested as well. However, some of the Russian lobby and self-help groups that arose in the 1990's were formed as a direct reaction to unsolved integration problems or as an answer to either self-perceived or objective kinds of social discrimination. Insofar, a considerable part of the organized RSJ groups, associations and platforms embody a process of strong ethno-cultural politicization during the 1990's

Similarly to other places in the world and to other migrant groups, quite a number of the groups and organizations introduced here soon experienced processes of inner dynamic, including programmatic fights, commutations, splits and personnel replacements. A few of the organizations have already disappeared while the final lines of this study have been written, while it is to be expected that new ones have already taken shape.

2. Informal networks

The often uttered assessment that RSJ immigrants would tend to form Russian "cultural enclaves" or "Russian ghettos" seems nowadays to be out of place. Neither in Israel nor in Germany do they show tendencies of self-segregation, and their communities are characterized by a dynamic social mobility which prevents professional and geographic immobility at least among the younger immigrants. It rather seems appropriate to describe the dynamic of RSJ immigrants in Israel during the 1990's with the Ecological Sequence Model on American Jewry, as developed by Wirth and Glazer.³³⁴ There are no mandatory obligations for the RSJ people to remain in an ethnic community life-long. Most of the immigrants are modern pragmatics, and places which once were crowded by Russian Jewish newcomers are often in processes of permanent change. Moreover, part of the immigrants "disappear" from the community screen immediately after arrival – and remain, if at all, visible as "Russian", "Ukrainian", or "Baltic" only by their names. Others take it as a comfortable circumstance to live in a Russian-speaking neighborhood with all its infrastructural advantages.

Nevertheless, some dense Russian speaking neighborhoods are to be found in

See: Price (1969), p. 202f.

both countries under focus. In Israel, some mid-size cities have experienced a dramatic population shift in the context of the new immigration wave. Cities like Ma'alot or Carmel in the North and Kiryat Gat and Sderot in the South, where the Russian Jews hold very large populations shares today, were apparently not the declared target sites. In contrast to this the metropolitan towns (Haifa, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem) hold a significantly lower share of new immigrants from the FSU, with a strikingly low share of 7% in Jerusalem.³³⁵

But even in Israeli areas where RSJ immigrants do not live in higher concentration, basic networks and drop-in centers help them to keep in touch with their co-ethnics. The greater the Russian-speaking population, the greater the spectrum of connecting frameworks, of cultural, intellectual, educational and dining establishments. Russian intellectual seminars, concert halls, theatres, museums and galleries, schools, evening schools but also Russian libraries and book shops³³⁶ have mushroomed across the country and also hold an important function as places of social encounter and communication. Also the Russian “ethnic market” holds an important conjunctive role, first of all visible in the foodstuff economy and in the established gastronomic system. Whole chains of Russian food stores have emerged during the 1990's – the majority of them offering anything but a “kosher selection” - and successfully survived. Finally, small trade business; for example, with articles of Russian music and film articles, textile and fashion shops and folklore articles have their own boom. Generally the “Russian street” in Israel has developed into a vibrant, interactive framework of social, cultural and service networks that enables almost everybody who wants to, to live a Russian, Ukrainian, Georgian or related life-style, to maintain themselves within co-ethnic social networks and to keep bridges to the country of origin.

In this regard the relative geographical smallness of Israel seems even to have its definite advantage. People can organize their own socio-cultural life, are well-informed and communicate in their own language, have their “Russian” shops and

³³⁵ Several reasons are worth considering for the low share of RSJ population in Jerusalem (7%). Firstly, many Russian Jews are still busy with consolidating their incomes, not belonging to middle or upper class. As is well-known, Jerusalem has one of the most expensive real estate markets in Israel. Secondly, due to the fact that an overwhelmingly majority of Russian Jews sees themselves as secular, Jerusalem might provide a too religious atmosphere for them. Thus, if they have the choice between Jerusalem and other metropolitan towns like Tel Aviv or Haifa, they might prefer the latter ones.

³³⁶ Concerning RSJ libraries and book shops as places of social interaction see the very illustrative case study of Nelly Elias and Natalia Khvorostianova in Beer Sheva in: Remennick (2007), pp. 47-61.

clubs. Shared social, cultural and commercial interests are discussed here, as well as shared problems and future perspectives. In an article of the “Jerusalem Report” at the end of 1997, the RSJ community in Israel was described as “Israel’s Russian Mini State” – and this “Mini State” is, indeed, well organized.

Only in a few places of Germany is there a comparable phenomenon of the “Russian street”. One of them is the Berlin quarter “Charlottenburg”, a city quarter preferred by Russian emigrées already during post-revolutionary times of the 1920's, and later ironically called Charlottengrad by the host population. Here we find a dense network of Russian shops, restaurants, galleries, agencies, casinos – places where of course the lines between Russian Jews, ethnic Russians, Ukrainians, Georgians (and so on) become blurred. The area is neighborhood, cultural meeting point and ethnic market in one.³³⁷

Also in other towns such as Munich, Frankfurt, Düsseldorf and Bremen, Russian cultural and educational centers have been built up, often enriched by Russian-language schools, theatres, galleries, “Associations of Russian Culture”, “Associations of Scientists”, food stores, restaurants, music shops, travel agencies, casinos, marriage offices and much more. Of course there is a considerable overlap in the interests of former Soviet Jews and former non-Jewish Soviets.

Uniqueness to Germany remains that the Russian Jews have the advantage of being able to implement many of their own cultural and social interests into the life of more than 100 local Jewish communities, where they have reached a demographic majority almost everywhere. In many of the local Jewish communities, studying Judaism and German society, practical help for integration and the formation of structured community life go hand in hand. Jewish communities of today are by far not only a place for religious service and religious education, but also for opening a literature, health or sports club, finding a library with Russian books and a computer pool for the kids, consultation for elderly and family services. In a certain way some of the Jewish communities in Germany, highly frequented by RSJ immigrants, try to resemble the model of Jewish Community Centers (JCCs) in the US, marked by a wide range of leisure-time activities and aimed to meet the specific interests of their

³³⁷ Interestingly a major part of the smaller sized business on the “Russian street” in Berlin (book and grocery stores, discos and music bars, car garages, real estate or tourist agencies and the like) is, according to Remennick (2007), in the hand of Jewish entrepreneurs, while the population share of Russian-speaking German Ethnic Repatriates is much higher. See: Remennick (2007), p. 347.

adherents.³³⁸

In fact, not a few of the smaller JCs in Germany are places where Russian Jews organize everything themselves with the exception of a very few German Jewish veterans and in a few cases a community head from Israel or from the United States, permanently living in Germany because of job obligations or being married to a German. Though, it is the “normal case” that small-scale communities with an absolute Russian majority in particular suffer underfunding and lack of professional personnel.

3. Interest and lobby groups in Israel

Based on common emergencies, shared interests, or connective ambitions, Russian Jewish immigrant networks in Israel have quickly turned into numerous interest groups and lobby groups with efficient organizational structures. Here the range goes from organizations which aim to support those immigrants who have found themselves in a marginal or disadvantaged social position or miss civil equality due to religious law in Israel, along to interest and lobby groups which are based on geographical, cultural or ethnic commonalities in the FSU, in a certain sense reviving or preserving socio-cultural links. In some cases, cultural offers and social services are usefully combined, which makes these institutions especially attractive for RSJ immigrants.

Finally, professional associations founded by the Russian Jews – not seldom as a kind of “duplication” of native associations of the same profile – can, on their part, overlap with social, cultural and educational projects touching the whole society of the host country. Furthermore, in professional, intellectual and also cultural groups a certain process of political or ideological differentiation can take place, as well.

³³⁸ There is, of course, the difference that the Jewish Community Centers in the US are based substantially on the financial capacities of their members and supporters. The German Jewish communities are, due to the low incomes of many members, highly dependent on external financial support, mostly from the German State.

Relief organizations

Relief organizations play a very important role for currently underprivileged subgroups among the Russian Jewish immigrants - examples including elderly immigrants in poor health, or unemployed single parents. Growing importance is also attached to those organizations that take care for “mixed families”, i.e. families consisting of only one Russian-*Jewish* parent, (as for example the “Union of Mixed Families”). There is a general conclusion that especially immigrant adolescents from “mixed families” are grappling with difficulties finding a new identity in the Israeli society.³³⁹

Immigrant-based organizations try to back those young people who have obviously less favorable chances in the Israeli society – such as the “Israeli Association for Immigrant Children” (IAIC), which pays special attention to those young girls and boys of former immigrant ways who faced remarkable difficulties in fitting into Israeli schools, into successful vocational training or generally into Israeli society.³⁴⁰

The Israeli public was shocked in recent years when it was learned that a

³³⁹ Gregory Kotler, a Reform Rabbi and former RSJ immigrant himself, described the situation of many immigrants’ adolescents with the following words: “They have come here as children of a mixed couple from the Former Soviet Union. Father is Jewish, mother not. Or you come as descendant of a family where only one grandparent was Jewish. What kind of strong Jewish identity could you have brought with you to Israel, the more so as a child? And maybe you would have liked to stay in your hometown in the FSU, but nobody asked you for *your wishes*. Finally, they explain to you at the Israeli school that you are not ‘a real member of the club’. And is it then such a surprise when some of them really get crazy and paint Swastikas on the wall? They have not come as fascists to Israel. They mutated to fascists here, because the Israeli society didn’t accept them; because they didn’t find their right place, they are still in doubt what they are doing here. Their outbursts have social and psychological reason and it becomes even worse when local media simply entitles them as the ‘Nazis in Israel’. (Interview with Rabbi Gregory Kotler in Jerusalem, March 17, 2008, Emphasis O.G.).

³⁴⁰ According to the Israeli Association of Immigrants Children (IAIC), currently the share of immigrants among Israel children is about 11%, but their school drop-out share is about 42%, with nearly 46% percent of immigrant children not finishing 12th grade. See: www.web4u.co.il/code/main.asp?PID=309 (contact by April 17th, 2010). Epstein and Kheimets (2000a) even stated for the first decade of RSJ immigration to Israel that “in the 17-year-old cohort 69% of [RSJ] immigrant pupils do not possess a matriculation certificate” [for finishing high school, i.e. they do not have a possibility for entering the universities, O.G.], and they even presumed this as not “a temporary phenomenon: the rate of those blocked from further education among the immigrants does not decline with length of residence in Israel.” (Epstein/Kheimets 2000a, p. 471). If this is the case in the long run, this would mean a great difference between the RSJ immigrant youth in Israel and the same group in Germany, which is expected, to an overwhelming majority, to finish German high schools – though sometimes with a delay of 1 year - and then to enter university immediately. The estimations of such young immigrants who take the direct way to university reach up to 80% (Freinkman-Chrustaljeva 2001) or even 90% (Polian 2007:152).

considerable number of young immigrants from the FSU tended to become “school drop-outs”, turning to excessive drug consumption or even to developing right wing extremist or Neo-Nazi attitudes.³⁴¹ As there have come also about 150,000 retired Russian Jews since the 1990's, there is an additional large sub-group demanding public attention and social concern, often underprivileged in their living conditions (especially housing³⁴²) and definitely grappling with health problems. Associations and centers developed which even specialize on specific health problems or disabilities of the elderly.

Some of the civil rights groups and from the relief organizations have succeeded to be well networked all over the country, including for example “SOS Chernobyl”, an organization that takes care for the all those immigrants from Ukraine who have been affected by the atomic disaster of the nuclear power plant in Chernobyl in the spring of 1986.³⁴³

Civil rights groups

In the same context and with a special focus on improving the rights of non-privileged and non-Halakhic Jews, Russian immigrants have established their own sorts of human rights groups – thus, for example the “Association of Judges for Defending the Rights of the New Repatriates”, the “Forum for Civil Marriage” and the Association “Alternativa”. The latter two are involved in a long-term fight for civil marriage, for the rights of mixed families and for the rights of non-Orthodox religious movements. Thus, the monopoly of the Orthodox Chief Rabbinate concerning marriages in Israel, as well as its monopoly on procedures of divorce, is questioned openly. Another important aim of “Alternativa” is the facilitation of Giur (religious conversion), organized by *local* Religious Councils.

³⁴¹ In September 2007 the Israeli Police discovered a Neo-Nazi gang in Tel Aviv / Petakh Tikva, which had sprayed swastikas on several public buildings (including a synagogue), had beaten religious students, drug addicts and foreign workers and was suspected of having illegal weapons. Computer experts determined that the gang had also contact with Neo-Nazi groups abroad including Russia's most extreme group, Format 18. The eight members of the gang were all adolescents from immigrant families of the FSU, between 17 and 21 years old. In November 2008 the Tel Aviv District Court sentenced the members of the gang from one to seven years in prison. (Ha'aretz, Nov. 24, 2008).

³⁴² A construction program of subsidized flats for immigrant retirees was planned at the end of the 1990's by the politicians in Israel ba Aliyah (when already committed in the Israeli government).

³⁴³ Details about the organization in: Remennick (2007), p. 129.

Associations of professional groups

Several professional groups among the Russian Jews in Israel had an especially difficult situation during the first years of the Great Aliyah. As Siegel (1998) illustrated, in some branches of the Israeli economy it was not only hard for new entrepreneurs to find a place in the native market but also to resist hostility or unscrupulous behavior from native entrepreneurs. From this point of view it is no surprise that RSJ immigrants established their own professional associations.

Organizations came to life as the “Association of Russian Entrepreneurs”, the “Association of Scientist Repatriates from the FSU in Israel”, the “Association of Scientists and Engineers from the FSU” and the “Union of Engineer-Repatriates.” The latter takes care of nearly 100,000 RSJ engineers, about two thirds of them not working in their professional field. Such organizations of professionals formed a lot of overlaps in specialist issues and recognized a wide array of common interests to improve the occupational situation of their members. They succeeded in pushing several projects where the state was challenged to assist with its own contributions. Finally these organizations of engineers and technicians established a network of “Houses of Science and Technology” across the country. These houses offer courses for the highly-qualified, scholar grants, counseling in how to apply for patents, but also advice on marketing and organization.³⁴⁴

Strong activities are also reported from organizations like the “Association of Technical Professionals”, “Association of Scientist Repatriates at Israeli Universities”, the “Association of Medical Doctors from the FSU” and – on the side of the social sciences – for example the “Sociological Association Aliyah” and the “Association of Immigrant Sociologists”.³⁴⁵ Artists, painters, writers and cinematographers established their own organization as well. Some professional groups – such as the ca. 40,000 immigrated teachers – have been able to organize

³⁴⁴ Khanin (2003), p.75.

³⁴⁵ The “Association of Immigrant Sociologists” consisted of 200 members in 1994 who had been professionals in the social sciences in several parts of the FSU, and then created a new scientific subject: “Olimology”. The olimological studies dealt with demographic data, the potential electoral consequences of the Great Immigration and the realisation of this potential in Israel. Having very limited contacts with native sociologists, the immigrants conducted their own research on immigration problems – including studies of “anti-Olism” (hostile native attitudes towards the RSJ immigrants) - the results of which were published in the Russian-language press and presented at conferences and seminars of immigrant sociologists. The example of the “Association of Immigrant Sociologists” shows the high degree of politicization of RSJ professional organizations. See: Siegel (1998), p. 148f.

themselves even into a diversity of associations. Already by 1990, an “Association of Educationists of the FSU Repatriates” was originated which primarily aimed at the absorption of RSJ teachers into the Israeli school system, but also the placement of RSJ pupils and students at the national colleges and universities. The organization succeeded in the establishment of pedagogical counseling centers in about 40 Israeli cities, where about 5,000 trainee teachers received consultations provided by former Soviet educationists.³⁴⁶ In 1994 a parallel teacher’s association was established – the “Amuta Mofet”.³⁴⁷

Publicists and journalists have also established their professional organizations in Israel, some of them clearly involved in and committed to political issues. For example, the “Congress of Russian Language Press” conducts many information events with Russian-speaking, Hebrew-speaking and Arab-speaking guests. Rather right-wing oriented is the journalists’ organization “Mila” (“The Word”), while on the left organizations like “Teena” also come out with new publications for the Russian audience, as the “Teena”-edited bilingual “Vremja Iskat” (“Time to look for”).³⁴⁸ Political pluralization became a trait of the RSJ journalists in Israel, what might indicate both the strength of the professional group in itself and a striking political interest.

Religious immigrants

Also the religious scene among the RSJ immigrants has built its own structures. For example, “Machanai’im” emerged as one of the most well-known *religious* RSJ platforms, originally formed as an underground network in Moscow, but then established as a religious educational organization in Jerusalem in 1987.

Already by the end of the 1970's, a group of young people had gathered around the Hebrew teacher Ze'ev Dashevsky in Moscow, began to study Jewish history and tradition and passed on this knowledge to their fellow Jews. Over time, this small group developed into a network of Jewish learning with a certain grass-roots approach, studying Torah, philosophy, and Jewish law. The classes had to be held secretly in private homes, because there was permanent observation by the KGB and

³⁴⁶Khanin (2003), p.75.

³⁴⁷ About the school projects of the “Amuta Mofet” see chapters 4 and 6.

³⁴⁸ Khanin (2003).

the threat of arrest, lawsuit, expulsion from university and other forms of oppression. In 1987 the core group emigrated to Israel and started to transform “Machana’im” into an international organization. The name of “Machanai’m” goes back to the Torah, Genesis 32:3, and has the meaning of “two camps” – here then initially referring to the Jewish community in Russia and to Israel. In Israel, the protagonists of “Machana’im” became aware that nowadays many Russian Jews around the globe are concerned for a high intellectual and general education level but almost completely ignore Jewish religion and tradition. They started therefore to create educational programs with an “open approach to teaching what being Jewish can mean to someone acculturated in the Russian Communist environment.”³⁴⁹ - “We thought this is the field where we can make a unique contribution to the people of Israel – both”, said Miriam Kitrossky, Director of Development at “Machana’im”, during the expert interview.³⁵⁰

Today “Machana’im” is working with a staff of nearly 60 people (including both employees and free-lancers) and is approaching Russian Jews in Israel, the Former Soviet Union, but also in Germany and the USA. As the main goal, Miriam Kitrossky and editor-in-chief Pinchas Polonsky define “offering Jewish education to Russian speaking Jews all over the world”, providing heritage ulpanim, preparatory courses for Giur (religious conversion) and youth outreach programs, among others. All in all, it is said that programs reach about 1,000 participants regularly.³⁵¹ “Machana’im” is supported by government institutions according to its status as a non-profit organization. As well as Russian partners there is also co-operation with the Zionist Yeshiva “Machon Meir” in Jerusalem and the Bar-Ilan University (where courses in Judaism are given in Russian). How far the co-operation with the Russian Diaspora is developed is shown by the fact that religious texts and comments produced by “Machanai’m” are also regularly printed in the Berlin-based “Evreyskaya Gazeta”.

Basically, the leaders of “Machana’im” do not see a spiritual lack among the Russian Jews at all. They rather appraise the Russian Jews as being more spiritual than their Western counterparts. In a certain way it is suggested that Russian Jews

³⁴⁹ See the website of Machana’im: www.machanaim.org (Contact by August 5, 2009)

³⁵⁰ Interview with Miriam Kitrossky and Pinchas Polonsky (Machana’im) on April 15 (by Email).

³⁵¹ Interview with Miriam Kitrossky and Pinchas Polonsky (Machana’im) on April 15 (by Email).

possess a deeper love for the land of Israel than others and - in contrast to overly-individualistic Westerners - they may be best suited to find and preserve a desired balance between “the perception of one's individuality” and “the perception of oneself as a cell of the people.”³⁵²

The plurality and complexity of Russian organizations in Israel, as briefly sketched here, refer to a certain strength of self-assertion, to a constructive and offensive imagination as to how to manage not only the situation of the own immigrants group, but also how to affect at some point the whole Israel society or – as in the case of “Machana'im” – even parts of the Russian Jewish community in the FSU or other countries of the Diaspora.

War Veterans

Among the estimated 150,000 Russian Jewish retirees who came to Israel mainly during the 1990's, there have been many veterans of World War II, many of them highly decorated as officers and soldiers of the Soviet Army which bore the brunt of the struggle to defeat Hitler's armies. These veterans symbolize in an outstanding way Jewish resistance and readiness for combat, strongly contradicting a formerly widespread cliché of the European Jews, having gone under Nazi rule and Nazi occupation “like lambs to the slaughter”, i.e. not fighting against the imminent genocide. Already in 1977 an “Association of the Veterans of the Second World War and their families in Israel” was founded, and at the beginning of the 1990's this organization counted already nearly 10,000 members.³⁵³

The Soviet Jewish war veterans in Israel have their counterparts in Germany as well, though in smaller local groups and not as a country-wide association. About 600-700 Soviet Jewish war veterans³⁵⁴ have settled to Germany since the beginning of the 1990's, and they founded local associations in cities like Berlin and Stuttgart. In some of the local Jewish communities their activities had a new impact regarding War and Holocaust remembrance.

³⁵² Pinchas Polonsky in: Vesti, March 8, 2001. Cited in: Hoffman (2003)

³⁵³ Siegel (1998), p. 175

³⁵⁴ Jüdische Zeitung, May 2008.

Associations of geographic origin

Others organizations have no special societal aims and are not concentrated on special cultural, religious or historical traditions. They simply enable people to hold on to former geographic origins or to a culture of origin from which they want to preserve at least some elements they obviously continue to identify with. First and foremost here reference should be made to a whole smorgasbord of organizations based on common geographical origin. The newcomers in Israel established, for example, Associations of Immigrants from Ukraine, or Belarus, or Moldavia, or Georgia, as well as organizations founded by people coming from the same towns in the USSR – as for example the Associations of Immigrants from Leningrad, or Tschernowtsi, or Birodbidschan.³⁵⁵ In a certain way, these groups and associations reveal local peculiarities in cultural, intellectual and mental life that have survived the end of the Soviet Union and continue in the “Russian Diaspora”. My interviewees considered these traditions as rather positive, and some enjoy having, again, many “Muscovites”, “Petersburgers” or “Odessites” in their private network(s).

In general, it seems that the intensive and comprehensive networks of RSJ cultural, social and intellectual groups, projects and institutions provide an exceptional backbone for finding support in the initial phase of resettlement, for maintaining the former cultural lifestyle, for communicating in the familiar language of origin and, if desired, for participating in discourse on new collective and individual identities. At least for Israel, it can be stated that the RSJ community has undergone an organic growth which enables the immigrants to act with self-assurance in the public and to meet Israeli host natives and other co-ethnic groups at eye-level.

4. RSJ Interest and lobby groups in Germany

Although having similar skills and self-confidence from their places in the FSU, Russian Jews in Germany have formed only a tiny amount of the large network of interest groups and lobby organizations existing in Israel. A careful look reveals several factors causing the disparity. First of all the number of Russian Jews in

³⁵⁵ See Khanin (2003), p.75.

Germany is much lower than in Israel (only about one-fifth), and with that there is also the wide dispersal of the RSJ immigrants across the whole of Germany. It was already referred to the debatable German policy of “dispersing” the RSJ immigrants according to the “Königstein” distribution key, which handed over the task of accommodating RSJ newcomers to the state officials, what ended up in many cases with settlement in rural areas. This has not only decreased immigrants’ chances in the (higher-qualified) labor market, but also the chances of establishing their own self-help organizations.

At the moment, distinct interest or lobby groups in Germany mainly run by Russian Jews are very much limited to the scientific and cultural/artistic spheres. In these fields, the most remarkable institutions are Russian-language cultural centers (or: “Societies of Russian Culture”), “Associations of [Russian speaking] scientists” and local clubs of immigrants with the same geographic origin. All these groups can be located under the roof of local Jewish communities (at least if the number of Jewish activists prevails), but can, at the same time and in other places, work completely independently. It is obvious that the RSJ lobby groups in Germany have less of a political character³⁵⁶, and also that groups of specific interest and tradition are – compared with those in Israel - rather small by number and size.

A glance at the United States easily makes clear that self-organization of Russian Jews is, indeed, also a variable of quantity, especially when forming a distinct minority in the country of destination. *Gold* (1997) has described the emergence of professional organizations (entrepreneurs, medical professionals), interest groups and even Russian-oriented religious congregations (including Russian speaking Rabbis) in Los Angeles during the 1990s.³⁵⁷ *Borshevsky and Belozersky* (2005) describe similar trends for the greater Boston area on the East Coast, for example by forming an “Association of Russian Physicians” (ARP), which was later intended to merge into a national association of RSJ immigrant doctors. The RSJ community of greater Boston, which is based on tens of thousands of immigrants,

³⁵⁶ Several factors seem to play a role here: firstly, the problem constellations of RSJ immigrants in Germany seem different to those in Israel. There is, for example, no problem of civil marriage, but on the other hand an extremely high share of unemployment. Secondly, it might be possible for the RSJ immigrants to join social and political lobby groups that are mainly formed by non-Russians, or other multi-cultural organizations that aim for better social, cultural and educational conditions. Thirdly, some urgent issues of Jewish inhabitants in Germany are taken up by the Central Council of Jews which has a greater weight in the political arena than representatives of the newcomers.

³⁵⁷ *Gold*, (1997), pp. 261-283.

even succeeded in establishing its own *political* lobby organizations, as the “Russian Community Association of Massachusetts” and the “Massachusetts Association of Jews from the FSU”.³⁵⁸ Such groups and institutions are far from being as punchy as the Russian political parties in Israel, but represent an impressive degree of self-organization – in parallel to established American-Jewish structures - and they could, theoretically, also serve as models for the RSJ co-ethnics in Germany in the long run.

However, in Germany the biggest challenge at the moment might rather be to consolidate the already *existing* associations and platforms, as for example the “Federation of Jewish Students in Germany” (BJSD), and it seems to be accepted among the leading veterans and the RSJ immigrants that the “luxury” of parallel structures would very much weaken German Jewry as a whole. Until now, Russian Jews have rather concentrated on local projects and initiatives, mainly scientific groups and culture and centers normally open also for non-Jews who are interested. Irrespective of the fact that such projects go far beyond the frame of a synagogue community and are hardly connected with any forms of *Jewish* tradition and culture, German-Jewish roof organizations support some of the projects as places where Jews gather and at least keep in touch each other. One of these projects is the above mentioned centre “Kibuz” in Potsdam, an acronym for “Center for Culture, Integration and Education”, receiving financial support from the Central Welfare Board of Jews in Germany (ZWST), outreaching RSJ immigrants, but also culturally interested Russian and German non-Jews. Nikolaj Epchteine, a Moscow born biologist in his sixties who settled into Germany in 1996, became director of the newly-founded center in 2004. He explained the concept of “Kibuz” in the following words:

“Here [at the center] we see ourselves as having a unique task, and I think we have a special target group. Not all of our immigrants can become members of the Jewish communities, and that for several reasons. Some cannot get membership because of non-Halakhic origin, but the number of mixed marriages is very high. (...) Then there is a bigger number of immigrants, who *could* become members of the Jewish communities, but they *don't want to*. If they read in the preamble [of the community statute]: ‘renewal of Jewish religion’ - then they feel, as mostly secular persons, quite distant. Among them are also many young people. *But in order to hold them, not to lose them, and to give them a liberal-minded accompany – that is the reason why we are here.* What the people later do with this, how do they feel connected to Jewish institutions in the long run – this will be their individual case.”³⁵⁹

³⁵⁸ N.A. Borschevsky/ I. Belozersky in: Schoeps et al. (2005), pp. 369-391, esp. 381-387.

³⁵⁹ Interview with Nikolaj Epchteine at the Center “Kibuz” in Potsdam, July 20, 2004. Emphasis O.G.

“Kibuz” is also offering social services and supports immigrants with specific programs to integrate into the new surroundings, whether in economical, cultural or psychological terms.

Comparable centers exist in other German towns, not necessarily dependent on Jewish support, but established and dominated by Russian Jews who often have been committed in culture and arts already in the Former Soviet Union. Some of them include Jewish arts and culture consciously in the program of their institutions but search for very intensive contact to other population groups and municipal institutions as well. An impressive example in this regard is the Russian Cultural Center “Raduga” in Düsseldorf.³⁶⁰ The several Russian-speaking groups have built up different specific organizations, institutions and clubs in town, some of them exclusive for their own, and some of them open for the public as well. According to director Nelli Kunina, the club “Raduga”, a now “Center for Russian-German Culture” (“Zentrum für russisch-deutsche Kultur”) and already 15 years active, seeks to “co-operate with all groups; Jewish immigrants, Ethnic Germans, bi-national couples, native Germans.” With about 1,000 members, “Raduga” is the biggest Russian-speaking cultural association in town. Surprisingly, the Jewish immigrants present a clear majority. Nelli Kunina speaks of a good co-operation with the local Jewish community³⁶¹, but both institutions are totally separate. “Raduga” is practicing a balancing act between integrative work (including free-of-charge social counseling for immigrants, translation services) and artistic activities by including different ethnic groups and different age groups. Kunina reports of public interest and efforts to create arts with social relevance:

“Our parents feel uncomfortable when their children at school at first get to know that Tchaikovsky was a homosexual, and only later what a great Russian composer he was. Parents want that their children get knowledge, and interest in culture, arts and sports. Our children’s club is visited by about 100 boys and girls, and we are planning a theater project together with a primary school. The Jewish community has a children’s group as well.”³⁶²

³⁶⁰ Düsseldorf has about 600,000 inhabitants and is the capital of Germany’s biggest federal state – North-Rhine Westphalia. The city is home to several ethnic minorities, as there are Turks, Greeks, Italians, war refugees from the Balkan States, ethnic Germans from the Former Soviet Union and Russian Jews.

³⁶¹ With more than 7,000 members, the Jewish community of Düsseldorf is one of the biggest in Germany. Aside from this, Chabad Lubavitch has established its own branch in town.

³⁶² Interview with Nelli Kunina, head of the Russian-German cultural club “Raduga” Düsseldorf, on August 24, 2004.

The club “Raduga” is also initiating arts projects for adolescents, where intercultural understanding should be promoted – and to set a sign against violence and right-wing extremism. In the long run, it is the dream of Nelli Kunina and her team “to establish a Russian Culture House in Düsseldorf, where Russians and non-Russians, natives, Jews and non-Jews meet all together.” Kunina sees the comprehensive network activities, mainly conveyed by Russian culture and arts, also as a useful tool against all kinds of prejudices in town.

A “House of Russian Culture” which Nelli Kunina is dreaming of, is reality in Berlin. Close to downtown and the Russian embassy, the “House of Russian Science and Culture” attracts a broad Russian, Russian-Jewish and also non-Russian public. Language courses, ballet for children, readings with various poets and writers, theater performances, meetings with artists, intellectuals and politicians are integral part of the program. The “House of Russian Culture” offers a great forum and place of inspiration for Russian Jewish immigrants but here they are, of course, one group among others.

A significant and partly successful trend to self-organization is also visible among the RSJ scientists and technicians. Since about 10 per cent of the RSJ immigrants’ work force in Germany are scientists or scholars³⁶³, it is not surprising that those professionals and academicians look for their own structures and places as well. A bit similar to the related institutions in Israel, in a dozen of greater German towns so called “Scientific Societies” (“Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaften”) of mainly-RSJ immigrants have been founded.

The Central Welfare Board of Jews in Germany (ZWSt) is giving financial support to these societies which, at least, facilitate communication and networking of highly-qualified RSJ immigrants from the natural sciences as well as from the humanities. The best developed of these “Scientific Societies” was founded in 1996, in cooperation with the Jewish Community of Berlin (“Scientific Community Berlin” – WiGB), and unites engineers, chemists, physicists, mathematicians, but also biologists, psychologists, philosophers and linguists. Irrespective of public resonance or success in the general scientific scene in Germany, the members of the “Scientific Societies” continue to develop patents, to organize open special seminars and to

³⁶³ See the graph on RSJ professions in Germany in chapter 3.

work on publications.³⁶⁴ They can rightly be compared with the “Scientific Seminars” as they exist in Israeli towns like Ashkelon.

Aside with the “Scientific Societies”, also “Clubs of Inventors” emerged in greater cities (as in Berlin and Düsseldorf), conducting similar activities, but often also supporting and advising individual scientists to apply for a scientific patent.³⁶⁵ Some of the organizers of such clubs providing new challenges for (mostly unemployed) scholars even estimate their work as more integrative or valuable than that of the local Jewish communities. Thus, the heads of the Inventors Club in Düsseldorf just commented about German integration policy: “It could be useful [in Germany], to check out what integration really means, and who integrates the newcomers. The Jewish communities get financial support by the German State, for *religious* integration. But these are religious communities – and religion remains religion. *We try to integrate scientists*, and why should this work not being supported in a similar way?”³⁶⁶

Groups of same geographic origin

In the greater cities of Germany, with a considerable number of former USSR citizens, clubs or associations for people with the same city or regional origin can also flourish. Hegner (2008:143) reports of special clubs of “Odessites”, “Leningraders” and people from Dnepropetrovsk, all meeting under the roof of a Jewish cultural center in downtown Berlin.³⁶⁷ She also describes the attempt of Latvian immigrants to establish an independent club “Riga” (which finally failed)³⁶⁸ and the palette of other “city clubs” and “nationality clubs” could be easily continued. It goes without saying that those clubs of people from different regions

³⁶⁴ Concerning the „Scientific Society of Berlin“ see:

<http://www.berlin-judentum.de/gruppen/wissenschaftler.htm> (access on June 24, 2008).

³⁶⁵ The “Club of Russian-Speaking Inventors” in Düsseldorf unites, according to its leader Mikhail Kinker, members between the ages of 23 until 80. Kinker reported that the Club has already supported 70 applications for scientific patents, “and already 15 have been accepted. Members of our club who are on welfare and do not have the money for paying for the acknowledgement procedure also get financial help from us.” At the time of my interview with Dr. Kinker, he was working on a patent that should be recognized in Israel, and he justified: “In some cases it is much easier to get a patent or to make a technical solution realizable in Israel or any other Western industrial country than in Germany.” Mikhail Kinker and his friends deplore “a certain kind of disinterest”, also by leading companies. (Interview with Mikhail Kinker in Düsseldorf on August 24, 2004.)

³⁶⁶ Interview with the heads of the “Club of Inventors” in Düsseldorf, August 24, 2004, Emphasis O.G.

³⁶⁷ Hegner (2008), p. 143.

³⁶⁸ Hegner (2008), p. 203-212.

and cities of the Former Soviet Union can also exist totally independent of Jewish community structures.

Clubs of Inventors, Houses of Russian Science and Culture, literary salons and associations of common geographic origin are part of the world Russian Jews in Germany are involved in. Scientists, intellectuals and artists find excellent frameworks and possibilities to pursue their own interests and meet suitable challenges at least as leisure-time activities. It might be that some of the Russian Jews who do *not* find adequate possibilities in the local Jewish communities then completely switch to the “pure” Russian places. The probability that Russian Jews have to fear ethnic broadsides or anti-Semitism there might be rather small, although it can’t be excluded that certain nationality conflicts stemming from the Soviet times and before – as, for example, tensions between Russians and Georgians – flame up at such places as well. Remennick (2005) figured out that mutual prejudices between German ethnic repatriates (“Aussiedlers”) and Jews from the former USSR have “survived” the Soviet times and do not improve the relations between both groups in Germany.³⁶⁹ However, these traditional profound aversions do not seem to spoil the enthusiasm and joy of attendance and involvement of the same Russian performances and projects.

5. Political platforms in Israel

There is no doubt that the Russian Jews in Israel and Germany have developed dense networks where Russian culture and language are preserved and imparted, a certain ethnic market booms, cultural and educational institutions successfully develop. In correlation with the size of the communities and the degree of inner mobilization, interest and lobby groups can contribute a lot to the improvement of the situation of certain RSJ subgroups, as for example mixed and single-parent families, the elderly, war veterans or unemployed scientists. However, many of the RSJ interest groups and associations also aim to impact on their surroundings, as for example intercultural projects initiated by RSJ artists' or journalists' associations which focus on certain political issues.

During the first half of the 1990's the Russian Jews in Israel got the feeling that

³⁶⁹ Remennick (2005), p. 50f.

Israeli state and society were not enough doing to solve some essential problems of integration – first of all concerning the integration into the labor market, the housing problem and problems of recognition for Soviet professional degrees. Additional problems had arisen by conflicts over religious and civilian rights and by ethno-cultural tensions, and a considerable part of the immigrants did not feel enough endeavour and attention by the established political parties to change the situation. Frustration came up when representatives of the new RSJ immigrants' wave were constantly ignored on the front places of electoral lists in all of the mainstream parties. For example, during five electoral campaigns (1992, 1996, 1999, 2003 and 2006) neither the Labor Party, nor the Likud found it necessary to incorporate any ex-Soviet immigrant who arrived in Israel in the 1990's into their lists of candidates.³⁷⁰ In the face of such obvious political disinterest, protagonists of the RSJ community saw a reason for putting immigrants' fortunes into their own hands. Though, in retrospective, the then campaigners such as Gennady Riger and Roman Polonsky emphasize that the project wasn't designed as an exclusively "Russian enterprise". According to both, a party like "Israel ba Alija" should serve the overall interests of Jewish newcomers in Israel. Gennady Riger, a successful Russian leader, temporarily deputy of the Knesset and today manager and head of the "World Congress of Russian Jews" office in Tel Aviv, remembered in the interview:

"The idea was not to establish a party exclusively for the Russians. The idea was rather to be a political party for everyone. Admittedly, it was the Russian electorate that gave its voice for IBA in the beginning, and that it was what helped to gain political power on the national level. But from the programmatic standpoint it wasn't our intention to establish an exclusive Russian club."³⁷¹

Roman Polonsky, for a long time the spokesman of the IBA-key figure Nathan Sharansky, gave similar statements in the interview:

"It was not our intention to form a decisive ethnic party, that's why we tried to widen the horizon. Thus, IBA had a representative from the Ethiopian Aliyah and even one from Canada, but naturally it didn't succeed to extend it. In generally, IBA remained a party formed *by* FSU immigrants *for* FSU immigrants."³⁷²

³⁷⁰ Alek Epstein, *After Sharansky: Russian Political Leaders in Israel – An Elite Without Successors*, Conference Paper, presents at the Conference "Israel as an Immigrant Society. Between the Melting Pot and Multiculturalism", Open University of Raanana/Israel, June 11-13, 2007, p.2.

³⁷¹ Interview with Gennady Riger in Tel Aviv in August 26, 2008.

³⁷² Interview with Roman Polonsky in Jerusalem on August 28, 2008.

Yet, not everybody was happy when an influential circle of Russian Jewish political activists, community leaders, journalists and intellectuals gathered at the end of 1994 and decided to conduct the experiment of a “Russian” political party.³⁷³

A broad basis of the Russian Jews expected to solve urgent problems now straight from the centres of power, be it on the national or on the communal level. The politicization of the RSJ community had reached its peak, though at this time mainly concentrating on domestic issues.

From Street to Parliament: Israel ba Aliyah (IBA)

“Israel ba Aliyah” (IBA) – the long-prepared project and initially constituted as a social movement (in 1995) – finally became the party of the “Russian street” and commenced campaigning at the Knesset election of May 1996. From the very beginning, the party with former Soviet dissident Natan Sharansky on top had enormous chances to bundle up support from most of the immigrants and their existing networks and interest groups. Sharansky was also backed by many people from the professional and intellectual elites. IBA offered a unique chance to launch the various social, cultural and educational issues and aims not only at the municipal but also on the national level. The experiment worked extremely successful in the 1996 Knesset election: 175,000 RSJ immigrants voted for IBA, securing 7 Knesset seats for the “Russians”.

Two years later, Russian politics also became a serious factor in local affairs. Sharansky’s party won a lot of seats in the municipal elections, which gave clear evidence that the party was not a fly-by-night phenomenon, but indeed backed by the “Russian street”. IBA-politicians entered local parliaments in greater numbers, were involved in local committees and subsequently took the post(s) of Deputy Mayor in a couple of towns. In the Knesset elections of 1999, Israel ba-Aliyah was supported again by 172,000 voters and could win six Knesset seats. However, the years after 1999 were very turbulent for IBA, with early split-offs, personal conflicts and an extraordinary strong inner dynamic that made continuity a difficult thing. Already in

³⁷³ Political scientist Vladimir Ze’ev Khanin even claimed that “the overwhelming majority of the *elites* was in favor of integration [into the existing political structures] but they had to consider that the majority of the RSJ population was willing to try a sectarian political option.” (Interview with Ze’ev Khanin in Herzliya on March 16, 2008).

the first legislative period, when IBA had entered the Knesset (1996-1999) and joined the Netanyahu cabinet with two ministerial posts (Sharansky as minister of Industry and Trade, Edelstein as minister of Immigrant Absorption), the first deputies drifted away, in the persons of Michael Nudelman and Yuri Stern, who tried their own party list (“Alija – for a renewed Israel”), but then soon joined the new emerging Russian-based party “Israel Beitenu” of Avigdor Liebermann. In the following parliamentary term (1999-2001), wherein IBA was able to hold 6 deputies in the Knesset and was present in the government of Ehud Barak (Avoda) with Natan Sharansky as Minister of Interior, another blood-letting took place, this time to the left wing: Roman Bronfman and Alexander Tzinker left the party and tried the experiment of a left-wing oriented party called “*Ha Brira Ha Democratit*” (see below). At the beginning of the new century the RSJ electorate started to realign. In the Knesset elections of 2003, IBA got only 2.1% of the total electorate and gained no more than two seats in the new Knesset. This gave reason enough for Natan Sharansky, still head of IBA, to work on the integration of the rest of IBA into the Likud party, which meant – at least on the national level – in 2005 the end of an independent and formerly very successful party of the “Russian street”.³⁷⁴

Russian and National: Israel Beitenu

At the zenith of the political power of “Israel ba-Aliyah”, a second Russian-based party emerged alongside, entering the Knesset for the first time in 1999 (winning 4 seats), and since that time – with a short break between 2003 and 2006 – steadily gaining more Knesset mandates and political influence: Israel Beitenu (“Our house Israel”). The party's head and key figure is Avigdor Lieberman, former Director General of the Prime Minister’s office during Netanyahu’s first governmental period (1996-99) and himself a veteran immigrant from Moldavia. In its initial stage, “Israel Beitenu” (IB) was recruited from disappointed Likud-members with Russian origin, unsatisfied Russian municipal politicians and “deserters” from IBA, but soon complemented by native voters with a strong national tinge. In the long run, many IBA followers turned to Lieberman's party, which is far more right-wing oriented

³⁷⁴ In January 2005, IBA officially merged with the Likud and received 128 seats in its Central Committee. Sharansky and Edelstein were working towards the creation of a Likud-style personal political camp. See: Khanin (2007), p. 351.

concerning Israeli-Palestinian politics than IBA has ever been. Lieberman developed very successful strategies in winning the “Russian street” for his side, at the same time attracting non-Russian Israelis, who appreciated his continuing campaigns against the “Israeli political establishment” and his stated aim to establish “Israel Beitenu” not as a distinct *Russian* party, but as a *national* party. Consequently he went into a coalition of the right-wing bloc “National Union” for the Knesset elections in January 2003, but left this bloc before the Knesset elections of March 2006.

Israel Beitenu joined the government coalition of Ariel Sharon after the elections of 2003, when the party was part of the right-wing alliance “National Union” and holding four Knesset seats inside this fraction. Lieberman became Minister of Transportation in Sharon’s cabinet, but the whole “National Union” left the government in June 2004 in response to Ariel Sharon's disengagement plan for Gaza.³⁷⁵ In the elections of March 2006, Israel Beitenu won 11 seats, and in October of the same year the party joined the government of Ehud Olmert. Already in January 2008 the party left the government in protest against talks (!) with the Palestinian National Authority. Lieberman landed his greatest political success so far at the Knesset elections in February 2009, when IB was able to win 15 seats, making it the third largest fraction after Kadima (28) and Likud (27), thus even surpassing the Social Democratic Avoda-party. In March 2009, Israel Beitenu joined Binyamin Netanyahu's coalition, and Lieberman became Minister of Foreign Affairs.

According to *Khanin* (2009) about 10 of the 15 seats won by “Israel Beitenu” in the elections of February 2009 came from Russian voters, which is again about 50% of the whole Russian electorate.³⁷⁶ Today, Israel Beitenu appears as a fully-fledged nationwide party “but with a Russian accent”. However, obviously Lieberman also succeeded in symbolizing the interests of the various peripheral (in both its social and physical meaning) groups in Israeli society, many of whom responded to his call “to change the situation in which underprivileged social groups are alienated from power and deprived of property.”³⁷⁷

³⁷⁵ IBA-head Nathan Sharansky, at that time Minister of Jerusalem and Diaspora Affairs, did the same in May 2005.

³⁷⁶ 4-5 seats of the Russian electorate went to Likud, and about 2 seats to Kadima. The rest of about 3 seats “dispersed” in Russian sector or very small veteran’s parties across the political spectrum.

³⁷⁷ Ze’ev Khanin, Israeli Russian Voting Trends in the 2009 Knesset Election. Online-Paper of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Israel. See: <http://www.fes.org.il/src/KhaninRussianVotingTrends.pdf>

Ha Brira Ha Democratit

As a Russian left-wing alternative to “Israel Beitenu” appeared the short-lived party *HaBrira HaDemocratit* (The Democratic Choice). Its founders, Alex Tzinker and Roman Bronfman, had left “Israel ba Aliyah” (IBA) in May 1999, firstly trying to act with an own parliamentary faction called “Machar” (“Tomorrow”). The two “renegades” explained their decision to leave IBA with strong ideological disputes with the leaders Natan Sharansky and Juli Edelstein. Later in 1999 Bronfman and Tzinker established *HaBrira HaDemocratit* as a party with liberal, left-wing political program and with a social-democratic tinge.

Roman Bronfman, a Ukrainian-born lecturer of literature and journalist who made Aliyah in 1980, had been working as the head of the “Haifa Municipality Absorption Authority” since 1993, thus having collected extensive experience in immigration policy. However, he gained special attention when in November 2001 opening an “Institute for Democracy and Leadership Training for Olim from the Former Soviet Union” in Tel Aviv. Initially funded by the European Union, the New Israel Fund and other non-government sources, the institute was mainly targeting at training future Russian Jewish *elites*, especially politicians and journalists, in leadership and in imparting “democratic values in the FSU community”.³⁷⁸ Bronfman then was one of the prominent politicians in Israel who declared even during the Second Intifada that a “Two-State-Solution” would be the only acceptable way to come out of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict dilemma in the long run. Thus it was less than surprising when “HaBrira HaDemocratit” joint together with the Israeli left-liberal Ashkenasi party “Meretz” (a former partner in Yitzhak Rabin's Labor government 1992-1995) before the Knesset elections in January 2003. However, the joint alliance was not very successful and could gain only 6 seats between them.

(access on April 19, 2010)

³⁷⁸ "The Institute for Democracy and Leadership Training for Olim from the Former Soviet Union" (MADA) primarily urges young Russian immigrants to assume a more prominent role in Israeli civil society as leaders and activists in social action groups, lobbying groups and NGOs, and as members of the working press. Roman Bronfman introduced as the aim of the MADA Institute to “foster the young leadership of the immigrant community through one-year-long courses in leadership training and journalism” but at the same time also to establish “the Institute not only as an instrument to cultivate leadership but as a meeting place for the elite of the immigrant community and the elite of the liberal and democratic camps in veteran Israeli society.” Very different professionals were involved in the teaching body of MADA, and the joint executive director of MADA, Danny Gal, refuted any suspicions the institute could serve small party interests. See: The Jerusalem Report, December 2001, pp. 26f.

Before the Knesset elections in March 2006, Roman Bronfman left the alliance with Meretz, and “Ha Brira Ha Democratit” did not place its own candidates for the elections. The party also did not run in the elections of 2009. Although small and ultimately short-lived, “HaBrira Ha Democratit” was a remarkable attempt to gather up especially those Russian voters who prefer a left-wing position in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

With “Israel ba Aliyah” as centrist, “Israel Beitenu” as right-wing, and “HaBrira HaDemocratit” as left-wing party, the RSJ community had – at the dawn of the new century – developed a distinct political pluralism³⁷⁹, resembling general trends in Israeli society. On the other hand, this coherent Russian political landscape appeared to be very short-lived, and the political earthquake in late 2005, when Ariel Sharon left the Likud and ad hoc established the mainstream party “Kadima”, gave the final blow to jumble up the Russian political scene, leaving only one party on the field.

At the end of 2006 Natan Sharansky, the dominating figure of Russian politics in Israel for nearly 10 years, stepped back from party politics and even gave up his (still-valid) Knesset mandate. A few months later, political analyst *Alek Epstein* draw a critical balance, when writing: “Israel ba Aliyah did not succeed either in shaping the Israeli political culture or in training the next generation of community political elite. Thus, there is no Sharansky legacy in Israeli politics. Israel ba Aliyah’s founders proved to be an elite without successors.”³⁸⁰

It is still unclear what impact the Russian politicians will have on Israeli internal politics in the long run, aside from continuing attempts to improve the situation of the immigrants. In the case of foreign policy, most of the Russian politicians seem to support a policy of powerfulness. Over the years the two most prominent RSJ politicians, Nathan Sharansky and Avigdor Lieberman have proven

³⁷⁹ There had also been a half-dozen other Russian parties in Israel during the 1990's, but they did not succeed to overcome the electoral threshold and/or were very short-lived. This group includes Efraim Fainblum's “Aliyah Party” and Efraim Gurs's “Za Edinstvo i Dostoinstvo Aliyi” (“For Unity and Dignity of Aliyah”), the latter representing Jewish immigrants from Georgia. Both failed at the 1996 elections, although forming a common list. Other failing parties have been “Democracy and Aliyah”, led by Yuli Kosharovskiy (1992); “Movement for the Renewal of Israel”, led by Robert Golan (1992); “Lev – Olim le'maan Israel” (“Heart – Olim for Israel”), a list of Bukharian Jews (1999, 2006); “HaTikva” (“Hope”), led by Alex Tenzer (1999), and “Citizen and State”, also led by Alex Tzinker (2003).

³⁸⁰ Alek Epstein, *After Sharansky: Russian Political Leaders in Israel – An Elite Without Successors*, Conference Paper, presented at the Conference “Israel as an Immigrant Society. Between the Melting Pot and Multiculturalism”, Open University of Raanana/Israel, June 11-13, 2007, p.6.

that they are willing to strengthen those forces in Israeli policy which prefer to offer almost no concessions to the Palestinian side. A politics of power also seems to be the trademark of foreign minister Avigdor Lieberman, and according to some insiders, by doing so he strikes the right chord among many Russian Jews. Political analyst Roman Polonsky commented in the expert interview:

“Note that Lieberman has – and always had – also his very hard core supporters, and those people support him not primarily for immigrant integration policy. In fact, Lieberman visualized by himself a kind of approach that is very closed to parts of Russian society and mentality. One of his images is the *attitude of strength*: ‘We are living in a very tough environment, so we should also be very tough’. Such an attitude is close to the views of a many Russians, but of course not all of them.”³⁸¹

Ideological differences are of less importance when it comes to local politics. Here Russian Jews have to fight with daily issues like all other citizens, beginning with infrastructure problems, welfare issues, local economy and ecology and last but not least developing and preserving cultural institutions. However, at the end of the 1990s a majority of RSJ immigrants primarily gave special trust to their co-ethnics and voted to a great extent either for Russian municipal lists, or for mixed lists including Russian candidates.³⁸² *Al-Haj and Leshem* (2000) have described this voting pattern as “an ethnic-collective behavior”, which is to be considered as “strategic decision more than a reactive behavior.”³⁸³ As a matter of fact, the RSJ immigrants became a considerable weight in local politics, too. In Bnei Ash they succeeded in appointing a Russian Mayor, and RSJ immigrants became also Deputy Mayors in cities like Ashdod, Ashkelon, Netanya, Beer Sheva, Carmel – and for a while even in Jerusalem (Larissa Gerstein) and in Haifa (Valentin Fainberg). Though, at the municipal elections four years later, RSJ immigrants voted already remarkably less “ethnically”.³⁸⁴

Epstein's criticism (2007) that IBA politicians finally turned out as an “elite without successors” might be legitimate with regard to a long row of personal differences, splits and individual tactics which probably reduced the chances of a more coherent “Russian policy” at the end of the 1990's and at the beginning of the

³⁸¹ Interview with Roman Polonsky in Jerusalem on August 28, 2008.

³⁸² Thus, in the municipal elections of 1998, 45% of the RSJ immigrants voted for Russian lists, and 44% for lists including immigrants and veteran Israelis. (See: *Al-Haj/Leshem* 2000, p.61).

³⁸³ *ibid*, p.61/62.

³⁸⁴ *Leshem* (2007), p. 342.

new century. However, the fact that with “Israel Beitenu” only one successful party has survived the 10-year-period - a party not narrowly fixed on ethnicity or immigrants’ issues but including many Israeli native voters and even including Israeli native deputies - speaks for itself. The model of a pure “ethnic party” has finally been ruled out after uncontested political successes in the second half of the 1990’s. This does *not* mean that distinct political interests of the Russian Jews cannot be channeled via other political channels and platforms.

As described above, the Russian Jews in Germany are not in the position to start comparable political initiatives, not to speak of “Russian policy”. In the long run, opportunities might appear to improve the general situation of RSJ immigrants by placing their issues in programs of NGOs and fractions of local political parties.

Chapter VI: Inter-cultural and inter-ethnic encounters and their impacts on the RSJ community

A relatively strong position as a minority group in itself enables the Russian Jews to reject – or at least avoid – assimilation into mainstream society in Israel and Germany, and threats of isolation and separation are consistently averted. The host society in both countries might consider the absorption of RSJ immigrants as comparatively smooth, at least when focusing the second generation. At the latest with the second generation, RSJ immigrants show significant upward mobility and gain importance as successful middle-class taxpayers. Highly appreciated contributions in the arts, science and education, and in Israel also in the general economy and the military, have already been described in chapter IV. However, all these achievements in functional integration and improving societal standards *by* the immigrants do not say anything about possible successes in cultural integration or in cultural convergence.

On the other hand, it can be presumed that a certain extent of acculturation is necessary for each group of immigrants in order to overcome fundamental problems of initial integration.

However, in terms of cultural encounter (and possible convergence), there have been distinct expectations from both sides - the host population and the newcomers, in Israel as well as in Germany. Under specific conditions in both countries, some mutual expectations have been fulfilled, and some have been almost disappointed. In the worst case, some observers invoke the threat of cultural segregation – and in the very worst case a “clash of cultures”. Trends of cultural parallelism between the “Russians” and other populations groups are a hotly discussed issue in Israel, but just like a “micro-cosmos” also inside Jewish communities in Germany. This chapter is an attempt to figure out major differences between Russian Jews and Jewish veterans in Israel and Germany which may hinder a more constructive *mutual* integration. However, as we elaborate the issue here mostly through Russian Jewish glasses, it seems appropriate to start with some reflections of the internal discussion of the RSJ self-images *as a group and community by itself*.

As already mentioned in the previous chapters, many of the Russian Jews are fully aware of their outstanding professional, intellectual and cultural competencies, keep a certain pride in Jewish *and* parts of the Soviet history and enjoy a

combination of elements of Jewish and Russian culture. Many feel important similarities in values of Jewish and Russian culture (for example in educational aspirations, family, social responsibilities), but also emphasize the close kinship of Russian and general European culture. As an additional hallmark, especially RSJ emigrés from former Soviet metropolitan towns tend to see themselves as rather secular, but nevertheless interested in (Jewish) history and religion. The relations to the Jewish religion remain ambivalent, even long after Aliyah or after emigration to Germany, but a certain pride in Jewish history and Jewish ethnicity is inherent in the majority. In general, Russian Jewish emigrants reject veteran Jewish assessments that they would be “less Jewish” because of their lack of religiousness. Exactly in this context, *Yelenevskaya and Fialkova* (2005) oppose the widespread view that Soviet Jews defined themselves only by the Jewish mark in the internal Soviet Passport. *Yelenevskaya and Fialkova* (2005) insist that “one should not dismiss the feeling of in-group solidarity, which was closely associated with the perception of common fate and collective memory. This memory was perpetuated by folklore: songs in Yiddish, parables, jokes and above all, personal narratives.”³⁸⁵ Others refer to inner-Jewish pride in world-wide Jewish achievements (like the great number of Nobel prize winners) and to inner-Jewish pride and solidarity with Israel, even if this could not, or only partly, be expressed in public life in the USSR.

Russian Jews in Israel are in a much greater demand to argue with Jewish lifestyle and traditional rule than their co-ethnics in Germany. As described in the previous chapter, the degree of self-organization and politicization among Russian Jews is significantly higher in Israel, though this doesn't hinder the immigrants to conduct very sharp and controversial discussions about own images, positions and relations to other population groups. Russian elites in Israel have initiated debates on identity, have given a voice to discriminated immigrants (“Olim”), have accompanied the birth of political parties and have backed the establishment of Russian institutes serving high-level education and arts. Russian elites have also been the motors for constructing professional associations and for political networking, whether on the right wing, the left wing or in the center. It is quite logical that they also aim to enter structures of the national (host) elites.

³⁸⁵ Yelenevskaya, Maria N./ Fialkova, Larisa: ‚My Aliya ′. Personal Narratives of Soviet Jews in Israel. Guest Lecture presented at the University of Basel, January 26, 2005; www.jewishstudies.unibas.ch

Also those RSJ immigrants who came as intellectuals and professional elites to Germany had a lot of self-confidence in their luggage, based on previous success in their occupational specialties, with engineers, technologists, economists and medical doctors at the top. In the same vein, RSJ immigrants to Germany are often equipped with a high level of cultural education, not a few of them committed as poets, actors and musicians *outside* their actual profession and job. The particular bonds between Russian culture and history and European culture and history were frequent topics in the conducted interviews, making it clear that there have been not only hopes of professional progress in the surrounding but also of cultural resonance. Ideas and expectations on how to become involved in *Jewish* activities might have been much more vague due to a lack of experience of Jewish community and Jewish cultural life in the former USSR.³⁸⁶ It is questionable to what extent the new immigrants indeed felt obliged to meet the pretended expectation of a “double successful integration” in Germany, i.e. into the society in general, and additionally into the local Jewish communities (*Schoeps et al.* 1999). In fact, about 50 per cent of the newcomers never joined the Jewish communities, thus also waiving starting aids, though these are highly appreciated in other countries; for example, in the US (*Tress 1997, Hegner 2008*). Following studies about the RSJ immigration into the German Jewish communities (*Schoeps et al.* 1996, 1999; *Silbermann 1997; Kessler 1998; Schoeps et al.*, 2005), it is revealed that the newcomers at many places have played only a minor role in active synagogue life, despite their growing number there, but nevertheless showed a huge interest in more frequent and more intense contacts with the host population (Jewish and non-Jewish). In Israel, leading figures were surprised that the newcomers expressed patriotism but often avoided close bonds with ideological and religious institutions. From the very beginning, RSJ immigrants in both countries made clear that they are not willing to subordinate to rules and institutions they do not accept. And immigrants were quickly ready to deplore the perceived gaps between their original, individual expectations to the host countries (in economy,

³⁸⁶ A few of the interview partners had collected some experiences with Jewish communities and other Jewish institutions while still at their places of residence but after the breakdown of the Soviet system. They made contact with newly-established Jewish schools and kindergartens appropriate for their children, took a job as teacher in a Jewish school or if very young at that point of time were sent on children-/youth programs to Israel. However, these people were a clear minority in my sample, and the time span between the USSR breakdown and their point of departure seemed too small to collect greater experiences with the newly-formed Jewish institutions.

culture, and solidarity) and the real experiences they made after arrival. In this context, some of the interview partners felt in retrospect very angry at the fulsome positive descriptions about life in Israel made by the Jewish Agency that had influenced their decision to choose Israel instead of other possible countries of destination (like the United States or Germany). Igor Sankin, a 26 year-old sociology student in Jerusalem, criticized:

“I think one of the biggest problems is the offensive style to enlist more and more Jews from the former Soviet Union. This style is practiced by the Sochnut [Jewish Agency], and they are just looking for demographic strategies. They are explaining that everything is fine and nice here. I don't like this glorifying, and it's a mistake. (...) But the officials and the Jewish Agency should advertise what problems a newcomer has to expect, as well. I think this is especially important for people over 45, because their chances in the labor market will be very low. (...) Potential immigrants should see, before Aliyah, that some problems are unsolved. (...) I think it would be useful - instead of very offensive enlistment - to invite potential immigrants for a trial stay. Maybe three, four weeks.”³⁸⁷

Trends of self-organization and certain politicization among underprivileged and particularly politically interested immigrants could be expected. However, such trends are rather surprising in the case of outstanding professional élites, who became more successful than ever in their new surroundings. What holds Russian Jewish immigrants still together when they have succeeded as top researchers at the Weizman Institute, professors of geo-physics at the TAU, chief physicians in Beer Sheva or successful editors-in-chief in Berlin? What motivates them in the long-run, to preserve Russian culture and language and to favor and apply former Russian/Soviet methods in education and arts? What is the driving force for outstanding personalities like the internationally-respected physicist Alexander Voronel to continue to publish the literary and intellectual magazine “22”? What is the driving force for veteran immigrants of the 1970's to join with newcomers from the 1990's to create new “Russian” platforms, establish “Russian” parties and built up Russian-based educational institutions? What is the putty for all these ample activities, and which function is provided here by Russian Jewish élites, sometimes still perceived as the “intelligentsia”?

³⁸⁷ Interview with Igor Sankin in Jerusalem on Sept. 8, 2003.

1. Changing Israeli society

From previous studies and the interview material presented here, RSJ elites appear as very active participants in general societal life, whereby *not* necessarily connected with organized actions or as adherents to any political structures. The RSJ interview partners in both countries were asked what kind of social, political and cultural contributions the RSJ immigrants community brought to the host societies in their opinion, and the question was consciously split into a) positive perceived contributions and b) negative perceived contributions.

In general, the interviews quickly turned to aspects of science, culture and (sometimes) politics whereby interest was declared in both directions: to learn from the Israeli/German society but also setting great store on showing contributions and (often unused) resources of the RSJ migrant group. In Israel, most of the interviewees were quite aware that simply the fact that Russian cultural retention caused deep impacts for the whole of Israeli society.

A clear majority of the interviewees in both countries also declared themselves to be secular, and in Israel, they were, of course, proponents of the separation of state and religion. The disappointment has been great that all previous attempts by secular political movements and parties to enforce a separation of state and religion have flopped³⁸⁸, despite the great influx of RSJ immigrants. Since the early 1990's, the Russian electorate referred to the problem of non-acceptance of non-Halachic Jews by the Orthodox Rabbinate, which meant in practice: the rejection of the right to marry in Israel, and the rejection of religious burial and related services. Russian Jewish deputies (and later on ministers) got the voters' order to fight for relevant changes at the top of national politics. How seriously a large proportion of the Russian Jews in Israel is taking this issue was revealed in the elections of January 2003, when the immigrants' voters switched from the "Russian" parties Israel ba Aliyah (IBA) and Israel Beitenu (IB) and instead gave many of their voices to the decisive secular and anti-religious party "Shinui" (led by Tommy Lapid).

³⁸⁸ Jewish Orthodox movements, although not the driving forces in building the Israeli State and in many cases distant from and critical towards the Zionist movement, had been integrated into the State building and were granted social and political privileges from the State's Declaration in 1948. In most legislature periods of the Knesset Orthodox-religious parties have been present, like Agudat Israel, Degel ha Tora, and later especially Shas.

Though, neither IBA, IB, Meretz, Shinui or any other more-or-less secular Israeli political party succeeded in enforcing any substantial improvements for non-Halachic Jews, let alone push-starting any steps for separation of state and religion. It seemed that the RSJ political leaders have early looked for a kind of status quo with the religious establishment, theoretically comprehensible when one takes into consideration that they were concentrating on other burning issues at the beginning, like the improved labor market integration of several professional groups and the state-sponsored linking of integrating institutions across the country, like the “engineers' houses” in several Israeli cities.

On the other hand, it seemed that the RSJ voters did not really pardon RSJ politicians' silence towards the religious establishment. As concerning other political issues and in situations when the immigrants felt necessity to put through specific interests and ideas, they turned to pragmatic strategies not necessarily connected with the Russian parties. This was exactly the case when many Russian Jews switched at the Knesset elections of 2003 and voted for the secular-liberal party Shinui, led by Tommy Lapid.³⁸⁹

In everyday public life, however, the RSJ immigrants finished the first round of the “Kulturkampf” on eye-level. Non-kosher food chains and hundreds of pork shops have survived, apart from the fact that they had to move out of the Israeli city-centers and are now situated at the peripheries. Only a small number of the non-Halachic RS Jews took a course for religious conversion (Giur), like their co-ethnics in Germany, but many have developed a distinct patriotism for the Jewish State.

Conversely, Russian and European traditions, as been brought and rigidified

³⁸⁹ However, there have been differences between the Russian political groups and parties as to how to come closer to equal rights for secular immigrants and how eventually to find ways in the direction of detaching state and religion. According to Khanin (2002:47), Roman Bronfman's left-liberal party „HaBrira HaDemocratit“ has been the only “Russian” party that more or less openly aimed to separate state and religion in the long run. Other parties and their representatives chose a much more moderate tone, and Roman Polonsky, long-standing speaker of Israel ba Aliyah and adviser of Nathan Sharansky mentioned a separation of state and religion “has never been an aim in the party program”. Roman Polonsky relativized: “We are not against religion and religious institutions. They are an integral part of the Israeli society. We accept and respect them, and we see their good contributions. But if it comes to a real argument with the religious, then we will fight.” (Interview with Roman Polonsky in Jerusalem on August 28, 2008). RSJ elites from other professions made clear that they wish a clear separation between state and religion. Thus, solar engineer Jewgenij Katz from Sede Boker said: “Our community, the immigrants from the former Soviet Union, are mostly non-religious in the Israeli sense of this term. But many [Russian political] leaders (...) are now ‘politically’ religious, or almost religious. In Israel, this question has a serious political and ideological matter. It makes a difference in this country.” (Interview with Jewgenij Katz in Sede Boker on March 26, 2003).

with the immigrants, have long ago left their marks on Israeli public life. Thus, for example New Year's parties and the putting up and decorating of Christmas trees are today not only widely accepted in the native Israeli population but even imitated.

Other "Russian" impacts are visible in daily fashion, music, cuisine, new leisure-time models and sports. A considerable number of interviewees also referred to a strong impact in education. In fact, one of the most visible previous impacts of RSJ on Israeli society has been set by Russian Jewish teachers and educationists. By the year 2003 the "alternative Russian educational system" in Israel included 10 alternative day schools, more than 250 independent, non-state certified schools, hundreds of Russian nursery schools and kindergartens, about 700 local circles of art and general learning, 25 Russian colleges and six outside branches of Russian academies.³⁹⁰

Aside from such achievements, Russian Jews can be surprisingly self-critical. *Al-Haj and Leshem* (2000) draw from an RSJ immigrants survey that the respondents stated more crime potential existing inside the RSJ community than in the general host population - a relation that is even disproved by the official *national* crime statistics.³⁹¹ Though, in cases of incidents of criminal prosecution which are seen as not justified, the RSJ immigrants are also able to organize massive public protest. When Gregory Lerner alias Zvi Ben Ari, a Russian manager hunted for years by Interpol and then in Israel was sentenced to several years of jail for bribery, fraud and embezzlement in 1997, RSJ protest demonstrators in Ashdod declared him to be "our Dreyfus". A poll run by Russian newspaper "Vesti" even declared him to be the fourth most popular person among the immigrants.³⁹² The action might appear as quite quaint, especially in view of the fact that Gregory Lerner is also suspected of having defrauded Russian banks of millions of dollars, but could have been seen also as an "overreaction" to a very marked trend of the Israeli boulevard press during the 1990's

³⁹⁰ See: Khanin (2003), p.77.

³⁹¹ Al-Haj and Leshem (2000) asked the immigrants about negative influences of the Russian Aliyah to Israeli host society concerning crimes, and vice versa. 48.8% of the respondents saw negative (i.e., criminal) influence by RS immigrants on the Israeli host society, but only 31.4% saw Israeli host criminality having a negative impact on the immigrant community. (Al-Haj/Leshem 2000:36,105). These results have been the more surprising considering that Israeli officials still in 1997 confirmed that the Russian immigrants have been statistically not over the average in crimes, with the exception of violence within the family. See: Schreiber (1998), p.338. Wolffsohn (2003:319,336) refers to a relatively higher crime rate among non-Jewish immigrants from Russia and also refers to organized Russian crime, however relativizing that an overrepresentation of criminal acts in the yearly Statistical Abstract is referring to Israeli Arabs and Oriental Jewish Israelis.

³⁹² The Jerusalem Report, December 25, 1997.

to stigmatize RSJ immigrants as having in tow surpassing numbers of criminals, prostitutes and drunkards. Today RSJ immigrants are much more relaxed in handling such stereotypes and accusations, and the Russian media (press, TV, radio, internet) can provide enough counterweight to such perfectly clear attempts of populist “ethnic” stereotyping.

Nowadays, Russian Jews in Israel are active far beyond their own issues and deal with manifold problems touching the whole country. Such activities are not necessarily bound to organizational structures or certain ideological premises. Within the interview sample there were people who belonged to left-wing Meretz, Social Democratic Avoda and Green Party (“Yerukim”), while others disdained any individual involvement in a political party, but clearly expressed their sympathy with right-wing politics. Again others belonged to former leading politicians from IBA but had consciously refused to follow Sharansky’s and Edelstein’s “conversion” to the Likud in 2005. The motivations of Russian Jewish elites to jump into politics appear as multi-faceted; the chosen political instruments are quite diverse, and also the public channels that are used. The relatively small sample of expert interviews – as presented here - seems, however, sufficient enough to question the often applied claim that the “Russians” in Israel are only pursuing “ethnic lobby interests”. Most of the interview partners who had decided for political commitment had discovered “burning issues” and were convinced that the solution of these problems admitted of no delay. But where was the line between active Russian Jews and “Russian politics”? Some of the interview partners made a clear differentiation between the role of the “Russian” parties during the late 1990’s and now, like the researcher below from Beer Sheva:

“When Israel ba Aliyah had is first election success, we were very proud of this. Later a kind of disillusionment arose. Of course, there have been some successes in the beginning (...) but many things were also promised by IBA, and they failed to realize them. For instance, the housing for many elderly Russian immigrants. (...) There is a real gap.”

Others expressed skepticism and distrust, sometimes in very cynical comments.

“One thing I’m certain of is that seven families, especially the families of those Russian Knesset members / deputies, which were elected – they got a good employment. About the others, and what they did – I’m not sure...”
(Junior Scientist at Tel Aviv University)

“So you can write I hate them, they are stupid. I don’t vote for them, never. I told my parents if you are going to vote for them, you are just throwing your vote away. Maybe they have some special Russian ideas, some Russian specifics – but this is Israel, and it’s not compatible. And I am not willing to vote for people only because they were KGB prisoners – like Sharansky. They have to make a good policy as well, but I don’t see this.”

(Student at the Hebrew University)

“You mean Lieberman’s and Sharansky’s parties? I don’t like either of them. I think maybe they love the country too much. They are, in my opinion, too nationalist, and I don’t like that. You don’t have to be like that.”

(Young student from Ashdod)

On the other hand, some of the interview partners have been major proponents of the Russian parties, referring to significant achievements for the RSJ immigrants (such as, for example, bringing the immigrants scientists into the scholarship programs Giladi, Shapiro and Cameya), or emphasizing new challenges.

“Of course, the establishment of the Russian parties has meant progress for the immigrants. In my situation I had received excellent support from the Russian parties at some difficult moments. As I said, I got concrete help from some Israeli academics, but from some Russian politicians as well.”

(Jewgenij Kamenetskii, Ben Gurion University)

“All scientific successes for the immigrants, all the successful adoption of immigrant scientists was based on the work of the Russian parties. That’s a fact. I know how it was done. (...) Recent programs for immigrant scientists and the financing were guaranteed by the Russian parties. (...) I am not very happy with the existence of ethnic-orientated parties. But for the situation of the immigrant scientists during the nineties it was very important and helpful to be backed by the Russian politicians. (...) *I think this is also the difference between Jewish immigration here and in Germany.*”

(Senior researcher, Tel Aviv University)

Finally, some immigrants made clear that the period of pure “Russian (ethnic) politics” in Israel would be over. Thus, TV commentator Michael Djaghinov, stated:

“I would like to avoid simple conclusions but, for example, Israel ba-Aliyah which no longer exists, used to be an almost totally Russian-oriented party. The case of “Israel Beitenu”, to my mind, is a bit different. Its chairman, Avigdor Liberman, unlike the founder of Israel ba-Aliyah, Nathan Sharansky, grew up in this country, absorbed its political culture and aspires to become a national leader. For this reason in his party’s platform the national agenda prevails over the narrow Russian community interest. That’s why so many native Israelis vote for him.”

Most of the interviewees were convinced that more and more problems and topics in Israeli society need a joint approach. In the interviews we discussed such themes as the occupational situation of immigrant scientists, the necessity of school reforms and promotion of talent, ethical questions in media reporting, identity problems of Russian non-Jewish adolescents, ecological problems in the country, the war on terror, Israel's relations to the European Union and the chances and risks of multi-cultural societies.

Some of the respondents had to deal with the mentioned issues and problems by their own professional activities, while others had started individual activity through political sensitizing. In this, totally controversially political meanings and activities also became apparent. Thus, Professor Miron Amusia, who worked as physicist at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, had become very active in cross-border publishing of information on Palestinian/Arab terrorism. Amusia explained his politicization during the Second Intifada and his subsequent self-imposed demand to inform the world on forms of Palestinian terror:

“I participated in a couple of meetings with Baruch Kimmerling, Shlomo Avineri, Yuli Tamir. They are leftist university professors, and I asked them always the same question but one of key importance: ‘How can you be sure that in case of Israel's territorial retreat to the 1967 borders, peace, calm and prosperity for both sides will come to this region?’ And my conclusion from all these debates was definite: they don't have any answer or argument for this. I was also surprised by the desire of the leftists to blame the so-called settlers. (...) I feel the pain of the losses, and I am trying to find ways out of this crisis, but, first of all, I try to inform as many people as I can about the real situation here in Israel. This is very important since the world mass media are so anti-Israeli biased. I use every available means and opportunity: public lectures, interviews by the radio here, in Russia, USA, interviews and articles in newspapers in these countries.”³⁹³

Almost at the same time, another prominent RSJ respondent had decided to become a member of the left-wing *Meretz* party, mainly due to total discontent with the policy of the Sharon government during the peak of the Second Intifada. Biochemist Alla Shainskaya from the Weizman Institute of Science in Rehovot joined the Meretz party, and had been elected as a board member of “B'Tselem”, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories.³⁹⁴ She is also a

³⁹³ Interview with Miron Amusia at the Hebrew University Jerusalem on March 9, 2003.

³⁹⁴ <http://www.btselem.org/english> (access on April 19, 2010)

member of the public board of the Geneva Accord initiative.³⁹⁵ In the summer of 2007, she participated in a multilateral peace conference in Florence (including Palestinians) and even met King Abdullah II. of Jordan.

Alla Shainskaya drew almost diametrically opposed political conclusions from the Second Intifada³⁹⁶, compared to those of Professor Miron Amusia, and she justified her political commitment with the aim “to take them [the RSJ immigrants, OG] away from the extremists.” In a similar manner to Miron Amusia, Alla Shainskaya intensified cooperation with several kinds of RSJ media and explained: “I try to push a Peace camp and human rights organizations to work with and within the Russian immigrant community. I try to penetrate Russian language media (...) to talk to the Russians to provide them with different and of course leftist opinions too, to provide them with the alternative information to digest, to think, to reject or to accept”.³⁹⁷

Obviously, Alla Shainskaya is striving to counterattack political reports and comments of the established and highly-consumed RSJ media, which are, in her eyes, reporting in a manner “from right wing to extremists, nearly fascist”. However, Shainskaya did *not* confirm the widespread opinion (even among scholars) that a clear majority of the RSJ immigrants in Israel would be generally right-wing orientated. With regard to a poll conducted by Dr. Mina Tzemah from the *Dahaf*

³⁹⁵ The Geneva Initiative came up soon after the breakdown of official Palestinian-Israeli peace negotiations in early 2001. A group of former negotiators and public figures from both sides drafted a model of peace agreement to show that there remained wide support among both Israelis and Palestinians for a solution based on two states for two peoples. Finally, the 40-page initiative was signed by a non-official group of Palestinians and Israelis in 2003 that included former Israeli generals, former Palestinian prisoners and former Cabinet ministers from both sides. It builds on previous formal negotiations and reflects what most who have been involved in the Middle East peace process know to be the inevitable contours of a peace deal - including an independent Palestinian State almost within the borders of 1967 (i.e. in the West Bank and in Gaza). The Geneva Initiative had no direct impact on the official Palestinian or Israeli politics, though it still works as a kind of recommendation for those political forces on both sides which are ready for deep mutual compromises.

³⁹⁶ As an activist of “B’Tselem” Alla Shainskaya has visited from 2003 (regularly) several checkpoints (“Mahsoms”) at the border to the territories (West Bank) and described her experiences: “I was shocked how badly we are treating the inhabitants of the Shtachim (occupied territories) there. And at some point I understood how damaging the *wall* is – how injuring human rights, but also hampering a future peace with the Palestinians (Interview with Alla Shainskaya in Tel Aviv on June 15, 2007)

³⁹⁷ Interview with Alla Shainskaya in Tel Aviv on June 15, 2007

Institute, she explained: “25 percent of the Russian Jews are distinctly right-wing oriented, and 15 percent distinctly left-wing. However, 50 percent are in the middle, and that’s the group I try to work with. In general, Russian Jews are flexible in politics. They don’t care for the settlements, and they are not interested in religion. The only things they constantly care for is the social and economical perspective, and – naturally not to disconnect from it – the possibilities of peace.”³⁹⁸

A more-or-less pragmatic assessment of the political attitudes and behaviors of the Russian Jews in Israel was also found in other interviews with representatives of the RSJ élites. Leon Litinetsky, who works in a key position for the national trade union (coming from the Histadrut branch of “Israel Electric/Chevrat Chaschmal”) and who has been temporarily a member of Knesset for the Avoda (Labor Party), especially focuses on the continuing significantly lower income for Russian immigrants in the free market economy of Israel and took up this uncomfortable situation – 20 years after the beginning of the Great Aliyah – as an indicator for a general alarming trend of increasing social gaps in the Israeli society. Litinetsky commented:

“The situation of the Russian Jews has not improved very much during the past 17 years. The overwhelming majority of the Russian Jewish immigrants are still working in the private sector, which is characterized by so much social injustice. The average Israeli family today does not receive the benefits it needs, as 25% of the household income annually. This is the money which should allow an average family to pay for a good education for the children and for the parents as well. (...) When I realized these great cleavages between state based and private economy in Israel, one day I decided to stop my social political career and to engage straight in politics. One of my primary aims is that people who work in the private sector get possibilities to make individual progress, to secure good education for the children and the whole family, and that people should have the possibility to go to work and to enjoy it.”³⁹⁹

In the same context, Litinetsky referred to a general favor/readiness of most of the RSJ immigrants to adopt or re-install social safeguarding measures that had been highly popular in the USSR. He referred to a public poll of 2006, presented by the Russian TV “Channel 9”, which brought out “that 78% of the Russian immigrants in Israel would appreciate the same working conditions as experienced in the state-

³⁹⁸ Interview with Alla Shainskaya in Tel Aviv on June 15, 2007.

³⁹⁹ Interview with Leon Litinetsky in Tel Aviv on March 13, 2008.

regulated economy of the Former Soviet Union.”⁴⁰⁰ Leon Litinetsky showed a certain understanding for these fundamental wishes of the immigrants and proclaimed two priorities of his own work as a politician (and trade unionist): “The first aim is to use political power in order to improve social issues. And the second aim is to make Russian-speaking immigrants into a real part of the Israeli establishment, which is no less important.”⁴⁰¹ Litinetsky also did not skimp on criticism on Russian “ethnic policy” which has been, in his eyes, a real mistake of the last 15 years:

“I’m quite familiar with the people who established the first [successful] Russian party in Israel, which was Israel ba Aliyah. I don’t want to depreciate some merits of the Russian parties in Israel, but the *ethnic character* of those parties made it finally impossible to strengthen the Russian community. On the contrary: it brought the community to an even greater distance from Israeli society. The Israeli establishment did not really consider the Russian parties as partners, there wasn’t a constructive dialogue. And I think Israel ba Aliyah had its own responsibilities for this unsatisfying situation. The party declared it was to serve for ethnic interests, and today we know that this was not enough and rather counterproductive.”⁴⁰²

Some other interviewees, like “22”-editor Alexander Voronel, are less concerned with daily politics, but focus on the general problem of lacking elites. Voronel examined – from his point of view - a dilemma of disintegrating Israeli society already in the 1990’s and stated: “A society finds itself in danger (...) when [losing] altogether the notion of what constitutes worthy behavior. Thus it is held together by a spiritually and intellectually strong aristocratic minority. Unfortunately, I do not see in Israel today the presence of a strong group that is certain of the rightness of its cause and that can set high standards of conduct for the people. Once upon a time the Chalutzim (pioneers) were such a group. After the Six Day War, Gush emunim settlers claimed this role. *Perhaps the Russian Jews are destined to become such a leading group in the near future. They have many of the prerequisites for this.*”⁴⁰³

Such a concept of aristocratic and functional elite at the same time – already

⁴⁰⁰ Interview with Leon Litinetsky, Tel Aviv, March 13, 2008.

⁴⁰¹ Interview with Leon Litinetsky, Tel Aviv, March 13, 2008.

⁴⁰² Interview with Leon Litinetsky, Tel Aviv, March 13, 2008.

⁴⁰³ Alexander Voronel in: Epstein/Ro’i/Ritterband (1997), p. 429. Emphasis O.G.

visible in the thought of thinkers like *Karl Mannheim* (1935)⁴⁰⁴ und nowadays Lowell Field and John Higley (1983)⁴⁰⁵ is not only seen as pragmatic answer for a (multicultural) society in danger of drifting apart, but also as a kind of philosophical answer to a general cultural and strategic crisis of the West. In this context, Alexander Voronel, outlined the, in his views, particular Russian (Jewish) qualities to answer the crisis:

“Development is central for them [the Russian Jews, O.G.], technical development, and they also believe in social progress. And here we have again clear contrasts to the elites in Europe. On the ‘Old Continent’ a part of the intellectuals are not sure whether development and progress make sense anymore. Maybe it sounds very pragmatic, but *for Israel progress is a must*. There is no way out. And the Russians understand this.”⁴⁰⁶

Political scientist Ze’ev Khanin shares Voronel’s view on Western cultural pessimism, and in a similar way he sees the Israeli society, as a certain part of the Western World, affected by this pessimism, which is, according to Khanin, very much connected with the ways of post-modern thinking. In contrast to this, Russian Jews are, in Khanin’s view, still oriented at modern thoughts and mentality – and thus are rightly demanding in socio-cultural and finally also in political decision-making:

“The Israeli society is post-industrial and post-modern, Russian Aliyah is still industrial and modern. I mean, they are still consciously oriented at industrial and modern values, and this, of course, includes the belief in technical progress. And the Russian Jews still believe in the positive development of society. (...) Western societies don’t believe in the fact that tomorrow will be better than today. And all in all, during the last decades Israeli society has adopted very much from this cultural pessimism in Germany, Italy, France, the United Kingdom and the United States. They don’t believe in progress, but Russians do. And this is the background of the Russian intelligentsia’s demand for playing a more active role in the [Israeli] decision-making process, in formulating the national agenda, and in national politics.”⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰⁴ Hungarian sociologist Karl Mannheim (1893-1947) suggested that the political course of a society cannot be formed by arithmetic means of opinion but has to be the fruit of theoretical debates for the right direction. Such a concept has to integrate the relative right elements of competing theories, what is only possible for small elites. Compare: Mannheim (1935/1967:96)

⁴⁰⁵ About the theoretical ideas of Field and Higley and their pleading for more radius of action for elites, see: Hartmann (2004), p. 68-70.

⁴⁰⁶ Interview with Prof. Alexander Voronel, March 17, 2008, Tel Aviv University.

⁴⁰⁷ Interview with Dr. Vladimir Zeev Khanin, Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya, March 16, 2008.

In the same context, not a few of the RSJ intellectuals in Israel consider a strong consciousness of a Jewish nation and the concept of a “new Zionism” as appropriate means for strengthening the society. In contrast to the post-Zionists, Russian Jewish intellectuals, publicists and even politicians strongly oppose the idea of an unreflected multicultural society, considering such a concept as fitting for some Western democracies, but as a fundamental risk for the State of Israel. In this respect, Professor Miron Amusia blames the Israeli left-wing intellectuals in general for being too closely orientated to Western democracies, at the same time losing their own bonds to Judaism:

“For the loss of Jewishness you cannot blame the immigrants. It is the guilt of the leftist intellectuals in Israel. For them it became more important to belong to the entire world than to be Jews. They feel a sort of a shame that Israel is not like a sort of Holland. (...) In my opinion the *loss of Jewishness* is a real problem now.”⁴⁰⁸

For some of the RSJ intellectuals, reviving Jewish tradition and nation is also inevitably bound with land and territory, and they draw parallels to *Russian* national history. It seems not coincidental that in his considerations for a common denominator for Israeli society, for example, Alexander Voronel refers to the national thoughts of the famous Russian writer (and former dissident) Alexander Solzhenytsin, who in his late years had become an adherent of the “back-to-the-soil” tradition in Russia, embodied already in the 19th century by writers like Fyodor Dostoevsky. Solzhenytsin’s recourse to the old-age Russian nation, based on homeland, religion, common values and history is – in the eyes of Alexander Voronel – quite worthy of being discussed as a model for the *Jewish* nation as well.⁴⁰⁹ Other RSJ scholars deduce and construe Jewish requirements to the whole territory of Israel and Palestine not only by ancient traditions but also by means of modern historiography and by negation of the existence of the Palestinian people *as a nation*.⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁸ Interview with Miron Amusia at the Hebrew University on March 9, 2003. Emphasis O.G.

⁴⁰⁹ Alexander Voronel, *V plenu svobody* (The Prisoner of Freedom). Moscow/Jerusalem. Nevo Art, 1998. Cited in: Dimitry Shumsky, *Ethnicity and Citizenship in the Perception of Russian Israelis*. In: Levy/Weiss (2002), p. 163ff.

⁴¹⁰ Russian Jewish historian Valery Smolensky deals intensively with the question of a “Palestine nation” or “Palestine people” and comes to the conclusion that there is no basis for this concept from an historical point of view. Smolensky has developed a theory about “a systematic conquest” of Eretz Israel by Arab migrants from the neighboring countries, which gradually took place during the years 1882-1914, i.e. paralleling the early Zionist Alijot. See in this context: Shumsky (2002), p.171.

However, the Jewish national ambitions and thoughts nowadays expressed in the ideas and publications of RSJ intellectuals in Israel are to be distinguished from daily politics and some remarkable trends among the Russian Jews opposing any territorial compromises with the Palestinians or any other Arab neighbors (like the Syrians) without getting a substantial return offer. Most of the interview partners tried to explain the widespread RSJ favor for such positions by general fears for the small Israeli territory - in compare to the extremely wide former “motherland” Russia -, by former Soviet socialization to solving many problems by using force, by disappointments regarding a possible peace that came with the Second Intifada (2000-2004) and imparted the feeling of living in a constant state of war, finally by a certain rethinking that “the longer they live in Israel the more they get convinced that the Judeo-Christian world outlook and ethics simply do not work in the Middle East.”⁴¹¹

As described, political opinions on how to solve the prolonged conflicts with the Palestinians and some of the Arab neighbour states are quite different among the Russian Jews in Israel. Though, many concur in the rejection of post-Zionism and in the strong emphasis of the Jewish character of the State of Israel. However, assessments on the general Russian Jewish political attitudes, ideas and strategies do very much vary, and there are serious doubts whether the Russian Jewish political elites are generally enabled to mobilize the “Russian street” when it comes to burning political issues. *Remennick* (2007) concludes from her own studies that the political outlook of most Russian Israelis would be characterized with “three antis”: anti-Socialist, anti-religious and anti-Arab/Moslem.⁴¹² *Khanin* (2008) offered an almost diametrical perspective in the expert interview:

“Three prejudices exist about the political attitudes of the Russian Jews in Israel. The first prejudice is that of the ‘Homo sovieticus’, the second is that they would vote always *against* the government, regardless which party is leading the country. That is also totally wrong. The Russian Jews always vote *for* something, and not against any party. And the third prejudice is that they are extremely right-wing orientated – and this is also wrong. Most of the voters prefer a moderate political behavior.”⁴¹³

⁴¹¹ Interview with TV commentator Mikhail Djaghinov in Jerusalem, March 12, 2008.

⁴¹² Remennick (2007), p.127. In the same context, Remennick concluded: “Most of them [the RSJ immigrants, OG] agree on these three negative tenets, while their positive political beliefs may broadly vary, including a large portion of those with no clear political outlook at all.”

⁴¹³ Interview with Zeev Khanin, Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya, March 16th 2008.

Khanin's view on the Russian immigrants in Israel as more center-oriented, pragmatic, concurs in this point very much with the above-quoted left-wing activist Alla Shainskaya. And as the Russian-speaking immigrant community consists very much of sub-groups, marked by different geographic origin in the USSR and rooted in different cultural and religious/non-religious patterns, it seems quite natural that different political outlooks and interests also crystallize inside the RS group in Israel.

But things become even more complex when taking into consideration that about 30% of the immigrants from the FSU are not Jewish according to the Halacha. Most of these immigrants are either spouses of Halachic Jews or could prove Jewish origin by the patrilineal line or at least by one Jewish grandparent. Major political trends/attitudes among this specific subgroup are not easy to explore, and first studies present a rather inhomogeneous picture. Several researchers see a general trend among non-Jewish Russians to identify themselves as “Jewish”, or at least as Israelis. On the other hand, there are also sharp criticisms of insufficient loyalty expressed by veterans, and even by some of the *Jewish* FSU immigrants who consider a part of the non-Jewish newcomers as showing separatist attitudes. Thus, a young scientist in Jerusalem, who had come with her mother from Donezk in 1991, angrily stated:

“Israel is primarily a Jewish country now, and it can lose its Jewish character by such composition in permanent immigration waves. (...) I’m not requiring new conditions for Aliyah. But if you want to go to a Jewish country, and you want to live there, in Jewish status – this is the main purpose of Israeli immigration policy. If somebody comes here, takes all the support, all the grants, all the solidarity – and afterwards is telling: ‘Very fine, but I am a Christian.’ – Then I am really thinking: What is this person doing here? (...) You can go to the United States, to Canada, Germany (...) But if you come here, you have to understand the this is a special Jewish matter, a Jewish state, a Jewish country. And I cannot understand when people come here, declaring partly Jewish origins, using all the Aliyah and integration help, and afterwards build up a church or stick together in a separated kind of community.”⁴¹⁴

In fact, several political groups and parties have appeared on the scene since the beginning of the 21st Century that distinctly present Russian *non-Jewish* interests, i.e. focus on problems and wishes of immigrants who do not feel a part of the Israeli-Jewish society, are facing bigger social and economical problems than average.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹⁴ Interview with young scientist (formerly Ukraine) in Jerusalem on March 18, 2003.

⁴¹⁵ See: David Bartram, Non-Jewish Immigration to Israel. Online-paper: http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/1/0/4/1/9/pages104190/p104190-1.php (access on April 11th 2010)

Thus, a broader socio-political movement (or even protest movement) based on the nearly 300,000 non-Jewish immigrants from the FSU is quite conceivable, but not (yet) really in sight. None of the previous “Russian-ethnic” lists or parties has been able to overcome the electoral threshold for the Knesset, and no charismatic leaders have appeared.

Some political groups have rather damaged the picture of the non-Jewish RSJ immigrants in the Israeli public by gesturing Russian nationalist, anti-Zionist and sometimes even anti-Semitic attitudes. A dubious example in this context is the “Slavic Union”, headed by Aleksei Korobov. On the one hand, the “Slavic Union” demands that the Russian language in Israel should be granted an official status and that the Israeli state should give support for special schools with Russian language, literature and history curricula – aims that could even be formulated by circles of the RSJ intelligentsia. On the other hand, leaders of the “Slavic Union” not only oppose the Jewish character of the State of Israel, but openly supported Palestinian Arabs in their fight against Israel during the Second Intifada, called on ethnic Russians not to serve in the Israeli army, and urged them to vote for Chadash, the Arab Communist party, in the Knesset elections.⁴¹⁶ Moreover, during the Second Intifada, a delegation of the “Slavic Union” visited Arafat in Ramallah, where Aleksei Korobov expressed the “Slavic Union's” support for “the struggle of the Palestinian Arabs with Zionist aggressors” and proclaimed that his organization aimed to create “one state for two nations”.⁴¹⁷

It goes without doubt that such policies only strengthen those political groups inside the Israeli host society which anyhow have exacerbated the discussion on a change of the “Law of Return”, wishing to exclude immigrants who are not Jewish according to the Halacha. The thrust comes mainly from representatives of the religious establishment, who see a threat for the Jewish character of Israeli society, and from some Sephardic politicians, whose clients are partly competing with the Russian communities for financial and economic resources. Currently having no real chance for realization, these attempts to change the “Law of Return” might gain more attention in future, taking into consideration that an increasing number of FSU immigrants' family members are not Jewish according to the Halacha.

⁴¹⁶ See: Khanin (2005), p.18.

⁴¹⁷ Natasha Mozgovaia, „Mi Russia im ahzava“ (From Russia with Disappointment). In: Yediot Achronot – Saturday Supplement, February 14, 2002, pp. 22-23. Cited from: Khanin (2005), p.18.

A related discussion appeared in Germany in 2004/2005, when the Central Council of Jews in Germany suggested to limit the immigration to Halachic Jews.⁴¹⁸ Finally this suggestion was not directly adopted in the new regulations, passed by the German government in 2005. However, the new regulations are so tied that it became extremely difficult for a non-Halachic Jewish applicant to get permission for permanent stay in Germany.

While the discussion on future criteria for Russian Jewish immigration to both countries went on, RSJ immigrants in both countries started to intervene in politics and “community politics” and the discussion about civil-religious rights in Israel and about JC membership legitimacy in Germany continued, the RSJ immigrants generally faced strong difficulties to enter elite strata. Only a small percentage of them really moved up to the established host élites. Mark Galesnik, editor-in-chief of the Russian political satire magazine “Beseder?” calls the disparity between the RSJ professional competencies and their small share in the national top elites a “glass roof phenomenon”. In this context Galesnik said:

“The Russian community in Israel now comprises about 20 percent of the total population. But only 1 percent of this 20 percent reached any kind of key position in Israeli society and became part of the élites. I wouldn't say that this is a specific problem of the Russian Aliyah, it's a general immigrant's problem. The host population is – in most cases – not ready to share privileges and high positions. But the outcome is that many Russian Jews in Israel are not equipped with the positions and challenges they are normally qualified for.”⁴¹⁹

Rabbi Gregory Kotler from Kfar Saba sees it even more critical, when stating:

“Russian voices are crucial at the Knesset elections, and they have created their own political parties. But the other spheres of power in the society are the army, academicians, business, judiciary, and media. And in these mentioned spheres there are – until today – almost no Russians. There might be some exceptions in the academic landscape. But these are outstanding professionals in certain fields, like professors of math or physics, but not from the humanities and from the social sciences. There is a considerable Russian language media scene. However, their influence hardly reaches beyond the community. All in all, the impacts of power, and the potential to change things via the Russian side, is still very limited. And the situation is aggravated by the fact that the Israeli establishment considers us [the RSJ immigrants] as a special segment of society, not more.”⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁸ This suggestion was sharply opposed by the liberal roof organization “Union of Progressive Jews” (UPJ), the World Congress of Russian Speaking Jews (office Berlin) and by the Berlin based Jewish Cultural Association (“Jüdischer Kulturverein”). See: Jüdische Korrespondenz, April 2005, p.2.

⁴¹⁹ Interview with Mark Galesnik in Jerusalem on August 29, 2008.

⁴²⁰ Interview with Rabbi Gregory Kotler in Jerusalem on March 16, 2008.

RSJ intellectuals - or, as still called by some immigrants: the “intelligentsia” – are admired but also considered as a group with limited influence. Thus, political analyst Roman Polonsky critically commented the idea of a future Russian aristocracy in Israel:

“Before you can build such a ‘roof’, you have to be very much inside the Israeli society. You have to find partners in decision making, for promoting processes and the like. I don’t see Russian elites, intellectuals, politicians already so close to the heart of the Israeli society. And one thing more is for sure: Whoever launches a discourse on new elites and concepts for Israeli society – they have to do it exclusively in Hebrew, and have to be integrated to a maximal degree.”⁴²¹

Former Knesset member Gennady Riger took the issue more from the general point of elites and said:

“There are Russian elites in several parts of Israeli society, in the arts, economy, and science. But other population groups have their specialties, too. That’s natural. Elites and leadership groups must develop from the bottom, and it never comes from the top.”⁴²²

In summary, despite all existing difficulties, three different trends can be outlined how RSJ elites affect current Israeli society - and this possibly to an increasing extent in the course of time:

a) In contrast to some other studies, my own findings show a very strong political interest *and* a strong political involvement. The political opinions as well as the forms of political activity among the RSJ immigrants differ in many cases and finally yield a panorama of divergence, more or less similar to the Israeli political landscape. The question of usefulness or necessity of “Russian” ethnic politics, i.e. in the shape of own political parties, was highly controversially discussed, thus no

⁴²¹ Interview with Roman Polonsky in Jerusalem on August 28th, 2008. A few even denied the existence of something comparable to the original Russian 'intelligentsija', as it had appeared in Russian history. TV journalist Mikhail Djaghinov stated: “I think that the Russian intelligentsia in the original, historical meaning of this notion, that is a group of intellectuals and patriots with a strongly-marked anxiety about the future destiny of their motherland and compatriots, has perished. It was totally destroyed by the communists. Those who are erroneously called ‘intelligentsia’ nowadays are no more than representatives of the professions or occupations characteristic of former intelligentsia.” (Interview with Michael Djaghinov in Jerusalem on March 12, 2009)

⁴²² Interview with Gennady Riger in Tel Aviv on August 26, 2008.

generalization is possible. However, a majority of my respondents seemed to agree that the Russian parties made a lot of sense in the 1990's when crucial integration problems of the RSJ immigrants were still unsolved or even ignored. The younger interviewees in my sample showed significantly more distance, sometimes distrust or even aversion towards the Russian parties and practically found no arguments as to why one should vote for them. Conservative attitudes among the middle-aged and the elderly generation, obviously resulting from their negative experiences with Communism and Socialism in the FSU, have at least not been opposed by the younger generation. Concerning strategies, *how to reach political aims*, different approaches have also appeared. Some of my respondents very much supported strategies of going the way of power, i.e. by putting through group issues via high level politicians or political parties, whether the latter have a Russian tinge or not. Others showed sympathy for grass roots movements and/or volunteered in several NGOs and help organizations.

b) A significant part of the Russian Jewish elites in Israel answers some of the currently “burning” social and national problems with their own theories and concepts, carried by RSJ intellectuals, media and (Russian) politics in common. One of the most striking issues in this context is the concept of a Neo-Zionism that suggests equality between Jewish State and Diaspora. Another issue is the projection of elements of Russian national historiography on the “Jewish-Israeli frame”, which implies a strong affirmation of the Jewish character of the State of Israel in the long run. This concept is definitely incompatible with concepts of post-Zionism. However, the strong Jewish nationalism implied is open for secular as for religious.

c) Just like the role of Russian political parties, so also the role of Russian intellectual elites and/or a specific Russian intelligentsia in Israel is very controversially discussed. Some of the interviewees draw a clear line between professional elites and intellectuals/intelligentsia. Others denied a specific “Russian intelligentsia” in Israel in general, but a few of the interviewees imputed to the “Russian intelligentsia” an overall societal role in Israeli society substantially contributing to more national coherence. Immigrants who shared the latter view saw Russian Jewish elites at the moment under-represented in the national élites, but do

consider this disproportion just as a matter of time. The writer Yakov Schechter from Tel Aviv got to the heart of it when stating: “True, they [the Russian Jewish elites] are under-represented [in the Israeli establishment], compared to their contribution, but that will change with time. We should keep in mind that most Israel’s ruling elite (...) are children of immigrants from Russia.”⁴²³

2. *RSJ impulses on German society*

Considering that the RSJ immigrants of the 1990's have increased the Israeli population by about 18%, but the German population only by about 0,25%, it is very clear that their social, cultural, economical and – more than ever – political impacts on the German host society are much smaller. But despite their thin presence in overall society and unfavorable conditions to commit in party politics⁴²⁴, Russian Jews in Germany appear anything but socially inactive. In general, the respondents expressed a relatively strong trust in the German socio-political system. Some interview partners simply expressed their appreciation for individuals’ personal safety in their new country and for the freedom to act. Thus, one young publisher who had formerly run a business in Ukraine admitted about his new life in Germany:

“I had a publishing house [in Ukraine] and we were politically committed, but even this caused problems. But I also had the wish to live a normal life, where you can assert yourself in business without corruption and permanent pressure (...) And of course you can improve your own professional perspectives when you go to Germany.”⁴²⁵

Some RSJ immigrants in Germany have become members of mainstream parties in Germany (even if still waiting for German citizenship) or are committed in multicultural organizations connected to the respective host municipalities. Threats of anti-Semitism were realized and not downplayed, but in general perceived as part of the general problem of right-wing extremism, and thus consequently viewed as a problem of the *whole* of German society.

⁴²³ Interview with Yakov Schechter, Tel Aviv, on April 22, 2009 (by Email).

⁴²⁴ The unfavorable conditions for Russian Jews in Germany to start active politics from scratch – as for example the long duration before getting German citizenship – have already been mentioned in chapter 2.

⁴²⁵ Interview with young Ukrainian publisher in Berlin, February 17, 2003.

For example, a RSJ medical doctor in a town near Dresden stated:

“In general I feel quite safe here. Of course, there are skinheads and anti-Semites, but that’s a problem the major population has to deal with as well. Insofar we share the problem with most of the natives.”⁴²⁶

In some towns the fight against right-wing extremism and anti-Semitism brought local Jewish communities, immigrants, local (non-Jewish) actions groups and local representatives from Christian churches close together. Sometimes there are even additional fields of cooperation between the (Russian-dominated) Jewish communities and local Christian communities; for example, in Hameln (Lower Saxony) and Chemnitz (Saxony). During the 1990's Christian churches were providing room for regular events (even for Jewish services) when the (new) Jewish communities were (still) lacking enough capacity. Some of the Russian Jewish immigrants, indeed, see the contacts to the established local churches as a chance for deeper anchoring in the local environment. Thus Inna Luchanskaya, a RSJ member of the Jewish community in Chemnitz who worked as medical doctor in Ukraine for 40 years and established the Bikur Cholim group in the local JC, said:

“We should also aim for close contact with the churches here, and the Protestant church in this town is also interested in such contacts. Yes, this is part of the process to make inroads into this country. I mean, this doesn’t change anything about the fact that we are Jews, and that we feel as Jews, and that we learn the Torah. All this is important, and that’s the way I understand my life now as a Jew.”⁴²⁷

Joint projects are often based on the work of the local “Societies of Christian-Jewish Cooperation” or of the “German-Israeli Associations” (where Russian Jews are engaged, for example, when they have close relatives in the Jewish State and where local Christians show intensive interest in the developments in Israel). Irritations emerge only at places where, additionally to these organizations, Christian-Jewish missionary groups also start to operate.⁴²⁸

Conflict potential can arise inside the wider RSJ community in Germany when confronted with the present interior and foreign policies of the C.I.S. states,

⁴²⁶ Interview with RSJ medical doctor in a medium-sized town near Dresden on May 25, 2008.

⁴²⁷ Interview with Inna Louchanskaya in Chemnitz, May 26, 2008.

⁴²⁸ See: Toby Axelrod, Missionaries Set Messianic Sights on Russian Jews in Germany. In: Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA) News, Dec. 28, 2006.

mainly with Russian politics. Some of my interview partners in both countries, but especially former dissidents, strongly criticized human rights violations and undemocratic structures in contemporary Russia. Boris Schapiro, a former Soviet dissident living in Berlin, compared the current situation in Russia and Germany: “A certain safety for the individual is a given in Germany which is *not* a given in the Former Soviet Union, until now.”⁴²⁹ Such positions are in line with human rights activists in Germany and Europe criticizing Russia’s government treatment of political opponents (like Garry Kasparow or the imprisoned Mikhail Chodorkovsky), attempts to enforce conformity in the media sector and attempts to repress movements of political independence by strong use of military power (as in the case of Chechnya and South Ossetia).

However, politically, socially or even culturally active Russian Jews in Germany do not necessarily identify *as Jews*, except then they distinctly want to express it. This was the case, for example, when the political scientist Sergey Lagodinsky and some comrades founded in 2007 a “Task force of Jewish Social Democrats” in the German (mainstream) party “SPD”. Main targets of the Task Force are “preoccupation with historical remembrance, integration, fight against anti-Semitism and racism.” In the field of foreign policy, the Task Force is going to focus on “the situation in the Near East, transatlantic relations and the contact to Israeli ‘Sister Parties’”.⁴³⁰ As protagonists in established political parties, of course, there is wider opportunity to insist on general immigration problems as on Jewish immigrant’s problems as well, such as the difficult social situation of retired RSJ immigrants.⁴³¹

Other RSJ immigrants are very active in political grassroots movements. Thus, one interview partner from Odessa, working as a free journalist and historian

⁴²⁹ Interview with Boris Shapiro on July 28, 2008 in Berlin.

⁴³⁰ For the Self introduction of the Task Force “Jewish Social Democrats” in the SPD see: www.j-sozis.spd.de/akj/ueberuns/index.html (access on August 14, 2009). The aforementioned Sergey Lagodinsky is the speaker of the Forum.

⁴³¹ Lagodinsky justified his discomfort with the problematic situation of elderly RSJ immigrants in Germany: “Many Russian Jews came here to Germany with high qualification and a high work ethic, but never got a chance to enter the labor market - because of their age. And now they are retirees without any pension. This will become a burning problem in the coming years, because there is a real threat of social decline for many of the older immigrants. The problem has, until now, not been noticed in the public. And that will be one issue I am intending to work on, and to look for possibilities to solve or to water down the problem.” (Interview with Sergey Lagodinsky in Berlin on January 8, 2008).

in Germany, was also active in several associations who cared for former Soviet slave laborer and war veterans (in Germany *and* in Ukraine), and additionally committed to an organization that brings together Germans and people from the whole C.I.S.⁴³²

For the German population away from metropolitan centers and Russian (Jewish) neighborhoods, however, it could still create unease to note Russian Jewish impacts on the host society. Those RSJ immigrants who probably reach the still widest popularity belong to the arts, and here especially the musicians and writers. One of the outstanding musicians who fascinates a Jewish and non-Jewish audience in the same way is former Ukrainian actor and pop singer Mark Aizikovitsch. Aizikovitsch emigrated to Germany in 1990 and soon came into contact with German Klezmer musicians. He then specialized in Klezmer Music, Yiddish songs but also gained fame in a small theater in the center of Berlin (the “Hackesche Hoftheater”). Later, Mark Aizikovitsch celebrated huge success as a singer of Yiddish, Hebrew and Russian songs, not only in Germany but also overseas. Intermediately he was also committed to the Jewish community of Berlin.

Without a doubt, Aizikovitsch did a lot to bring Yiddish culture and Klezmer music closer to a German audience that had had only sporadic touch to this field of arts for decades. In a short film, produced in the early 1990's for educational institutions in Germany, Aizikovitsch spoke about his feelings as Jewish migrant in Germany:

“In the Soviet Union, I always felt that I am a Jew. I won’t forget it that I am a Jew, but in the attitudes of the people [in Germany] I do not feel it. I cannot say that for me, as a Jew, any [extra] doors are opened. I am an equal human being, like every Polish, German, Turk, Arab (...) I do not yet feel I belong to the German culture. I am seeking asylum. Or let’s say, I am a foreigner (...) I am trying to integrate myself into this culture, but of course without losing myself. I am not ready to disown my mentality (...) I think the Jewish culture will affect the German, they will come to a certain unity each other. And that’s what was could be seen today on the stage.”⁴³³

Aside from some outstanding Jewish musicians and actors, the most conspicuous RSJ group in Germany are writers. Two of them have just outstanding success in the

⁴³² Interview with Dmitri Stratievski in Potsdam on February 11, 2003.

⁴³³ Media Centre Osnabrück, Pedagogical Material, Video 064, “Am I a stranger?”, Shortfilm, 1992/1996. See also: <http://www.medienzentrum-osnabrueck.de/mzo/begleitmaterial/42/4253064.pdf>

German speaking readership: Moscow-born writer Wladimir Kaminer, who lives and works in Berlin, and Leningrad-born Lena Gorelik, living and working in Munich.

Wladimir Kaminer emigrated to Germany in the summer of 1990, quickly became popular among young German readers since publishing his celebrated short-story-book “Russendisko”. In the 1990's he had become famous for introducing a discothèque of the same name in the middle of Berlin, together with the musician Yuri Gurzhy. In recent years Kaminer has published a dozen popular short-story books, often describing weaknesses and strengths of Russian and German society but also reflecting multi-cultural encounters in an ironic and humorous way. In general he is not providing the readership with Jewish issues⁴³⁴, which is very much the case in the short novels of the young author Lena Gorelik. In two of her novels (“My White Nights” and “Wedding in Jerusalem”) Gorelik sets out a panorama of Soviet Jewish family narrative, integration experiences as a child and adolescent in Germany and rambling between the cultures, experiences with Israel included. She directs a lot of questions to herself, to the Jewish community and to the general (German) surroundings. Gorelik is also keenly observant of her new country, and she comes out with unconventional suggestions to change migration politics:

“The first thing I would do is to establish a ministry for all issues of integration, but I would *not* call it ministry of immigration or the like. I would prefer to call it “Ministry of Diversity” or something like this. And I wouldn't like to focus explicitly on Russian Jews, I would focus on immigrants in general. That is one of the main challenges that Germany faces today. It's very important to turn the public opinion, to help veterans to understand: 'People are coming here with special skills and interesting cultures', and not to say: 'Problems are coming.' In other countries, like Canada, you can see the opposite. Integration becomes successful because the veteran population shows a kind of positive curiosity. I have lived there [in Canada] for a while, and I had the impression, that having different cultural backgrounds rather lead to mutual interest than to segregation.”⁴³⁵

⁴³⁴ Bodemann and Bagno (2008:166ff.) undertook an attempt to analyse Jewish identity issues and general Jewish topics in the short stories of Wladimir Kaminer. By text analysis the scholars conclude: “Signals of K as the Jewish Other appear like brief flashes here and there, and indicate their underground existence. It is as if Kaminer wanted to let his readers faintly know that he is Jewish, but that for him Jewishness does not count, and that really all ethnic identities are fleeting, easily removable labels. What appears as a disabling of the Jewish theme, its depoliticization, makes it also unthreatening and in the end allows the German reader to follow this harmless stranger – Germans can be grateful both *for* K's Jewishness and for discounting the relevance of his Jewishness at the same time. It is easier to live with this kind of Jew.”

⁴³⁵ Interview with writer Lena Gorelik (Munich) on February 10, 2009 (by phone).

Artists like Mark Aizikovitsch and Lena Gorelik impersonate former immigrants inviting German audience in their world as immigrants but also clearly affirming the ideas of multi-cultural society. Aizikovitsch expects that (new) Jewish culture will affect German (host) culture, while Gorelik would dislike a special integration policy for Russian Jews, but wants to “focus on immigrants in general”. It is very likely that especially Russian Jewish artists in Germany, indeed, will contribute a lot to the development of the multi-cultural palette. Though, compared with the elitist impacts in Israel, RSJ elites’ impacts on German society *as a whole* have remained rather small.

3. Disappointments and conflicts

In stark contrast to this, RSJ immigrants’ demographic impacts on Jewish community life in Germany are all in all tremendous, but at the same time these are the places where different cultural ideas and concepts of community building clash most intensively. The problem exists in similar ways in Germany and in the United States. Veteran Jews perceive the newcomers as different from what they see as traditional Jewry. Gold (2005) quoted a frustrated American Rabbi concluding that the Russian newcomers are not interested in religion: “One of the disappointments many Rabbis experienced was that the majority of Soviet Jews did not feel a necessity to express their Jewishness. We should have understood this, because they come from a secular atheist country. It was hard to accept this.”⁴³⁶

Aside from the reproach of being not interested in the Jewish religion, Russian Jews are confronted with the rebuke of showing only a weak commitment in community issues, if any at all. The main reproach by veteran Jews in the United States, in Germany or even in Israel, however, is that a majority of the Russian Jews would not find their way back to their (Jewish) roots in the sense of the host JCs. Depending on general attitudes towards the immigrants and the specific local situations, reactions sway between understanding that other integration problems are more relevant *for the time being* (for example, finding an appropriate job, finding the right school for their children) and surprise and dismay about “secularism”.

Körber (2005) concludes from a local study in an East German Jewish

⁴³⁶ Gold (2005), p. 340.

community, totally consisting of Russian Jews, that rigid internal conflicts are also caused by the fact that immigrants' former status differences disappear while new ones emerge. At the same time she spots front lines between Russian Jews *inside* a local Jewish community and Russian Jews who organize themselves in other forms *outside*. In this context Körber (2005) writes: "The [new] Jewish community was granted a symbolic power; the other Russian Jewish immigrant groups [in town] have nothing comparable. The [RSJ] community agents tried to preserve this imbalance of power in local conflicts, stigmatizing other groups (...) While emphasizing their social superiority as carriers of Jewish tradition and religion, members of other associations were challenged as to their ethnic and cultural belonging to the Jewish minority."⁴³⁷

It has to be noted that this is not only the exclusive view of established, native Jews, who are irritated by cultural or mental differences and related interest conflicts. The critical perspective on heavy power struggles is also shared by some of the RSJ insiders. Thus, former chief physician and psychotherapist from Moscow, Igor Ladyshenski, made a lot of noise in an interview with the "Evreyskaya Gazeta" (in May 2004) drawing a line from the unsolved integration problems of many RSJ immigrants in the German society on one side and their fighting patterns inside Jewish community's on the other. Ladyshenski tried to explain a part of the power fights for Jewish community leadership by the frequently-appearing type of 'troublemaker' and stated: "Very often rational behavior is replaced by irrational behavior (...) Humiliated people join the 'troublemaker' (...) Further complaints grow like a carcinoma."⁴³⁸ Asked by the interviewer whether the appearance of the (post-Soviet) 'troublemaker' might be a logical consequence of former socialization in the FSU, Ladyshenski replied very pictorially: "Our people are like fishes that learned to survive in a turbid stretch of water."⁴³⁹

Ella Gurzhy, an RSJ immigrant from the 1990's and now a social worker in Potsdam, tries to explain the "fight club phenomenon" especially among the RJS *men* with an unfavorable conjunction of long-term unemployment and attempts of psychological compensation. Competition becomes a kind of vicarious satisfaction, and since male immigrants feel more loss of status, the more they engage in

⁴³⁷ Körber (2005), p.171.

⁴³⁸ Igor Ladyshenski in an interview with the "Evreyskaya Gazeta" in May 2004.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

conflicts. Thus, Ella Gurzhy commented:

“And then they [the unemployed RJS men] sit at home, without work, without any task – and step by step they get mad. And I think there is a context with the situation in the Jewish community [in Potsdam], how it is like now – the older men are seriously quarreling with each other. Then they feel significantly better – they have a job. They fight, and they have found it useful to have the fight. It is just a compensation for reality – because there isn’t a real reason to fight.”⁴⁴⁰

Aside a generally increased number of conflicts, the deeper fears of the native community members, numerically already in the minority in many localities, obviously run in two directions: one is the anxiety that the local Jewish communities could, in the long run, be turned into purely “Russian cultural clubs”⁴⁴¹, and the second is the fear that “post-Soviet attitudes” could become prevailing patterns for community building. In context of the latter fears the case of Berlin especially has been subject to heated discussion, on the one hand in the non-Jewish media, but also in inner-Jewish circles and even in sociological articles. *Bodemann and Bagno* (2008) even worry about further splits and fluctuations when writing: “The recent putsch-like transfer of power in the Berlin community⁴⁴² is only a case in point, *and Jewish intellectuals will be ever more remote from the Gemeinden* [communities]. The cultural gap is too great to overcome.” *Kessler* (2008) who worked as social worker in the United Jewish Community of Berlin throughout the 1990’s indicates a “presence of specific Soviet-influenced attitudes” what she calls the “Homo Sovieticus”. According to her, “this attitude can be characterized by dependence on authority, denial of responsibility, separation of person and society, general indifference to public affairs and reliance to informal networks. While not every

⁴⁴⁰ Interview with Ella Gurzhy in Potsdam on Sept. 24, 2003.

⁴⁴¹ Others do not share these anxieties and argue the RSJ newcomers' predominant preference for Russian culture and the arts would remain a phenomenon of the first generation. The former community board member of the JC Berlin, Boris Schapiro, rather denied a possible turn into Russian clubs: “No, I don’t think so. It’s already unthinkable because the second generation [of the immigrants] is already much less anchored in the Russian culture and language.” (Interview with Dr. Boris Schapiro in Berlin on July 16, 2008).

⁴⁴² *Bodemann and Bagno* (2008), p. 164. The authors obviously allude to shambles inside the JC Berlin in late 2005. At this point of time a dirty campaign against the community chair Albert Meyer, a German born Jew, considerably contributed to his resignation from the post. The accusations against Meyer, among others “abuse of authority”, were mainly brought forward by Russian Jews. Later on, all investigations against Meyer were abandoned. In the spring of 2007, Meyer announced the foundation of a new Jewish Community in Berlin (which ultimately did not happen) and justified such a plan by saying: “Pseudo-Bolschewiki try to make a Russian Cultural Association out of the old community.” See: *Der Stern*, April 14, 2007.

immigrant behaves according to this typology, there's considerable evidence that having lived in such a society [FSU] has long-term effects on an individual's character and attitude.”⁴⁴³ Kessler furthermore states that “a quasi-socialist system has been established, complete with rituals of submission, official statements, one-year-plans and censorship”, and she concludes: “Insignificant as all this may sound, it does give an idea of today's atmosphere.”⁴⁴⁴

From interviews with veteran members of the Jewish community in Berlin, US-American scholar *Jeffrey Peck* (2006) concluded that “the Russians’ attitudes toward the Germans can indeed often be aggressive, either in words, deeds, or just attitudes.” Peck furthermore concludes that “many educated Russian Jews disdain ‘high’ German culture and regard the classical Russian tradition on a par or even better.”⁴⁴⁵

However, it has to be noted that *Körber* (2005), *Kessler* (2008), *Peck* (2006) and others described conflicts and disruptions based on certain local conditions and constellations that can hardly be generalized for the overall situation in Germany. Less than ever, the media presents a whole panorama. For example, it is obvious that RSJ immigrants are significantly less quoted in reports and coverage.⁴⁴⁶ As many of the Jewish community leaders, at least in larger towns and JCs, still stem from the group of the veteran Jews, their statements about smoldering conflicts are usually not “pro-Russian”.

However, the expected trend as happened in Berlin that veteran protagonists distance themselves to the Jewish community because of, in their eyes, fierce conflict situations, has also reverse constellations. Russian Jewish immigrants leave local JCs for not having found the appropriate place - and then join new, independent projects. A young RSJ immigrant manager from Minsk, now very active member in the Chabad Center of Berlin, expressed sharp criticism at the local Jewish community she had joined in southern Germany after her arrival in the early 1990’s. This community numbers a few thousand members but did not succeed to build up vital structures until today.

⁴⁴³ Kessler (2008), p.137. Concerning the discussions around the term and phenomenon of “Homo Sovieticus” see: Oswald (2000).

⁴⁴⁴ *ibid.*

⁴⁴⁵ Jeff Peck, *Being Jewish in the New Germany* (2006), p.49.

⁴⁴⁶ Garbolevsky//von Mering/Glöckner (2006), p.110.

The young manager from Minsk lamented in the interview:

“When I came in the community of [...] I got a real shock. There is almost nothing that could be called a vital Jewish life. There [...] have been a lot of chances during the last years, but until now there’s almost nothing: No infrastructure, no Jewish school, no kindergarten, nothing. The young people are marrying non-Jews, for me a sign that the community has no real coherence. Some of the immigrants have even ended up in drug addiction and died! I am talking about Jewish immigrants, about Jewish people!”⁴⁴⁷

In some JCs in Germany, the different visions as to what is possible under the roof of a Jewish community and what is not, have become a subject of sober discussion, with consequences regarding the inner structure(s) of these communities. Thus, Arkady Litvan, a board member of the United Community in Hanover, himself an immigrant from the Ukraine, explained his perspective:

“Of course we have a structure of associations and interest groups here. However, they have often undergone a certain mutation – depending on the interests and contents targeted by these groups. Just like the scientists, the athletes, the literature experts and the poets – also of these we have a circle here in our house. And there are dancing groups, and leisure-time-programs for children – all this is here. And this meets the minds and well-being of our members, it’s absolutely acceptable, and it has its place here. But then there comes a crucial question: What [in the JC] remains unchanged, what will be of constant interest? The synagogue! People who are regularly using our religious events – that is our real clientele. It is nice to have such a colored spectrum of clubs and associations here. But I want to emphasize once more: The community is not a club. We are a religious community, and the synagogue will remain the center.”⁴⁴⁸

Arkady Litvan reported that a “Club of Scientists” was also active in the JC, but later decided to move out from the community and to look for its own place. A comparable case was reported from the Jewish community in Bremen, where initially an “Association of Russian Culture” was hosted, run by a former RSJ professor. According to the leader of the JC Bremen, Elvira Noa, both sides – the Russian Cultural Association and the community leadership – finally agreed that it was better to work in a parallel structure, still with opportunities to cooperate. Direct competition between Russian intellectual (or scientific) clubs and Russian cultural

⁴⁴⁷ Interview with young RSJ woman (formerly living in Minsk) in Berlin, May 6, 2009.

⁴⁴⁸ Interview with Arkady Litvan, board member of the United Community in Hanover, Nov. 30, 2003.

centers and the local Jewish communities was, however, virulently denied by most of the interview partners.⁴⁴⁹

Arkady Litvan belongs to those RSJ immigrants of the 1990's who disprove the stereotype of the secular or passive, purely pragmatic newcomers. Born in 1946 in Odessa, he worked as a professional engraver in his home but decided even in the late 1970's to study in a yeshiva in Moscow. When Litvan settled with his family to Germany in 1990 - the graves of his parents were situated in West Berlin -, he brought along 10 years of having been the head of the Jewish community in Odessa (1980-1990). Like many of the *religious* oriented immigrants, Litvan counts himself rather to Orthodox Judaism. Since many years working as a member of the JC board of the United Community in Hanover, he is obviously not suffering from an inferiority complex vis-à-vis the veteran members of the JC. In the interview he frankly described his perspective on veteran-immigrants-relations:

“Culturally there are some difficulties, of course. Particularly with the German Jews, and that's probably not something Jewish, but a general German phenomenon: they're constantly scared of being overpowered. The Russians don't want to dominate or suppress anyone, but the Germans, and not just the Jews, it's a German phenomenon in my view: They are always a little afraid of being taken over. And that's why they're so careful. But otherwise, the main thing is that there are no reasons for it.”⁴⁵⁰

In fact, during the 1990's there have been comparable cultural fights between Russian Jewish emigrés and Israeli host society on the one hand and between Jewish Community veterans and RSJ newcomers in Germany as well. Ben Rafael (1998) had referred to the central meaning of language attitudes in the RSJ cultural self-assertion and re-orientation, and Remennick (2007) had figured out certain attempts by the Israeli state and society to “win the war” over language superiority also against the Great Russian Aliyah. Conversely, neither in Israel nor in the German Jewish Communities could certain very self-confident attempts by the immigrants to win equal status for their language of origin be ignored. Already in 1998 the Russian Jewish Knesset deputy Sopher Landver demanded the recognition of Russian as the third official state language in Israel, along with Hebrew and Arabic. Sopher Landver argued that the Russian language was a world language that all Israelis should

⁴⁴⁹ Ben Rafael et al. (2006), p. 101.

⁴⁵⁰ Interview with Arkady Litvan, board member of the United Community in Hanover, Nov. 30, 2003.

learn.⁴⁵¹ In not a few of the local Jewish communities in Germany dissensions emerged about which language should be the community journals published in, and in some communities the newcomers openly demanded a Russian speaking Rabbi.⁴⁵² In communities which have a relative large membership, such conflicts are relatively easy to solve by printing bilingual JC magazines, and the introduction of Russian speaking events and service institutions has by all means enlarged the attractiveness of the respective JCs for the newcomers. It is not an exception when the RSJ medical doctor and psychotherapist Igor Ladyshenksi declared in the interview: “My mother tongue is the Russian language. I am proud that I have the Russian culture inside me, but I am also proud that I know the German culture very well – and sometimes better than Germans.”⁴⁵³

On the other hand, Russian Jews can get really indignant when their willingness and also their – in fact, existing - competency of acquiring German culture is contested by veteran Jews and non-Jews. Thus, the above mentioned political scientist Sergey Lagodinsky, who is also an elected member in the Representative Assembly of the Jewish Community in Berlin, uttered in the expert interview:

“I feel angry when a German Professor claims that ‘the Russian Jews came to Germany with Puschkin, Dostojewski and Lermontow, but do not know Heine, Goethe and Schiller.’ It’s sheer nonsense. Of course the Russian Jews have read Heine, Goethe and Schiller. The only difference: They have read them in Russian. I for myself, have read ‘Faust’ for the first time in the translation by Boris Pasternak!”⁴⁵⁴

Lagodinsky also sharply attacked a commentator of the prominent “Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung” (“FAZ”), who declared in November 2006 as “one of the greatest challenges of the Jewish communities in Germany” making “*real Jews*” out of Russian Jews. Lagodinsky replied in “Tachles”, a Jewish weekly magazine in Switzerland, with biting irony: “In my own naivety I was searching for myself. However, a glance into my daily newspaper would have been enough (...) Since than I live as an *unreal Jew* in Germany.”⁴⁵⁵ Lagodinsky then took the

⁴⁵¹ Ma’ariv / HaGalil online, Dec. 8, 1998.

⁴⁵² It is exactly this demand among the RSJ immigrants that has motivated especially guest Rabbis of Chabad Lubavitch and of the Lauder Foundation to learn and/or improve their Russian language knowledge, thus remarkably improving their chances to find an approach to the RSJ community.

⁴⁵³ Interview with Igor Ladyshenksi in Berlin on May 27, 2008.

⁴⁵⁴ Interview with Sergey Lagodinsky in Berlin on January 8, 2008.

⁴⁵⁵ Sergey Lagodinsky, “Unechte Juden, echte Probleme.” In: *Tachles*, February 2nd, 2007.

opportunity to describe the actual discourse dilemma in Germany: “Of course he [the FAZ journalist, O.G.] had the very common picture of the ‘Germans Jew’ in his mind: They [the RSJ immigrants] should be (...) most of all [religious] believers. “ Against this background, the author demands: “The common denominator for accepted ethnicity as well as for intellectual religiosity is the same: A respectful treatment of Jewish immigrants from both sides: from the native Jews as well as from the German host society.”⁴⁵⁶

It is obvious that especially those Russian Jews in Israel and Germany who enjoyed success in the new environment and already proved their substantial contribution for the respective host society are willing to be accepted at eye-level, and refuse any attempts to be manipulated from outside, might this touch their religiosity, political attitudes or cultural patterns. RSJ representatives are convinced of the positive impacts they set in the respective host societies, and they expect approval. That’s why Lagodinsky did not accept the depreciating comment in the “FAZ”, and that’s why former “22”-editor Nudelman explicitly appeals to the Israeli establishment not to force the immigrants to assimilation, but just to “let Israel accommodate to them”. Nudelman sets out a panorama of unique Russian Jewish resources and contributions, offered to Israeli society by the Aliyah of the 1990's:

“The doctor who is dissatisfied with the Israeli public health service; the engineer who persists not for the sake of tenure but for that of conscience; the political activist calling himself ‘a Russian poet’; the activist from Gush Emunim who works out a plan for a Russian town in Shomron; the scientist creating an industrial moshav ‘outside the Israeli structure’; the musician, stubbornly cultivating the tolerance of the Israeli establishment for Organ ('Christian'!) music; the teacher, artist, journalist, architect bringing their own particular attitude toward their work, their demands, their criteria and values.”⁴⁵⁷

From such a general feeling of possessing unique valuable resources and competencies, RSJ immigrants define their relations vis-à-vis host society and vis à vis other ethnic or cultural minorities. RSJ elites do also refuse a devaluation of Soviet Jewry as “purely ethnic”. Others explicitly refer to inner-Russian Jewish pride. *Markowitz* (1993) describes as principal items of former Russian Jewish identity in circles of RSJ intelligentsia the “quality of education, type of

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁷ Epstein/Kheimets (2000a), p. 470.

employment, cultural orientation and consumption and a critical stand towards the regime and its institutional structure.”⁴⁵⁸ Moreover, for some of the RSJ immigrants, Russian cultural values and traditions and Jewish values and traditions are quite congruent. Thus, the questions arises how RSJ immigrant integrate their host culture into their new self-image. In the questionnaire-based in-depth and expert interviews, they were asked to describe their identity preferences by choosing one out of four terms which combined or separated identity shares as Jewish, Russian and German/Israeli. The interviewees could choose between

- a) Russian Jew in Israel/Germany
- b) Russian immigrant in Israel/Germany
- c) Jew in Israel / Germany with Russian (Ukrainian, Moldavian...) background
- d) Israeli Jew/German Jew with Russian (Ukrainian, Moldavian...) background

Answer a) gave the possibility to express a strong emphasis of Russian Jewishness in the new surrounding, answer b) gave the possibility to reduce the importance of Jewishness – or even to exclude it (important also for interviewees who had emigrated as non-Halachic Jews or as non-Jewish spouses). Answer c) gave the possibility to prefer Jewishness very much in contrast to host culture (Israeli/German) and also to the culture of origin. Finally, answer d) described a strong Jewishness combined with very successful integration into the host society.

In Israel most of the respondents described themselves either as Russian Jews in Israel (a) or as Israeli Jews with FSU background (d), in Germany the answers did *not* show significant preferences. Thus, at least for Israel, a huge number of immigrants could be calculated out who feel well integrated into the host society, but at the same time insist on a primary feeling as part of the Russian Jewish community. In this the RSJ community is not a virtual community, but has a certain shape with informal networks, ethnic markets, cultural centers such as theaters and libraries, and educational institutions.

In Germany, no significant preference for one of the four identity types appeared. Irrespective of the lack of preferences, about half of the interview partners reported having more contact with Russian speakers than with natives or clearly

⁴⁵⁸ Markowitz (1993), p. 25ff. Quoted in: Lomsky-Feder/Rapoport (2001), p.4.

preferred Russian-speaking milieus for their own social activities. In metropolitan centers with a large number of RSJ immigrants, such preferences and orientations can turn into kinds of community building as well. As already mentioned above, intersections with the general Russian-speaking world (totaling about three million people in Germany) are a logical consequence.

Interview partners who preferred to assign themselves to the categories a (Russian Jew in Israel/Germany) or b (Russian immigrant in Israel/Germany) could be expected to have still close bonds to Russian culture and language, but also those who would rather see themselves in the categories of c) or d) could keep a certain interest in their culture of origin.

Cultural hybridism might become the normal case for Russian Jews having emigrated from the FSU. It is then, of course, a question how the host society – from its cultural and artistic ideals and behavior – reacts: Is it interested in exchange, is there an interest to adopt new cultural impetus, or is there rather disinterest, cultural reluctance or even seclusion?

4. Perspectives on networking and friendship

If we consider the previous encounter of the RSJ immigrants – as a group – and the respective host societies in Israel and Germany (including encounters in the Jewish communities), it is notable that certain dissociations and avoidances have come down to the so called 1.5 generation, i.e. those young people still born in the FSU or C.I.S. but who emigrated as children or teenagers. Sociologist Marina Niznick, who did a case study with 120 young immigrants in the ages 13-16 in the greater Tel Aviv area (*Niznick 2003*), relativized the integration success of these youngsters in a very stable area even economically and wrote: “The fact that about a half of them believe they are different from Israeli-born adolescents and prefer to be surrounded by 'Russians' proves that full integration still has a long way to go.”⁴⁵⁹ In contrast, several of the younger interview partners in Israel emphasized that army service and first university experiences had helped them to get more intensive encounters with native contemporaries and then to get deeper into Israeli society.

Marina Cornea-Drabkina, youth center leader in the Jewish community of

⁴⁵⁹ Niznick (2003), p. 255.

Bremen (Northwest Germany), reported about “her” fosterlings in the interview:

“Most of them are among the best and fittest pupils in their school classes. But if you start longer talks with them, they start to explain that they build real friendships rather in the circle of their co-ethnics, or just among immigrant’s children in general. (...) Here in Bremen we have also [ethnic] Russians, Turks and other minorities. By the way, also the kids and adolescents from other immigrant groups tend to build friendships primarily among foreigners.”⁴⁶⁰

Despite the fact that young RSJ immigrants in both countries are much more involved in host networks (such as peer groups, school classes, and student groups) than their parents and grandparents, overcome the language barrier within 1-2 years and have a much wider range of educational and professional opportunities, a tendency to prefer their own networks and peer groups seems to continue. What makes Russian Jews (still) different from the Israeli and German hosts, beyond cultural, lingual, partly also social and political differences in the first and obviously also second generation? Peer groups and close networks might be based, in many cases, on individual sympathies and mutual interests, but also on personal friendships and particularly reliable relations. Concerning human interaction, *Fialkova and Yelenevskaya* (2007) emphasize that “deep friendship is of great importance in the Russian hierarchy of values and is reflected in Russian literature and language.”⁴⁶¹ Mental differences, as a serious factor hampering close friendships between “veterans” and “newcomers” shouldn’t be underestimated. Some of my interview partners – in different age groups – emphasized that they feel a remarkable difference in what they understand as “real friendship”, compared with their acquaintances or colleagues on the Israeli side. Thus, TV journalist Michail Djaghinov from Jerusalem said:

“I grew up in an environment where spiritual values prevailed over the material ones. In Israel the situation is much different and I regret it. People here are extremely pragmatic. They value their time too much to waste it on intimate talks which are so common and sometimes necessary for the Russians. There is a deep cultural gap between the two cultures and we have to learn to live with it.”⁴⁶²

⁴⁶⁰ Interview with Marina Cornea-Drabkina in Bremen, Oct.16, 2003.

⁴⁶¹ “Various researchers have noted that intensive interpersonal bonds were part and parcel of Russian culture in pre-Soviet times, to a large extent due to the oppressive atmosphere in Czarist Russia. (...) The most important aspect of friendship is reliability, and the Russian saying *drug poznaetsia v bede* (the equivalent of the proverb ‘A friend in need is a friend indeed’) is often quoted in everyday speech.” Quoted by: Fialkova and Yelenevskaya (2007), p.99. Emphasis O.G.

⁴⁶² Interview with Mikhail Djaghinov in Jerusalem, March 12, 2008.

Igor Sankin, a 26 year-old sociology student at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, who came with his RSJ immigrant family 13 years before, noted:

“Most of my friends are Russians. I also have Israeli friends, but I think we are contacting each other more on the basis of our aims. Our aim to get the degree, to finish the university; so we help each other in a pragmatic way. We are called friends, but we are just sympathizers. (...) I wouldn’t call that friends, it’s different to some of the close Russian friends I have.”⁴⁶³

Aba Taratuta, a retired aerospace engineer and former Soviet dissident from Leningrad, living in Haifa since 1988, stated:

“If you mean real personal friendship – then it’s different among Russians and Israelis. One of the indicators for me is, if people invite me to their birthday party (at home). I got invitations from some colleagues, who are from the United States, but not from Israelis (...) I think the native-born Israelis’ style and understanding of friendship is different from ours. It’s not their fault or our fault. It’s just a difference in mentality.”⁴⁶⁴

A middle-aged Ukrainian engineer woman who lives in Haifa with her family for 12 years concluded quite succinctly:

“I don’t need dozens of people for doing ‘so –so’. But we have a lot of acquaintances, of course, and these on both sides (Israelis and Russians). But real friends – in the deeper meaning – we have only among the Russians.”⁴⁶⁵

Fialkova and Yelenevskaya (2007) presented similar quotes from RSJ immigrants in Israel, referring to “real friendships” only with RSJ co-ethnics, while, nevertheless, keeping good relations to host Israelis as acquaintances, and justifying this difference in terms of quite distinct mentalities. Fialkova and Yelenevskaya quote a *young* woman from the immigrants group who states:

“Well, my friends, say, *yedidim* (...) I cannot say that they are friends, rather they are acquaintances. Yes, I feel good, at ease and comfortable with them. But there are some themes which I never discuss with them (...) For example, I would never talk about the meaning of life with Israelis.”⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶³ Interview with sociology student Igor Sankin in Jerusalem, Sept. 8, 2003.

⁴⁶⁴ Interview with Aba Taratuta in Haifa, March 11, 2003.

⁴⁶⁵ Interview with 46 years old female engineer in Haifa, March 11, 2003.

⁴⁶⁶ Fialkova/Yelenevskaya (2007), p.112f.

Surprisingly, most of my interview partners in Germany did *not* confirm similar problems when trying to build up friendships in the new surroundings. Not a few of them reported having close German friends at work or in private, others regretted a lack of friendships to people from the host population, but saw the main reason for this not in cultural differences but in language barriers. A female musicologist in her mid-thirties, very active in the Jewish community of Bremen, stated: “In general, we have enough contacts here, but I rather perceive them as shallow. However, this doesn't make me unhappy.”⁴⁶⁷

A young painter from former Azerbaijan, now living and working in Munich, simply and ironically reversed the often-stated Russian wish for more private communication into its opposite and said: “The fact that the people in the West are a bit more aloof in daily contacts and relations, I sense it as something releasing.”⁴⁶⁸

Others enjoyed friendship with host Germans very much, such as Evgeniy Potievsky, a graphic designer from Kiev, now living in Chemnitz (southeast Germany):

“Actually I've never felt considerable differences in daily culture. Of course, the German and the Ukrainian language are very distinct, and also a few traditions, but already concerning human characters, you can find so many things in common (...) A German graphic designer and I became very good friends already ten years ago. At the beginning, verbal communication was almost impossible. However, it worked very well via gestures and facial expression, eye contact and the like. Anyway, we were able to communicate and became friends.”⁴⁶⁹

Young RSJ writer Lena Gorelik stated:

“Neither I nor my Russian friends here in Germany have the feeling: 'Oh, I am missing more Russian friends, they are much more enabled to understand my nature and soul' [than native Germans would do]. Even with my Russian friends I communicate in German, and we share similar experiences and world views as our German friends, and there is no difference in creating friendships. I think this is more a problem of the elderly and the median age generation, or – in a wider sense – of all those immigrants who don't feel their German is good enough to share and express their feelings and world views in the host language.

Of course, in such a case you cannot start a profound communication with veterans, and it can easily happen that you feel misunderstood. But that's, in general, not the problem of my generation.”⁴⁷⁰

⁴⁶⁷ Interview with RSJ musicologist in Bremen, May 12, 2003.

⁴⁶⁸ Interview with young painter from Azerbaijan in Munich on August 8, 2008.

⁴⁶⁹ Interview with Evgeniy Potievsky in Chemnitz on May 24, 2008.

⁴⁷⁰ Interview with Lena Gorelik (Munich) on February 10, 2009 (by phone).

5. Persistence of stereotypes

It remains, however, the question to what extent general prejudices and media clichés may still hinder closer interpersonal relations between native-borns and Russian Jews in both countries. Several studies in Israel and Germany noted similar kinds of stereotypes against the “Russians”. General stereotypes about “Russians” circling in the German population – i.e. actually independent from Russian-*Jewish* issues - are connected with robustness in economical issues, a liability to luxurious life style (if economically successful) and very self-indulgent consumption attitudes.⁴⁷¹

Becker (2001) suggested that negative stereotypes about the Russian Jews would be transported by German media straight to the host population. In her well-regarded qualitative study, *Becker* (2001) figured out typical stereotypes like “commuter existence”, “free riders” and “Soviet functionary” – according to her even produced by mainstream print media.⁴⁷² *Becker* assumes that the immigrants themselves, when in contact with German institutions (i.e., logically with natives) and then necessarily confronted with such media-produced stereotypes will be influenced in their own self-image and identity.⁴⁷³ Her conclusion that immigrants' identity and self-image is unfavorably influenced by German media seems to be questionable for good reasons⁴⁷⁴, but a closer convergency of host Germans and Russian Jews might be entirely inhibited. Some leading figures of the RSJ community harshly criticize that negative attributions continue, while the immigrants almost never have opportunities to defend themselves in the relevant media. Thus, a

⁴⁷¹ Compare: Tsypylma Darieva in: L. Remennick (ed., 2007b). The negative triangular image of the Russian-speaking immigrants in the Israeli Hebrew press as “non-Jewish” – “criminals” – “prostitutes” has already been mentioned above (Elias and Bernstein 2007).

⁴⁷² *Becker* (2001), p. 80. In fact, “mainstream” coverage of the Russian Jewish immigration has often alternated between euphoric reports on the growth of organized Jewish life in Germany – visible, for example, in the construction of new synagogues or the opening of new Jewish community centers – and a disproportionately large interest in scandals and conflicts. See for example the following articles: “Misused as Service Center”. In: *Focus*, June 22nd 1998; “Difficult Area of Investigation”. In: *Der Spiegel*, 13/1999; “Jewish Community before split”. In: *Stern*, April 14th 2007.

⁴⁷³ *Becker* (2001), p. 29: “On other hand, the migrants are forced to grapple with media based pictures (...) the dominating discourses [on Russian Jews in Germany, O.G.] become an integral part of the biographical relocation of the Russian Jewish immigrants.”

⁴⁷⁴ Firstly, previous studies on the image of Russian Jews in German media have shown that articles, reports, comments on this immigrant group are very low in number – at least compared with such reports in Israel (Ben Rafael et al. 2006). Secondly, contacts between German natives and Russian Jews in Germany are not very frequent, thus making it quite unlikely that negative stereotypes cause practical consequences. Thirdly, RSJ immigrants in Germany are enthusiastic consumers of *Russian-language* media, which might serve as capable means to correct negative stereotypes and even to strengthen pride on distinct own qualities.

female RSJ artist in Berlin, active in the local Jewish community stated in this context:

“Some clichés and stereotypes make me really angry. At the beginning [of the 1990’s] all the time the topic of the ‘Russian Mafia’ circulated. Now the media like to impart other negative attributes, and in this context they even quote well-established German Jews. In these reports and quotes the Russian Jews appear as paupers, incapable [to live their lives in Germany], not sufficient in German language and so on (...) Sometimes I have the feeling that German media really enjoy to report on conflicts and trouble inside the Jewish communities.”⁴⁷⁵

Conversely, Schoeps et al. (1996) determined that Russian Jews in Germany consider the host population as rather weak in their social competencies⁴⁷⁶ but admire their technical and professional abilities. Vice versa, there is no empirical data on what specific feature the general German or Israeli host population would assign to the Russian Jews.

Nevertheless, some scholars in Israel and Germany have tried to outline a typical profile of the RSJ immigrants in terms of their attitudes and activeness as a group. *Al-Haj* (2004) refers to surveys in Israel which would allegedly reveal that Russian Jews in Israel have a distinctly lower sense of freedom in expressing themselves among fellow workers, around their boss (at work) and in public places.⁴⁷⁷ *Kessler* (1999) referred to a very low readiness for volunteering in the JC of Berlin⁴⁷⁸.

⁴⁷⁵ Interview with female RSJ artist in Berlin on April 26, 2007.

⁴⁷⁶ In the relevant study, Russian Jewish respondents gave relative high scores for superficiality, inflexibility, arrogance and xenophobia among Germans, but at the same time admired German qualities like cooperativeness, diligence and tidiness. See: Schoeps et al. (1996), p.76.

⁴⁷⁷ *Al-Haj* (2004), p.124. It has to be noted that the *Al Haj* (2004) himself acknowledges that the younger generation of FSU immigrant feels “more freedom of expression” and that the sense of freedom of expression positively correlates with the command of Hebrew and the duration of stay in Israel. Hence, it can be concluded that the lack of sense of freedom of expression is a temporary phenomenon mainly concerning the older generation of FSU immigrants.

⁴⁷⁸ *Kessler* (1999), p.156. A rather opposite assessment was provided by Katharina Seidler, Head of the Federation of JCs of the Union of Progressive Jews in the German district of Lower Saxony. With regard to the Liberal Jewish Community of Hanover, Seidler stated: “There is reciprocity, a kind of give and take, and I think this makes a certain difference between the liberal JCs and those of the Central Council. The JCs of the Central Council firstly try to provide a lot of offers, and hope that finally the people will come. I wouldn’t support such a strategy. I think it’s important to activate the newcomers from the very beginning, they shall bring in their skills and ideas as soon as possible.” (Interview with Katharina Seidler in Hanover on October 31st, 2003).

Remennick (2007) describes certain techniques in manipulating the welfare system at least in Germany, then concluding that the Russian Jews would

“try to get all possible benefits from the German welfare bureaucracy, showing great savvy in navigating the system, manipulating their case workers, withholding information on their additional income (e.g. Soviet pensions) – in brief, making good use of their skills acquired under state socialism and still handy under German social democracy. When they meet with refusals and the emerging limitations in the system of free handouts, they deploy their most powerful weapon – sweeping accusations of anti-Semitism, a harsh blow for politicians and officials at all levels and a stigma for most native Germans that immediately puts them in a defensive mode and often leads to concessions.”⁴⁷⁹

A certain kind of rudeness is reported from Russian Jews in the United States when it came to attempts to reach professional success.⁴⁸⁰ Irrespective of the fact that the presented features have remained, for the time being, as highly hypothetical and would demand age-specific differentiation and systematic comparison with certain control groups, it is absolutely possible that parts of the host population in Israel and Germany have internalized a picture from the RSJ immigrants’ group that presents them as less communicative, more self-centered than group-centered and extremely assertive – features that would indicate a lack of “sense of community”, or – in more western terms – a lower sense or desire to invest in civil society.

Aside from the problem that the Russian Jewish immigrants are seldom perceived as a heterogeneous group that includes Halachic and non-Halachic Jews, people of very different geographic origin and therefore of very different cultural background and also people of quite different secular or religious attitudes, it is, of course, a crucial point whether those Russian Jews who consciously joined the Jewish communities show characteristics that might seem incompatible to previous community principles and ideas of conceptual work. One striking bone of contention might remain the secularism.

⁴⁷⁹ Remennick (2007), p. 336 and p. 361.

⁴⁸⁰ Ben Rafael et al. (2006) quote Alexander Etman, the editor-in-chief of Chicago’s Russian language newspaper *Svet* who says regarding Russian immigrants: “They feel that after living in the Soviet Union, they have it coming, so they are aggressive and have no regrets. Usually this is healthy aggression – when people use socially approved ways. But sometimes it is not healthy, when individuals are not ethical and cheat [the system]. See: Ben Rafael et al. (2006), p.81. It should be noted here that Etman speaks about the *whole* group of Russian immigrants having come to Chicago since 1989.

6. *Secularism and Religious Return*

All previous studies in this respect - whether from the early 1990's or from the early 2000's – suggest that a significant majority of Russian Jews in Israel and Germany prefer distinct “secular” or “atheist” worldviews, and this in all relevant age groups. This might have no relevance in daily life encounters and daily life situations but can certainly affect host-veteran relations when there is encounter in (originally-)religious institutions or frameworks. Prevailing secularism does not hinder the immigrants from joining synagogue communities for other reasons. As the Berlin editor-in-chief of the “*Evreyskaya Gazeta*” Michail Goldberg concludes from many of his readers that there is interest in the Jewish religion and tradition, and this interest *might* lead to a religious practice and lifestyle in some cases, but must not. Goldberg stated:

“In principle, many ['JG' readers, O.G.] are interested in the topic of religion. But how many of them are practicing the Jewish religion – I don't know. We are not a religious paper. (...) I for myself think [that] an individual needs knowledge about his own roots. And when you are in search of your roots, of course the desire can develop, also to practice your own religion.”⁴⁸¹

While some of the RSJ immigrants rather express an intellectual interest in the Jewish religion instead of practicing it, others also like to declare religiosity in general as a private issue.⁴⁸² But some of the RSJ immigrants from the middle-aged and the older generation also expressed their regret that the political circumstances in the Former Soviet Union have taken them and their relatives from their Jewish religion and from most opportunities to learn, adopt and preserve Jewish tradition. A RSJ medical doctor in a city near Dresden (Saxony) stated:

“Yeah, the generation of my father has lost the basics [of Jewish religion and tradition, O.G.]. And me too. I cannot read the Torah. But I was happy when my son was called to the Torah (...) In the last generations we had a great loss in the Soviet Union. My father wasn't able to make a Seder on his own and me too. But I hope that my sons will be able to do it again (...) Maybe I will find an opportunity to learn Hebrew still at 50 or 60, and then to be able to read the Torah. Maybe.”⁴⁸³

⁴⁸¹ Interview with Michail Goldberg in Berlin on July 28, 2004.

⁴⁸² One of the prominent RSJ women leaders inside the Jewish community of Berlin, when asked about her relation to the Jewish religion, answered: “It is something in my soul, and my God is with me, and when I travel to Israel, of course I go to the Wailing Wall, and it has much to do with my feelings. But here [in Berlin, O.G.] I attend services only on Yom Kippur and on some other important Jewish holidays.” (Interview with RSJ woman activist in Berlin on April 26, 2007).

⁴⁸³ Interview with RSJ medical doctor in a town near Dresden on May 25, 2008.

RSJ psychiatrist Igor Ladyshenski (Berlin) referred to biographical aspects when reflecting his secularism, but at the same time talking about identity search and contacts to the Jewish community of Berlin:

“In general, all of us are atheists. We have been Jews by our passport, but we haven’t been religious Jews. We have seen our Jewish traditions the last time at the home of our grandma. *And later it was impossible for me to show myself as a religious Jew – otherwise there wouldn’t have been a chance to become a chief physician in Moscow.* And of course when we arrived in Germany, we came into a new situation. I have asked myself: ‘Am I a Jew if not a believer?’ Then these German phrases came up, like ‘Jewish ancestry’ and ‘Jewish roots’. (...) The local Jewish community, of course, takes care to impart Jewish tradition, and thank G’d, during the last 18 years we have picked up some parts of this tradition. And I enjoyed this. And the Jewish community enjoyed it as well.”⁴⁸⁴

Human rights activist Alla Shainskaya from Rechovot, also member of the left-liberal “Meretz” party - that seeks for a clear separation of the religious institutions from the state in Israel - defined her own and her friends’ attitude towards Jewish religion and tradition in the following way:

“I understand myself as a member of a lobby that wants to clip the influence of the religious establishment in Israel. Major aims for us are, for example, the installation of civil marriage and the separation of state and religious institutions. This kind of political movement is already expressed in certain secular organizations and institutions – for example the institute ‘Yahidut chilonit’ (“secular Judaism”). But that is – as a single issue and term – too narrow. We would have liked to call it ‘Pluralistic Judaism’, a platform open for a credo like: ‘The Torah is Jewish Culture.’”⁴⁸⁵

It becomes clear that not a few of the RSJ elites deplore the historical loss of Jewish traditions inside their families, due to Communist repression in Soviet times. They are happy to have new access to institutions and programs which provide Jewish culture and religion.

Though, at the same time, many insist on a self-confident secularism, and even when joining the local Jewish communities they do not feel obliged to make religious concessions – despite manifold efforts by the respective religious authorities and movements to “bring them back”.

⁴⁸⁴ Interview with Igor Ladyshenski in Berlin on May 27, 2008. Emphasis O.G.

⁴⁸⁵ Interview with Alla Shainskaya in Tel Aviv on June 15, 2007.

The statement of a retired engineer from the Ukraine, now living in Potsdam, sounded rather typical for the status quo:

“My wife and I are members of the local Jewish community. We do not often attend the community, it’s just that we pay our taxes. The community is a religious denomination, they are believers. Of course, we are Jews as well, but we think it’s useful to differentiate between a religious and a traditional Jewry. And we are not religious. (...) I also understand that there are good reasons for Jewish immigrants to be active in the community – and to take care for the Jewish belief and the Jewish tradition. *However, for me, Russian culture is more important than Jewish culture.*”⁴⁸⁶

Many of the Russian Jews do not feel a self-demand to adjust themselves to the religiosity of host Jews, yet emphasize their respect for Jewish religion, identify with their Jewish roots but give much more attention to Jewish tradition than to Jewish religion. They feel self-confident enough at least to distance themselves from ultra-orthodoxy. Thus Nikolai Epchteine, leader of the center “Kibuz” in Potsdam, when asked concerning the religiosity of the RSJ immigrants, stated:

“Admittedly, this question is difficult to answer. At first I have to admit that those immigrants among us who are, indeed, religious, are very few. (...) Religious people among our immigrants here in Potsdam are almost all in old age, except a few youngsters who have come from the Caucasus area. (...) There is a group of immigrants who approach religious Judaism again, by *learning* and *studying* Judaism. They obtain power from the Jewish education. But in general, these are modern people. And I think the interest in Liberal Judaism is here much stronger than in Jewish Orthodoxy. And if you want to hear my very individual opinion, I think it’s extremely difficult in our days to be religiously Orthodox. Especially, because we have suffered a lot under *political orthodoxy* in the Former Soviet Union (...) When I meet here the immigrants – most of them are Liberal and not Orthodox in the strict meaning of its word. Except for the Rabbi, actually I don’t know any Orthodox Jews.”⁴⁸⁷

A young painter from Azerbaijan, living and working in Munich, said:

“Jewish religion plays, in fact, a role for me. But I do not feel myself bound by traditions and rules which emerged inside the Jewish religion 2000 or 3000 years ago. However, the basics have a certain importance for me. On the other hand, I must say that Judaism is more than religion. It’s also ethnicity, it’s a national community.”⁴⁸⁸

⁴⁸⁶ Interview with retired RSJ engineer in Potsdam, February 2003. Emphasis O.G.

⁴⁸⁷ Interview with Nicolai Epchteine in Potsdam, July 20, 2004. Emphasis O.G.

⁴⁸⁸ Interview with young painter from Azerbaijan in Munich on August 7, 2008.

All interview partners quoted above gave respect to Jewish religion and tradition, some of them were registered Jewish community members, but none of them practiced an observant life style or would have been committed in *religious* activities. Many other interview partners showed similar attitudes, and in a certain way the interviews confirmed empirical findings that religion plays a very subordinate role in the immigrants' self-understanding as Jews.⁴⁸⁹

The experiences with a relative RSJ disinterest in religious issues might have disillusioned the Rabbinate in Israel and the synagogue boards in Germany, and in the latter case one carefully forebears to speak of a "religious revival" these days. On the other hand, at least in Germany, the RSJ immigrants are aware of the fact that their secularism is just mirroring general trends of secularization in the Western world, so to speak having had a tough experience of secularization already up front. This might have fostered their lack of appreciation when it comes to the propagated necessity of Giur (religious conversion) for non-Halachic Jews and their general perception that religious issues will become less important even in the programs of local synagogue communities.

Nonetheless, a minority of not more than 10% of the Russian Jews in both countries is considered to be attached and committed to Orthodox Judaism⁴⁹⁰, which is also visible in groups of young people who join religious schools and yeshivot in Israel and appear as very active people in Orthodox centers in Germany, as well. In Germany, there are considerable efforts by the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation to build up new religious schools for all age groups, and the Lauder Foundation also succeeded in building up a Rabbinical College in Berlin and a Talmud-Torah-Center in Leipzig. Already now, a considerable number of the Rabbinical students are of Eastern European origin. Parallel efforts are made by the Chabad movement.

Among the 70 interview partners, about 10 clearly identified as religious and observant, among them 6 RSJ immigrants in Israel and 4 in Germany. On the other hand, it came out that those interviewees belong to quite different age groups, had different developments toward religious return ("Chasara Be Tschuwa") and were by far not disconnected from social processes in their respective surroundings.

⁴⁸⁹ Compare: Epstein/Kheimets (2006), p.127f.

⁴⁹⁰ For Israel see: Charles Liebman (2003), p. 309. For Germany: Ben Rafael et al. (2006), p. 182. Remennick (2007:63) estimates the share of RSJ immigrants considering themselves as secular, by about 90%. The percentage of RSJ immigrants who occasionally visit synagogue services in Germany, is by far higher (Hess/Kranz 2000:159; Schoeps/Jasper/Vogt 1999:113).

Julia Konnik, a 30-year-old German philologist and teacher born in Kiev, belongs to those Russian Jews in Germany having undergone a deep process of “Chasara Be Tschuwa”. Except for a few months in a religious boarding school for girls in Israel (1990/91), she underwent her religious education and socialization mainly in Germany, after her family had settled there at the beginning of the 1990's. Konnik reported in the interview that already as a teenager she started to compare, differentiate and assess what kind of Judaism would be most authentic to her. During her student time in Heidelberg (southwest Germany) she met her future husband, and together they started to search for “the real Jewish life”. Still in South-West Germany, the couple joined a Lauder Yeshurun Community, and after moving to Berlin, the Konniks have become an active part of this community in Germany’s capital. Julia Konniks descriptions do also reflect the fast progress of communities and centers of the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation in Germany:

“My family and I, we live *in* the Jewish religion. (...) It’s a permanent process of learning; it’s strongly connected with our community here in Berlin (...) Of course, it is not easy to live a religious lifestyle, there are relapses, but in general it’s a wonderful, positive process. (...) And there are encouraging signs that especially Orthodox Judaism is attracting a growing number of young people. When we came here to the Lauder Yeshurun Community about three years ago we had been only about 10 young families. Now we are about 30. For all of us, having children is a joy and a *mizva*, and our people are marrying much younger than the average in the West and the secular immigrants. (...) It could have happened that I also assimilated, but probably I was immunized against it because of my one-year-stay as a school girl in Israel.”⁴⁹¹

Concerning the general development of the Jewish communities in Germany, Julia Konnik shares the critical view of those demographers and sociologists who predict a drastic membership decline in Germany within the next decades:

“If you look at the demographic development, then you see that this is not simply scare tactics. In the communities the number of deaths outnumber that of the births by far. It's absurd, but it’s the situation of today. It has a lot to do with overage, but also with very low birth rates – and the latter is a point which depends on ourselves. But as you know, many young families in the communities – 'Germans' and 'Russians' - don't want more than one, or maximum two children. But another problem can be added; many young people who really want to live Jewish but find no vital environment, they just go away. Today there are so many parents and elderly [in Germany] whose children have left for America, Israel, Canada and anywhere else – finding a better Jewish infrastructure there...”

⁴⁹¹ Interview with Julia Konnik in Berlin, February 12, 2009. Emphasis O.G.

However, Julia Konnik and her family are, at least for the time being, intending to stay in Berlin, very much emphasizing the Lauder Yeshurun Community as a “community which is under construction. Everybody is learning here, works on himself and herself. There is also a high motivation to integrate all the children into community life. We have great support from the Rosh ha-Yeshiva, there are seminars for women, we have a kindergarten, and since last year also a primary school with a wonderful teacher from Israel. I don't want to miss this wonderful surrounding, where everybody invests individual ideas, energies and special skills.”⁴⁹² Professor Edward Bormashenko, a physicist in his mid-40's and scholar at Ariel University Center, turned to an observant life style long before Aliyah in 1997. He reported that he was, on the one hand, already influenced by a religious friend of the family who practiced a religious Jewish life style already in the early 1970's. On the other hand he referred to the social and political developments in the crumbling Soviet Union which sensitized him for his own roots:

“In addition, I was heavily impressed by the moral degradation of Russian intellectuals in the Gorbachev epoch. Millions participated in a total robbery of the former USSR property. Moreover, the robbery was led by intellectuals. One more factor should be mentioned: It is a well-known fact that in Stalin's and Hitler's concentration camps the staunchest behavior was demonstrated by religious persons, including Jewish religious observants. I started to ask myself: What does it mean to be a Jew? The natural answer led to Torah and Talmud.”⁴⁹³

Edward Bormashenko drew a clear connection between his religious beliefs and the final decision to resettle to the Holy Land. From this perspective it became less surprising that he answered the standard question about “fulfilled expectations” in the host country *firstly* by emphasizing religious fulfillments (“I found a nice religious community, and I made my Torah knowledge much deeper”) and only *secondly* by confirming professional success (“I realized my dream to work as a physicist”).

That interview partner in the 70-person-sample with the closest combination of deep Jewish religiosity and national identification has been Yakov Schechter, a former engineer from Odessa, but today living and working as a writer in Tel Aviv. Schechter, born in 1956, emigrated to Israel in 1987, never seeing the USA or any

⁴⁹² Interview with Julia Konnik in Berlin on February 12, 2009.

⁴⁹³ Interview with Prof. Edward Bormashenko (University of Ariel), Feb. 22, 2009 (by Email)

other Western country as an alternative destination but just wishing “to live in the Holy Land.”⁴⁹⁴ The respondent expressed strong individual bonds to Russian culture, also imparted to his kids: “My children can read and speak Russian. Russian is the language we speak at home, and besides, it is good for the children to know another language in addition to Hebrew and English.” But after Aliyah, Yakov Schechter did not visit his former country of residence for 15 years (!), later on joining several book fairs in towns of the former USSR where he could present his publications. Yakov Schechter emphasizes that his “closest friends are religious Jews born in the former Soviet Union”, which refers to a real 'community of fate'. When describing his experiences with anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union, it emerges easily that he never had a chance of equal civil acceptance “under the hammer and sickle”:

“From kindergarten through university to the job market – I was made to feel different. I spoke Russian better than many Russians, matriculated with a silver medal and graduated cum laude, but every minute I knew I was an Other.”⁴⁹⁵

Schechter said the situation changed completely when he came to Israel. At least in terms of civil equality and identification with the nation state, he confirmed complete satisfaction and fulfillment of his expectations:

“I expected that in this country I would be able to feel fully a part of my nation, a citizen by right, and that I would be able to look at my country’s flag and, if necessary, take up arms for its sake without any ambivalence. All these expectations have been fulfilled.”⁴⁹⁶

Edward Bormashenko, Julia Konnik and Yakov Schechter gave very illustrative examples showing that some of the Russian Jewish émigrés are indeed motivated to combine deep religiosity, modern professional activities and, rather as a result of individual interest, preserving elements of Russian cultural heritage. At the same time, these immigrants are present in the public, no matter if in research centers, professional organizations, by journalistic activities or just by providing public readings of their own lyrics. Though, a fundamental difference arose between my religious interview partners in Israel and Germany when it came to the appropriate place of residence. While the German interviewees did not consider a life in Germany or Europe as contradictory to their religious life style, some of the

⁴⁹⁴ Interview with Yakov Schechter (Tel Aviv) on April 13, 2009 (by Email).

⁴⁹⁵ Interview with Yakov Schechter (Tel Aviv) on April 13, 2009 (by Email).

⁴⁹⁶ Interview with Yakov Schechter (Tel Aviv) on April 13, 2009 (by Email).

Orthodox interviewees in Israel did not hide their opinion that “the communities of the Diaspora are doomed to assimilation”⁴⁹⁷ or that gradual assimilation into the countries of the Diaspora would be “no fair finish for the 3000 year history of the Jewish people.”⁴⁹⁸

However, almost none of the interview partners in Israel and in Germany – no matter if religious or non-religious – questioned or regret their former decision to settle into the respective country of destination. This was all the more surprising for Germany, since only a minority of Russian Jews clearly identifies with the host society here ⁴⁹⁹ and a considerable part of the immigrants has failed to succeed at the labour market. However, extended families tend to stay together, and as it seems, cultural differences looking more or less insurmountable are accepted and responded with strategies of social insertion, instead of acculturation.

Russian Jews in Germany show also the psychological ability to live in the country of the former Nazi thugs. For this question I consulted David Weiss⁵⁰⁰, a retired psychotherapist from Kiev, still providing psychological advice in a Jewish center in Hanover. Weiss reported: “Of course there are immigrants who have a bad conscience about coming to live here, in Germany. However, people seldom come to me with this problem.”

But when people contact him especially with regard to this depressing factor, David Weiss has his own strategy of counseling then to apply:

“I don’t want to downplay the Holocaust. But if I have such a talk with the people, then I also confront them with other historical examples - with what kinds of anti-Semitic crimes happened in their former home region though in other times. Let’s take for example, Bogdan Chmelnizki in the Ukraine. Chmelnizki has killed Jews in a horrible manner, among them pregnant women, and this is historically proven. Thus, I try to explain the people that anti-Semitic barbarism is not limited to Germany. In many cases, the people know themselves that Germany was not their exclusive preference of destination. The main thing is that the people wanted to leave, whether because of anti-Semitism, because of the economical crisis, or just to be re-unified with the own children. I think the crucial point is now: What is today, and how does life go on?”⁵⁰¹

⁴⁹⁷ Interview with Prof. Edward Bormashenko (University of Ariel), Feb. 22, 2009 (by Email).

⁴⁹⁸ *ibid.*

⁴⁹⁹ Ben Rafael et al. (2006), p. 166.

⁵⁰⁰ Interview with psychologist David Weiss (pseudonym) in Hanover, November 2003.

⁵⁰¹ Interview with psychologist David Weiss (pseudonym) in Hanover, November 2003.

In one interview I confronted a young historian originally from Odessa and asked whether it afflicts him to live in the country of the Shoah murderers. The interview partner answered:

“Yes, it afflicts me. On the other hand I see and feel that this population has undergone tremendous societal changes during the last decades. Especially since the 1960's, German society has proven its ability to deal honestly and critically with its own past. Also I do not have the impression that current memorial events are pure exercises in political correctness. I feel that there are serious debates on the Nazi regime and all its crimes, especially among young people.”⁵⁰²

Other interviewees in Germany emphasized that they understand themselves primarily as Europeans, and a few also affirmed the question whether they would recommend to other Russian Jews in the FSU to resettle to Germany.

⁵⁰² Interview with young Ukrainian Historian (formerly Odessa) in Berlin, January 26, 2009.

Chapter VII: From immigration to participation – RSJ elites acting in their new surroundings

In the previous chapters it was reflected that Russian Jews in Israel and Germany, irrespective of success or failure in their individual integration, often tend to act as an ethno-cultural group that is negotiating its own positions and aims with the new environment. It was to demonstrate that there are intensive *internal* debates, often pushed by intellectuals and by self-established (Russian language) media, as to what extent RSJ immigrants should adapt themselves to the host society and what kinds of cultural heritage from the former homeland should definitely be preserved.

It was deduced from the Israeli as well as from the German interview material that RSJ immigrants, despite existing cultural barriers and dissonances, are motivated to a high degree for societal and political participation (in Germany also inside the Jewish communities). It is still not clear to what extent the intensive efforts of societal and political participation are simply the means to promote “Russian” interests; for example, implementation of Russian type of schools in Israel or the publication of German Jewish community journals in Russian, or to what extent these RSJ activities reflect gradual steps of integration (or even, in future generations, assimilation). Russian Jews of all age groups do consequently use opportunities of social and political participation even if these opportunities turn out very differently in Israel and Germany, and lead to distinct processes of identification.

Thus, whereas a majority of Russian Jews in Israel develop a certain level of Israeli patriotism and Jewish nationalism, Russian Jews in Germany rather identify with European culture. Since the Russian Jews do show a remarkable professional and economical upward mobility in Israel, and the same is expected in Germany after a certain time lag, *and* show interest in political participation, their permeation into the national elites seems to be only a matter of time.⁵⁰³ Though, in Germany, where Russian Jews are a very small minority (even inside the Russian speaking population), they’ll probably enter the national elites in the long run, but as

⁵⁰³ Michael Blumenthal, head of the Jewish Museum in Berlin (the biggest in Europe), stated about the RSJ immigrants: “I am convinced that the young generation of Russian Jews – those who are studying now – will go their way in Germany. In 10 to 15 years, some of them will have a seat in the Bundestag [the German parliament], others will be university professors, others successful entrepreneurs and artists. But I think it still needs a little bit of time.” (Quoted from an interview with Michael Blumenthal: “Jüdische Zeitung”, April 2006.

individuals and not as group formations. The immigrants themselves keep this in perspective. Thus, an RSJ engineer from Tallinn, now living and working in Hanover, stated:

“Just look at the statistical factor. Russians have increased the Israeli population by about 15 percent, but in Germany they increased the population by less than 1%. You cannot expect the formation of elites from such a small group. But, for sure, individuals will reach elitist positions, university chairs, positions of chief physicians for example. But again, and realistically: Russian-Jewish elites won't affect the German system as it is.”⁵⁰⁴

In contrast, Russian Jews in Israel are on the best way to place leading figures in all those top groups of society that are described as “strategic elites” in the theoretical model of *Suzanne Keller* (1963).

In the *political realm* the model of pure “Russian ethnic parties” seems to be obsolete, but those political forces with national topics *and* a Russian tinge have good opportunities to get strong backing by other population groups. This is very much illustrated with the success of the political party “Israel Beitanu” (IB).

In the *economical realm* Russian Jews have developed a strong main pillar with the business of the “ethno market” but even more striking are a few oligarchs from the successor states of the Former Soviet Union⁵⁰⁵ that have either settled to Israel or live a trans-national existence between Israel and their country of origin.

Not a few of these oligarchs invest in the Israeli economy aside from in philanthropic foundations. In this context, former deputy of Knesset, Leon Litinetsky, stated in the expert interview:

“The general Israeli establishment is also realizing now that with the Russian immigrants a group has come that is also connected with great benefactors from the Russian Jewish business group. Some of them are motivated to invest in Israel and Israeli society in a comparable manner, as American and Western European Jewish donors had in recent decades.”⁵⁰⁶

At some points the issue is considered and discussed with mixed feelings in the Israeli host society, especially when the fear comes up that some of the oligarchs could

⁵⁰⁴ Interview with RSJ engineer in Hanover on May 15, 2003.

⁵⁰⁵ See in this context the chapter III.

⁵⁰⁶ Interview with Leon Litinetsky in Tel Aviv on March 13, 2008.

“buy” political influence. Though, as the case of Arkady Gaydamak⁵⁰⁷ indicates that Israeli politics and society seems to be immunized against plump efforts of power takeover. In some cases there’s also a certain fear that problems of economic crime could be transformed to Israeli society, but in turn not a few of my interview partners referred to the enormous drive of the Israeli yellow press and other mainstream media in landing whatever scoops on Russian peculiarities.

The enormous contributions of the *RSJ scientists* to Israeli research and development have been described in detail in the chapters above, and it is to expect that similar contributions will even increase with the second generation. Some *RSJ intellectuals* are, as we have seen, occupied with launching a debate on a new Zionism and on how to strengthen Jewish identity against the backdrop of multiculturalism and world-wide anti-Semitism. Russian *media* in Israel has also its very unique social and political profile but is realistically without considerable effects beyond the *RSJ* community.

Religious elites with Russian background are conceivably in the making, supported by sufficient organizations like “Machana’im”, and, as reported, coming “through the mainstream schools as well, along with dozens of Russian synagogues in the country, especially beyond the Green Line. There are strong Russian religious communities in Kedumim, in Samaria; Nokdim in Shomron, Bethel, and there are Russian Chabad synagogues.”⁵⁰⁸ Fairly soon, it is also expected that Russian Jews will play an increasing role in the Israeli military, not only in technical development, but also among the officers.

Of course, the success of *RSJ* elites cannot simply be measured by “Russian percentages” in the top positions of society. Coming back to *Keller’s* concept of external and internal elites described as heterogeneous, mutual completing elites in modern society, it appears that *RSJ* elites in Israel (and Germany) have their strongest power in the internal elites. Processes of integration and in-group consolidation are a task of “internal elites”, and are, to a great extent, promoted and steered by opinion makers and role models, who can be artists, publicists, intellectuals, journalists and religious leaders, as well. Whereas religious authorities of Russian background are still in the making, intellectuals and most of all leading

⁵⁰⁷ See chapter III.

⁵⁰⁸ Interview with Ze’ev Khanin in Herzliya on March 16, 2008.

journalists remain those who form the opinion of the “Russian street”. Thus, I thought it useful to consider such leading journalists also as integrative elites who distinctly focus on both the situation of the immigrants and the relations to host society, and to the Jewish communities in Germany in particular.

Concerning the *artistic elites* among the Russian Jews it appears rather unrealistic at present to expect more than just to provide some outstanding artistic impulses for the whole population(s) and to build inter-cultural bridges between newcomers and veterans.

In the following, it will exemplarily be shown how RSJ artists, community heads, Rabbis and journalists strengthen immigrants’ identities and self-confidence, but at the same time address interests that touch the overall societies in Israel and Germany, thus really crossing over from immigration to participation. All these groups under focus fit *Stammer’s* definition of elites as “more or less closed social and political groups of influence which crystallize from broad layers of society and their bigger and smaller groups on the ways of delegation and competition, in order to take over a certain function in the social and political organization of the system.”⁵⁰⁹ The organizational functions of the RSJ elite groups are firstly visible inside the Russian (Jewish) migrant community but then gain importance also in the encounters with parts of the host population.

1. “Cultural messengers”: RSJ theaters in Israel and Germany

Undoubtedly the greatest impacts which Russian Jews have set in Israel during the recent 20 years are in science and in culture & arts. When considering RSJ cultural places having gained the image of being the best in Israel and in parallel celebrating outstanding international success, first of all the bilingual theater “Gesher” in Tel Aviv-Jaffo must be mentioned. One of the most risky, most exciting, extremely successful but also most vulnerable projects of immigrating RSJ artists, “Gesher” was founded at the turn of 1990/1991 by a handful experienced artists from former Soviet metropolitan towns, especially from Moscow and Leningrad. Several of them had been quite famous in the Soviet Union but were just recently arrived. In Tel Aviv they started with some initial sponsorship by the municipality, the Zionist Forum, the

⁵⁰⁹ Stammer (1951), p.1.

Jewish Agency and the Ministry of Education and Culture, but in general, with not much more than lots of euphoria, artistic visions of a theater for immigrants (and natives) and the belief of being able to “make it”. The founding (and then artistic) director, Yevgeny Arye, had already earned a lot of renown as a stage and screen director in the USSR, seeing himself in the tradition of Constantine Stanislavsky and influenced in his style by former collaboration with the famous Soviet artistic director Andrey Goncharov. Already by the spring of 1991, just a few months after its founding, the small “Gesher” group of FSU actors presented its first performances, in the following years having a balanced repertoire of Russian classical drama, western classics and comedy and then also with Israeli contemporary drama. Already in the 1990's “Gesher” was seen as the best quality theater of the country. As early as 1992, the theater started to produce performances also in Hebrew, well aware that economic survival was only ensured in the long term when also gaining the native Israeli audience. Growing resonance by Russian *and* native Israeli audiences went in parallel with international prizes and awards. The success continued irrespective of frequent theater critics in the Hebrew mainstream print media which either denied the immigrant actors “real” willingness to integrate into Israeli culture (by dealing “too much” with Russian or European material) or condemned Gesher's speedy involvement with topics that seemed rather the domain of native Israeli elites.⁵¹⁰ Several critics of established newspapers continued throughout the 1990's to question the theater's willingness to become “a real Israeli theater”⁵¹¹, despite increasing sympathy, a certain - calculated or not – public backing by leading politicians (especially by Leah and Yitzhak Rabin and later on by Ehud Barak) and an official agenda which no doubt even supported RSJ immigrants in their transitional stages on the way *into* Israeli society.⁵¹²

Throughout the 1990's “Gesher” gained triumphant resonance at theater

⁵¹⁰ When the Gesher Company brought to the stage Yoram Kanjuks novel “Adam Resurrected”, some of the established Israeli critics praised the artistic means of the play, but criticized the – in their eyes – insufficient personal preparation for the core topic – the Holocaust. See: Gershenson (2005), pp. 75-89.

⁵¹¹ In this context, Gershenson (2005) holds a mainstream trend in established Israeli media responsible which would insist on ideological (Zionist) terms, not accepting full-fledged cultural-artistic integration and cultural-artistic hybridism in the same way.

⁵¹² In the mission statement of the early 1990's, the Gesher company had declared: “We intend to turn our theater into a welcoming home, where old culture is preserved and a new one is acquired. Home, where both Russian and Hebrew would sound (...) It will be open to all (...) We hope to help those for whom culture is a necessary part of life, help them not to get lost in the new circumstances and new language.” (Gershenson 2005:41)

festivals in New York, London, Rome and Berlin⁵¹³ – acquiring, as general director Lena Kreindlin formulates it, a “role as cultural ambassadors in foreign countries. People [abroad] can see that here is more than conflicts and war.”⁵¹⁴ Strangely, suspicious attitudes in the mainstream media continued. In this context, General Director Lena Kreindlin has been especially annoyed about the stigma of a “Russian Ghetto Theater”. In the expert interview she remembered:

“The first prominent press comment that was published about our theater was titled ‘Gesher le Schum Makom’ - ‘bridge to nowhere’. And this was an article in ‘Ha’aretz’. We took it as a typical sign of the traditional expectation that all the newcomers will quickly assimilate. All of us got offers to become actors at Israeli theaters. And there have been some prominent Russian actors who entered the established Israeli theaters - and they became very successful. So the critics looked into our direction and asked: Why don’t you go the same way? ‘Gesher’ was something against the mainstream, and some people even called us ‘Russian Ghetto Theater’. *Today everybody can see that we are the opposite of a ghetto.*”⁵¹⁵

In contrast to other established Israeli theaters, “Gesher” seldom puts burning social or political topics on the stage.⁵¹⁶ Gershenson (2005) who did a complete study on the theater, identifies a kind of “colonizing position” on the side of Israeli mainstream critics “who consistently ignore this [Gesher’s] hybrid position, fixating instead on the ideology-driven questions of identity politics.”⁵¹⁷ Artistic Director Yevgeny Arye was repeatedly pushed in very uncomfortable interviews focusing more on identity than on the artistic aspects of his theater. In an interview with the magazine “Anashim” in 1999 he finally responded: “The problem is that after we have been performing in Israel for eight years (...) *for you, we are still foreigners here.*”⁵¹⁸

Whereas Hebrew media critics continued, already in the mid-1990’s the theater became further enriched by outstanding native-born actors who made “Gesher” even more popular. Today the theater is totally mixed with former immigrants and Israeli

⁵¹³ In the 1990’s, Gesher staged three times successfully in Berlin: In 1994 with “Adam Resurrected”, in 1998 with “Village” and in 1999 with “City/Odessa Stories”. See: Gershenson (2005), p.187.

⁵¹⁴ Interview with Lena Kreindlin in Tel Aviv-Jaffo on August 24, 2008.

⁵¹⁵ Interview with Lena Kreindlin in Tel Aviv-Jaffo on August 24, 2008. Emphasis O.G.

⁵¹⁶ Lena Kreindlin’s comment: “We are so tired of political theater in our brilliant Soviet Union that we don’t want to deal with the same here. (...) I do not deny that we could play any drama with political aspects. But in general, we are aiming to reach the souls of the human beings who come here.” (Interview with Lena Kreindlin in Tel Aviv-Jaffo on August 24, 2008.)

⁵¹⁷ Gershenson (2005), p. 180f.

⁵¹⁸ Quoted in: Gershenson (2005), p.162. Emphasis O.G.

“Sabras” and the share of Russian-speaking visitors is “only” about 30 percent.⁵¹⁹ The principle of “Gesher” to provide Russian subtitles for all performances has remained. About the current repertoire, Lena Kreindlin said:

“Yes, we are less and less playing in Russian. We just had a tour in America – and played there in Russian – but in general it becomes less and less Russian-speaking. Now we have a lot of Israeli-born actors in our group, as well. But that’s natural, that’s integration.”⁵²⁰

The nearly 20-year-long story of the “Gesher” theater might be unique in the context of the big Russian Aliyah since 1989/90, especially in its speedy success in reaching the “artistic heaven” in Israel within only a few years. On the other hand, it shows that it is possible, even against certain host obstacles, to become a respected part of the Israeli society and of the established scene whilst intensively retaining Russian cultural roots, and even applying it as an important capital on the way to professional success.

“Gesher” is not the only successful theater in Israel that was created by Russian Jews but attracts a much broader audience. New Russian theater projects which work in the tradition of Constantine Stanislavsky are also found in the United States and in Germany, what can be considered a kind of *cultural transnationalism* on a high artistic-professional level. It is not always the crucial point whether these Russian theater projects are aiming for distinct professional success or whether they play for a wide audience for a mix of motivations, i.e. preserving Russian arts, affecting local cultural milieus, promoting talent or strengthening the spirit of community.

Semjon Arkadjevitsch Barkan, an emigré theatrical director from Moscow, who also feels obliged to the tradition of the Stanislavsky theater school, established the “Rossiskaja Aktjorskaja Schkola” (RAS) as an amateur theater on the campus of Bremen University in 1995. At that time, Barkan was already 79 years old. The RAS plays a mix of late Soviet dramaturgy, Russian classical theater and Jewish dramas and as an amateur theater unites Russian Jews, Russian-speaking German “Aussiedlers” and German students of Eastern European Studies who are enrolled at

⁵¹⁹ Interview with Lena Kreindlin in Tel Aviv-Jaffo on August 24, 2008. The share of ca. 30 per cent of Russian speakers in the general audience might be, compared with other Israeli theaters, still above average.

⁵²⁰ Interview with Lena Kreindlin in Tel Aviv-Jaffo on August 24, 2008.

the local university. Among the immigrant actors all age groups are present, and the RAS also maintains close connections to the local Jewish community. The JC of Bremen has recognized that this theater is a very attractive meeting place for Russian Jews in Bremen and provides support by lending rooms for guest performances, with food for rehearsal breaks and for trips, and sometimes even with making the actors' costumes. The RAS performances are given in both Russian and German, and the theater participated in theater festivals in Paris. Barkan, born in 1916 and with a very exceptional biography⁵²¹, remembered the initial stage weeks of the theater:

“Firstly the German students [of Eastern European studies] came but, you know, German students are hard to motivate for rehearsals until late in the night or to rehearse every day, it doesn't work with them. (...) And then the immigrants' children came. Children and youth often with the nostalgia of their parents, but at the same time often do not fit in the Russian language anymore, and are not familiar with the Russian literature, not to speak of theater experiences (...) However, there are 40-50 individuals at each rehearsal. And those who have left Bremen already sometimes come back here, visiting a rehearsal or a performance, and telling us that the theater became for them a good bridge into host society.”⁵²²

About his extraordinary motivation to run the RAS still in his old age, the director stated:

“At the beginning, many of our actors weren't able to speak a free word on the stage. But the longer they are here, the more they pass through a development of artistic, creative liberation. I can see how they are blossoming – *and this gives me back the necessary energy*. (...) In addition, some of the actors learn to act more self-confidently in daily and public life – just because of the experienced role plays on stage. And this is, for example, advantageous at professional interviews.”⁵²³

In the course of the years the theater has also become a kind of social tower - and this for several age groups. Barkan himself states: “I have no idea how life is going in the families of the actors. I cannot assess this - probably there's good atmosphere in some of them, and difficult situations in other ones. But what I feel is that here for some of the actors a kind of second family exists (...) I see my work as theater work and as pedagogical work in one”.⁵²⁴

⁵²¹ Offspring of a Jewish worker's family in the Belorussian Shtetl Polozk, Semjon Barkan suffered from asthma from his early childhood. After having a medical cure in Palestine (in 1925) and living at several places in the Crimea, Barkan studied dramatic composition in Moscow and later on took over the artistic management of a State-sponsored theater for Sinti and Roma in Moscow for 25 years.

⁵²² Interview with Semjon Barkan in Bremen on October 17, 2003.

⁵²³ Interview with Semjon Barkan in Bremen on October 17, 2003, emphasis O.G.

⁵²⁴ Interview with Semjon Barkan in Bremen on October 17, 2003. David Solostyanskiy, a 68 year-old

The story of the RAS in Bremen might be exceptional in light of its founding director. However, concerning its structure, concept and local anchoring, similar projects and theaters are to find in other places in Germany as well. Though, the new Russian theaters in Israel, Germany and the USA are by far not the only places and genres where Russian culture is preserved and imparted. A Russian cultural revival is also visible in widespread cultural and artistic centers, where especially the visual arts and literature have an emphasized position.⁵²⁵ Most prominent writers and poets with a Russian background are enthusiastically welcomed in Russian and Russian-Jewish communities around the world, and the success and resonance they gain is sometimes even surprising for veterans. In Israel itself, the strong attraction for Russian language and culture even revives among the RSJ immigrants of the 1970's. Thus the well-known writer Ephraim Bauch, chairman of the "Israeli Author's Union Federation" and of the "Association of Russian-speaking authors in Israel", admitted in the interview:

"It sounds ridiculous, but when we came here to Israel during the 1970's we didn't want to transmit the Russian language to our children. So nobody expected such a renewal of Russian culture and language as it came in the 1990's. But it came, and many Russian parents today really want to teach their children the Russian language and arts."⁵²⁶

Galper (1995) and *Siegel* (1998) have emphasized to what a great extent Russian culture and arts were used as means of RSJ community empowerment in Israel but also as stabilizing factors in private life, especially at the beginning of the 1990's. Consuming Russian theater, music, ballet or readings became a welcome balance to the perceived "cultural shock" after Aliyah and a certain counterbalance for the stress of acculturation.⁵²⁷

actor, reported from his own perspective: "I came to Germany when I was close to retirement age. It's a critical moment when you come to a totally new environment and nobody gives you the feeling of really being needed. Semjon Barkan gives us that feeling." (Interview with David Solostyanskij in Bremen on October 17, 2003.)

⁵²⁵ For example, in April 2003, the well-known painter Joseph Kapelyan and some colleagues founded the "Union of Professional Artists of Israel." In connection with this, an art exhibition was opened in the Jerusalem Museum of Nature, which presented the works of twelve immigrant painters. All works – landscapes of Israel – were donated to the Museum as a gift. Currently the Union has more than one hundred members, including native-born artists. See more in: Genkina (2007).

⁵²⁶ Interview with Ephraim Bauch in Tel Aviv on June 16, 2007.

⁵²⁷ See also: Glöckner (2004), pp. 140-143

2. RSJ Community leaders and RSJ Rabbis

In countries of the Jewish Diaspora, today synagogues fulfill a kind of double function. The synagogue is the place where Jewish belief and identity are to be strengthened but it's also the place where people meet for social reasons, exchange news and extend social networks. For Russian Jews – as for other groups of Jews as well – these aspects can easily blend. Taking away the fact that a part of the Russian Jewish migrants in the Diaspora avoids any connection with local Jewish communities, and are thus *de facto* “disappearing from the scene”, others might enjoy the community frameworks although understand themselves as secular Jews or as atheists. Yet rather surprisingly, the comparative study of *Ben Rafael et al.* (2006) worked out that RSJ respondents in the United States and Germany felt closer bonds to the Jewish religion and tradition than their co-ethnics in Israel.⁵²⁸ This indicates a great demand of reinsurance of their own identity⁵²⁹ but also a huge motivation to remain connected as (Russian) Jews in Germany and the United States, while the immigrants in Israel experience Judaism and Jewish life right on the street. Comparable processes of RSJ community building have taken place in Germany and the United States, in “native” Jewish communities, but beyond the local synagogue and in their “own” networks as well. *Belozersky and Borshevsky* (2006) describe a specific Russian Jewish community in Boston, Massachusetts, that “is not simply a group of Jews from the FSU but rather a dynamic Russian Jewish community of Boston, with institutions, leaders, cultural traditions and social events of its own, including a Bnei Moshe Temple in Brighton.”⁵³⁰ It goes without saying that distinct RSJ projects of community building need protagonists and “architects”, in their personalities unifying most of the characteristic features and strengths of the group.

Russian Jews who join the Jewish communities and organizations in

⁵²⁸ See: Ben Rafael et al. (2006), p. 182: 90% of the Russian Jews in Germany declared a close connection to Jewish tradition, 70% each in the United States and in Israel. 30% of the Russian Jews in Germany as well as in the United States declared close connection to Jewish religion, but only 25% in Israel.

⁵²⁹ Ethno-religious minorities wishing to avoid a total assimilation develop a surpassing interest in fathoming their own historical roots, ethnic specifics and strengths, religious and cultural myths. This leads to diasporic engagement in a wide range of cultural, social, political, and economic activities. The Jewish Diaspora provides an excellent example in this regard but is certainly not unique in this respect, since, for example, the Greek, Polish and Chinese Diasporas are organized in a similar way. See: Sheffer (2003), p.38.

⁵³⁰ Belozersky and Borshevsky (2006), p. 55.

Germany find themselves indeed in a unique situation. They have become a distinct majority there which might strengthen feelings of self-confidence and coherence. On the other hand, high hopes are expressed that the “Russian” majority and their elites will make great contributions in developing future organized Jewish life in Germany. The question on whether Russian Jews prefer a certain congregation becomes minor in light of the general struggle for institutional survival in Germany. Despite of a steep increase in memberships and a considerable number of newly founded Jewish communities in Germany as result of the RSJ influx until 2004, especially small-sized communities in the periphery must worry about their continuance.

However, Russian Jews have also become familiar with middle-sized and bigger communities, where they take over positions and responsibilities as well. The first Russian Jew who became head of a local community in Germany with more than 1,000 members, is Kuef Kaufmann in the Saxon town of Leipzig.⁵³¹ The former actor, journalist and art manager settled with his family from Leningrad to Germany in 1990, and he took over the JC leadership in 2004. Kaufmann is practicing a managerial style that aims to cover commonalities instead of emphasizing differences. There are basic principles which Kaufmann wouldn’t challenge at all:

“We believe in G’d and in the [Jewish] Law. And we are a *united* community in Leipzig. Apart from that it is secondary for me, who feels belonging to Liberal, Conservative or Orthodox Judaism. *And also the secular Jews are very welcome*. By no means do we want to be a field of inner-Jewish conflicts, but we are open for all who want to move things forward in the sense of humanity.”⁵³²

Kaufmann, a dynamic man in his late 50’s, doesn’t see grave, insurmountable conflicts between veterans and newcomers in the long run, but admits:

“Of course, there is some bad blood, and there are cultural differences. A few of the old members feel uncared-for and they think we have forgotten them. But here are platforms and programs which are designed for all members. Our community journal is published in both languages, and in the integration club ‘Gesher’, a place where German-speaking and Russian-speaking Jews come together, the communication is in German.”⁵³³

⁵³¹ Leipzig is the second biggest city in East Germany (after Berlin). The JC had 12,000 members before 1933; after World War II a mini-community with ca. 100 members tried to continue. Since the early 2000’s, thanks to an immense RSJ influx, the community counts more than 1,200 members.

⁵³² Interview with Kuef Kaufmann, carried out by the author of this work for the “Jüdische Zeitung”, February 2006. Emphasis O.G

⁵³³ Interview with Kuef Kaufmann, carried out for the “Jüdische Zeitung”, February 2006. Emphasis O.G

Kaufmann makes also clear that he would never dissociate himself from the concept of the *United Community* which he perceives as the only realistic possibility to build a future for the whole Jewish community in Leipzig. For him this does not contradict cooperative relations with other Jewish movements and institutions that have established footing on German ground in recent years.

Thus, in 2005 a Torah Center of the Lauder Foundation opened in the city, and Chabad Lubavitch supported the opening of a Jewish kindergarten. Aside from his cooperative stand towards all congregations, Kaufmann is also a strong proponent of close exchange and communication with the non-Jewish surroundings, and he avows to “feel like a hundred per cent Leipziger”. – “The contacts to the city are important for us”, says Kaufmann. “We are not exotic birds who tend to separate from the rest of the town.”

Also in other Jewish communities in Germany, Russian Jews have entered the boards and representative assemblies, taking responsible positions for community building. One of the outstanding RSJ figures in Berlin is former Moscow physicist Boris Schapiro who had emigrated to West Germany already in 1975 after being in trouble with Soviet officials and KGB for about six years, excluded from any university career and also physically attacked.⁵³⁴

After doing research at the Universities of Regensburg and Tübingen, Schapiro moved to Berlin (after German re-unification), where he became a very active member of the local Jewish community, for a couple of years also functioning as member of the Board and responsible for “Education and Next Generation”. Schapiro had never understood himself as “pure Russian” or “pure German”, but was, as a JC board member, widely confronted with the great influx of Russian Jews to Berlin during the 1990's.⁵³⁵

⁵³⁴ In 1969, when Boris Schapiro was research assistant at Moscow State University, he was urged to sign a calumny against his colleague, Professor Jewgenij Shapowal, who publicly protested at this time against new Stalinist show trials. Schapiro refused, and later on was denied the chance to finish his PhD thesis, and then was forced to do a whole range of unskilled jobs. After many troubles and difficulties, in 1975 he got permission to emigrate to West Germany, where his wife Hela already lived. Short before his departure he was attacked and seriously injured, but could leave the USSR in December 1975.

⁵³⁵ About 6,000 Russian Jews joined the Jewish Community of Berlin during the 1990's.

Asked for his view on the dominant secularism inside the RSJ immigrant group, he stated:

“If a human being has no inner contract that symbolizes God – and the unison with him in his/her own life - his existence has a great deficit. This is very much present among people who grew up in totalitarian regimes like the USSR, but in a wider sense, it’s a general problem of post-modern society, and it is even present in all religions. It’s a world wide crisis.”⁵³⁶

In the eyes of Schapiro, the lack of religious spirituality could have serious consequences for the Jewish communities in Germany in the long run. He doesn’t fear their mutation into “Russian cultural clubs”, but states:

“Many of the Russian-dominated Jewish Communities turn – similar to many German Jewish groups and synagogues - into rather *formal communities*, which are lacking theological profoundness. When a person stops doing theological work, and does not feel responsibility for the things he believes in, then his forms of believing are steadily caving in. In the end the believers are less and less aware why they are religious, or why they should be religious. The social component is growing but the spiritual component declines. That’s the real danger, and it’s absolutely not limited to Jewish communities.”⁵³⁷

Schapiro emphasizes that for him, religion is “not just a social game. For me, religion is very important in forming me as a human being, and in this framework of being a human, also to care for being Jewish.”⁵³⁸ Schapiro wears a Kippa in daily life, also at work and on the Berlin streets, and in this context he reported incidents of having been threatened. However, as a lyric poet with many publications in both Russian and German, as well as a book author on religious issues, Boris Schapiro is also present at public readings which gather an interested German and non-Jewish audience. In general, he shows much respect to German immigration politics but also thinks that German policy at the beginning of the 1990's had some rosy fantasies as to how the integration of the RSJ immigrants could work, fantasies that did not become true.

⁵³⁶ Interview with Dr. Boris Schapiro in Berlin on July 16, 2008.

⁵³⁷ Interview with Dr. Boris Schapiro in Berlin on July 16, 2008. Emphasis O.G.

⁵³⁸ Concerning the context of religion and faith, the interviewee stated: “Faith is for me not only a kind of bonbon that you get presented, it has to be acquired, and the kind of religion that somebody is plasticising is ultimately an expression of free will. Ultimately also an expression of the likeness between human beings and God. *This is the practice of the theological relevant faith.*” (Interview with Dr. Boris Schapiro in Berlin on July 16, 2008, Emphasis O.G.)

“I also think that the German government was assuming that the *cultural* integration of the Russian Jews would go easier. Of course, there are a lot of stereotypes and prejudices inside the German population. But I assume that the German politicians thought, this population is quite reasonable, and only a minor adjustment has to be made by the Russian Jewish immigrants. But as we know today, there are also obstacles in the native population, *and for a better integration, work is necessary from both sides.*”⁵³⁹

Schapiro’s lifestyle and his general activities show that it’s possible to be socialized in the FSU, and become deeply religious and living one’s religion also very publicly in the Diaspora. This is all the more true for the younger generation. Like in Israel, Eastern Europeans take over positions as Rabbis in Germany, where the lack of religious personnel is extreme.

This obvious deficit has mobilized several international Jewish movements in the early 2000’s to care for the establishment of appropriate schools. The Abraham Geiger College in Potsdam, which is the first European Reform Rabbinical College since World II, opened in 2000, and the first graduates received their ordination in 2006.⁵⁴⁰ Already today, the AGC is mainly frequented by students from Eastern Europe.

The Orthodox complement to the Geiger College is the Hildesheimer Rabbinical Seminary which was established by the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation in Berlin in 2005. The seminary ordained the first Orthodox Rabbis in Germany after World War II in June 2009 in Munich, and the graduates, Avraham Radbil and Zsolt Balla, came originally from the Ukraine and from Hungary.⁵⁴¹ Quite similar to the AGC, all seminars of the Hildesheimer Rabbinical College are highly frequented by students from Russian and from other parts of Eastern Europe.⁵⁴²

Other young Rabbis with a Russian background have come to Germany after having been in other places, and not a few of them bring study experiences along which they carried in religious centers in Israel. For example, Rabbi Reuven Yaacubov, who was born in 1977 in Uzbekistan, underwent training in religious seminaries (Yeshivot) in Moscow and Jerusalem and finally came to Berlin to serve as the first Orthodox-Sephardic Rabbi in the German capital and to care for the

⁵³⁹ Interview with Dr. Boris Schapiro in Berlin on July 16, 2008. Emphasis O.G

⁵⁴⁰ See: www.abraham-geiger-kolleg.de

⁵⁴¹ <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,628298,00.html> (access on March 25, 2010).

⁵⁴² See: www.lauderyeshurun.de/yeshiva-short

synagogue “Tyferet Israel” mainly frequented by Caucasian Jews. Michail Kogan, a former Moldavian engineer and theater artist enrolled in the Schechter Institute in Jerusalem. Ordained as a Conservative Rabbi, Kogan took an offer by the Jewish community of Düsseldorf, today one of the biggest in Germany. Rabbi Yehuda Pushkin first studied in a yeshiva in Moscow, and continued his religious studies in several Yeshivot in Israel. Pushkin came to Germany in 2006 and is working now as travelling Rabbi in the North German districts of Schleswig-Holstein and Lower Saxony.

The growing number of Russian speaking Rabbis in Germany’s Jewish communities has enormous advantages even if the language of communication will gradually turn to German. Common language is an essential element of collective identity, also in religious communities, and those religious leaders who are fluent in Russian and have former Soviet experiences obviously find better access to the JC members with former Soviet backgrounds. Reform Rabbi Gregory Kotler confirms:

“I think that religion can help the immigrants in their new lives a lot. But the effect will be much stronger, if you do it with personnel who speaks Russian and who are familiar with the same mentality as the immigrants. Somebody who understands their attitudes, former experiences and the individual transitions into Israeli society. If somebody tries to act without this background it won't help.”⁵⁴³

Gregory Kotler thinks that Russian Jews in Israel – if in search for their identity – “do not need to go to any specific Jewish place. When children go to a school, they find a Jewish school, they study Hebrew, and Jewish literature and history and the like. *So that’s the answer, why most of the Russian Jews in Israel do not go to any kind of synagogue.* The Jewish environment is enough for them.”⁵⁴⁴ Nevertheless, as a Reform Rabbi, Kotler feels a special obligation to those immigrants with “only” patrilineal Jewish descent in Israel and their almost insurmountable difficulties in being permitted to apply for a Jewish, state-acknowledged marriage.

⁵⁴³ Interview with Rabbi Gregory Kotler in Jerusalem on March 16, 2008.

⁵⁴⁴ Interview with Gregory Kotler in Jerusalem on March 16, 2008 in Jerusalem. Emphasis O.G.

Thus Gregory Kotler publicly asks:

“Why should mixed couples go to Cyprus or to Prague [to get married]? It’s unbelievable, especially when we are talking about 300,000 people who are directly affected! And this is not only a religious, this is also a social problem. (...) Why shouldn’t we be ready to take such a step forward, to make the integration of the Russian Jews easier - and at the same time attracting them for Jewish community life? Every week I have applications from immigrants who are not Halachically Jewish, who go to Cyprus to get married, but who also would like to have a Jewish ceremony here, in Israel. It is not only a question of religion, it’s also a questions how to feel as part of the society here. I try to make this issue more public in the Russian media as well as in the Hebrew. And of course I have permanent discussions in the Reform movement in Israel.”⁵⁴⁵

Kotler is using the argument that the Board of American Reform Rabbis made an official decision already in 1983 to recognize Jews of patrilineal descent, on the condition that they had been raised and lived as full community members - i.e. without conversion -, and one of the Liberal Jewish movements in Great Britain did the same. Opponents of such a position, however, pick up exactly the (American Reform) pre-condition of Jewish breeding at home and question whether this was guaranteed in Jewish families in the USSR. However, a distinct element in Kotler’s arguments for religious concessions to non-Halachic RS Jews is the conviction that religious and social well-being must intertwine if a deep integration into the Israeli society should work. Thus, it is no coincidence that Rabbi Kotler took place in a big protest demonstration in 1990 when a Russian soldier (non-Halachic Jewish) was killed in action in Lebanon, but the Rabbinat refused to allow burying him in a Jewish cemetery.⁵⁴⁶ The issue of non-Halachic Russian Jews has developed to an enormous bone of contention in both Israel and in Germany. Rabbi Kotler, of course, is aware of his limited scope of action in a country where the Orthodox Rabbinat(s) practically serve as the only authoritative religious authority for Jewish Israelis. Also in Germany, the overwhelming majority of hired Rabbis belong to Orthodox organizations and movements, and the Russian speaking Rabbis are no exception. In sum, most of the local Jewish communities in Germany, belonging to the Central

⁵⁴⁵ Interview with Rabbi Gregory Kotler in Jerusalem on March 16, 2008.

⁵⁴⁶ At the same time Kotler stepped into the – at that time - very dynamic party Meretz which finally joined the government coalition with social democrats Yitzchak Rabin and Shimon Peres (1992-1996). The Rabbi preserved his critical, unconventional and independent style also in political life. When Meretz seemed to become a self-satisfied part of the political establishment, he left the party after a couple of years. A few weeks before our interview in March 2008, he had joined another opposition party – the Greens (Yerukim).

Council of Jews in Germany and declaring themselves as “United communities”, are exclusively oriented towards Halachic principles concerning possible membership. Contrary to this, many of the non-Halachic Russian Jewish immigrants with a clear Jewish self-image perceive the demand of a Giur under such circumstances as completely unacceptable.⁵⁴⁷

Some of the RSJ immigrants who joined the local Jewish communities and their surroundings are proposing quite unconventional one-time solutions for successfully adopting the non-Halachic Jews and at the same time to correct the demographic dilemma of many JCs (overage), to prevent another falling apart. At the annual meeting of the “Union of Progressive Jews” in Berlin in summer 2009, Leonid Friedmann, an engineer and member of the Liberal community of Hanover, pleaded for an exceptional rule to grant all RSJ immigrants with a Jewish father the status of full JC membership (as far as they want this). “70 percent of our children have not arrived in the Jewish communities”, Friedmann justified his particular suggestion. “We don’t want to change the Halacha, and we aim such a special regulation exclusively in order to save future community life in Germany“.⁵⁴⁸

Attempts like Rabbi Kotler’s suggestion to permit Jewish weddings for non-Halachic Jews in Israel or Leonid Freedmans suggestion of a one-time easing of the absorption rules in German Jewish communities might currently have very unlikely prospects – even inside the respective Reform movements. However, they show with what seriousness Russian Jews in both countries struggle for a successful integration of the RSJ immigrants, not only into general society but also into existing Jewish frameworks. Therefore, it can be expected that the debate on “Who is a Jew?” will

⁵⁴⁷ Hegner (2008) has quoted a successful RSJ actor from the FSU who settled in Berlin and expressed his harsh frustration about the “recognition politics” of the local JC: “What especially concerns me, are those [RSJ immigrants] who have a Jewish father but not a Jewish mother. They are told here that they are not Jewish. But so what? They have been discriminated [in the FSU] in the same way like all other Jews. ‘What is your name, Goldstein? No, sorry, we don’t have a job for you.’ Such experiences have also affected the wife, she has been discriminated in the same way as her husband. And the children, are they not Jews? I think this is a mistake. But those converted Germans, they tell us here what it means to be Jewish (...) I want that they once feel how it is to be discriminated as a Jew. If, for example, somebody [in the FSU] around Pessach did not eat [leavened] bread, then the people started wondering, and then there were people who urged those people to eat [leavened] bread. Yes, they were even forced to do so.” See: Hegner (2008), p.168.

⁵⁴⁸ Jüdische Allgemeine, July 16, 2009.

continue with permanent harshness, and very much will depend on the activities of RSJ non-Halachic Jews themselves.

3. *On the edge of politics: RSJ journalists in Israel and Germany*

Even more than RSJ Rabbis, Russian Jewish journalists have delved into politics in Israel and Germany. The interview partners tended to get to the heart of sensitive social and political issues promptly, and they did not shy away from criticism of the host societies nor from criticism of prominent figures in their own co-ethnic community. Thus, Mark Galesnik, the editor-in-chief of the political satire magazine “Beseder?” explicitly emphasized that his medium addresses critics equally to all groups of politicians:

“We do that also with the Russians, and sometimes even harder. That's why a lot of Russian politicians in Israel are not that happy with us. An important credo for our magazine is to open people's eyes for social and political realities, and not to believe in any propaganda. Ultimately Russian politicians could stand our criticisms and humor, and the native Israeli politicians as well. In the 18 years of our magazine there has been only one politician submitting a lawsuit against us.”⁵⁴⁹

Mark Galesnik, who once graduated as a playwright at the Moscow Literature Institute and whose plays were in some cases also translated into foreign languages (including German), belongs to those RSJ publicists who had and have a general critical position towards *ethnic politics* in Israel. Galesnik even considered the party “Israel ba Alija” as a rather counter-productive issue from the very beginning:

“In general, I think it was a bad idea. Until 1996, the Russian community in Israel had developed in a very fruitful pluralism, and this in very different fields of society – whether in the arts – like Gesher – the literature scene, science, philosophy, media. I think that at the point in time when Nathan Sharansky established ‘Israel ba Aliyah’ and entered the Knesset and won 7 mandates, politics got an exaggerated importance. And that went on at the expense of other parts of [Russian] social life. Almost no culture, no literature, no religion, no high-tech – all the time 'politika, politika, politika'... Ultimately that captured 90 per cent of the public [Russian] interest.”⁵⁵⁰

⁵⁴⁹ Interview with Mark Galesnik in Jerusalem on August 29, 2008.

⁵⁵⁰ Interview with Mark Galesnik in Jerusalem on August 29, 2008.

Galesnik has also a critical view on the politics currently made by the most influential Russian Jews in Israel. In contrast to some of the interviewed RSJ intellectuals, Galesnik does not connect the political efforts of Avigdor Liebermann and Israel Beitanu with visionary hopes:

“Lieberman presents himself as a 'Russian' in front of a Russian audience, and he presents himself as an 'Israeli' in front of a Hebrew audience. Much in his program is, in my opinion, very speculative, and I think that he is *not* going to solve basic problems of Israeli society. In general, we are far from his ideas and politics.”

Like some of his colleagues and some intellectuals among the RSJ, also Mark Galesnik described it as absolutely unimaginable for him to become a professional politician:

“I can't imagine going into party politics, never. May be it's because I do not like the inner pressure and compulsions of organized groups. (...) As a politician, I would have a problem with being obliged to sell any standpoints and programs – whether for the right or wrong issue. My mentality refuses it. I feel that I can only be responsible for my own self and my family.”⁵⁵¹

Also Eduard Kusnezow, one of the most prominent RSJ journalists and long-time editor in chief in Israel, never developed ambitions to go into politics. Well-known as one of the legendary averted Aeroflot hijackers⁵⁵², he came to Israel in 1979 after having spent 16 years in Soviet prison camps. Later on, Kusnezow worked for a couple of years for “Radio Liberty” in Munich, before definitely resettling to Israel in 1990, exactly at the beginning of the Great Russian Aliyah. When working as editor-in-chief for many years for “Vremja”, “Vesti” and “Mignews”, Kusnezow gained not only professional success, but also the respect of the native political

⁵⁵¹ Interview with Mark Galesnik in Jerusalem on August 29, 2008.

⁵⁵² Eduard Kusnezow had been fighting for permission to exit to Israel (“Prisoners of Zion”) already from the end of the 1960's. His and his friends' most spectacular action was the attempt to hijack an aeroplane of the Soviet Airline “Aeroflot” in 1970 and to direct it to Israel. After the failed hijack he was initially sentenced to death, later the sentence was commuted to 15 years of prison camp. Of these 15 years, Kusnezow had to spend 9 years in prison camps in Mordovia, and then he was freed in a spectacular Soviet-American exchange of political prisoners and spies in 1979. Three days after his release from Soviet imprisonment, Eduard Kusnezow made Aliyah. On arrival in the Jewish State, he firstly worked in the department of Sovietology at Tel Aviv University, later he lectured in America and in Europe, then becoming the Chief Editor of the News Department of “Radio Liberty” in Munich (1983-1990). In 1990, when the big RSJ immigrants' wave to Israel started, Kusnezow also returned to Israel and became Editor-in-Chief of the Russian newspaper “Vremja”. This was the beginning of a long-standing career as publicist in Israel.

establishment. However, he not only disdained a political career⁵⁵³ but also rejected to play the role of an “RSJ opinion-maker”, although especially the 1990's were politically very loaded in Israel, with frequent political changes, heated debates on immigration and integration, highly controversial discussions on the economy and the Middle East conflict. When insurmountable disagreements and conflicts with the publishers arose, Kusnezow consequently left the place. Another principal difficulty in Kusnezow's encounter with the RSJ elites stemmed from his principle to generally reject political lobbying efforts through the RSJ print media. This brought him in conflict even with top RSJ figureheads like Nathan Sharansky. Kusnezow became a “maverick” and “troublemaker” even for the RSJ political elite. This did not affect his popularity among the Russian readers in Israel. Kusnezow considers the Russian Aliyah of the 1990's already today as a success, despite some unsolved conflicts:

“It’s a real advantage for the Russian Jews that they have come here in such a great number, and that gives them the power to set higher aims than other immigrant groups. And of course they have natural demands, like housing, labor market, professional specialization and so on – and these are quite natural demands. It is also natural that the host society tends to resist such demands, it’s the same as in any other immigrants society around the globe. Nobody is really waiting for you, nobody wants to give you his place. (...) Never mind, Russian Jews have learned to formulate their demands in Israel, and they express them loud enough, sometimes even in a kind of hysterical tone. They know – it’s their country, a Jewish State. *And this is, by the way, a great difference to those Russian Jews who emigrated, for example, to Germany. There, in the middle of Europe, they will formulate their wishes and demands more moderately, and they will strive to adopt at least a part of the values, patterns and lifestyles of the host society.*”⁵⁵⁴

A prominent journalist of the younger RSJ generation in Israel is Michael Djaghinov, born in 1972 in Moscow. Djaghinov worked already as diplomatic correspondent for the Israel-based Russian TV channel “Israel plus” (“Channel 9”), but then moved to Russian RTVi where he holds the position of a presenter of the leading news analysis program. Like the journalists above, Djaghinov also strictly refuses ambitions to start a political carrier⁵⁵⁵ but is very much in favor of a consequent disengagement of state and religion in Israel.

⁵⁵³ Not so his wife Larissa Gerstein, who joined Avigdor Lieberman's party “Israel Beitenu” in the late 1990’s and then temporarily acted as Vice Mayor of Jerusalem.

⁵⁵⁴ Interview with Eduard Kusnezow in Moza Illit / Jerusalem on March 13, 2008, Emphasis O.G.

⁵⁵⁵ Michael Djaghinov said on the question whether he could imagine a political carrier for himself: “Never. I think politics as occupation totally contradicts my nature and values. I do have political views – in Israel it is almost inevitable, but I hardly think of implementing them into life.”

Djaghinov said in the expert-interview:

“I am totally convinced that religious institutions have to be separated from the secular life of the vast majority of citizens. Ben-Gurion failed to do it back in the 1950’s. [But] during the last 20 years the religious parties have become much stronger and today they hold more than 20 percent of the Knesset seats. It means that no government coalition can be formed without them. For this reason I don’t see any practical way of converting Israel into a totally secular state [by now].”⁵⁵⁶

Djaghinov presented a whole range of additional factors and problems he considers responsible for the fact that the Russian Aliyah - and Aliyah in general – has been in remarkable drop since the beginning of the 2000’s:

“There are rather obvious problems of the State of Israel: intellectual, psychological and communicative ones. Certainly the deadlock of the Arab-Israeli conflict. I’m afraid many would argue with me, but there is a strong feeling that for the majority of the Diaspora Jews living in their homeland at this particular moment would be more comfortable and safe.”

Michael Djaghinov believes that the RSJ media in Israel gained much of its importance in the course of the 1990’s just when it became clear that the Hebrew mainstream media’s trend to stigmatize and to revile the immigrants would not end before certain RSJ journalistic countermeasures. But although feeling closely connected with Russian culture, arts and mentality, Djaghinov expressed a certain skepticism towards trans-national Russian organizations.

Exactly the opposite attitude was to meet by Dmitri Feldmann, today one of the leading RSJ journalists in Germany, who settled with some of his relatives from Riga to Berlin in 1990. Together with his brother Boris, Feldmann succeeded to establish the first successful Russian language weekly for all of Germany – called “Russkij Berlin”/ “Russkaja Germanija” – in the mid-1990’s. At the same time, Feldmann became a member of the Board of the Jewish Community in Berlin and was committed there as commissary for integration for years. Though, later on he distanced himself from the JC and instead of became the European chair of the “World Congress of Russian Jews” (WCRJ).

In the book “We in Germany”, published by the WCRJ in 2007, Feldmann’s brother Boris tried to explain the disappointments of his brother in the JC of Berlin,

⁵⁵⁶ Interview with Michael Djaghinov in Jerusalem on March 12, 2008.

and his new enthusiasm for the WCRJ:

“Dima was elected to the Board of the Jewish Community in Berlin, and he wanted to achieve a lot. At that point of time we did not yet realize what the JC is in reality (...) an old-fashioned, lifeless, bureaucratic machinery that wastes money. In the course of many years the board hasn’t been able to make one ground-breaking decision, not for good and not for bad. All decisions were made after endless and useless conflicts. Dima stepped down from the board, and with the World Congress [of Russian speaking Jews] he finally got the opportunity to bring important things on the way. He really enjoys this task, and he does not enjoy privileges or dividends from this job at all. On the contrary, the job [for the WCRJ] costs a lot of time that he could normally invest in the company or in the family.”⁵⁵⁷

Dmitri Feldmann himself vehemently justified the importance of the WCRJ’s work in Germany and worldwide when saying in the interview:

“That such a congress was founded in 2002, was very much rooted in the experience of recent decades – an experience that in general, nobody really cared for the Russian speaking Jews. This has something to do with *respect, with international respect*. The world shall see that there are many Russian Jews nowadays, they continue to speak Russian, and they live in the C.I.S., but also in Israel, Europe and America. And they are a special force of their own.”⁵⁵⁸

The Feldmann brothers limit criticism of the German migration policy in “Russkij Berlin” and in “Russkaja Germanija”, but Dmitri Feldmann strives very actively for better conditions for Russian Jewish migrants in Germany by conducting political action with the WCRJ. For example, in 2004, the Berlin office of the WCRJ sent letters and petitions to all Minister Presidents in the 16 federal states of Germany to convince them to settle future RSJ immigrants straight to bigger towns - in order to change a more or less inefficient German distribution system for the newcomers.⁵⁵⁹ This petition was written at a point of time when it was already apparent that a considerable part of RSJ immigrants in Germany had failed at successfully integrating into the labor market and a more or less “disordered” internal migration had begun. Finally, the petition could not turn the general situation but it became

⁵⁵⁷ Boris Feldmann: in “Wir in Deutschland” (2007), p.39.

⁵⁵⁸ Interview with Dmitri Feldmann in Berlin on August 3, 2004. Emphasis O.G

⁵⁵⁹ About the answers, Feldmann reported, “A few of the Minister Presidents have personally answered, a few via state secretaries, and a few answers still stand out. Most of them expressed general understanding. But in principal nobody has written: ‘Yes, a good idea. We should change the distribution system.’ Sometimes I have the impression a lot is spoken about integration, but only a little is done.” Concerning the distinct support of the WCRJ also for non-Halachic Jews, Berlin office manager Larissa Syssoeva confirmed: “We have a quite different position to the Central Council of Jews in Germany and its communities.” (Interview with Dmitri Feldmann, Berlin, August 3, 2004; Interview with Larissa Syssoeva, Berlin, April 26, 2007)

clear that the WCRJ would crystallize as a very resolute lobby for all RSJ immigrants, including non-Halachic Jews and those who are Jewish according to the Halacha but consider themselves as secular and search for community building outside the synagogue. Feldmann emphasized that only some of the immigrants have, indeed, found their way into the religious synagogue communities:

“The Central Council counts 90,000 Russian Jews in Germany who are registered in the local Jewish communities, but that means they count only registered members. I consider this questionable because not all of the Russian Jews have to be members. According to our own estimates there are about 300,000 Russian Jews in Germany.”⁵⁶⁰

While Dmitri Feldmann and his compatriots from the WCRJ concentrate on the general social integration of RSJ newcomers in Germany and organize and support national and international Jewish festivals of arts (like the yearly talent show “Golden Chanukah”), Michail Goldberg, the Editor-in-chief of the “Evreyskaya Gazeta”, is openly questioning the current priorities in the work of the (veteran dominated) Central Council of Jews in Germany. Goldberg believes that the work of this strongest Jewish umbrella organization, which was founded in 1950 and is the uncontested first point of contact for German top politicians for 60 years, must also be transparent and understandable for every Russian Jewish immigrant. In the summer of 2004, the “Evreyskaya Gazeta” conducted a poll among its German-wide, Russian speaking readership, asking them to elaborate their opinion about the current work of the Central Council and presented results that are hardly found in any other medium in Germany. According to the poll of the “Evreyskaya Gazeta”, almost 90 percent of the respondents declared that they “do not feel” the work of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, and that they lack more information about the work of the Council. Editor-in-chief Goldberg commented: “I can recognize the field where the Central Council is really active: it fights anti-Semitism. Whether at the right place or not – that’s a different question. But the fight against anti-Semitism is the only stage where you can see it continuously. And this is not enough.”⁵⁶¹

⁵⁶⁰ Interview with Dmitri Feldmann in Berlin on August 3, 2004.

⁵⁶¹ Interview with Michail Goldberg in Berlin on July 28, 2004.

Like Dmitri Feldmann, Michail Goldberg is also missing more respect for the RSJ newcomers, and he sees a need for rethinking in both groups – German non-Jews and veteran Jews. Concerning veteran Jewish leadership’s attitudes towards the RSJ immigrants, Goldberg took a drastic illustrative comparison:

“They [veteran JC leadership, O.G.] have a problem to accept the immigrants just as they are as *Russian Jews*. But can you imagine, for example, a home for handicapped, where the staff complains that all the inmates are handicapped? I hardly think so. But if so, then you need to search for a new job. And if you work in a [Jewish] community, where 80 or 90 percent are Russian speaking Jews, it’s just necessary that your attitude changes in a certain way.”⁵⁶²

Goldberg, born in 1962 in Kiev and originally a construction engineer, worked for years in the real estate branch before switching to journalism. He describes himself as a “non-religious person, but interested in Judaism”. He and the whole editorial office of the “*Evreyskaya Gazeta*” follow a rather pragmatic style of reporting, trying to cover Jewish pluralism in Germany and in the RSJ community, at the same time dedicating a considerable part of the paper to developments in the Former Soviet Union and to Russian culture, history and the arts. With regard to the Jewish communities in Germany today and their current disparity between “German leadership” and “Russian basis” Goldberg commented:

“Many of our immigrants are members of the Jewish communities, and are interested in religion, but are not interested in an observant life style. That’s a thing the community heads have to live with, and the crucial point is, how is one intended to shape future community life? And another crucial question is: Are the people made to serve the religion, or is religion there to help the people? I think that those religious movements which find the best answers, and this can theoretically be even Chabad Lubavitch, those movements will have a clear advantage.”⁵⁶³

Considered an established monthly, the “*Evreyskaya Gazeta*” offers an unusually large amount of space for debates and reader’s letters; space where immigrants vent their own sorrows and feelings, describe their experiences from overall Germany, discuss Jewish community issues, but also, initiated by individual intellectuals, pose questions of identity. Without a doubt, unvarnished coverage of unsolved community conflicts and frank criticism of the Jewish umbrella organizations and of German

⁵⁶² Interview with Michail Goldberg in Berlin on July 28, 2004. Emphasis O.G.

⁵⁶³ Interview with Michail Goldberg in Berlin on July 28, 2004.

migration policy are easiest to find in the “Evreyskaya Gazeta”.⁵⁶⁴ Critical observers object that the “JG” is rather addressing the median age and the elderly groups of Russian Jews in Germany, while the young generation would prefer Internet sites and/or German language media.

For Germany we can conclude that Russian Jewish journalists as well as a few intellectuals have in a certain way taken over the actual tasks of politicians and lobby groups that normally serve the distinct interests of RSJ immigrants in Israel or in the USA. When comparing leading Russian Jewish journalists in Israel and Germany who run and publish in *Russian language media*, it comes out that in both countries they are highly politicized, without becoming politicians, and at the same time closely connected with issues of the whole RSJ population. For example, Mark Galesnik (“Beseder?”) consciously combines political satire with traditions of Russian humor but insists on the main function of opinion making. Michael Djaghinov (rtvi) represents the self-confident young RSJ journalists who push for a clear demarcation between politics and religion, and he pleads for a realistic assessment of Israel-Diaspora relations. Dmitri Feldmann (“Russkaja Germanija”) serves overall Russian readerships interests in Germany, and helps immigrants to regain their self-respect. Michail Goldberg has made the “Evreyskaya Gazeta” into the mouthpiece of Russian Jews in Germany, opening wide platforms for discussion on culture and identity, but also openly addressing dissatisfaction to the German Jewish umbrella organizations.

It goes without saying that the scope of action for leading RSJ journalists in Israel remains greater in both pushing topics on the national agenda as well as in enhancing internal debates within the RSJ community. Russian language outlets in Germany have a much smaller radius of action, but can set strong impacts locally, and in inner-Jewish issues. This was the case, for example, in autumn 2003, when the monthly “Evreyskaya Gazeta” and the weekly “Russkij Berlin” acted more or less as direct competitors in their support for favorite candidate lists for the Jewish community board elections in Berlin. The election campaigns got more space than

⁵⁶⁴ “JG”-commentator Pavel Polian was one of the very few prominent figures who openly opposed in January 2005 the new, rather restricted regulations for Russian Jewish immigration to Germany. This says a lot about the important role of RSJ print media like “Evreyskaya Gazeta”, but also about the aloofness of German mainstream media to comment conflict loaded issues between Jews and German politics today.

usual in German (Jewish) print media, as obvious attempts to mobilize a Russian speaking majority for certain candidates.⁵⁶⁵

Such activities have nurtured certain fears among veteran members that Jewish community life could easily become a plaything of political interests, which would be especially unfavorable with respect to the fact that in some Jewish communities “Germans” and “Russians” have almost no common interests. Thus, Judith Kessler, Editor-in-chief of the Jewish community journal “jüdisches berlin”, stated:

“The ‘non-Russians’ and the ‘Russians’ have, in fact, little in common. They go to different restaurants, they have different networks, and the few things in common which can be found can be counted on one hand. (...) It’s really a different world – and it’s considered so from both sides. And I cannot see serious efforts to unite both groups. My impression is that they also do not really intend to do so – from both sides not, at least not the median and older generation. And you could seriously ask the question why should they?”⁵⁶⁶

However, in Germany, there are no indications that the Russian-Jewish media understand themselves as a kind of corrective to biased reporting by host media comparable to those in Israel. Mikhail Goldberg stated that the established media “is relatively often reporting on Russian-Jewish immigration, but sometimes, I would say in a very embellished way. There are a lot of problems which do not or very seldom become a topic of reporting – or which are eliminated deliberately. These – more-or-less ignored – problems are connected first of all with the economic integration [of the immigrants, O.G.] and with internal developments in the Jewish communities.”⁵⁶⁷

The impression would be wrong that the interest of leading RSJ publicists in Germany is limited to immigrants’ problems and the situation in the local Jewish communities. Among the relevant interview partners I’ve met also publicists and intellectuals who consciously attempt to build bridges to the German public and society. Evgueni Berkovitch, a computer scientist from Moscow, now living in Hanover (West Germany) and – apart from his IT job – running an international web

⁵⁶⁵ Concerning the election campaigns at the advent of the JC Board elections in Berlin, conducted by the “Evreyskaya Gazeta” and by “Russkij Berlin” in the autumn of 2003, see: Jüdische Allgemeine, November 27, 2003, p.17.

⁵⁶⁶ Interview with Judith Kessler in Berlin on October 27, 2003.

⁵⁶⁷ Interview with Michail Goldberg in Berlin on July 28, 2004.

portal “Zametki po Jevrejskoj istorii” (“Notes on Jewish history”), is studying also on specific German history issues. One of his favorite topics has been the history of the German aristocratic family Quandt. Another topic of Berkovitch's studies has been “German Heroes and the Righteous” in the times of the Third Reich; people fighting the Nazi regime and supporting persecuted Jews. He has also written a book with the title “Banalnost dobra” (“The Banality of Good”⁵⁶⁸). While Berkovitch can be seen as one of the Russian Jewish intellectuals aiming to connect immigrants and the host society by rethinking history he also emphasizes the great intellectual potential that Germany is gaining at least by the second generation of the RSJ immigrants. He also expressed frustration about the new regulations for Russian Jewish immigration passed by the government in 2005 which have reduced the annual rate of Russian newcomers drastically. In this context, Berkovitch critically described the situation by saying that

“all Jewish kids who came with the Russian Jewish immigrant families are studying now and all of them are getting an ambitious job. (...) Jews are less than 1 percent of the total German population but their share of university students is much higher. And that is the main capital that Germany gets from the Jewish immigrant side. But these advantages coming with the second and third generation, they are simply not realized by the German politicians.”⁵⁶⁹

Berkovitch is questioning whether the “critical mass” of Jewish immigrants has indeed entered the country to make sure a continuation or even revival of organized Jewish life in Germany, and the much more restrictive regulations for RSJ immigration since 2005 make to demographic balance of Jewry in Germany again a burning issue.

⁵⁶⁸ In a certain way the title of Berkovitch's book sounds like an antithesis to “The banality of evil” - a phrase coined by Hannah Arendt and incorporated as sub-title in her book “Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil” (1963). The book is based on Arendt's impressions of the Eichmann-Trial in 1961 in Jerusalem and describes Adolf Eichmann, one of the leading Nazis responsible for the Holocaust, as a characterless individual, unable to differentiate between good and evil. Arendt's thesis says that the great evils in history generally, and the Holocaust in particular, were rather executed by ordinary people who accepted the premises of their state, accepting their policy as “normal”. Indeed, many historians conclude that the Nazis' crimes in their extreme dimension were only possible because of great indifference in the majority German population.

⁵⁶⁹ Interview with Evgueni Berkovitch in Hanover on November 4, 2007.

Chapter VIII: Crossing Borders – RSJ elites building a multi-cultural society⁵⁷⁰

When considering RSJ social activities that extend beyond their own community, it's easy to find that in both countries of destination at least some Russian Jews are very open to intercultural encounter and exchange. The activities of these groups are not limited to newcomer-host-relations but do also include close contacts to additional minorities and cultures. In such a context, fragmented identities might develop that could serve new concepts of social formation far away from “melting pot” and “mosaic society” in Israel and from “Leitkultur” in Germany. Some RSJ interviewees from both countries showed a high motivation and verve in such intercultural commitment. Though, since this work is based on a purely qualitative study, I wasn't in the position to conclude to what extent such attitudes and activities are *typical* for RSJ communities or for the RSJ elites.

Originally, multi-cultural contacts and activities were *not* a concrete item of the interview questionnaire. Some of the interviews in Israel and Germany turned to multicultural issues especially after asking the interviewees to assign themselves to the four predetermined types of preferred identity (Russian Jew in Israel/Germany; Russian in Israel/Germany; Jew in Israel/Germany with Russian background; Israeli Jew/German Jewish with Russian background). Some disliked this classification, rated it as too narrow and/or declared themselves to adherents of “world culture”, “Western culture”, or as “Europeans”. For some, intercultural encounter had obviously an important *social* function, and it came about that they were ready to invest and to contribute for multiculturalism in their respective surroundings.

Yuri Goldmann, an RSJ immigrant from a medium-sized Russian town, psychologist and PhD student in Jerusalem, today living in Ma'ale Adumim, sees himself as secular and neither totally anchored in Russian nor in Israeli culture.

“I prefer the Western culture, but I am very open to multicultural influences; for example, now I enjoy listening to Greek folk music. But, if you ask of me to choose only between the Russian and the Israeli cultures, I prefer the Russian, because I think that little is done in Israel to foster the *secular* culture, music, literature, which is in Israel in an underdeveloped state, especially as compared to the high numbers of immigrant artists of international level living here.”⁵⁷¹

⁵⁷⁰ The classification as “elites” does not fit for all four persons briefly portrayed in this chapter.

⁵⁷¹ Interview with Yuri Goldmann (pseudonym) in Jerusalem on September 3rd, 2003.

In the late 1990's, Yuri Goldmann had been committed to the left-wing movement "Dor Shalom" ("Generation of Peace"), helped Ethiopian immigrants to learn Hebrew, and he describes himself, in general, as very interested in meeting other people and "to learn from them". At the same time he regretted that Israeli host society did not take greater use of Russian culture:

"Compared to the quantity of [RSJ] artists that came, the Israeli society didn't give them - *but more important, primarily itself* - enough opportunities to develop culture and art. I know some famous artists from Russia who are still working as cleaners (...) I think, in general the change in culture and art, but also in daily life, culture is not proportional to the quantity of Russian Jewish immigrants which came in."⁵⁷²

Goldmann does *not* distinctly separate between top level arts and everyday culture, and he grants culture a general important role in the process of integration. "The way of bringing different cultures together, to promote exchange - this could bring some good results [of integration]", believes Goldmann. Currently, however, he feels not much readiness in Israeli society to open itself for more cultural exchange and socio-cultural encounter, and even fears a certain cultural militarization of the Israeli civil society. Goldmann criticized:

"As the saying goes, when the *cannons* speak, the muses are silent. Unfortunately, among the Israeli policy-makers there are too many people who, rather irrationally, prefer the songs of *cannons* to those of *artists*. In addition, if we take the culture as the repertoire of peoples' everyday activities, the military orientation caused negative social phenomena, such as machismo: to show off your physical strength, your muscles, to behave abruptly, not to be modest are the bon ton in Israel. I am convinced it is time to change this culture in both of its senses."⁵⁷³

As Goldmann said, he is eager to contribute and to invest into a more multi-cultural society but on the other hand, he feels unsure about planning his future life in Israel: "I have been thinking many times of resettlement to a more world-open place."

Gregori Pantijelew, a former musicologist from Moscow, came to the north-western German city of Bremen in 1994 and works now as freelance lecturer for Eastern European Music History, as manager of theater groups and sometimes as music conductor. Pantijelew says that the majority of his friends in Bremen are Germans, but he has built contacts in various groups and networks. Just like

⁵⁷² Interview with Yuri Goldmann (pseudonym) in Jerusalem on September 3rd, 2003. Emphasis O.G.

⁵⁷³ Interview with Yuri Goldmann (pseudonym) in Jerusalem on September 3rd, 2003. Emphasis O.G.

Goldmann in Jerusalem, Pantijelew believes that cultural exchange has a very important meaning for mutual integration processes. As a board member of the Jewish community in Bremen, he organizes cultural events in cooperation with the Adult Educational Center in Bremen and the JC “that should give immigrants an understanding of German arts and music.” Pantijelew has also no distinct preference for any culture, but instead is “searching for cultural *quality*. If I am interested in an exhibition with paintings of Ilja Repin, then I am ready to drive to Groningen. And equally I do the same when there is a staging by George Tabori in Neumünster or Bern - then I’ll also drive there.”⁵⁷⁴ Additionally, and with support of the (state funded) Johann-Wolfgang-Goethe-Institute, Pantijelew has initiated an inter-cultural working group which brings together non-Jewish Germans, German Jews, and immigrants as well. The working group should help to reduce mutual (cultural) prejudices and to enlarge acceptance of different mentalities and cultural otherness. But as Gregori Pantijelew stresses, “another important aim is to deal with the German history – and that’s why the participation of descendants of former offenders and former victims [under the Nazis] is so important. We mainly work according to the TRT method of the Israeli psychology professor Dan Bar-On.”⁵⁷⁵

Grigori Pantijelew, who is obviously very much interested in German culture and arts, but also in preserving Russian culture and to gain more cultural inspirations from different places in Europe, is trying to contribute to a better understanding of very different population groups in his new town of residence. As a Jew and JC member he sees a necessity to push historical reworking if mutual cultural learning shall succeed. He is convinced that cultural rapprochement can work between hosts and immigrants, Germans and Russians, Jews and non-Jews, also in the country of the offenders.

Igor Ladyshenki, the above quoted Russian-Jewish psychotherapist in Berlin (and former chief physician in Moscow), described his individual development in

⁵⁷⁴ Interview with Gregori Pantijelew in Bremen on May 13, 2003. Emphasis O.G.

⁵⁷⁵ The German-Jewish born psychologist and researcher Dan Bar-On developed the method of TRT (“To Reflect and Trust”) for working groups where either descendants from offenders or descendants from victims come together and try – by narrative work and self reflection – to overcome seemingly insurmountable interpersonal barriers. The methods of Professor Dan Bar-On have also been applied in working groups where Israelis and Palestinians or enemy groups from Northern Ireland and from South Africa met.

Germany as successful and satisfactory and that of his friends who also moved here:

“Our immigrants become part of the social elites now. It’s obvious in the media, but also in the academic sphere. I know compatriots in so many faculties now, whether as professors, as second professors or as scientific assistants. I also know that my *compatriots – Jews and Aussiedlers* – have found their place in other professional fields, even in the criminal investigation department and in the military. Today, you can also hear the Russian language in administrative offices, ministries and in public libraries. And our people are doing a very good job as interpreters.”⁵⁷⁶

Interestingly, Igor Ladyshenski was counting Jews *and* Aussiedlers (German Ethnic Repatriates) as “our immigrants” and thus expresses close bonds between both groups just as former “Russians”. At a later point of the interview he presented a yellow pages book in Russian language, published for the district Berlin-Brandenburg, and he commented:

“Just look what a variety you can find here: doctors, arts, companies – and everything in Russian language. You can also find such phone books in Düsseldorf and Frankfurt am Main (...) Of course, in these phone books you cannot find a distinction between Jews and non-Jews, but believe me, the Jews are very much present there (...) That means that the Jews that have come to Germany, they are proud to be Jews, and happy to enjoy a free development here, without the feeling to be threatened by anti-Semitism.”⁵⁷⁷

Ladyshenski himself personifies that type of RSJ immigrant who developed a distinct Russian-Jewish-German hyphenated identity from the very beginning:

“My mother tongue is Russian. I am proud to have the Russian culture. But I am also proud that I know German culture – and sometimes even better than the Germans (...) We do not have a real difference concerning Schiller and Goethe. And the books of Feuchtwanger, I had already read them in Russian language during my youth.”⁵⁷⁸

It was then no surprise at all, that Igor Ladyshenski described his closer circle of friends as a “big, colorful group – Russians, Germans, but Turkish as well.”

Emilia Abramova, a dynamic sociologist in her mid-40’s born and raised in Moldavia, and now living and working in Tel Aviv, has become more and more interested in inter-cultural issues, when doing culture-related projects for further

⁵⁷⁶ Interview with Igor Ladyshenski in Berlin on May 27, 2008. Emphasis O.G.

⁵⁷⁷ Interview with Igor Ladyshenski in Berlin on May 27, 2008.

⁵⁷⁸ Interview with Igor Ladyshenski in Berlin on May 27, 2008.

professional training in Israel. As she said, in general she tends with her mentality to inter-cultural openness:

“If I take my private contacts - besides the family - I think it’s mixed. When I started further qualification in a School for Educational Leadership, this was the real place to discover new worlds. (...) I came from the sociological education, and others came from different fields. It was like a picture on Israeli society with so different ethnic groups. A few of them came from Teman, from Morocco, from Bulgaria.”⁵⁷⁹

Soon after Aliyah, Abramova realized inter-cultural and inter-ethnic prejudices across the Israeli society that according to her hinder a more tolerant and flexible company. Not least as a scholar with inter-cultural pre-experiences, Abramova is highly interested to find ways out of the dilemma:

“I remember when I was a teacher in 1995 at the School for Educational Leadership of the Mandel Foundation I already had the *chuzpe* to teach sociology in a still low level of Hebrew – but in these 5-month-courses one month was dedicated to cultural topics. In my course I introduced a very actual Israeli movie, a story about a pair of newcomers. These pair of newcomers spoke Polish, and they met two Arabs, and in the movie you see the Arabs talking: ‘Oh, all the Jews here, we don’t like them’. Then you see the newcomers, these two Polish immigrants, and they start to say: ‘Oh, all these Temanis here, we don’t like them. And at the end you see two Temanis who think the Polish are Russians and start to say: ‘Oh, all these Russians here...’ This is exactly what we experience in front of our doors, we started to discuss each of the groups in the seminar.”⁵⁸⁰

When asked for imaginable ways for more interaction and communication between the distinct cultural and ethnic groups in Israel, Emilia Abramova stressed a

“necessary improvement of the educational system (...) There must be also more efforts to bring the several cultures closer to each other. (...) I would try to educate the children to be more open-minded towards other cultures and ethnic groups, to practice more tolerance and to be more modest. This, I think, could have positive implications on immigration processes, as well.”⁵⁸¹

It was remarkable that the four personalities briefly portrayed here were distinguished by a huge appreciation for their own culture of origin (Russian/Moldavian) and were eager to import some of it into the cultural development of the overall society. Aside from their appreciation for their own

⁵⁷⁹ Interview with Emilia Abramov (pseudonym) in Tel Aviv on September 9, 2003.

⁵⁸⁰ Interview with Emilia Abramova (pseudonym) in Tel Aviv on September 9, 2003.

⁵⁸¹ Interview with Emilia Abramova (pseudonym) in Tel Aviv on September 9, 2003.

culture and the interest in those of the others, these interviewees considered intercultural exchange as an important factor to stabilize society and to prevent alienation and disintegration. Seen from this angle, their *cultural* commitment in Israeli and German society can be considered as *political* commitment as well.

Chapter IX: Conclusions

This study has dealt with Russian Jewish elites in Israel and Germany, exploring their degree of integration into the respective host societies, their development of a new self-image and their possible role in Russian (Jewish) community building.

In general it was to explore whether after having passed the initial stage of integration RSJ elites aim to preserve elements of their former cultural identity, to what extent they combine it with elements of host culture and what importance Jewish religion and tradition might play in this context. It was furthermore of interest how Russian Jewish emigrants in case they strongly preserve elements of Russian culture and language would also aim to form transnational ties and networks. Finally, it was to clarify what specific contributions the RSJ elite would give not only to the overall RSJ immigrants' community, possibly as a kind of new leadership, but also to the host societies and to modern Jewry in general. Most of the persons under focus belonged to elites that had already achieved professional success and outstanding positions in their fields of expertise in the Former Soviet Union and its successor states. The study was based on qualitative research, most of all on 35 expert interviews each in Israel and Germany, and to a smaller extent on participant observation.

As described in the introductory chapter, Jews in the USSR faced enormous difficulties to enter any elites of the Soviet society, especially in politics, diplomacy, bureaucracy, and the military not to say the top positions in science, economy and communication. Thus, search for more refined means of subdivision of respective elite categories was necessary, and then to elaborate from anew where Soviet and post-Soviet Jews had found opportunities to fit in. I found the right means in Suzanne Keller's model of "strategic elites" (1963) that stands in line with general theories of "functional" elites (Mannheim 1935, Stammer 1951, Dahrendorf 1961, Dreitzel 1962) and emphasizes the existence and necessity of heterogeneous, pluralistic elites for modern societies - competing each other, but also interdependent and with specific functions. Keller differentiates between external elites, those who are to be found in the center of political and economical power, and internal elites, primarily creating and preserving cultural and social values and caring for latent pattern maintenance. This group of elites encompasses, according to Keller, first of all,

intellectuals, religious authorities and artists. We know from historical research that Soviet Jews were strongly present among intellectuals, scholars and artists in the USSR, even if being limited in their sphere of action, not to speak of societal influence

Not a few of those Soviet Jews who could be counted to the “internal elites” of the USSR and to those groups perceived as the “Soviet intelligentsija”, joined the great exodus of the early 1990, while others remained and looked for their chance of self-realization in realms that were more or less blocked to Jews under the Soviet regime. For the first time for about 70 years, Jews also had the chance to enter political elites or to develop businesses, and in the free economy of Russia some Jews succeeded to enter the top. However, many highly qualified Jews moved to Israel, the United States and also to Germany. Many observers noted a Russian(-Jewish) “brain drain”, and it was of special interest to what extent the countries of destinations would be able to turn the huge intellectual and professional potential of Russian émigrés into their own “brain gain”. In the context of this study it was of special relevance whether they would (re-)establish strong socio-cultural networks on a local, national and trans-national level. Previous research suggested that the RSJ communities outside the FSU are dense, well organized, strongly oriented at Russian culture and language but not at all separatist or marginalized.

Former studies on Russian Jewish emigration had also revealed that a considerable part of the immigrants sets a high value on the opinion of scientists, publicists and intellectuals of the own group, trusting them in a particular way for launching the interest of the whole community and being competent of forming spiritual leadership, and this was ultimately confirmed here. Such elitist groups were often appreciated by the interviewees as being “intelligentsija” in the sense of academically qualified and highly culturally educated, predestined for leadership, opinion making, creating and preserving Russian culture and – in the case of Israel – even for political innovation.

While the concrete understandings of the Russian “intelligentsija” often appear as vague⁵⁸², there was a general trust and support for co-ethnic *elites*, and the more exciting question was to what extent RSJ elites are actually willing to play a leading role in RSJ community building and to act as mediator between the RSJ

⁵⁸² Oswald (2000).

group and the host societies. Furthermore, it was to find out whether Russian Jewish elites – if *indeed* interested in keeping strong ethno-cultural bonds to the migrant community – are also attempting to build and maintain transnational ties.

Formation of new collective identities is not only dependant on internal group dynamics but also on the intensity of encounter with the host society, and with the host elites. Such encounters are like an arena for power struggles and competition for resources, but also processes of cultural fusion or the other way around, processes of cultural foreclosure. Naturally, each host society has its own concepts and ideas about how to integrate and to include immigrants. The more corporately and independently an immigrant group acts, the greater the chances of political participation, social upward mobility and co-designing the host society obviously are.

It is uncontested that the Russian Jews in Israel, Germany and other parts of the RSJ Diaspora have the resources and competency to insert themselves successfully in the social and economical realms within a relatively short time span. This is confirmed in previous empirical studies in Israel, Germany, the USA and other countries, in the low rate of re-migration and second migration and also in many statements of my interview partners in Israel and Germany stating a successful integration process *in general*.

Though, this does not say much about the tension between original expectations and dreams and final fulfillments and final letdowns among both the immigrants and the veterans. The results of social and economic integration into the host societies are, as we have seen in chapter IV, quite different. An overwhelming majority of the RSJ immigrants in Israel has been absorbed into the labor market, but only a minority is working in their original occupation. The situation in Germany appears to be much more complicated. Here the unemployment rate of the RSJ immigrants remained unusually high. It would be probably worth another study just to assess the cost-use-relations that apply to having a mass of highly-qualified long-term-unemployed like the Russian Jews, compared with an alternative model of having had huge initial investments for scholar programs or “technical incubators” similar to Israel, but then with potentially great outputs in the economy and science. But beyond some panel discussions and formal task forces, the opportunity to adopt successful Israeli models of labor market absorption has probably never been

seriously contemplated at the relevant offices, and also the German media have shown little interest to cover this absurdity of brain waste and devaluation of human resources.⁵⁸³

Finally, many Russian Jews in Germany are lacking basic conditions that would enable them to play a much greater role in public and political life in Germany (citizenship, active and passive voting rights). *Körber* (2005) writes in this context of a general German minority policy of social inclusion with a simultaneous political exclusion.⁵⁸⁴

However, the much more successful economic integration of the first generation of RSJ immigrants in Israel has not resulted in remarkably stronger ties of their co-ethnic networks, compared with those in Germany. The Russian community in *both* countries is quite strong. The request of Russian culture and art, Russian products on the “ethnic market” and also Russian media is unbowed, and the community itself is, as described in chapter 5, very much backed by a whole range of cultural centers, welfare and self help organizations, professional associations, inventor’s clubs and – at least in Israel – political platforms. Having such a sufficient structure at their side, many Russian Jews confront the veteran population and also host institutions with a hefty dose of self confidence, in no way intended to undergo full assimilation. The structure of the RSJ communities in Israel and Germany as well as their attitudes expressed in former studies and also in the expert interviews analyzed here exactly fit the strategy of *integration* in Berry’s fourfold model of acculturation (Berry 1990) - instead of assimilation, separation or marginalization -, and there’s also no doubt that the RSJ immigrants perceive integration as a process of mutual convergence and reciprocity.

Though, rather surprising in this study was the enormous politicization, especially of those immigrants who were already successful in upward mobility. In both countries, RSJ immigrants very much cherished the contributions that were obviously given from the whole group to the host societies (scientific achievements, educational innovations, cultural inspirations, or stabilizing demographic profiles),

⁵⁸³ German media did not produce negative stereotypes and clichés on the RSJ immigrants with a comparable intensity as it happened in the Hebrew language press in Israel during the 1990’s, but at the same time also omitted to frequently present realistic reports on the immigrants, their background, profile, worldview and practical problems to fit into German society.

⁵⁸⁴ *Körber* (2005), p.53.

and this obviously works as an additional argument to reject any host attempts to pressure them into more social adjustment. However, the degree of politicization as well as the radius of political action is much bigger among the Russian Jews in Israel. Hence the RSJ elites assume much more responsibility for the overall RSJ community and fight for RSJ interests even in the national parliament but face in turn much bigger challenges also as *citizens* of the Jewish state. Despite a widespread trend to secularism, many Russian Jews consider themselves as national patriots in Israel, probably more than many veteran Jews. In Germany, those immigrants who join the local JCs, do also show a lot of pride in their Jewishness. However, parts of the RSJ elites consider it a matter of course that *their* Jewry is closely connected with elements of Russian tradition.

It seems exactly this self-concept what is openly or covertly refused by host elites which might have expected at least a partial acquisition of Zionist ideology or acceptance for the “melting pot concept” in Israel and of religious commitment in the Jewish communities in Germany. Russian Jews, however, follow their own self concept, consequently maintain bilingual and bicultural patterns at least in the first generation, and when it comes to cultural clashes the RSJ communities are not willing to back down. The process of RSJ ethno-cultural self-formation as described, among others, by *Al-Haj* (2004), *Ben Rafael* et al. (2006) and *Leshem* (2007) is consciously supported by the RSJ elites, and also by some politicians with RSJ background in Israel.

Though, there are also learning processes on all sides. This study reveals that a considerable part of the RSJ elites in Israel saw “ethnic politics” as a useful means or “necessary evil” during the 1990’s, when some Russian problems seemed to be constantly ignored by the political establishment, but not anymore. The decline of Nathan Sharansky’s party “Israel ba Aliyah”, founded in 1996 and quite successful for a couple of years, but then negated by the RSJ electorate, is a clear proof for this trend of rethinking. Today, most Russian Jewish elites in Israel seem to consider a political party with a focus on exclusively integration politics as too narrow and not up-to-date.⁵⁸⁵

⁵⁸⁵ This attitude is not at odds with a partly strong support for Avigdor Lieberman’s party “Israel Beitanu”, dealing with a lot of Russian issues, but working with a national agenda and very open for other political forces as well.

At the same time, structural elements of the RSJ community remain very strong, and immigrants' hedge sedulous ambitions to preserve and impart Russian cultural heritage. Russian theaters, libraries, schools and pre-schools, literature and chess clubs, scientific associations, intellectual clubs, cinemas are popular as before and guarantee a vibrant ethno-cultural milieu which provides both a backing of immigrants' demands but also a world of culture and inspiration not at all seen inferior to that in Israel, Germany and other countries of the Diaspora. The shapes of Russian Jewish self-organization may gradually differ, but also show a lot of commonalities, as I could conclude from the interviews especially with theater directors and (socially committed) scientists in both countries. It is interesting to note that Russian Jews in Germany are also willing and able to insert projects and programs of Russian culture and arts in the regular works of local synagogue communities, not least encouraged by their huge number of members and visitors.

Of course, such vibrant Russian cultural activities among Jews in Israel and Germany are also fed by close connections to friends, relatives and cultural projects in the Former Soviet Union, by regular visits in both directions and by a certain cultural market. We might confidently conclude that there is a Russian Jewish *transnational Diaspora from below* on the rise, as it is conceptualized by Guarnizo and Smith (1999) although there remain unique characteristics in comparison with other transnational Diasporas. Indeed, RSJ emigrants from the former Soviet Union have more or less completely opted for such countries of destination that are considered attractive economic centers while leaving (at the time) economically weak, peripheral ones.⁵⁸⁶ On the other hand, the economic gap between the absorbing countries and the successor states of the USSR, at least Russia and the other states close to Europe, seems nowadays not that serious to expect a constant need for migration or constant need for one-way-remittances. Many Russian Jews with high qualifications and good mobility (especially the younger) have multiple choices for places to live and work now and in the future. The increasing mobility of the "transnationals" is already visible in the tens of thousands (mostly young) Russian Jews who have re-moved from Israel to Moscow/St. Petersburg for professional reasons; for example, experts in computer science. Another tens of thousands of highly qualified RSJs live their lives as permanent commuters between Israel and

⁵⁸⁶ Glick-Schiller, Basch and Szanton-Blanc (1992, 1994).

Russia, gaining lucrative job offers in both countries and ambitious to live in *both* cultures. Others have moved – in a stage of second migration - to North America, and all this indicates that especially the outstanding highly qualified Russian Jews migrants (most of all scientists⁵⁸⁷) do not really fit in the classical concepts of transnational Diaspora.

Russian Jews might continue to fit Sheffer's (2003) definition of an "ethnic Diaspora" that marks it as social-political formation with the same ethno-national origin, maintaining strong bonds to the country of origin but also to co-ethnic formations with the same profile in other countries of emigration. Though, in most recent studies, Sheffer (2009) speaks of ethno-national-religious Diasporas, a term that might overcharge the Russian Jews since not all of them would assign them exclusively to *one* nation, and, as we have seen, religion plays only a marginal role in current local, national and trans-national networks of most of them.⁵⁸⁸

The material of this study did not sufficiently reveal why some Russian Jews are so willing to live out their ethno-cultural peculiarities in own institutional structures, paralleling existing Jewish ones, beginning with split-offs from Jewish communities in Eastern Germany⁵⁸⁹ including their own professional associations in Israel, up to the formation of the World Congress of Russian Speaking Jews (WCRJ) which has declared the support of Russian Jews and their cultural requirements as a first priority. At international gatherings of the WCRJ today one can meet deputies of very different national parliaments (Russia, Israel, the Baltic States, Ukraine, even

⁵⁸⁷ Especially outstanding in this context is the phenomenon of the so called "Russian scientific diaspora". Zharenova (2002) describes emigrated scholars from Russia as a "community of Russian speaking scientists who emigrated from the FSU and continue research activities abroad. They cope with similar integration problems and as a result seek to maintain relations with each other, as well as with colleagues, friends and relatives living in the Fatherland." For such groups, science might become the connecting transnational link. (Zharenova 2002, quoted in: Yelenevskaya/Fialkova (2009), p. 614.

⁵⁸⁸ For example, a religious Georgian or Azerbaijani Jewish emigrant living in Petach Tikvah might have little in common with an emigrated intellectual Muscovite now residing and working in Chicago. At the same time, a Russian Jew from Ukraine who has undergone religious revival (Chasara be Tschuwa) and lives in Berlin, will have a complete different impression of Israel as her religious motherland than a secular, non-Halachic Russian Jewish computer expert, permanently commuting between Haifa and St. Petersburg.

⁵⁸⁹ In several towns of East Germany, where a few hundred Russian Jewish immigrants make up the overwhelming majority of the Jewish community, some Russian Jews recently aimed to spin-off their own Jewish communities, officially emphasizing their willingness to establish a community that fits their preference for a special Jewish congregation much more than the established ones. Since the Jewish communities in Germany are mainly funded by the State and such spin-offs usually cause dissent regarding future distributions of funding, some of the arising conflicts ended up in district courts or even in a federal court, for example in the city of Potsdam.

the USA) who are involved in completely different political contexts and issues but still feel close (trans-national) bonds by their Jewishness *and* their Russian cultural background. Financial backing by some Russian Jewish businessmen as well as spiritual support by the Chabad Lubavitch movement guarantees additional backing for the WCRJ.⁵⁹⁰

Nonetheless, it is hardly predictable to what extent this transnationalism will continue in the long run. Some studies in Israel (*Rapoport/Lomsky-Feder* 2002, *Niznick* 2003) suggest that at least the so called 1.5-generation (born in the FSU, resettled to Israel as children) partly prefers Russian peer groups and networks and to adopt cultural patterns from their parents. Although, especially those of the interviewees who were under 30 stated that they have a greater “host” or “multi-cultural” network than a Russian one, and Russian speaking networks within a local context must not automatically create interest in other RSJ centers.

Hence, extended research on Russian-Jewish transnationalism seems to make sense only if the respective cross-border activities reach greater sustainability. Longitudinal studies will become necessary to explore the durability or temporariness of current activities, not least to find out whether transnational bonds and activities are indeed reproduced in the second generation (*Luethi* 2005). *Waldinger* and *Fitzgerald* (2004) remark that in the previous studies of transnationalism “the absence of any concerted effort to analyze the relationship between immigrants’ transnationalism and receiving states and civil society actors is a fundamental omission.”⁵⁹¹ Indeed, a crucial question seems what attitudes the respective host societies will develop towards RSJ immigrants in the long run, and to what extent this will affect RSJs feelings and attitudes. It was concluded from former research, and repeatedly from this study, that Russian Jews in Israel and Germany had to stand and overcome a lot of assimilation pressure, stereotyping, prejudice and denigration even by national mainstream media throughout the 1990’s

⁵⁹⁰ From the interviews of this study it could be drawn that three driving forces are considered as crucial for the establishment of the WCRJ: a) a certain wish and demand by the Russian Jewish migrants to strengthen the Russian language and culture in the long run (via the next generations); b) ambitions of Russian Jewish oligarchs to make their mark in the Jewish world; c) interest of the Russian government to intensify its connections with Russian Jews living abroad.

⁵⁹¹ In the same article, *Waldinger* and *Fitzgerald* state that “discovering connections between villages or communities here and there hardly qualifies as transnational, as the same relationship reoccurs within almost any domestic or international migration.” See: *Waldinger* and *Fitzgerald* (2004), p. 1182.

(Becker 2001, Elias/Bernstein 2007, Remennick 2007), the latter even more intensively in Israel than in Germany. Surprisingly, many of the interview partners regretted this biased media coverage of their own group but rather pragmatically referred to “any” noise and scoop as what media needs for making money. Some interview partners explained the mushrooming of RSJ media primarily with a then necessary defense and correction of permanently biased media coverage. In fact, some immigrants’ institutions were still experiencing biased coverage in the Hebrew mainstream press even after they had long become successful in their specialty and increasing popular also in the host population. For example, the systematic broadsides against the Russian bilingual theater “Gesher” in Tel Aviv-Jaffo were obvious and can easily be traced back; other processes of non-acceptance or discrimination become visible only at second glance. In this context it was referred to interviews with high-ranking RSJ scientists who had clearly proven their outstanding skills in Israeli institutes and companies but constantly remained dependent on bureaucratic structures and on the patronage of host scientists and politicians. Aside this, it seems common practice that “Russian” experts still work for a fraction of the average Israeli wages, and the walling-off attitudes by host elites are by far not finished.

Though, it is rather unlikely that Russian Jews would fall back on a strategy of pure “ethnic politics” – as it was actually successful in the late 1990’s. However, it can be presumed that they will definitely reserve other strategies of political mobilization for themselves, similar to social movements, widely experienced in modern Western societies (Eyerman/Jamison 1991)⁵⁹² and probably at all times repeatable.

The fact that Russian Jews and RSJ elites in Germany until now have had a much smaller impact on their surroundings is not due to a lower degree of motivation or significantly less competencies. It can be assumed that Russian Jews in Germany, if equipped with comparable means and opportunities as their co-ethnics in Israel, would have undergone similar processes of politicization and lobby work.

⁵⁹² The model of political mobilization as created by the Russian Jews in the 1990's could theoretically also become attractive for the *non-Jewish* Russians in Israel, as far as they would develop a common sense as an immigrant sub-group. From the pure quantity of the sub-group (about 300,000), they have, indeed, the potential for a social or political movement, but as described in Chapter 6, at least for the moment they are lacking coherent programs as well as qualified leadership.

It should have also become clear in this study that the successful social integration of the Russian Jews in Germany comes obviously with a certain lag of time. As reflected on in previous chapters, the second generation of Russian Jews in Germany will not face the social and economic hardships of their parents to the same extent. As empirical data on the school and academic achievements of the younger cohorts are only available in Israel, a direct comparison with Germany is impossible. Though, even foreign scholars like *Remennick* (2007) reported from Jewish communities where RSJ families had sent all of their children completely to institutions of higher education. In other words, an overwhelming majority of the second generation of Russian Jews in Germany will gain professional success and then join the German middle class. At present, educational success among the RSJ youth in Germany seems to surpass that of the RSJ youth in Israel.

For the Jewish communities in Germany it will become a crucial point whether the second generation of RSJ immigrants, aside from their expected success in the educational and professional realm will also be interested in their ethnic and religious roots and ultimately in commitment in the local Jewish communities, presumed they will then be accepted and supported by the native Jews. *Cohen* (2006) concludes from former studies on Russian Jewish immigrants to Canada that increasing economic security in private life normally correlates with a growing commitment in the local Jewish community.⁵⁹³ Such an issue has never come to the test in Germany, but could become relevant within the next 20 years. The interviews with younger Russian Jews in Germany who were interested in their Jewish roots by very distinct inducements and intentions gave evidence that among the RSJ second generation a remarkable Jewish pluralism is taking shape which could enrich the Jewish scene in several spheres, and definitely not only inside the local Jewish communities. There were young interviewees who expressed a strong secularism and were completely disconnected from the local Jewish communities, but interested in Jewish history, Jewish art experiences or enthusiastically joined the learning festival movement “Limud”. Other young immigrants had taken up an observant Jewish lifestyle and were eager to commit to new Orthodox communities built up by Chabad Lubavitch and by the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation, and still others plead for a

⁵⁹³ Cohen (2006), p. 68.

concept of “intellectual religiosity”.⁵⁹⁴

Last but not least, some younger Russian Jews are visible now in German media, politics and Jewish community boards at the same time, some of them being religiously committed as well. Nonetheless, it shouldn't be overlooked that the number of Russian Jewish professional, intellectual or artistic elites who are vocal in the German public have remained, until now, relatively rare. An elderly generation of *veteran*, German speaking Jewish intellectuals is still launching major inner-Jewish debates that touch the whole Jewish community.

Inside the local Jewish communities in Germany, where the Russian Jews face a unique situation since having the overwhelming statistical majority due to the massive influx during the 1990's, immigrants and their offspring indeed aim to enter key positions and try to put through their own interests.⁵⁹⁵ Certain dynamics that affect the whole Israeli society are mapped just like a “micro-cosmos” in the local Jewish communities in Germany. There is the fight for equality of positions and of the used languages; there are the intensive debates on content and programs of community work; there are the attempts of cultural rapprochement and demarcation, and there is – last but not least – the never ending debate on “Who is a Jew?”

Religious interest, however, is not a burning issue for the majority of the Russian Jews, and is also ranked as rather minor when asked for the most important elements of current Jewish identity.⁵⁹⁶ It is then presumed that the Russian Jewish elites will set great store by other issues and values in order to strengthen inner coherence of the overall RSJ community in the long run. From the interviews in both countries it was concluded that for many Russian Jews *cultural and artistic* content plays a greater role for self realization than religious ones. Nevertheless, Russian Jews are widely using existing structures of religious communities to launch their interests and to improve their communication. It appears quite natural that RSJ immigrants who have joined Jewish communities in Toronto, Sydney and Berlin, and make up a very significant part of the total membership there now, find the easiest way to keep in touch today is through the Jewish communities.

⁵⁹⁴ However, compared with Israel, research on the cultural orientations, social/political views and integration strategies of the RSJ *youth* generation in Germany is, with very few exceptions, yet completely underdeveloped.

⁵⁹⁵ Schoeps (2009), p. 299f.

⁵⁹⁶ Epstein/Kheimets (2006), p. 127f.

However, in public life in Israel and in the Jewish communities in Germany, Russian Jews tend to combine their strong collective self-assurance as *Russian Jews* with the self demand of introducing own values and traditions into the respective surroundings. As an impressive example I had mentioned the Mofet school system in Israel that highlights main points of Russian values *and* Jewish priorities in the frame of a single pedagogical model. Almost all of the RSJ interviewees stood very much behind the idea of the Mofet school system in Israel.

Another important element of the Russian Jewish concept of collective identity seems to be the preservation of distinct values associated with Western modernity. Although the recent generations of Russian Jews grew up and were socialized in an empire more or less partitioned from the free world, they consciously remained to see themselves in the tradition of European and Western culture, from the cultural point of view but also in terms of values which might be threatened in a global context today. In this respect, Professor Alexander Voronel, the editor of the literary and political journal “22” in Tel Aviv, suspected that “today, especially European intellectuals seem to be ready to dissolve a part of the longstanding traditional Western values. But I, as a former Eastern European; I am now a very stubborn Westernized person, and I believe that it’s worth it to defend the whole canon of Western values, and if necessary, even to fight for it.”⁵⁹⁷

With the self chosen role of being carriers of European culture on other continents, Russian Jewish émigrés cross host societies of very different profile and orientation, and some irritations might appear as well. Some observers even assume that the demonstration of distinct European pride in Israel could have widened the gap to the oriental population.

Cultural conflicts, however, also cause litmus tests in Jewish communities of Germany, where the Russian-German disparities have appeared more problematic than originally expected. Though, many of the German interview partners presumed that these conflicts will be limited to the current generation, and that future community building will then be beyond cultural dissonances between “veterans” and “newcomers”, and also beyond discussions on the reality or fantasy of a “homo sovieticus”.

In sum, it can be concluded that the Russian Jews in Germany face

⁵⁹⁷ Interview with Professor Alexander Voronel in Tel Aviv on March 17th, 2008.

significantly larger problems of integration into the labor market, at least in the first generation, and suffer from the lack of opportunities for distinct political commitment. In turn, their difficulties of cultural integration appear as minor, compared with the co-ethnics in Israel.

In Israel, however, it says a lot about the strength of the RSJ community that its elites have become increasingly heterogeneous within the *first* generation. Lieberman does by far not represent the whole RSJ elite. In fact, the heterogeneity of RSJ “internal elites” is indicated by political activists of very different ideas and orientations, by a vibrant cultural scene, civil action groups, outstanding publicists and new religious leaders. Since the RSJ elites in Israel show such a great diversity, it appears normal but also difficult when some burning issues are tackled with totally different suggestions. This becomes evident especially in controversial standpoints on how to fight terrorism and how to reach peace in the Middle East.⁵⁹⁸ Though, even the intensity of discussions indicates the huge political interest.

A few of the interview partners in Israel who could thoroughly be described as intellectuals, mainly professors with a great political interest and commitment, favored the RSJ elites in Israel for having the resources and talent to form a new aristocracy or intellectual elite which could substantially contribute for a new public spirit in the overall Israeli society.⁵⁹⁹ This might rather appear as a strange pretension, but as former dissident and intellectual Rafael Nudelman rightly remarked, the Great Russian Aliyah happens in a stage when Israel faces “a crisis of

⁵⁹⁸ Thus, some of the RSJ intellectuals, standing close to left-liberal parties and human rights groups, express deep concern about current trends in the RSJ media as well as in the RSJ political scene. Thus, Russian scholar Alla Shainskaya, one of the leading figures in the Meretz Party, states that “the overwhelming majorities of the Russian-language periodicals offer shallow highly biased politicized information, express ultra-rightist, racist orientations, and engage in a long flirt with Orthodox Judaism in its worst manifestations.” For Shainskaya this does not come as a surprise, since, as she said, “these [media] as well as virtually all Russian political and social activities in Israel are sponsored and financed by ultra-rightist and religious circles. The reporting of current events to a considerable degree is shaped by political needs of new political elites from the so-called Russian parties [which] based their ideologies predominantly on the paradigm of conservative nationalism and ‘collaborated’ with one or another periodical.” (Interview with Alla Shainskaya in Tel Aviv on June 15th 2007). Left wing and liberal intellectuals among the Russian Jews, as Roman Bronfman, Alla Shainskaya and Dina Zisserman, do permanently point to the need of more institutions that could train future generations of Russian elites in democratic values, tolerance, equity and non-racism.

⁵⁹⁹ These ideas included also the development of “a new Zionism” that would stand in sharp contrast to trends of post-Zionism proclaimed by other, veteran intellectuals in Israel. Though, such a sense of mission for creating a new Zionism, as expressed by some RSJ intellectuals, was completely denied by other interviewees.

the former collective identity”.⁶⁰⁰ The Russian elites touch a crucial point of recent domestic Israeli development and are anxious to provide solutions, while the overall RSJ group is meanwhile a very integral part of the Israeli society. Presenting one fifth of the Jewish population, they have understandable ambitions to intervene in public issues. Presuming that the Russian Jews would gain more influence during the next years and decades, it is likely that the country will become more secular and westernized in daily life, more European in the arts, more liberal in the economy and probably less compromising in Middle Eastern politics.

In Germany, the discussion about a “Russian intelligentsija” as a possible spiritual leadership ultimately appeared irrelevant. Some of the interview partners confirmed that there is an “intelligentsija” inside the RSJ community but either they related them to professional elites, as was typical in the Former Soviet Union, or they rated the chances of RSJ “intelligentsija” in Germany to effectuate anything as minimal.

For those Russian Jews in Germany who feel distinctly dismissed by the host society or by the Jewish establishment or by both, RSJ journalists and publicists have currently taken over the role as a *political* mouthpiece, with provocative comments and wide forum discussions. RSJ artistic elites have also gained an important function for the self-image of the Russian Jews in Germany. Some of the visual artists discover religious topics and put them into new, modern contexts reaching a considerable Jewish and non-Jewish audience. However, beyond the frameworks of the Jewish communities, there hasn’t been much scope of action until now, where the Russian Jews in Germany could prove their above-average qualifications and competencies.

This study should have made clear that two decades after the great Soviet Jewish exodus a considerable part of the RSJ immigrants in Israel and Germany continues to enjoy a primarily culturally oriented “co-ethnic” Russian Jewish community that gives them societal backing and secures a strategy of gradual integration into their host societies. RSJ elites, mainly presented by intellectuals, writers, journalists, artists, scholars, but also Rabbis – and in Israel politicians as well – serve as key figures and opinion makers making clear that (Russian) cultural self assertion remains an essential part of the immigrants’ collective identity. Moreover,

⁶⁰⁰ Nudelman (2002), p. 105. Quoted in: Hoffmann (2003).

the RSJ elites consider some former experiences in their country of origin (for example in the arts, education, scientific theories) as just as worthy to be adopted into societal life of the host societies as well. On the other hand, host concepts to *assimilate* the newcomers into Israeli society or into the local German Jewish communities have completely failed, and they would probably also fail in future.

What do all these developments mean for the global Russian Jewry in perpetuity, and what does it mean for *world Jewry* in the long run? It is a peculiarity that the RSJ immigrants continue to cope with *three* cultural identities: the Russian, the Jewish, and that of the host society (i.e., Israeli or German). This is a striking difference to other Diasporas and transnational Diasporas; for example, the Turks in Germany. Russian Jews are enabled to conceptualize *fragmented* identities at their new places of residence what is not untypical in modern societies and underlines that each individual can collect several identities, depending on place of residence, private networks, professional experiences, cultural interests, ethnic origin, religious behavior, political commitment and transnational bonds. However, as this study shows, it is first of all the *twofold* (Russian-Jewish) identity that is not only defended vis-à-vis the native population(s) and the host institutions but also delivering the primary connecting links for the RSJ trans-national community. Since the transnational networks, as visible in organizations like the World Congress of Russian speaking Jews, are first of all based on *cultural* (and partly also religious) traditions, it seems worthy to refine those research approaches analyzing transnational developments being independent from socio-economical necessities.⁶⁰¹

The first generation of Jews who left the crumbling USSR and its successor states and moved to different continents around the globe, has found its common denominators in their awareness of Jewish ethnicity, strong bonds to the Russian language and culture and a certain pride in the skills already gained in the former motherland. Though, at the outer edges of this trans-national “core group” of Russian Jews we find on the one side those who gradually turn to religious networks (where former und current nationality becomes less and less important) or become distinctly Jewish Israelis; at the other extreme we find those who gradually turn more to the

⁶⁰¹ Thus, for example, Levitt (2003) has stressed that religion is still an understudied field in research on transnationalism. Levitt (2003) furthermore assumes that some migrants’ institutions become sites where globally diffused models of social organization and individuals’ local responses converge and produce new mixes of religious beliefs and practices. I had also referred to Kivisto’s criticism that “Brain-Drain-migration” was not yet an issue in analyses on Transnational Diasporas (Kivisto 2001).

general Russian Diaspora which counts millions of individuals spread around the globe.⁶⁰² It seems quite worthwhile to concentrate future studies on these extremes within the RSJ group as well.

In view to the distinguishing characteristics of the Russian Jewish Diaspora, we can expect steady reference to two “motherlands”: Israel (as the Jewish one) and the former USSR (as the territorial one).⁶⁰³ Though, multiple cultural backgrounds and partial intersections with the non-Jewish Russian Diaspora might keep the very dynamic processes of identity pluralization alive. However, it seems rather unlikely that Russian Jewish cultural, intellectual and professional elites will then still serve as vanguard for a whole Diaspora.

⁶⁰² Roughly 100 million ethnic Russians live in Russia today, but about 20 million abroad. About 17 million live in the neighboring countries (i.e., formerly belonging to the Soviet Union), and a relatively significant number of Russians, around 3 million, live elsewhere in the world, mostly in America and Western Europe, but also in some places in Eastern Europe and Asia.

⁶⁰³ However, for many of those Russian Jews who have maintained or just turned into religious-observant life styles (“Chasara BeTschuwa”), Israel is the exclusive reference point in terms of a “motherland”, and a part of the group does also expect a gradual dissolution of the Jewish Diaspora.

Deutschsprachige Zusammenfassung

**Russisch-jüdische Eliten in Israel und Deutschland nach 1990 –
Integration, Selbstbild und eigene Rolle in Immigranten-Netzwerken**

-Dissertation-

zur Erlangung des Grades des Doktors der Philosophie (Dr. phil.)
an der Philosophischen Fakultät
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Institut für Jüdische Studien

Olaf Glöckner, M.A.

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**Erstgutachter:
Prof. Dr. Julius H. Schoeps**

1. Thematischer Hintergrund und bisherige Forschung

In der vorliegenden Doktorarbeit wurden russischsprachige Juden, die in der früheren Sowjetunion zu den kulturellen, intellektuellen und professionellen Eliten gehörten und seit 1990 nach Israel und Deutschland emigriert sind, bezüglich ihrer (individuellen) Integrationserfolge, ihre Selbstbildes (als Eliten) und ihrer Rolle beim Aufbau russisch-jüdischer Netzwerke im jeweiligen Emigrationsland verglichen.⁶⁰⁴

Rund 1,7 Millionen Juden (einschließlich ihrer Familienangehörigen) haben seit 1990 die UdSSR und ihre Nachfolgestaaten verlassen. Etwa 1 Million von ihnen haben sich in Israel niedergelassen, ca. 350.000 in den USA, ca. 220.000 in Deutschland und jeweils mehrere Zehntausend in Kanada und Australien. Diese Auswanderung steht einerseits in der Tradition zeithistorischer jüdischer Emigration im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert⁶⁰⁵ und andererseits im Kontext von modernen transnationalen Migrationsbewegungen, die durch Globalisierungsprozesse bedingt sind bzw. dadurch auch erleichtert werden.⁶⁰⁶ Erst mit Beginn des 21. Jahrhunderts zeichnete sich wieder ein deutlicher Rückgang der russisch-jüdischen Emigration ab. Die Mehrheit der russischen Juden lebt heute außerhalb der ehemaligen Heimat, und in totalen Zahlen betrachtet, wohnen sowohl in Israel als auch in den USA derzeit mehr russische Juden als auf dem Territorium der früheren Sowjetunion.

Die russisch-jüdische Zuwanderung nach Deutschland, die in kleinerer Form im Sommer 1990 begann, zu Beginn des Jahres 1991 auf eine gesetzliche Grundlage gestellt wurde („Kontingenflüchtlingsregelung“) und in dieser Form bis zum Jahre 2004 anhielt, zählte zu den Überraschungen des späten 20. Jahrhunderts.⁶⁰⁷ Nach dem Holocaust galt ein beständiges jüdisches Leben in Deutschland wie auch signifikante jüdische Zuwanderung als sehr unwahrscheinlich.

⁶⁰⁴ Der Begriff „Russische Juden“ findet hier nicht nur für Juden aus Russland Anwendung, sondern für sämtliche Juden, die auf dem Gebiet der früheren Sowjetunion gelebt haben oder dort noch oder wieder leben. „Russian Jews“ steht im Kontext der aktuellen Migrationsforschung vorrangig für die Verbundenheit der Gesamtgruppe durch gemeinsame Sprache (Russisch). Territoriale, kulturelle und nationale Unterschiede, die gleichwohl im Kontext des sowjetischen Vielvölkerstaates existierten, bleiben im Terminus „Russian Jews“ unberücksichtigt. Zur Üblichkeit der Begriffsverwendung in der aktuellen Migrationsforschung vergleiche: Lewin-Epstein/Ro'i/Ritterband (1997), Schoeps/Jasper Vogt (1996,1999), Körber (2005), Ben Rafael et al. (2006), Remennick (2007).

⁶⁰⁵ Gitelman (1988), Slezkine (2004).

⁶⁰⁶ Glick Schiller et al. (1992, 1994).

⁶⁰⁷ Während des Zweiten Weltkrieges hatten deutsche Militäreinheiten und die mit ihnen verbündeten Truppen 26 Millionen Sowjetbürger und 6 Millionen Juden ermordet.

Doch infolge der Zuwanderung von rund 220.000 russischen Juden (einschließlich ihrer Familienangehörigen) im genannten Zeitraum findet sich in Deutschland wieder die drittgrößte jüdische Gemeinschaft Europas.

Die seit 1990 nach Israel, in die USA, nach Deutschland, Kanada und Australien ausgewanderten russischen Juden besitzen ein weitgehend identisches demographisches und berufliches Profil, an dem besonders ein relativ hohes Durchschnittsalter, ein extrem hoher Anteil an Personen mit Hochschulabschluß und eine ganz überwiegend großstädtische Herkunft auffällt. Besonders gravierende Auswirkungen hatte die russisch-jüdische Zuwanderung der vergangenen 20 Jahre auf die israelische Gesamtgesellschaft (wo die Gesamtbevölkerung um rund 15% wuchs) und auf die lokalen jüdischen Gemeinden in Deutschland, in denen nun rund 90% der Mitglieder einen osteuropäischen Hintergrund besitzen. Ein Vergleich zu Integration, Selbstbild und Community-Aktivitäten von russisch-jüdischen Eliten bot sich aber auch deshalb zwischen Israel und Deutschland an, weil beide Staaten mittlerweile die einzigen sind, die jüdische Zuwanderung fördern und mit systematischen Eingliederungshilfen flankieren.⁶⁰⁸

Die Emigrationsbewegungen russischer Juden sind seit Jahrzehnten von Historikern, Politikwissenschaftlern, Soziologen und Ethnologen untersucht worden, konzentrierten sich dabei vor allem auf die Herkunftsländer (Zaristisches Reich, UdSSR, GUS und Baltikum), auf Israel und die USA. Mit der jüngsten Auswanderungswelle seit Anfang der 1990er Jahre hat sich das Forschungsinteresse in verschiedenen Aufnahme-Ländern deutlich erhöht, zumal die lokalen - in Israel auch die nationalen - Auswirkungen in demographischer, ökonomischer, kultureller und politischer Hinsicht enorm sein können. Russisch-jüdische Diaspora-Gemeinschaften (im folgenden „communities“) werden keineswegs nur als religiöse oder ethnische Formationen betrachtet, sondern auch als Einwanderer-Netzwerke⁶⁰⁹ mit eigenen Medien, Bildungseinrichtungen, „ethno-market“, Kulturszenen,

⁶⁰⁸ Für Deutschland trifft dies seit 2005 allerdings nur noch bedingt zu, da die Bundesregierung zu diesem Zeitpunkt restriktive Neuregelungen für den Zuzug russischer Juden in Form eines speziellen Punktesystems beschloss und die Zahl der einwandernden Juden seither drastisch gesunken ist. Zwischen 1995 und 2003 hatte sich die Zahl der jährlich nach Deutschland emigrierenden russischen Juden konstant zwischen 15.000 und 20.000 bewegt. Im Jahre 2004 kam es zu einem zwischenzeitlichen Zuwanderungsstopp. Im Jahre 2005 kamen nur noch 5.968 russische Juden in die Bundesrepublik, im Jahre 2006 nur 1.079 und im Jahre 2007 nur 2.502. (Statistische Angaben: Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge).

⁶⁰⁹ Thränhardt/Hunger (2000).

Interessenverbänden und Selbsthilfeorganisationen. Selbst wenn eine Beschreibung von russisch-jüdischen „Enklaven“ (Lissak/Leshem 1995, Gold 1997) oder „ethnischen Kolonien“ als unscharf und mißverständlich erscheint, so fällt dennoch in sämtlichen Aufnahmeländern ein hoher Grad an kultureller Selbstbehauptung⁶¹⁰ und eine vergleichsweise niedrige Rückwanderungsquote (Tolts 2005) auf.

In Israel ist die Zahl der Studien zur russischen „Aliyah“ (hebr.: Einwanderung) kaum noch zu überschauen, doch haben sich einige signifikante Forschungsschwerpunkte wie „Bilingualismus/Bikulturalismus“ (Ben Rafael, Olstein and Gejst 1997), „ethno-kultureller Zusammenhalt“ (Al Haij 2004, Fialkova/Yelenevskaya 2007), „sozio-ökonomische Integration“ (Leshem und Sicron 1994/2004), „politische Selbstorganisation und Partizipation“ (Jones 1996, Khanin 2002/2003/2007; Gitelman 1994, 2007), „jugendliche Einwanderer“ (Horowitz 1999, Niznick 2003) und „elitäre Berufsgruppen“ (Remennick 2002b, 2003) herauskristalisiert.

In Deutschland, wo die Forschung relativ spät einsetzte, erfassten Schoeps, Jasper und Vogt (1996, 1999) das demographische und kulturelle Profil der Neuzuwanderer und beschrieben initiale Integrationserfahrungen in der Gesellschaft.⁶¹¹ Explizite Studien zur Integration in lokale jüdische Gemeinden legten Silbermann (1996) für Köln, Kessler (1998) für Berlin, Petschauer (1999) für Leipzig und Tchernina/Tchernin (2002) für Bremen vor. Die Arbeitsmarkt-Integration der russischen Juden untersuchten Gruber and Rüssler (2002) sowie Cohen and Kogan (2008). Becker (2001) analysierte biographische Re-Konstruktionen und Identitätskonflikte, Körber (2005) die innere Dynamik einer ostdeutschen jüdischen Gemeinde mit ausschließlich Zuwanderern.⁶¹² Die bisher einzige empirische Studie zur Identität russisch-jüdischer Jugendlicher stammt von Hess und Kranz (2000). Dietz (2000) verglich die Situation der jugendlichen russischen Juden mit jener der deutschen Spätaussiedler. Schütze und Rapoport (2000) verglichen in einer Längsschnittstudie die Integrationsstrategien von russisch-jüdischen Studenten in Berlin und Jerusalem. Cohen und Kogan dehnten ihre Untersuchungen zur Arbeitsmarktintegration in Deutschland auf einen Vergleich mit Israel aus (2005, 2007). Ben Rafael et al. (2006) untersuchten die Zuwanderung nach Israel,

⁶¹⁰ Schoeps/Jasper/Vogt (1999), Leshem/Shuval (1998), Siegel (1998), Remennick (2007).

⁶¹¹ Knapp 50 Prozent der russisch-jüdischen Zuwanderer – in totalen Zahlen ca. 90.000 - schlossen sich den lokalen Jüdischen Gemeinden nach der Übersiedlung in die Bundesrepublik Deutschland als registrierte Mitglieder an.

⁶¹² Die Autorin ließ den Namen der Jüdischen Gemeinde anonymisiert.

Deutschland und in die USA in Bezug auf kulturelle, religiöse und nationale Orientierungen sowie die Strategien der Immigranten beim Community Building. *Remennick* (2006) verglich lokale russisch-jüdische Communities in insgesamt vier Ländern – Israel, Deutschland, USA und Kanada.⁶¹³

2. Theoretische Grundlagen und entwickelte Thesen

Abgesehen von Remennicks Studien zur Integration beruflicher Eliten in Israel (Remennick 2002b, 2003) sowie einer politikwissenschaftlichen Analyse über russisch-jüdische Immigranten in Top-Positionen in Israel (Khanin 2003a, in Russisch) liegen bisher keine Studien vor, die sich explizit mit der Situation und dem Rollenverständnis immigrierter russisch-jüdischer Eliten in Israel oder Deutschland beschäftigt haben. Meine eigenen Untersuchungen wollte ich auf intellektuelle, künstlerische und allgemeine Berufseliten beschränken, zumal die klassischen Macht-Eliten (Politik, Wirtschaft, Militär) für Juden weder in der UdSSR relevant waren noch in den untersuchten, gegenwärtigen Aufnahmeländern für sie Bedeutung erlangt haben.⁶¹⁴

Das von der US-amerikanischen Soziologin Suzanne Keller (1963) entwickelte Modell der „Strategic Elites“, welches auf heterogene Funktionseliten fokussiert, die miteinander konkurrieren, aber auch einander bedingen, schien als theoretischer Ansatz am geeignetsten, um russisch-jüdische Eliten sowohl von ihrer beruflichen Herkunft als auch von ihrer Position in heutigen und künftigen gesellschaftlichen Konstellationen einzuordnen.

Keller (1963) unterscheidet zwischen „externen Eliten“ - vergleichbar den häufig untersuchten gesellschaftlichen Machteliten (Power Elites⁶¹⁵) - und so genannten „internen Eliten“, zu denen die Forscherin u.a. Intellektuelle, religiöse Autoritäten und Kulturschaffende zurechnet.

⁶¹³ Remennick arbeitete vor allem in Israel mit eigenen empirischen Umfragen, während sie sich in den USA, Kanada und Deutschland vorrangig auf qualitative Untersuchungsmethoden (in-depth-Interviews, Experten-Interview, teilnehmende Beobachtungen) beschränkte.

⁶¹⁴ Ein Trend hin zu stärkerer russisch-jüdischer Partizipation an den politischen Eliten in Israel zeichnete sich zwar in den letzten Jahren ab und wurde mit der Nominierung des aus Moldawien stammenden Außenministers Avigdor Lieberman im Jahre 2009 auch personell sichtbar. Andererseits kann zum gegenwärtigen Zeitpunkt von keinem signifikanten Einfluß innerhalb der israelischen Parteienlandschaft gesprochen werden.

⁶¹⁵ Mills (1956).

Stategische Eliten in Anlehnung an Suzanne Keller

Russian Jewish Elites in Israel						Russian Jewish Elites in Germany					
External Elites			Internal Elites			External Elites			Internal Elites		
Political	Econom.	Science	Intellect.	Media	Arts	Political	Econom.	Science	Intellect.	Media	Arts
Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	Present	-	-	Present	Present	Present	Present

Es handelte sich vorrangig um „interne Eliten“, in denen hoch qualifizierte Juden in der früheren Sowjetunion auch am ehesten anzutreffen waren - mit einem relativ hohen Anteil an Wissenschaftlern und generell Akademikern, aber auch an Künstlern und Intellektuellen. Vor-Annahme für diese Studie war, dass besagte russisch-jüdische Eliten nach ihrer Emigration aus der Sowjetunion und ihren Nachfolgestaaten danach streben, vergleichbare elitäre Positionen wie im Herkunftsland zu erreichen, oft aber auch eine Schlüsselrolle bei der Formung neuer kollektiver Identitäten innerhalb der russisch-jüdischen Community übernehmen würden.

In beiden Aufnahmelandern war zu untersuchen, inwiefern die russisch-jüdischen intellektuellen, professionellen und künstlerischen Eliten ein Interesse entwickeln, sich als *Einwanderer*-Eliten zu verstehen, als Multiplikatoren zu profilieren und die Rolle von Repräsentanten und „Mediatoren“ zwischen russisch-jüdischer Community und jeweiliger Aufnahmegesellschaft (sowie deren leitenden Institutionen) zu übernehmen. Einige Studien in Israel⁶¹⁶ legten nahe, dass sich ein Teil der russisch-jüdischen Eliten in Israel tatsächlich in der Tradition der russischen „Intelligentsija“ sieht und dies auch nach außen hin demonstriert.⁶¹⁷

Anzunehmen war außerdem, dass Teile der Immigranten-Eliten neben ihren Führungsrollen in den jeweiligen Communities auch an der Etablierung transnationaler Netzwerke (und möglicherweise auch von speziellen Lobbygruppen) mitwirken oder diese selbst initiieren.

⁶¹⁶ Lissak/Leshem (1995), Epstein/Kheimets (2000), Rapoport/Lomsky-Feder (2002).

⁶¹⁷ An dieser Stelle sei ausdrücklich betont, dass die ursprüngliche „russische Intelligentsija“, die in den 60er Jahren des 19. Jahrhunderts von hoch gebildeten, sozialkritischen und sozial unabhängigen Kreisen formiert wurde, denen Juden schon auf Grund ihrer marginalen gesellschaftlichen Position nicht angehören konnten. Dies änderte sich spätestens in den 1920er Jahren, und bereits in den 1930er und 1940er Jahren gehörten Künstler und Intellektuelle mit jüdischer Herkunft – wie etwa Osip Mandelstam und Isaak Babel - zu den vom Regime am Brutalsten verfolgten Personen. Bei Protestaktionen gegen Menschenrechtsverletzungen, wie sie ab den 1960er Jahren unter sowjetischen Akademikern organisiert wurden, ist ein überdurchschnittlich hoher Anteil an Juden nachgewiesen worden (vgl. Beyrau 1993:21,221).

*Im Vorfeld meiner qualitativen Studie entwickelte ich daher folgende Thesen:*⁶¹⁸

- 1.) Russisch-jüdische Migranten tendieren zu einem *kulturellen* „Transnationalism from below“⁶¹⁹ auf der Grundlage von starkem Bikulturalismus und Bilingualismus, und dies grenzüberschreitend.
- 2.) Der entwickelte Bilingualismus und Bikulturalismus, der von den jeweiligen russisch-jüdischen *Eliten* unterstützt wird, schließt Tendenzen der Assimilation in den Aufnahmeländern weitgehend aus.
- 3.) Im Vergleich zur anderen transnationalen Diaspora-Gemeinschaften gibt es einen doppelten Bezug betreffs Herkunfts- und Heimatland: die frühere UdSSR und Israel.
- 4.) Die starke kulturelle Selbstbehauptung der russischen Juden wirkt sich nachhaltig auf die lokalen jüdischen Gemeinschaften der Residenzländer und auf die globale jüdische Welt aus. Es kommt zur demographischen Stärkung jüdischer Netzwerke in westlichen Staaten und Israel bei gleichzeitiger Pluraisierung und partieller Säkularisierung. Auch hier spielen russisch-jüdische Eliten eine Schlüsselrolle.
- 5.) Im Vergleich zu Deutschland sind die russischen Juden in Israel hoch politisiert und mischen sich mit starken eigenen organisatorischen Strukturen auch in die nationalen Geschicke ein. In Israel (nicht in Deutschland) wird zu den russisch-jüdischen Eliten auch ein Bezug als „russische Intelligentsija“ hergestellt.

3. Methodische Herangehensweise

Die entwickelten Thesen galt es in Form einer qualitativen empirischen Untersuchung systematisch zu überprüfen. Dabei erschienen (halbstrukturierte) Experten-Interviews (Meuser/Nagel 2002) mit Personen, die zu den intellektuellen, kulturellen und professionellen Eliten der russisch-jüdischen Einwanderer in Israel und Deutschland gerechnet werden konnten – bzw. sich auf Grund einer hoch qualifizierten Ausbildung dorthin bewegten -, für die geeignete Methode. So wurden im Zeitraum von 2003 bis 2009 je 35 Interviews mit russischen Juden in Israel und Deutschland durchgeführt. Das Interview-Sample wurde vorwiegend unter Wissenschaftlern, Künstlern, Schriftstellern, führenden Journalisten, Lehrern,

⁶¹⁸ Siehe auch die englische Version auf Seite 47/48.

⁶¹⁹ Siehe Guarnizo und Smith (1998).

Ingenieuren, Sozialarbeitern, Studenten und Politikern rekrutiert.

Abgesehen von wenigen Ausnahmen, hatten die Interviewleitfäden in Israel und Deutschland eine identische Gestalt.⁶²⁰ Der standardisierte Fragebogen (siehe Anhang) konzentrierte sich auf vier thematische Schwerpunkt-Komplexe:

- a) eigene Integrations-Erfahrungen in der ersten Zeit nach der Übersiedlung
- b) gegenwärtige Verankerung und Engagement in der russisch-jüdischen Community
- c) Auswirkungen der Immigration auf die jeweilige Aufnahmegesellschaft (in Deutschland vorrangig: Auswirkungen auf die jüdischen Gemeinden)
- d) möglicher Wirkungsradius und Visionen der russisch-jüdischen Eliten

Die meisten der Interviewpartner wurden per „Schneeballsystem“ gewonnen. In Deutschland nutzte ich zunächst initiale Kontakte in den jüdischen Gemeinden und Organisationen in Berlin, Potsdam, Bremen, Chemnitz und Hannover, in einem russischsprachigen Verlagshaus (Berlin), einem russisch-jüdischen Kultur- und Bildungszentrum (Potsdam), und ich konnte verschiedene Kontakte über das Berliner Büro des „Weltkongresses russischsprachiger Juden e.V.“ (WCRJ) herstellen. Teilnehmende Beobachtungen erfolgten in einem jüdischen Gemeindezentrum in Rostock (eine komplett russischsprachige Gemeinde mit deutschem Rabbiner) und in der Liberalen Jüdischen Gemeinde Hannover. In Israel knüpfte ich die ersten Kontakte über die „Vereinigung der repatriierten Wissenschaftler aus der früheren Sowjetunion“ („Association of Scientist Repatriates from the Former Soviet Union“), über Wissenschaftler der Universitäten in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv und Haifa, über Mitarbeiter des Brookdale Institute in Jerusalem, und über private Kontakte in der Entwicklungsstadt Mizpe Ramon in der Negev Wüste.

Da die Interviews *halbstrukturiert* angelegt waren, bestand die Möglichkeit, das Gespräch zu bestimmten Teilaspekten der Migration und Integration zu vertiefen oder auch biographisch-narrativen Aspekten mehr Raum zu geben. Am Beginn der Interviews wurden die Gesprächspartner zudem gebeten, einige persönliche Angaben zu offerieren (Geburtsjahr, Familienstand, Zahl der Kinder, Wohnort in der UdSSR/GUS, Jahr der Ankunft in Israel/Deutschland, erlernter und aktueller Beruf).

⁶²⁰ Einige Fragen berührten die gesellschaftliche Integration und Partizipation der russischen Juden in Israel sehr intensiv, konnten aber nicht adäquat in Deutschland gestellt werden, so beispielsweise die Frage nach Aktivitäten in „russischen“ politischen Parteien oder nach Erfahrungen der erwachsenen Kinder in der israelischen Armee.

Alle Interviews wurden komplett transkribiert, die Auswertung erfolgte in Orientierung an Meuser & Nagel (2005), Gläser and Laudel (2004), Corbin and Strauss (2008) und Huberman and Miles (1994).

4. Ergebnisse der Studie

Da die vorliegende Studie im empirischen Sinne *qualitativen* Charakter trug, ließen sich keine Verallgemeinerungen mit *repräsentativem* Charakter ableiten. Dies traf auch für Teilvergleiche zwischen den einzelnen Altersgruppen⁶²¹ und ebenso für den direkten Vergleich von russisch-jüdischen Gesprächspartnern in Israel und Deutschland zu. Dennoch konnten einige merkmaltypische Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede sowohl zwischen den verschiedenen Generationen als auch zwischen den jeweiligen Gruppen in den beiden Untersuchungsländern festgestellt werden.

Zunächst war auffällig, dass fast alle Interviewpartner mit russischsprachigen Netzwerken und Community-Strukturen gut verbunden waren – und dies unabhängig vom bisherigen Erfolg der individuellen Integration. Eine große Zahl von Gesprächspartnern nutzte russischsprachige Kulturangebote, Medien und Vereine. Die Identifikation mit der Herkunftsgruppe war vergleichsweise hoch und stützte sich u.a. auch auf das Erleben innovativer Einwirkungen der russisch-jüdischen Immigration auf das jeweilige Aufnahmeland, wie beispielsweise die Wirtschaftskonjunktur der frühen 1990er Jahre, den allgemeinen Wissenschafts-Boom und die „Europäisierung“ der Gesellschaft in Israel wie auch eine deutliche Bereicherung des Kunst- und Kulturangebotes in Deutschland.⁶²² Nur in 2 von 70 Interviews waren die Gesprächspartner der Meinung, dass eine „zu starke“ Identifikation mit der russischen Kultur und Sprache den Integrationsprozess in neuer Umgebung hemmen bzw. die Rückkehr zur jüdischen Religion und Tradition erschweren könne.

Jüngere Interviewpartner in beiden Ländern offerierten deutlich heterogenere

⁶²¹ Im Interview-Sample beider Länder befanden sich sowohl Personen unter 30 Jahren (oft noch in der Hochschulausbildung bzw. Promotionsstudenten); Personen zwischen 30 und 60/65 Jahren (Berufstätige) wie auch Personen im Rentenalter (wobei teilweise noch berufstätig).

⁶²² Zugleich wurde in *beiden* Ländern bedauert, dass nur ein Bruchteil der intellektuellen Ressourcen und fachlichen Kompetenzen der Zuwanderer tatsächlich zur Anwendung käme. In der Tat sind selbst in Israel die meisten hochqualifizierten Fachkräfte („professionals“) zu weniger als 50% wieder in ihren Originalberuf gelangt.

soziale Netzwerk als die älteren (neben russischsprachigen „Peers“ auch Nichtjuden, Amerikaner, Türken etc.), neigten eher dazu, sich auch mit den Aufnahmegesellschaften zu identifizieren und zeigten Interesse für inter-kulturellen Austausch (oder waren in inter-kulturelle Projekte selbst involviert). Allen Altersgruppen gemein war eine große Wertschätzung für russische Kultur und Sprache, während der Kontakt zur einheimischen Bevölkerung teilweise als unterentwickelt galt, aber ausgebaut werden sollte. Insofern zeichneten sich bikulturelle und bilinguale Verhaltensmuster deutlich ab, und in zahlreichen Fällen drückten die Interviewpartner die Vorteile einer eher „additiven“ Identität aus: *russisch* vorrangig im kulturellen Sinne⁶²³; *jüdisch* im religiösen und/oder ethnischen Sinne; *israelisch/deutsch* (oder europäisch) im nationalen oder territorialen Sinne.

Fast durchweg waren sich die Interviewpartner ihrer überdurchschnittlich großen beruflichen Kompetenzen (70% Akademiker) bewußt, und die eigenen *kulturellen* Ressourcen und Qualitäten wurden als mindestens gleichwertig zu denen der Aufnahmegesellschaften betrachtet. In Israel wurde die staatliche Integrationspolitik der frühen 1990er Jahre und in Deutschland die Integrationspolitik bis zum Jahre 2005 – dem Zeitpunkt der Einführung restriktiver Neuregelungen für die Zuwanderung – als relativ positiv eingeschätzt. Das allgemeine politische Interesse (nationale und internationale Geschehnisse) war vergleichsweise hoch. Ein Teil der israelischen Interviewpartner beschrieb eigenes politisches Engagement, das sich meist aus aktuellen Anlässen und Problemen ergeben hatte (Benachteiligung von Immigranten, soziale Disparitäten, Nahostkonflikt, Terrorismus, Umweltprobleme), doch waren die Betreffenden in sehr unterschiedlichen politischen Lagern zu verorten. Die Intensität ihres Engagements – vier der Interviewpartner hatten über Jahre hinweg Spitzenämter in „russischen“ Parteien inne, kehrten aber mit einer Ausnahme in ihren Originalberuf zurück – und die jeweiligen, sehr individuellen Motivationen erinnerten an den Typus des „Intellektuellen mit sozialer Funktion“ (Eyerman 1994⁶²⁴). Die Gelegenheitsstrukturen („opportunity structures“) der russisch-jüdischen Eliten in Deutschland sind für ein ähnliches politisches Engagement deutlich geringer, was

⁶²³ Die Weitergabe der russischen Sprache an die Generation der Kinder wurde nicht nur als kulturelle Horizonterweiterung, sondern auch als vorteilhafte Kompetenz in der Öffentlichkeit wie im späteren beruflichen Leben beschrieben.

⁶²⁴ Eyerman schreibt von „intellectuals in a position, present to a greater or lesser degree in any society, which must be performed“. Siehe: Eyerman (1994), S. 187.

sich nicht zuletzt aus *objektiv* ungünstigen Bedingungen ergibt (u.a. fehlende Staatsbürgerschaft). Obwohl in Israel die Phase der „ethnischen“ Politik im Sinne „russischer“ Parteipolitik offenbar schon der Vergangenheit angehört⁶²⁵, ließ sich in den Interviews ein unvermindert hoher Politisierungsgrad der Zuwanderer feststellen. Eine Minderheit favorisierte sogar russische Juden als Spitzenpolitiker gegenüber etablierten israelischen und billigte ihnen langfristig elitäre Führungsrollen in der israelischen *Gesamtpolitik* ausführlich zu.⁶²⁶

Sowohl in Israel als auch in Deutschland zeigten manche der Interviewpartner großes Unverständnis über die strikt halachisch gehandhabten Kriterien für Mitgliedsrechte in den Jüdischen Gemeinden bzw. die Nichtgewährung elementarer Zivilrechte mit religiöser Symbolik (Zulassung zur jüdischen Hochzeit, jüdisches Begräbnis, Bar Mitzwa u.a.) in Israel.⁶²⁷ Offenbar ist es zu einem wichtigen Charakteristikum der russisch-jüdischen Communities in *beiden* Ländern geworden, dass sie nicht-halachische Juden bewußt integrieren und in ihrem Bemühen um mehr (religiöse) Partizipation auch intensiv unterstützen.

Ein weiterer starker Reibungspunkt mit den religiösen Autoritäten in Israel und den lokalen jüdischen Gemeinden in Deutschland ergibt sich offenbar aus dem der Zuwanderergruppe zugeschriebenen, vorherrschenden Säkularismus. In dieser Hinsicht bestätigten die Interviews frühere Untersuchungen (Liebman 2003; Ben Rafael et al. 2006, Remennick 2007) über einen relativ niedrigen Prozentsatz religiöser Einwanderer (unter 10%)⁶²⁸ hiermit auch für die Eliten. Zehn der 70 Interviewpartner pflegten einen religiösen jüdischen Lebensstil, wobei diese Minderheit ihre Religiosität auch im Alltag deutlich zum Ausdruck brachte (z.B. durch Tragen der Kippa am öffentlichen Arbeitsplatz und durch den Besuch von

⁶²⁵ Das Ende der „ethnischen“ Politik unter den russischen Juden in Israel schließt die teilweise starke Unterstützung für die Partei „Israel Beitanu“, welche von Avigdor Lieberman geführt wird und sich als „Partei mit russischem Akzent“ versteht, offenbar nicht aus.

⁶²⁶ Die Idee der Favorisierung russisch-jüdischer Spitzenpolitiker kam interessanterweise bei solchen Interviewpartnern zum Vorschein, die über eine besonders hohe (akademische) Bildung verfügten.

⁶²⁷ Selbst Gregory Kotler, ein in Jerusalem tätiger Reform-Rabbiner, kam zu dem Schluss, dass es bei der Zulassung von (jüdischen) Hochzeiten auch für nicht-halachisch jüdische EhepartnerInnen „nicht einfach nur um eine religiöse“, sondern auch „eine wichtige soziale Frage“ gehe, „eine Frage des Sich-verbunden-Fühlens mit dieser Gesellschaft“. Kotler verwies ausdrücklich auf die Entscheidung des Board of American Reform Rabbis aus dem Jahre 1983, die eine Aufnahme von Personen mit „nur“ jüdischem Vater in die Reformgemeinden der USA schon seit 25 Jahren ermöglicht. (Interview mit Rabbiner Gregory Kotler in Jerusalem am 16. März 2008 in Jerusalem.)

⁶²⁸ „Religiös“ wird hier im Sinne von religiös *praktizierend* definiert. Der Prozentsatz von russischen Juden, die regelmäßig Gottesdienste besuchen, liegt deutlich höher (Vgl. Hess/Kranz 2000:159; Schoeps/Jasper/Vogt 1999:113).

ausschließlich koscheren Restaurants). Nur äußerst selten gab es im Hinblick auf das Thema Religion indifferente Äußerungen. Vielmehr benannten auch „säkulare“ Gesprächspartner ihre Haltungen sehr deutlich. Als dritte Gruppe zwischen den dezidiert säkularen und den religiös praktizierenden Gesprächspartnern kamen jene Personen hinzu, die Religion als eine rein private Angelegenheit bezeichneten, welche für sie nicht notwendigerweise an eine religiöse Institution (wie beispielsweise die lokalen Jüdischen Gemeinden) geknüpft sei. Umgekehrt bedeutete eine Selbstbeschreibung als „säkular“ nicht zwangsläufig, dass die betreffende Person kein Mitglied der lokalen Jüdischen Gemeinde war, im Gegenteil. Dies korreliert mit verschiedenen Umfragen in Jüdischen Gemeinden in Deutschland (Silbermann 1997, „jüdisches berlin“ 2002), nach denen ein beträchtlicher Teil der befragten (russischsprachigen wie einheimischen) Mitglieder die Gemeinde nicht vorrangig als Religionsgemeinde, sondern als allgemeine Interessenvertretung und kommunikativ-sozialen Treffpunkt versteht.

Auch 20 Jahre nach dem Ende der Sowjetunion spielen für das starke Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl der Immigranten in Israel und Deutschland russische Kunst und Kultur eine herausragende Rolle. Verschiedene Interviewpartner nutzten in dieser Hinsicht nicht nur lokale Angebote, sondern waren selbst künstlerisch aktiv bzw. hatten eigene Projekte gegründet. In Deutschland finden sich entsprechende Initiativen teilweise unter dem Dach der lokalen jüdischen Gemeinden, und einige der hiesigen Interviewpartner (beispielsweise in Potsdam und Bremen) betonten, das Erleben *russischer* Kultur sei für sie der wichtigste Antrieb, die lokale *jüdische* Gemeinde aufzusuchen.⁶²⁹ Für die Immigranten entsteht hier kein zwingender Widerspruch zwischen Religionsgemeinde und Kulturverein, zumal ihre künstlerischen Eliten dazu neigen, die schon im Herkunftsland internalisierte Kunst auch einem breiteren Publikum der neuen Umgebung – beispielweise mit Theaterdramen in der Tradition von Constantin Stanislavski – nahebringen zu wollen.

Die hohe Qualität künstlerischer Darbietungen und Produkte bietet den russischen Juden allerdings keinen Garant auf Erfolg oder allgemeine Wertschätzung

⁶²⁹ Es handelte sich jeweils um jüdische Gemeinden mit einer überwältigenden russischsprachigen Mehrheit, die insofern auch in der Lage war, russische Kunst und Kultur als Interessenfeld einer Mehrheit der Gemeindemitglieder weit oben auf der Programm-Agenda zu platzieren. Denkbar ist durchaus, dass auch in eher gemischten, „deutsch-russischen“ Gemeinden die russische Kultur als ein starker Magnet auf solche Immigranten wirkt, die den Gemeinden sonst eher fernbleiben würden.

in den jeweiligen Aufnahmegesellschaften. So konstatierte die Kunstkritikerin Marina Genkina (Jerusalem) eine „Wand“ zwischen den russischen und israelischen bildenden Künstlern⁶³⁰, und die Direktorin des seit 20 Jahren international sehr erfolgreichen Theaters „Gesher“ („Brücke“) in Tel Aviv-Jaffo beschrieb, wie schwierig es für die Gründer gewesen war, trotz der schnellen Einführung von *hebräischsprachigen* Vorstellungen einer Stigmatisierung als „russisches Ghetto-Theater“ zu entgehen.

Russisch-jüdische Kulturzentren sind grenzüberschreitend gut miteinander vernetzt und erleben daher einen „Flow“ von internationalem Austausch. Besonders in der Literaturszene werden neue Migrationserfahrungen künstlerisch so verarbeitet, dass sie auch das russisch-jüdische Lesepublikum in anderen Diaspora-Ländern ansprechen (wie bei Dina Rubina in Israel, Lena Gorelik in Deutschland und Gary Shteyngart in den USA). Die „Transnationale Community“ der russischen Juden scheint *vorrangig* künstlerisch geprägt und in diesem Sinne tatsächlich vergleichbar einer Bewegung von unten („Transnationalism from Below“).

Gleichzeitig haben die russischen Juden auch transnationale Netzwerke etabliert, mit denen sich von bereits bestehenden jüdischen Strukturen zumindest partiell abgegrenzt wird. Das eindrucklichste Beispiel hierfür ist der „Weltkongress russischsprachiger Juden e.V.“ (WCRJ). Die geführten Experten-Interviews mit führenden Repräsentanten des WCRJ in beiden Ländern ergaben, dass neben solchen Hauptanliegen wie der Förderung russischer Sprache und Kultur unter jüdischen Immigranten *weltweit* und der Solidarität mit Israel auch der empfundene mangelnde Respekt von Seiten der etablierten jüdischen Organisationen als ein entscheidender Anlass für die WCRJ-Gründung betrachtet wird.⁶³¹

Auf nationaler Ebene zeigen sich die Tendenzen der russisch-jüdischen Selbstorganisation dennoch am intensivsten. So reagiert besonders ein Teil der hoch qualifizierten GUS-Immigranten auf Dauerarbeitslosigkeit und/oder

⁶³⁰ Marina Genkina schrieb: „Weshalb trennt nach so vielen Jahren immer noch eine Wand die russischsprachigen Künstler von den israelischen? Diese Trennung existiert nicht nur zwischen den Künstlern, sondern generell zwischen den Zuwanderern und den einheimischen Israelis.“ (Marina Genkina, Exhibition catalogue „Artsession 2007“, Jerusalem)

⁶³¹ So hatte Dmitri Feldmann, der europäische Vorsitzende des WCRJ, im Interview betont: „Dass sich so ein Kongress bildete, hat natürlich auch mit der Erfahrung zu tun, dass in den vergangenen Jahrzehnten die Belange der russischsprachigen Juden im allgemeinen nicht so besonders berücksichtigt worden sind. Und es hat auch etwas mit Respekt, mit internationalem Respekt zu tun. Die Welt soll sehen: Es gibt viele russische Juden, die sprechen weiter russisch, und sie leben in der GUS, aber auch in Israel, Europa, Amerika. Sie sind eine ganz eigene Kraft.“

Schließungsprozesse der lokalen Eliten mit der Bildung eigener Netzwerke, Wissenschaftsvereine und Erfinderklubs, welche gut frequentierte Bildungsveranstaltungen und Selbsthilfe organisieren, neue Studienergebnisse publizieren und weiterhin eigene Patente anmelden.⁶³²

Insgesamt widersprechen die Ergebnisse der geführten Interviews dem Bild des russisch-jüdischen Migranten als eines pragmatisch-passiven „Homo sovieticus“ (Oswald 2000, Kessler 2008). Volunteering und öffentliches Engagement – sei es in Religionsgemeinden, Kulturzentren, multi-kulturellen Projekten oder NGO's – galt hier eher als die Norm denn als die Ausnahme.

Zu den Traditionen der frühen „russischen Intelligentsija“ gehörten fließende Übergänge zwischen Kunst, Bildung und gesellschaftspolitischem Engagement. Dies setzt sich in Israel in einigen Gruppierungen und Projekten nahtlos fort. So gilt beispielweise das in Tel Aviv erscheinende Literaturjournal „Dvadzat dva“ („22“)⁶³³ als meinungsbildend sowohl für Künstler, Intellektuelle und ebenso für Politiker. Für eine starke Identifikation mit der eigenen, ethno-kulturellen „Community“ sorgen aber auch weniger elitär orientierte Massenmedien, welche viele der Interviewpartner trotz ihrer ausgezeichneten Hebräisch-Kenntnisse⁶³⁴ weiterhin regelmäßig nutzten.⁶³⁵ Eine Überschneidung von meinungsbildender „Intelligentsija“ und politischem Engagement gilt bei den russisch-jüdischen Eliten in Israel als nichts Ungewöhnliches.

Dagegen machten die Experten-Interviews in Deutschland deutlich, dass ein vergleichbarer „Intelligentsija“-Effekt hier nicht zu erwarten ist - und daher für kollektive Orientierungsprozesse der russischen Juden irrelevant. „Intelligentsija“-Status wurde entweder komplett negiert, nur (relativ einflußlosen) Einzelpersonen zugebilligt oder im Zusammenhang mit professionellen Fachkräften gebraucht – eine

⁶³² In Deutschland gibt es rund ein Dutzend „Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaften“, die von russischen Juden gegründet wurden, daneben eine Reihe von Erfinderklubs, die teilweise auch offen sind für nicht-jüdische russischsprachige Wissenschaftler. Das Äquivalent zu den russisch-jüdischen Wissenschaftler-Gruppen in Deutschland bilden die „Scientific Seminars“ in israelischen Großstädten.

⁶³³ „Dvadzat dva“ erscheint als „sozio-politisches und literarisches Magazin der *Jüdischen Intelligentsija* aus den GUS-Staaten in Israel“ und wird vom israelischen Ministerium für Wissenschaft und Kultur finanziell gefördert. (Hervorhebung O.G.)

⁶³⁴ Nur die wenigsten Interviewpartner waren im Hebräischen (noch) nicht fluent, so beispielsweise ein Medizinwissenschaftler, der seit 10 Jahren an der Hebräischen Universität forscht, aber nach eigenem Bekunden noch keine Zeit gefunden hat, entsprechende Sprachkurse zu besuchen.

⁶³⁵ In Bezug auf ihren TV-Konsum berichteten einige Interviewpartner, dass sie Spielfilme und andere schöngestige Sendungen vorrangig in Russisch schauen, während die politischen Sendungen und die Nachrichten fast durchweg in Hebräisch gesehen werden. Auch dies ist ein deutlicher Hinweis auf Integration *ohne* Assimilation.

schon in der UdSSR übliche Begriffsverwendung, die die ursprüngliche Bedeutung von „Intelligentsija“ natürlich verkennt und eher ad absurdum führt.

Im Vergleich zu Israel wird russisch-jüdische Meinungsbildung in Deutschland weniger von Intellektuellen, sondern eher von führenden Journalisten und Publizisten betrieben, welche offenbar auch die – bisher unausgefüllte – Funktion des politischen Advokaten für die Community übernehmen. Zeitungen wie die „Evreyskaja Gazeta“ und „Partnjo“ führen eigene Umfragen unter russischen Juden durch und lancieren die Ergebnisse in eine breitere Öffentlichkeit. Dies kann sowohl als Versuch gewertet werden, sich gegen ein verzerrtes Image in den Mainstream-Medien⁶³⁶ zu wehren, andererseits aber auch bestehende kommunikative Barrieren zur Aufnahmegesellschaft aufzubrechen.⁶³⁷

Die bisher deutlich erfolgreichere Integration der russischen Juden am israelischen Arbeitsmarkt wie auch bisherige vergleichende Studien zur Identifikation mit der Aufnahmegesellschaft (Remennick 2005a, Ben Rafael et al. 2006) hatten vermuten lassen, dass die Interviewpartner in Israel sich über die Gesamtsituation der dortigen russisch-jüdischen Community zufriedener äußern würden als in Deutschland.⁶³⁸ Die bestätigte sich, wobei aber auch in Israel bestimmte Schließungsprozesse der einheimischen Eliten - besonders gegenüber den hoch qualifizierten russisch-jüdischen Immigranten - scharf kritisiert wurden.⁶³⁹

⁶³⁶ Zu Stereotypen von den russischen Juden in der Medienberichterstattung in Russland, Israel und Deutschland siehe: Elias/Bernstein (2007); ausschließlich für Deutschland: Becker (2001).

⁶³⁷ Der Chefredakteur der in Berlin erscheinenden russisch-jüdischen Monatszeitung „Evreyskaja Gazeta“ erklärte: „Es klingt sehr einseitig, wenn man nur davon spricht, dass ‚die Russen sich abkapseln.‘ Wir haben umgekehrt das Problem, dass die deutsche Gesellschaft die russischen Zuwanderer zwar nicht wegschickt, aber auch nicht so gern aufnimmt. Es muss schon von beiden Seiten Bewegung kommen, dann könnte manches einfacher sein.“ Goldbergs Statement, dass Integration „von beiden Seiten kommen“ solle, d.h. als interaktiver Begegnungs-Prozess zwischen Immigranten und Einheimischen, steht für die Meinung von vielen meiner Interviewpartner in Israel und Deutschland.

⁶³⁸ Eine Arbeitslosenrate von 35% und mehr bestätigten unter anderem Schoeps/Jasper/Vogt (1999), Gruber/Rüßler (2002), Ben Rafael et al. (2006), Cohen und Kogan (2005, 2007).

⁶³⁹ Mark Galesnik, Chefredakteur des russischsprachigen politischen Satiremagazins „Beseder?“ sprach von einem so genannten „Glasdach-Phänomen“: Russische Juden würde heute fast 20 Prozent der jüdischen Bevölkerungsgruppe in Israel ausmachen, aber nur rund 1 Prozent der gesellschaftlich relevanten Schlüsselpositionen einnehmen.

5. Schlussfolgerungen

Aus den geführten Interviews und teilnehmenden Beobachtungen ließ sich insgesamt ableiten, dass sich das Engagement der russisch-jüdischen Eliten in Israel und Deutschland, was Führungsrolle und Repräsentanz für die russischsprachige jüdische „Community“ betrifft, grundsätzlich deckt. Herkunftskultur und -sprache dienen als Bindeglied für unterschiedliche Gruppierungen innerhalb der Community, und dies unabhängig vom Erfolg der bisherigen sozio-ökonomischen Integration. Assimilation ist nicht die Regel, sondern eher die Ausnahme. Die Auswertung des Interviewmaterials bestätigte weiterhin, dass eine klare Mehrheit der russisch-jüdischen Eliten sich für eine Akkulturations-Strategie der „Integration“ entscheidet (Berry 1990), dagegen aber Tendenzen von „Assimilation“, „Segregation“ und „Marginalisierung“ vermeidet. Wie viele meiner Gesprächspartner deutlich machten, verstehen sie Integration in die Aufnahmegesellschaft als gegenseitigen Lernprozess und als eine Form von Reziprozität.

Auf Schließungsprozesse der jeweiligen nationalen Eliten, dauerhaft bestehende Probleme bei der beruflichen Integration, aber auch auf kulturelle Barrieren reagieren russisch-jüdische Migranten mit intensivierten Formen der Selbstorganisation. Da sich die russisch-jüdischen Communities in Israel, Deutschland und anderen Emigrationsländern zwar deutlich in ihrer Größe, aber weniger in ihrer Struktur unterscheiden, sind sie auch auf transnationaler Ebene gut vernetzt - und diese Entwicklung wird ausdrücklich von den jeweiligen Immigranten-Eliten unterstützt. Neben kulturellen und politischen Ambitionen können noch andere Faktoren das transnationale Verbundenheitsgefühl stärken, so beispielsweise eine gemeinsam erlebte *wissenschaftliche* Community. In diesem Zusammenhang hat Kivisto (2001) zurecht darauf verwiesen, dass die „Brain-Drain-Migranten“ in der bisherigen Transnationalismus-Forschung unberücksichtigt geblieben sind, gleichwohl aber „eine wichtige Komponente heutiger Migrationsbewegungen darstellen“.⁶⁴⁰

Unterschiede zwischen den russisch-jüdischen Eliten in Israel und Deutschland ergeben sich also weniger aus unterschiedlichen Selbstbildern und Selbstkonzepten, sondern eher durch die politischen Rahmenbedingungen und

⁶⁴⁰ Kivisto (2001), S. 561.

aktuellen Gelegenheitsstrukturen. So scheint der hohe Politisierungs- und Organisationsgrad der russischen Juden in Israel - und ihrer Eliten im Besonderen - zum einen der zahlenmäßigen Stärke der Einwanderergruppe, aber auch der politischen Dynamik im Jüdischen Staat und den vielfältigen Konfliktlagen, die das Land erlebt, geschuldet.

Es ist möglich, dass die russisch-jüdische Community in Israel sich in den nächsten Jahren oder Jahrzehnten schrittweise in der Gesamtgesellschaft auflösen und damit auch die Bedeutung elitärer, intellektueller Meinungsmacher („Intelligentsija“) nachlassen wird. Ebenso ist es aber auch möglich, dass mit einem zunehmenden Einfluss der russischen Eliten die israelische Gesamtgesellschaft graduell säkularer, die Alltagskultur europäischer, die Wirtschaft liberaler und die Nahostpolitik weniger kompromißbereit wird. In Deutschland bleibt den russisch-jüdischen Eliten (v.a. Schriftstellern, Künstlern, Journalisten) eine Schlüsselfunktion als Meinungsbildner im Sinne der „internen Eliten“ (Keller 1963) für die eigene Community vorbehalten, und dies trifft ebenso für den Erhalt institutioneller Strukturen (Kulturzentren, Wissenschaftsvereine) zu. Daneben erscheint ihre repräsentative Rolle für die russisch-jüdische Mehrheit in den jüdischen Gemeinden und Organisationen zumindest in der ersten Generation unbestritten.⁶⁴¹

Im Allgemeinen wurden die Thesen zum Selbstbild und zur Rolle der kulturellen, intellektuellen und beruflichen Eliten der russischen Juden in den jeweiligen Communities in Israel und Deutschland bestätigt. Um mehr Aufschlüsse über den sonstigen Wirkungsradius der russisch-jüdischen Eliten - über den eigenen ethno-kulturellen Rahmen hinaus - zu gewinnen, scheint es sinnvoll, mittels empirischer Studien Gemeinsamkeiten und Unterschiede zu den ebenfalls in die gleichen Aufnahmeländer emigrierten *nicht-jüdischen* russischen Eliten zu untersuchen.

Fließende Übergänge zwischen russisch-jüdischen und nicht-jüdisch russischen Communities in Israel, Deutschland (aber auch den USA) finden sich möglicherweise auch auf transnationaler Ebene, zum Beispiel unter den „Brain-Drain

⁶⁴¹ Umgekehrt ist schwer einzuschätzen, inwiefern sich die zweite Generation der russischen Juden in den lokalen jüdischen Gemeinden von den Kindern der einheimischen Mitglieder kulturell oder religiös noch unterscheiden wird.

-Migranten.“⁶⁴²

Obwohl sich im *kulturellen* Sinne sehr deutliche Strukturen einer transnationalen Diaspora der russischen Juden entwickelt haben, erscheint es wenig sinnvoll, in dieser Richtung weitere Studien anzuschließen, solange die besagten Übergänge zwischen nicht-jüdischen russischen und russisch-jüdischen Communities noch unerforscht sind und sich keine Beständigkeit in den Strukturen, möglicherweise über Generationen hinweg, abzeichnet (Luethi 2005). Waldinger und Fitzgerald (2004) haben darauf hingewiesen, dass es in bisherigen Studien kaum ernsthafte Versuche gegeben hat, die Beziehungen zwischen transnationalen Aktivitäten von Immigranten und der Haltung der Zivilgesellschaft in den jeweiligen Aufnahmeländern zu untersuchen.⁶⁴³ Abgesehen von einzelnen Medienanalysen, sind auf empirischer Grundlage die Einstellungen der deutschen Bevölkerung gegenüber den russischen Juden noch gar nicht untersucht. Dies könnte aber eine weitere Vergleichsebene mit Israel eröffnen, entlang der Frage, inwiefern die Intensität und Dichte der russisch-jüdischen Selbstorganisation tatsächlich auch Ablehnungshaltungen durch Teile der einheimischen Bevölkerungen reflektiert.

⁶⁴² Zharenova (2002) hat den Begriff der “Russischen Wissenschaftler-Diaspora” geprägt und versteht darunter „eine Gemeinschaft russischsprachiger Forscher, die aus der früheren UdSSR emigriert sind und im Ausland wissenschaftlich tätig bleiben. Sie haben mit ähnlichen Integrationsproblemen zu tun und bleiben untereinander, aber auch mit Kollegen, Verwandten und Freunden im Vaterland verbunden.“ (Zharenova 2002, zitiert in: Yelenevskaya/Fialkova 2009, S. 614).

⁶⁴³ Waldinger and Fitzgerald (2004), S. 1182.

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Federal Office for the Recognition of Foreign Refugees, Nuremberg (BAMF): Monthly Statistics on Russian Jewish Immigration to Germany. 02 / 2003 - *continuous*

Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society Statistics (HIAS)

Israel Yearbook & Almanac 1994 - *continuous*

Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI), Aliyah Statistics

Statistical Abstract of Israel (Central Bureau of Statistics of the State of Israel). 1991 - *continuous*

Statistisches Jahrbuch der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. Hrsg. vom Statistischen Bundesamt. Wiesbaden/Stuttgart. 1993 – *continuous*

V. Selected websites of organisations, projects, ministries

Evreyskaya Gazeta (leading Russian Jewish monthly in Berlin)

<http://www.evreyskaya.de/contacts.html>

Gesher Theater in Tel Aviv-Jaffo

<http://www.gesher-theatre.co.il>

Israel Beitanu (Party “Nash Dom Israel”/”Our House Israel”)

<http://www.beytenu.org/>

Israeli Repatriate Scientist Organisation (FSU Scholars)

<http://www.math.bgu.ac.il/~camea/>

Mignews – Russian Jewish Online Weekly in Israel

<http://www.mignews.com/>

Ministry of Immigrant Absorption in Israel (MIA)

http://www.moia.gov.il/Moia_en

Russian Jewish Religious Associationa “Machana'im”

http://www.machanaim.org/ind_eng.htm

Technological Incubators Project for Russian Scientists in Israel

<http://www.incubators.org.il/>

World Congress of Russian Speaking Jews (WCRJ)

<http://www.wcrj.org/en/>

Applied questionnaire

for the half-structured expert interviews with RSJ immigrants (Elites) in Israel and Germany

1. Personal Data

- Name, year of birth, home town, family status/children
- educational degrees, profession(s)
- year of arrival in Israel/Germany
- Did other parts of the family (parents...) also emigrate?
- last occupation in the FSU
- first place of residence in Israel/Germany

2. Circumstances of Emigration

- Could you, please, explain the decisive reasons and motives for your emigration to Israel/Germany?
- Could you, please, describe your experiences with anti-Semitism in the FSU? To what extent was anti-Semitism crucial for your/your families' decision to emigrate?
- Was Israel (Germany) the definitely preferred country of destination, or did you think about other options as well?
- What expectations have been there before arriving in Israel/Germany?
- Which of the expectations have become fulfilled, and which not?

3. Functional Integration

Experiences at the Labour Market:

- How long did it take for you to find a job in Israel/Germany?
- Are you working in your original profession? (If not, what are the reasons?)
- Have there been opportunities for you to utilize special support programs (further vocational training, scholarships programs...)?
- How would you assess your income today, compared with the former in the FSU?
- Did you buy a flat at your new place of residence? (Prize?)
- How successful was the labour market integration for your closest relatives?
- Do you/does your family enjoy special support by the State (welfare, special pensions)?

4. Socio-Cultural Experiences

- Do you live in a neighbourhood mainly occupied by (other) FSU immigrants, or rather by natives?
- If you take your five best friends at the new place of living: Are these mainly FSU immigrants / natives / people from other minorities?
- Are you member of any RSJ cultural, social or political organisations, associations, projects, clubs...?
- Are you member of any native Israeli (German) cultural, social or political organisations, associations, projects, clubs...?
- Are you committed in any kind of volunteering?
- Would you consider yourself as religious or traditional Jewish?
- Do you feel, [...] years after emigration, all in all, more at home in the Russian culture or more in the Israeli (German) culture?
- Was (is) it important for you (and your spouse) to impart Russian culture and language to your children?

(Germany only)

- Are you a member of the local Jewish community? If so, are you involved in special activities there? Are there special interests?

5. Art Consumption, Media Consumption, Language Use

- What kind of cultural/artistic activity do you prefer (music, theatre, literature...)?
- Do you use more Israeli (German) cultural/artistic offers, or more Russian?

Is there a language preference concerning...

- Print Media (Russian/Hebrew/English...) – which papers?
- Television /Radio – which channels?
- Internet
- Which language do you prefer to speak at home (with your friends)?

6. Political Experiences

- How would you generally assess the programs and measures by the Jewish State / German State to promote integration of the FSU immigrants?
- Do you see totally unsolved integration problems for a considerable number of the FSU immigrants?
- If you just try to imagine that you are a politician in responsible position: What would you try to change/improve immediately...?

(Israel only)

- Do you have individual preferences for any political party in Israel?
- Did you committ in a certain political party or political movement since you have come here?
- What do you think about the “Russian parties” (Israel ba Aliyah, Israel Beitanu)? Was there an objective imperative to establish “Russian parties”?
- There are many voices that claim that Russian Jewish immigrants rather tend to the political rightwing camp. Can you confirm that?
- Russian Jews are considered to have though positions in the Middle East conflict. Where do you see the reasons for this?

7. Perception of own group, host society, interrelations

- Do you see special contributions made by the RSJ immigrants to Israeli (German) society during recent years? a) in a positive way b) in a negative way
- In what societal fields (arts, education, economy, science, sports...) do RSJ immigrants have greater resources/competencies than the host society?
- In what societal fields (arts, education, economy, science, sports...) do natives have greater resources/competencies than the RSJ immigrants?
- Do you think that the host media coverage on the RSJ immigrants is realistic or rather biased? What do you think about the “Mafia” stereotypes?

8. Elites / Intelligentsija

- Would you describe some elites in the FSU immigrants’ group as “intelligentsija”? If so, how would you define “intelligentsija” and its special role?
- Do see consider yourself as a part of the “intelligentsija”?

- Do you think that RSJ elites (professional, intellectual, cultural, political) are adequately represented in key positions of Israeli society (Germany: Jewish communities)?
If not, where do you see main reasons?

(Israel only)

- Do you think that Russian Jewish intellectuals/politicians should play a greater role in society/politics than they play now?

9. Transnational Aspects

- How many times have you been back in your former home country?
- Do you have a business run in the FSU?
- Are there still relatives/friends living at your former place of residence?
- What do you think about the current political situation in your former home country?
- What is your personal opinion about sense and impact of RSJ transnational organizations?

10. Individual Index of satisfaction

Scale 0-5; 0 = not satisfied at all; 5 = completely satisfied

- satisfaction with the own socio-economic situation / living standard
- satisfaction with the cultural life and artistic offers in Israel (Germany)
- satisfaction with contacts / interaction to the native borne Israelis
- satisfaction with acceptance as immigrant, as shown by the native born Israelis

11.) Identity / Self-identification

4 predetermined types

- Russian Jew in Israel (Germany)
- Russian immigrant in Israel (Germany)
- Jew in Israel (Germany) with Russian (Ukrainian, Georgian,...) background
- Israeli Jew (German Jew) with Russian (Ukrainian, Georgian,...) background

12.) Second migration / Recommendations

- Have you ever thought about re-migration/second migration?
- If friends or relatives in your former home country ask for advice: Would you recommend to them emigration to Israel (Germany), too?

Table of acronyms

AJC	American Jewish Committee
BAMF	Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, Nuremberg (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, Nürnberg)
CAS	Center for Absorption in Science
C.I.S.	Commonwealth of Independent States
FJCR	Federation of Jewish Communities in Russia
FSU	Former Soviet Union
HIAS	Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society
IB	Israel Beitenu (“Our House Israel”), political party mainly of Russian Jews in Israel
IBA	Israel ba Aliyah (“Israel in Immigration”), political party of Russian Jews in Israel
JAFI	Jewish Agency for Israel
JC	Jewish Community
JCC	Jewish Community Center
MIA	Ministry of Immigrant Absorption (Israelisches Einwanderungsministerium)
OBF	Otto Benecke Foundation (Otto Benecke Stiftung)
PTM	Professional-Technical-Managerial
RAS	Russkaja Aktjorskaja Schkola (Russian Theatre School)
RJC	Russian Jewish Congress
RSJ	Russian Speaking Jewish
TAU	Tel Aviv University
UJA	United Jewish Appeal
USSR	Union of Socialist Soviet Republics (the former Soviet Union)
WCRJ	World Congress of Russian Speaking Jews
WIZO	Women’s International Zionist Organisation

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Erklärung zu den verwendeten Hilfsmitteln

Hiermit wird bestätigt, dass die vorliegende Dissertation selbständig verfaßt wurde und bei ihrer Abfassung nur die in der Bibliographie und den Fußnoten aufgeführten Quellen und Hilfsmittel benutzt wurden. Alle wörtlich oder inhaltlich übernommenen Stellen sind als solche gekennzeichnet.

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