

REVERSED DIASPORA: RUSSIAN JEWRY, THE TRANSITION IN RUSSIA AND THE MIGRATION TO ISRAEL

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The dramatic political and economic changes leading to the collapse of the Soviet Union have had a considerable impact on the identities of the people inhabiting the once almighty and omnipotent Red Empire. Changes have been especially dramatic for the Jewish diasporas of the former Soviet Union (FSU). Gorbachev's policies of "glasnost" and "perestroika" and the subsequent breakdown of communism triggered a mass emigration among Jews since the end of 1988, and in the intervening period more than 700,000 Jews have left the Former Soviet Union in what I will refer to as the "fourth wave" of emigration (see note 1).

The exodus came as a surprise to most observers. Western Europe and the US, whose governments during the 1970s and 1980s had given economic and political concessions to Soviet leaders in order to ensure the Jews the right to emigrate, were deeply concerned by the thousands of Jews (and other Soviet minorities) now seeking entry to the West. Hence, by the end of 1989, new restrictions on Soviet immigration were introduced by the US government, and these were soon followed by most other major receiving countries in Western Europe. Due to the large number of Jews who sought to emigrate, they were no longer regarded as refugees, but merely as migrants. The mass movement was consequently redirected towards Israel, whose constitutional laws embrace Jews in the diaspora as an extraterritorial population and henceforth automatically secure them citizenship. As a result, the Jewish state has seen a 12% increase in its population during the latest six years.

Naturally, such large scale emigration must have an enormous impact on the diverse Jewish diaspora groups remaining in the FSU. Of the 1-1.5 million Jews remaining in ex-Soviet territories today, nearly all families have members who have left for Israel or other countries. As post-Soviet society changes, the remaining Jews are involved in a process of redefining their ethnic and cultural identities. Emigration and the post-communist transition have led to the emergence of new diasporic forms and new ethno-religious identities, both amongst the "stay-behinds" and the emigrants. It is this dual process of identity reconstitution - both in Russia and in Israel - which will be the focus of this paper.

The Russian Jews, like other groups of migrants, are involved in processes of identity-change when they arrive

in their new countries of destination. Confronted with entirely new realities, they search for new identities. Here the cultural experiences from life in Russia play an essential role. New identities are constructed in which the imagination of life in Russia/FSU is of crucial significance. In the case of Russian Jewish emigration to Israel, we might speak not simply of a diaspora "coming home", but of the creation of a new diaspora in the mythical homeland. Russian Jews, I will argue, do not simply come home; rather, they become diasporic in relation to their erstwhile homeland, Russia. Diaspora does not cease to exist when Russian Jews come home to Israel. On the contrary, a new Russian-Jewish diaspora emerges.

I would like to elaborate further on this point by providing a more detailed analysis of identity and emigration based on 8 months of fieldwork in Moscow in 1993/1994 and a shorter supplementary stay in Tel Aviv in May/June 1995. Jews in the FSU are usually divided into three main ethno-geographical groups: the Western Jews (Zapadniki), living in the Westernmost part of the former Soviet Union (Lvite Jews, most of them highly educated members of the intelligentsia).

Russian Jews: Assimilation and Stigmatization

After the 1917 Russian Revolution, the Jews, who until then had resided in shtetls in the Pale of Settlement in the Western part of the Russian Empire, were permitted to move to the metropolises (see note 2). The following decades saw the urban migration of hundreds of thousands of Jewish families. The new city-dwellers soon found work largely within the fields of administration, education and the liberal professions. Hence, the Jews were rapidly brought into the modern lives of Soviet citizens. Simultaneously, the Jews lost contact with the traditional Jewish communities in the Pale of Settlement. Specific Jewish cultural features such as Yiddish language, religious practices and Jewish household gradually vanished due to lack of convergence with modern Soviet lifestyle or simple secularization (Levin 1988). It is this group of metropolitan, secular Jews that has become known as Heartland Jews. By the end of the 1970s, the Heartland Jews made up more than half of the total Jewish population of the Soviet Union.

For Soviet Jews, secularization was not simply a mechanical process. Traditional Jewish life was severely suppressed by the Soviet authorities. Jews were deprived of their cultural institutions and synagogues, their schools were closed, and Jewish cultural organizations prohibited during the 1920s and 1930s. The creation of the State of Israel in 1948 was soon followed by a major anti-Jewish purge in the Soviet Union. After the death of Joseph Stalin, in 1953, the repression receded, yet in most respects the official policy towards the Jews remained unchanged until the era of Gorbachev.

In this general climate of assimilation, the Soviet internal passport system played a major role in the maintenance of distinct Jewish identities. From the age of 16, all urban dwellers had to declare their nationality in an affidavit. Children of mixed marriages were allowed to choose between the nationalities of their parents. In any contact with the authorities, Jews could not escape their nationality (Korey 1973:49-63) and in this way they were excluded from a number of "sensitive" fields: diplomacy, the security apparatus, higher levels of the party, etc. Moreover, Jews were discriminated against in spheres of education and work due to the Soviet quota system, that was supposed to secure national groups equal access to education and qualified work. In reality, the system of ethnic quotas limited the possibilities of particular national groups, especially the Jews, as their national quota allotments rapidly filled up (Korey 1973, Levin 1988). Nevertheless, in 1989, the Jews constituted the Soviet Union's best educated nationality group.

Soviet nationality policy and the "national order of things", to borrow a label from Malkki (1992:36), ascribed the Jews as "rootless cosmopolitans" or potential "Zionist agents". In the narrative of Soviet power, the presumed rootlessness of the Jews comprised a direct threat to the social order. The Jews' loyalty to the Soviet state, especially after the creation of the State of Israel, was regarded as ambiguous. Jews were excluded from serving in the Soviet diplomatic corps and in leading political positions. Soviet Jews were consequently involved in a process of mutually contradictory forces: on the one hand attempts were made to assimilate them. On the other, they were stigmatized through discriminatory efforts. Soviet Jews became "culturally Russians, but legally and socially Jews" (Gitelman 1972). Today, most of the Heartland Jews speak Russian as their native language and identify themselves with "Russian culture" (Gorlizki 1990:343).

Israel's victory in the June 1967 Six-Day War triggered a series of new repressions against the Soviet Jews. This repression laid the foundation for the emergence of the "refuseniks", Jews who overtly demanded the freedom to

emigrate (Pinkus 1988:259-60). Despite the ill-treatment of these would-be emigrants, some 250,000 Jews managed to leave. While this wave of emigrants were driven by religious or Zionist motivations and naturally emigrated to Israel, by the mid-1970s the majority of Jewish émigrés were "dropping out" en route and heading to other Western countries in Europe or North America (Harris 1976:104-105, Gitelman 1977). In 1981, however, following the rise of Cold War tensions, the emigration of Soviet Jews was again limited to an insignificant annual rate by the Soviet rulers.

Transition, Emigration and Jewish Identities

The transition of the Soviet Union is usually said to have been initiated by the coming into power of Gorbachev in early 1985. From 1987 came the policy of "glasnost" and subsequently "perestroika". From then on, the isolated and dispersed Jewish underground networks gradually stepped out into the limelight and semi-legal organizations were founded (Krupnik 1991:82). This occurred at a time when the possibilities for Jews (and others) to emigrate were still extremely limited. Many "refuseniks" were at this time still prosecuted just for having applied for exit visas (Altshuler 1988, Gitelman 1989:10). By the end of 1988, those Jews who had already applied for exit visas were being allowed to leave, and gradually exit restrictions were lifted if not de jure then de facto. In 1989 a number of former political prisoners, including Andrei Sakharov and other prominent dissidents, were elected to the Peoples' Congress, and the semi-legal Jewish organizations could officially register along with other civil organizations. During the following years the state-imposed "anti-Zionist" agitation gradually disappeared from television and the printed press, and there appeared programs and articles positively disposed towards Israel and Jewish life. With the democratization of public life, it became possible for the Jews to obtain literature about Judaism and traditional Jewish life. The officially implemented discriminatory barriers, such as the national quota-system, which limited the number of Jews able to enter institutions of higher education, or obtain certain jobs or even a flat, gradually vanished.

"Glasnost" and "perestroika" also opened the way for populist Russian radical nationalist and fascist organizations, who took advantage of the new freedom of speech to express their anti-Jewish sentiments. According to the ideologies of these organizations, the Jews were to blame for the creation of the Soviet Union and the era of communism in Russia. During the summer of 1990, widespread rumors were circulating in Moscow and Saint Petersburg that pogroms would break out on certain days (see also Yukhneva 1991:75). While what has come to be called "anti-Semitism from above", (the official, state-

imposed anti-Semitism) declined, "anti-Semitism from below", (i.e. popular anti-Semitism) increased or appeared in a more overt form.

In the sphere of economy, the market-reforms led to a serious decline in living standards. With the changes it became increasingly hard for Soviet citizens to fulfill basic daily needs. An architect among my Jewish informants described the situation around 1990:

"There was a general climate of instability. Nobody knew what political and economical developments the morrow would bring. Many Jews were convinced that a total collapse of the state was impending, an impression that was supported by the anti-Semitic activities of fascist- and national-patriotic organizations"

In this atmosphere, thousands of Soviet Jews prepared to emigrate. From the end of 1989 through 1991, nearly 350,000 Jews left the Soviet Union (Gur 1994). This exodus had the character of a flight in panic (Gorlizki 1990:350). The situation became somewhat more stable after the 1991 abortive hard-line communist coup and the subsequent disintegration of the Soviet Union. Since that time, Jewish emigration from the FSU has stabilized at a level between 60-70,000 annually (ibid.).

Given these conditions, the question of emigration has become a cornerstone in the discussion of Russian-Jewish identity. Unlike most other national groups, Russian Jews (along with Germans and to some extent Armenians) have over the past five years found themselves in the intricate situation of having a genuine choice between staying and leaving. For the Heartland Jews, the question of emigration was not connected to religious or national sentiments, nor is it at present. Being widely secular and lacking national aspirations, their motives for emigration revolve around getting out of Russia rather than coming to Israel. The vast majority of Zionists and religious Jews, for whom emigration was a question of obtaining freedom and "returning" to the mythical homeland of Israel, had left in the 1970s, and the remainder were among the first emigrants who left the Soviet Union when the gates opened in the late 1980s.

As their friends and relatives began to leave, Jews started to consider their future lives. The most usual theme of conversation among Jews centered around emigration: who had left now, how they were getting through the process of emigration, and how they were managing their new lives abroad. Offspring of mixed families who were Russians, or whose passports indicated non-Jewish nationalities and who had never thought of themselves as Jews, began to consider the possibility of emigration.

Being a Jew became something desirable, as Jewishness opened a gateway to new possibilities.

During my fieldwork in Moscow, I noted that most Jews had not made a definite decision concerning the difficult question of their own possible emigration. Nevertheless, the vast majority of my informants expressed the view that as long as the political situation did not deteriorate, i.e. as long as democratic-minded parties remained in power, they would prefer to stay in Russia. The parliamentary crisis, culminating in the putsch and the shelling of the "White House" (the Parliament) in Moscow in October 1993, was regarded by many informants as a sign of the consolidation of the democratic forces in Russia. The subsequent December 1993 elections that brought Zhirinovskiy into parliament along with a significant number of fellow right-wing radicals was a blow to most Jews, but the event did not in itself comprise a concrete motivation for emigration. Emigration rates remained relatively stable (Gur-Gurewitz 1995:189).

In contrast to the 1990-1991 period, Moscow's Heartland Jews now see emigration as an undesirable solution. Emigration is now reduced to an option if the sociopolitical realities in Russia, i.e., primarily political instability and anti-Semitism, should make exodus an absolute necessity. Those who do emigrate are mainly: 1) elderly Jews who leave to reunite with family members abroad and 2) youth and students, who have received scholarships to attend schools or universities in Israel.

Russian Jews and Russian Culture

With the opening of the Soviet borders, emigration had become one of the most important elements of Russian Jewish identities. Thus, an important question to examine during my fieldwork was the traits in Russian Jewish identities that were connecting Russian Jews to Israel. Did this diasporic Jewish population in one way or another refer to Israel as a land of return?

My interviews about possible destinations in migratory processes indicated that Jews tended to be reluctant to emigrate, particularly to Israel. Nobody would express enthusiasm regarding the question of emigration. When presented with more than one emigration destination, nearly all Jews would prefer to go to a European country or to the US, and only in the absence of other possibilities was Israel mentioned as a destination. Israel was by most Russian Jews regarded as an "Oriental", "non-European", "semi-feudal" state ruled by religious laws. The Russian Jewish intellectuals regarded "Israeli culture" as alien, and the socio-economic conditions in Israel were seen as undesirable. Israel tended to be regarded as a "homeland"

in the sense of a refuge, to which Jews could seek in case the socio-political climate in Russia should make emigration an imperative.

Emigrants actually had a choice of destination from late 1988, when the fourth wave emigration began, to the end of 1989, where the US and most West European countries stopped granting political asylum to Jews from the Soviet Union. During this short period, more than 100,000 Jews left the USSR, but less than 15,000 went to Israel. Since then, the greater part of Jews have been deprived of the possibility to freely choose their destination. To emigrate today now means primarily to go to Israel.

Simultaneously, the socio-political pressure on the remaining Russian Jews has been relieved. There is no more any state-imposed anti-Semitism in Russia. True, the general economic situation has deteriorated, and the standards of living - including those of many intellectuals - has been severely reduced. Nevertheless, in the opinion of many Jews, the perspectives for the future in Russia seem rather insecure. Most educated Russian Jews are involved in continuous rethinking of whether to stay or leave. In these negotiations, a crucial factor in favor of staying is their rootedness" in Russia. A woman, musician, at the age of 54, explains:

"My family is connected very strongly to Russia, and it is something which comes from within. I don't know why. Maybe it is connected to the fact that in my idea of a homeland, the culture is something secondary. What comes first is the destiny I share with people around me. Not my family or my friends, but all the people who share a destiny. Including the war, the Stalin terror, including the victory in connection with the democratization. My son took part in the events of 1991. Sharing this is a natural thing for my family. I want to stay with this country, and this country shall become better with me."

A professor of fine arts, aged 50, expressed his rootedness as follows:

" I know that there is a Jewish culture, and I regard myself as a Jew. But as far as Jewish culture is concerned I feel somewhat handicapped. I can't emphasize Jewish culture with the same warm feelings as the Russian culture. But I can't stop being a Jew - even though I am a Jew, as well by blood as by other difficult to explain reasons, I nevertheless feel so much at home here, so natural, that I would feel myself a stranger anywhere else."

Another intellectual, a 65-year-old female teacher of music, elaborates on her feelings of Russian rootedness:

"For me one of the most important things in life is the privilege of conversation. The Russian language is a

unique language, so rich and colorful. The language - and the nature - are the main reason that I would never feel at home anywhere else than in Russia. I could never - no matter how brilliantly I might adapt to another language - be able to express myself as I can in Russian."

According to this conception of the Russian-Jewish intelligentsia, the Russian-Jewish diaspora is so rooted in Russian soil that we may speak of a re-territorialization of the Jewish diaspora in the Russian surroundings (Malkki 1992:35-36). The degree of shared experience with Russians, as indicated in the statement of the musician, is often stronger than the degree of shared experience with the more abstract category of "Jews", not to mention those for whom being a "Jew" is a matter of expediency.

Most Heartland Jews today refer to Jewish language and culture as having been "lost" during the process of assimilation to Soviet life. On the contrary, many Jews, particularly intellectuals, have a strong sense of connection to Russian cultural life. In my interviews with Jewish intellectuals, they tended to emphasize their organic links with Russia. Some of the more characteristic statements from these Jewish informants were:

"My soul is connected to the Russian land".

"I have grown up with Russian culture".

"Russia is my destiny."

"I cannot live without Russian literature"

"Russian culture is unique".

"I am deeply devoted to Russian nature".

"My roots are here in Russia".

"I belong to the Russian intelligentsia".

Even though the Jews still regard Israel as a possible destination should socio-political developments should make it necessary to leave, Russian Jews have become territorialized themselves in Russia. Consequently, when the Russian Jews leave for Israel they go "abroad" to a foreign and unfamiliar country; they do not return "home".

The Construction of a "Russian" Diaspora in Israel

The major part of fourth wave Russian Jewish intellectual immigrants have come to Israel during the period of 1990-1991 under the shadow of an impending chaos in Russia. Let me now turn to the other pole of this study and address myself to the migrants after their arrival in Israel.

The Israeli national ideology is based on Zionism.

According to the founding laws of Israel, Jews throughout the world are regarded as members of an extraterritorial

Jewish nation, and Jews in the diaspora are secured the right to "return", and thereby obtain citizenship (Tekiner 1991). Upon immigration, newcomers are expected to adapt to Israeli mainstream society, a process known as "absorption" and administered by various immigration agencies. The Israeli ideology strives to form a Jewish population in Israel that is socially and culturally homogenous, connected to a shared religion, history, and destiny. Yet, there are cracks in this mosaic. There is a popular narrative in Israel, according to which the newly arrived Russian Jews are ascribed as "Russians", rather than "Jews". Due to the large number of new immigrants, this narrative is today stronger than ever. The newly arriving Russian Jews are therefore confronted with a process that in some aspects resembles what they left in Russia, where assimilation goes hand in hand with stigmatization. Thus, neither in Russia nor in Israel do the fourth wave Russian Jews fit into the national order: in Russia/Soviet they were at best "Jews", at worst "rootless cosmopolitans". In Israel they are "Russians" or "immigrants".

In the present public debate in Israel there is discussion as to whether the fourth wave of immigration constitutes a new ethnic group. The outward behavior of the FSU-immigrants clearly differentiates them from most segments of Israeli society. The distinction is not only social or cultural, as one might expect in an Israel which is a refuge for Jews around the world. It is also religious. A considerable number of immigrants from the FSU to Israel are non-Jews in mixed marriages, non-Jewish immigrants reunified with Jewish relatives, or have absolutely no Jewish links, having simply manipulated nationality documents so they could leave Russia. According to the stricter definition of Jewishness, up to 20% of the newcomers from the FSU are in fact non-Jews.

The exact proportion of non-Jewish immigrants depends on which definition is used. According to Minister of Absorption Yair Tzaban, 81.2% of the 540,000 FSU immigrants who have arrived from late 1989 to March 1995 are Jews in the religious sense, i.e., born of a Jewish mother. Of the remainder, 7.3% are non-Jews married to Jews, 9.4% are children of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers; 2.1% are grandchildren of Jews who have immigrated to Israel and 0.4% are grandchildren of Jews who have not immigrated; finally 0.2% are non-Jewish parents of non-Jewish spouses (see note 3). Consequently, depending on the definitions, between 40,000 and 100,000 of the new immigrants are non-Jewish (see note 4). Anti-immigration groups use the 20% figure for non-Jews, whereas pro-immigrant circles use the 8% figure.

Not Jewish, Not Christian

The influx of non-Jewish Russians, Ukrainians and other FSU citizens poses a challenge to Israel's religious authorities, who make decisions in the vital spheres of birth, marriage, funerals etc. The non-Jewish immigrants lack all rights in these realms. For several years deceased non-Jews have found places of rest in secular-oriented kibbutzes or have occasionally been buried in Christian cemeteries. Such solutions are not popular with the ecclesiastic authorities, as the non-Jewish immigrants are largely not Christians either (see note 5). Only recently, and due to protests from non-Jewish immigrants, have rights to conduct non-religious funerals been granted. Accordingly, a few non-Jewish burial grounds have been established. The significant presence of non-Jews has thus reinvigorated the discussions of a radical reform of Israeli society, where a separation of state and religion is currently being debated. The religious authorities and Orthodox Jews are strongly opposed to attempts to secularize these particular spheres of life. They fear that the vast majority of the Russian Jews would prefer civil marriages and non-Jewish funerals to the existing, religious ceremonies.

Immigrant Organizations

The new immigrants have become dissatisfied with the governmental integration efforts, following a number of broken electoral pledges made by the ruling Labor party, and similar disappointments with the Likud policy towards the immigrants during their reign until 1992. This dissatisfaction has led to the formation of several immigrant organizations and political movements, of which the newly founded, Yisrael Be'aliya (The Movement for Israel and Immigration), seems to be a unifying force. The movement was founded in June 1995 by the prominent former Soviet "refusenik", Natan Shcharansky, who came to Israel in 1986 after nine years of Soviet imprisonment, and who has become a symbol of the individual's heroic struggle against faceless totalitarianism. Shcharansky is widely respected not only by the new immigrants, but also by wide segments of the Israeli population, leftist and rightist (see note 6). Shcharansky expects to form a political party and run in the May 1996 parliamentary elections. Political analysts expect the new immigrants can help the movement to obtain 12 to 14 seats in the Knesset, which could give the immigrant party the balance of power between the Labor- and Likud-blocs, and push immigrant issues to a prominent place on the political agenda. Yisrael Be'aliya aims to improve the general life conditions for the FSU-immigrants, provide appropriate housing and jobs, and reform Israeli society.

Undoubtedly, the social and economic integration is far more difficult for the new immigrants than it used to be

for the old. Due to the enormous amount of Jews that have sought to leave the Soviet Union since 1989, Israel has given first priority to assisting actual emigration and entry, and only then covered the costs of long-term integration efforts. In Shcharansky's opinion, "the time has come for Israel to be more than just a haven for the world's Jews, but a place that attract Jews". He underlines the importance of making long-term absorption of Jews as important as bringing them to Israel (see note 7). Only in this way does he believe it is possible to attract a significant number of the mainly secular Jews from the FSU in the future. Paradoxically, Yisrael Be'aliya, a party based on facilitating the immigrants in the process of "absorption", has become a social force, that is leading the new immigrants in the opposite direction. By establishing a political platform for the new immigrants' interests, Shcharansky's movement is leading the immigrants from the FSU to consolidate their own cultural peculiarity in Israel.

Alienation From Israeli Society

The founding of political entities reflects a host of immigrants' frustrations: lack of jobs commensurate with their qualifications is one. The average new Russian-Jewish immigrant is more educated than the average Israeli. Moreover, considerable numbers of immigrants are still living in mobile barracks, constructed to cope with the explosive influx of immigrants in 1990 and 1991. Moreover, the immigrants are annoyed at their negative image among the population and in the Israeli mass media. Statements such as "all immigrants are prostitutes, pensioners and up to no good" as it was verbalized by a member of the Knesset, can commonly be read in Israeli newspapers.

Most Russian Jewish informants in Israel are conscious of the acute loss of the contextual frames that endow meaning to their personal identities. Due to the amount of immigrants - more than 12% of the population in Israel is now made up of fourth wave émigrés from the FSU - it is extremely difficult for the immigrants to find a job in harmony with their educational background. Many intellectuals have had to take manual labor to earn for their living, something they experience as humiliating. Most immigrants see themselves as having severe difficulties in coping with the new realities in Israel and the losses of familiar surroundings, though the majority of my informants are grateful to the Israeli government and society for their willingness to receive them along with hundreds and thousands of other Jews from the FSU, and for the financial aid in the first, difficult period.

Next to living conditions in Israel, a common theme of conversion among immigrants from the FSU is the

political and economic developments in Russia. Despite great variations in points of view, there is a strong tendency to look upon the future development of Russia with a large portion of pessimism. Many Russian Jews express their conviction that the future would reveal a reinforcement of anti-Semitism, and even pogroms. Usually the situation in Russia is compared with the climate in Germany in the beginning of the 1930s. Hence, the often tragic feelings of being displaced are to some extent compensated by rationally argued, mutual assurance among the émigrés, that they after all have taken the right decision when they decided to emigrate. In conformity with their fellow intellectuals back in Moscow, the émigrés express feelings of being deeply "rooted" in Russian culture. Russian literature is enthusiastically discussed, the nature, and shared memories of the expressions of life in Russia. In such discussions, Russia is generally referred to as "home". Their knowledge of current political and cultural developments in Russia is usually significant, thanks to the variety of Russian-language newspapers and radio-programs in Israel (see Hefetz 1993:32-36). Indisputably, personal links to Russia begin to ebb away not long after their arrival in Israel, except in relations between parents in Russia and their emigrant children.

Among the intellectual immigrants, there is a tendency to overtly oppose "absorption" to Israeli society. Many women have chosen to stay at home instead of having a job. The kindergartens are so expensive and wages so low that the lack of a second income in a family is compensated by the saved costs for children-care. Young families find additional advantage in controlling their children's upbringing during the first years: this enables them to teach the children proper Russian and take care of their socialization into "Russian culture". A mother of two girls stated that she would use any means to avoid her children becoming "strangers" in the family.

Certainly, fourth wave Russians Jews regard themselves as culturally distinct from other Jews in Israel. Commonly expressed characteristics of the Israeli population are: "Oriental", "rude", "uncultivated", "provincial" along with more admirable "morally healthy", "idealistic", "hardworking", and "nature bound". Relations to Russian-Jewish immigrants who arrived in the 1970s and early 1980s are also complicated by feelings of otherness and lack of common points of reference. A 40-year old female musician, now employed at a mental hospital, explained how "old" immigrants from Russia avoided her by answering her in Hebrew whenever she addressed them in Russian. She recognized that these early immigrants were afraid of being identified with her cohort of immigrants. Virtually none of my informants had friends or acquaintances among third wave immigrants, apart from

members of their families or people they knew back in Russia. Even in relations with old friends from the Russian past, most new immigrants expressed their surprise in finding how far from each other they had grown (see also Markowitz 1995:207).

Third Wave Versus Fourth Wave

Fourth wave immigrants from the FSU contrast sharply with the 220,000 Soviet-Jewish immigrants who arrived in Israel during the 1970s and the early 1980s (see Farago 1978, 1979; Markowitz 1993). As already indicated, emigration from the Soviet Union in the 1970s and 1980s was far more difficult (and even dangerous) than it is today, and the reasons to leave usually motivated by religion or Zionism. In her study of this group of immigrants conducted the late 1980s, Fran Markowitz traces a strong sense of identification with Israeli society - a powerful feeling of finally being "at home." Markowitz concludes:

"While most migrants, forced or voluntary, start off as rooted in an identity and a place which they call home and then end up as strangers upon arrival at a new destination, Jewish aliyah [immigration] to Israel changes the stranger into a rightful citizen, a member of the majority group in his or her historic homeland" (Markowitz 1993:99).

According to the majority of Markowitz' informants, Russia was not considered a "home", and longing for the past in Russia was not expressed (ibid.:101-103). In a survey based on 105 immigrants conducted in 1988, Markowitz observed that 87% of her respondents felt "completely or to a great extent at home". Though the immigrants conducted their lives nearly exclusively in Russian within their migration cohort, they tended to "embrace Israel assimilationism by refusing to support an infrastructure of organizations and Russian-speaking leaders which would make them a political force to contend with in a multi-ethnic Israel" (ibid.:97). Markowitz concludes that Russian immigrants in Israel found not only a new culture, climate, and political system, but also a new meaning for their Jewish identities. (...) In the course of time most of them have internalized and put into practice an identity that places them alongside natives of the country they chose to be their home. (Ibid.:108).

It would be misleading to assume that third wave and fourth wave immigrants are going through different stages of basically the same process of integration, and that the new immigrants will eventually identify with mainstream Israeli society in a way similar to third wave immigrants. The experiences of these two waves of immigrants from

their arrival to Israel are totally different, and the waves arrive with dissimilar experiences from Russia/the Soviet Union. It is therefore reasonable not only to distinguish between various groups of Soviet/Russian Jews according to space (ethno-geographic diasporic "origin"), but also to refer to Russian Jews in Israel with regard to time (period of immigration), even though the borders between these new groups obviously are blurred. The immigration cohort with which the individual came has become a marker of identity as well.

Conclusions: New Diasporas in the "Homeland"

The emigration of Russian Jewry triggered by the collapse of the Soviet Union seems on first sight to be a typical example of a diaspora coming "home". Return home, to the land of its remote ancestors, is the negation of a diaspora (cf. Clifford 1994:307). However, unlike early Russian settlers to Israel, the sentiments among fourth wave Russian Jewish intellectuals of "being at home" are largely surpassed by feelings of "being away". Remaining Jews in Russia are reluctant to leave, and now mainly do so by reasons of family unification or educational opportunities. The socio-political developments in Russia will no doubt determine the future scale of the emigration, but for the moment there is no panic on the horizon.

For the new Russian immigrants in Israel, perhaps precisely because they have no desire to return to Russian reality, now have rendered Russia the status of a highly developed culture, a divine nature, and a congenial language. For the Russian-Jewish intellectuals in Israel, the homeland is widely identified with the Russian culture flowering in the intellectual layers of Russian society. In this sense, the cultural home is reproduced as an "imagined homeland" (cf. Anderson 1983) of the Russian Jewish immigrants in Israel.

The commonly held assumption, that a diaspora ceases to exist when it comes "home", which is often indicated in terms of loss or "starting life anew" upon returning to the historical point of departure, does not allow us to understand the impact of a returning diaspora. Diasporic identities do not cease to exist during the process of migration. The identities are involved in a dynamic, continuous interaction with the socio-political realities, they confront. When members of the Russian Jewish diasporas are relocated, and during the processes of relocation, the new environments cause identities to be altered.

Somewhat paradoxically, we might here speak of the emergence of a new diaspora, or new diasporic identities, among people that for the first time refer to Russia as their cultural homeland. We might call this phenomenon

reversed diaspora. Upon returning to what is usually regarded as the mythical homeland (Israel) the Russian Jews have been displaced physically from "Russian culture", thereby creating a diasporic relation to the newly left country.

It may be argued that some segments of fourth wave Russian Jewish intelligentsia are developing elements of a collective identity distinct from, and in opposition to, the Israeli, national narrative. Perhaps it is still too early to say how this narrative will be articulated in the Israeli surroundings. As I have discussed, there are many indicators that the new Jewish immigrants along with their non-Jewish or "partially" Jewish fellow immigrants will emerge into powerful political and cultural forces. The emergence of a wide range of Russian Jewish cultural organizations, movements, newspapers and other identity-bearing phenomena such as "Russian" political parties in Israel all seem to indicate that Russian Jews are attempting to manifest their cultural distinctiveness and their imagined Russian culture within the Israeli society, thereby contributing to ongoing ethnification of contemporary Israel society. This development may not only have consequences for the structure of Israeli society, leading the Jewish state towards secularization. It may also generate the cultural distinctiveness of the new Russian Jewry in the future.

Notes

1. The notion of waves of emigration has been suggested by Sidney Heitman (1991). The first such wave embraces the refugees who fled from revolution, civil war and famine, 1917-1922. The second wave relates to the demographic movements during World War II, during which around 2 million people fled, were deported, and/or repatriated in new areas. The third wave consists mainly of Jewish, German and Armenian emigration from the end of World War II up to the late 1980s (Heitman 1988:18-19).

2. Small Jewish town in the Pale of Settlement during the reign of the Russian czars.

3. The Jerusalem Post, February 4th; March 25th, 1995.

4. Jewish Agency expects another 700,000 Jews to emigrate from the FSU (1995) before the turn of the century (Hotline, Keren Hayesod, no. 304, March 23rd, 1995), but even though the immigration rate should continue with an average of 70,000, the amount of non-Jewish immigrants will nearly double during the coming four years. 5. See e.g. The Jerusalem Post, March 25th, 1995.

6. See Jerusalem Post, June 17th and an interview with Natan Shcharansky on June 24th, 1995.

7. Jerusalem Post, June 24th, 1995.

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