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The integration Challenge of Russian-speaking Jews in Israel

Problematika integrace rusky mluvících Židů v Izraeli

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Prohlášení:

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Abstrakt:

Tato práce se zabývá otázkou hromadné migrace osob židovského původu ze Sovětského svazu do Izraele mezi lety 1989 a 1992 v rámci tzv. „postsovětské aliji“. Postavení těchto přistěhovalců a jejich integrace do izraelské společnosti je hlavním tématem této práce. Úvodní část práce pojednává o židovském životě v Ruském impériu a Sovětském svazu. První z hlavních částí bere za úkol vysvětlit politické postoje nových přistěhovalců po příjezdu do Izraele. Téma druhé ze tří hlavních částí se věnuje otázkám náboženství mezi příslušnými přistěhovalci, zatímco poslední část pojednává o jejich vzdělání a pracovním uplatnění. Tato práce se snaží znázornit vliv specifických podmínek za sovětského režimu, během kterého židovská identita prošla procesem drastické transformace, kde si Židé zachovali povědomí specifické etnické příslušnosti, ačkoliv se kulturně asimilovali. Tato transformace připravila půdu pro vytvoření konkrétní skupiny imigrantů, kteří se přestěhovali do Izraele ze Sovětského svazu v době jeho skutečného kolapsu a politického rozpadu.

Abstract:

This thesis discusses the question of mass migration of persons of Jewish origin from the Soviet Union to Israel roughly between the years 1989 and 1992, within the framework of the so-called “post-Soviet Aliyah”. The position of these newcomers and their integration into Israeli society is the main topic of concern. While the initial part of the work provides an overview of Jewish life in the Russian Empire/Soviet Union, the first of the main sections discusses their political attitudes and activities after their arrival to Israel. The topic of the second of three main sections delves into the issues of religion among the immigrants in question, while the last section discusses their education and qualification as well as their application in Israel. This work attempts to depict the influence of specific conditions under the Soviet regime where Jewish identity underwent a process of drastic transformation and where Jews retained awareness of a specific ethnicity although culturally assimilated. This transformation set the stage for the formation of a specific group of immigrants who arrived in Israel from the Soviet Union in the time of its actual collapse and political disintegration.

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"I was Jewish in Russia, now I am Russian in Israel. Is it our fate to always be 'others' and second-rate citizens?"[1]

[1] Remennick, 2007, p.53 – *(from an interview with immigrant, security guard, former engineer, 1994)*

Introduction

The thesis, under the title The Integration Challenge of Russian-speaking Jews in Israel, engages in the topic of immigration of the Soviet Jews into Israel, namely in the 1990s. Much attention will be dedicated to the situation of these immigrants and to their reception in Israeli society after the decomposition of the Soviet state. This work was based on an initial research paper done during my exchange program at Ben Gurion University in Beer Sheva, Israel. This work will talk about the historical background of Russian-speaking Jews, the main problematic issues of immigration, religious aspects, political preferences, higher education and future occupation after the big Aliyah of Russian-speaking Jews migration to Israel.

The main goal of this thesis is to analyze the aspects of immigration for Russian-speaking Jews into Israel. This means we need to answer the following questions: why Russian Jews faced difficulties in assimilating into Israeli life, why is it that Jews of Russia remained to be seen as Russians in Israel. Also, we need to show how the Russian-speaking Jews adapted in the new Israeli society.

It is important to define the term Russian-speaking Jews or in a broader sense - Russian Jews. This thesis takes into account the definition of this term where the group of Russian Jews were characterized by the following criteria: Russian as a spoken and literary language; a combination of Russian and Jewish culture; an emergence of group self-awareness which was based not on religious but on ethnic identity; a wide geographic area including Jews from other post-Soviet countries.

First, the work presents the situation of the Jewish communities in the Russian Empire and after, in the Soviet Union, in a wider context of development of the Russian and Soviet state as well as society. At the same time, more attention is paid to the deformation and changes brought about within Russian Jewry. Afterwards, in its main part in fact, this thesis becomes preoccupied with some aspects of the Soviet or post-Soviet Jewish immigrants after their arrival to Israel. This part is divided into three chapters. The first of this part's chapters digs deep into political attitudes of the newcomers from the former Soviet Union and their political activities in Israel. The second chapter engages in the religious questions among the Soviet immigrants in Israel, influenced by the atheistic teachings characterizing Soviet society during a period of several generations. Eventually, the third chapter looks at the issue of the

education or qualifications of these immigrants, which they had reached in the Soviet Union and applied in Israel.

This thesis has taken into account information from various academic literature. It does not use any specific main source, as information about Russian speaking Jews is available across the secondary literature. The secondary literature was available in either Russian, English or Czech. This thesis builds on the mentioned secondary literature, while it tries to unify the available information from different sources and create the most detailed picture possible about the topic. One of the main methods used in this thesis was the analysis of data from the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics. Another method used was the analyzation of available literature concerning the general history of Russian-speaking Jews and the specific issues which plagued their integration into Israel in the 1990s.

A great part of this thesis is dedicated to the development of Russia and the Soviet Union, in addition to the positions of the Russian Jews. Immigration from the Russian Empire to Palestine which took place during the final phase of the 19th century and in the first half of 20th century played an important role in the establishment of the modern Israeli state in 1948 and in its political life during the initial periods of its existence. Immigration in the 1990s was radically different from the first waves of immigration. In this thesis, we will see quite a difference between these immigrants, their descendants and generations of those immigrants who came from the Soviet and post-Soviet lands and who were often considerably influenced by the specific conditions of Soviet life.

Subsequent historical events within the country and the reversal of Soviet foreign policy were reflected in the situation of the Soviet Jewish population. The Jews were presented among many nations and nationalities within Soviet Russia whose revolutionary government, as early as November 1917, had declared “the right of nations to self-determination”. The Jews as a national group were affected by the repressions of the Soviet regime, culminating under Stalin’s dictatorship. Moreover, seven decades of the Soviet regime which had created “a new socialist Soviet man” with its strict atheistic education or actual Russification, quite influenced the Soviet Jewish population. The Soviet Jewish population started to be more and more visible as there was a longing for emigration, a popular sentiment which was growing among the Soviet Jewish population. The mass emigration of the Soviet Jews as early as the 1970s was just a signal of the slowly approaching collapse of the Soviet system. The migration (post-Soviet Aliyah) in the 1990s, that presents the basis of the main theme of this work, accompanied such a collapse.

Separation from Soviet life and immigration to Israel was a complex and painful process. The Soviet system practically destroyed Jewish identity but also it did not give a chance for complete assimilation into Soviet society. Many Russian-speaking Jews upon arrival to Israel did not feel as if they were back home. Grigoriy Pomerants (philosopher and cultural theorist) very accurately described the following situation: "We are not completely aliens but we are not entirely our own… we have become something like non-Israeli Jews, people who have lost all roots in everyday life."[2]

[2] Pomeranc, 1972, p. 161,166.

1 A brief overview of Jews in the Russian Empire and in the USSR

Despite the presence of the Jews in Russian society since the Middle Ages, it is possible to say only in the late 18th century after the gradual partition of the Polish state, the Russian Empire obtained along with the extensive territories settled mainly by Ukrainian, Polish, Belarusian or Lithuanian population, a massive Jewish population too. Therefore, Russia was faced with "the Jewish Question" and the question there of "what to do with the Jews?" Concerns about competition from the Jewish population forced Catherine II (ruling in 1762-1796) to take radical measures - the creation of a "Pale of Settlement" in which permanent residency by the Jews was allowed.[3] One of the main reasons for the creation of the Pale of Settlement was more than likely the complaints of Russian traders about the competition of the Jews and about anti-Jewish prejudices which were common in Poland. According to them, Jews represented "unproductive" and "parasitic" group of the population.[4] The first general census of the Russian population was carried out in 1897, when the number of Jews in the Russian Empire as a whole reached 5.2 million (4.2% of the total population).[5] The end of the enforcement and formal demarcation of the Pale coincided with the February and October Revolutions of 1917, i.e., with the fall of the Tsarist Russian Empire.

The government of the Tsar Nicholas I (1825–1855) had an autocratic character. The Tsar tried to integrate the Jews into Russian society but his integration process was highly repressive. The Tsarist government, convinced that Jewish religion and belief were dangerous to the Christian population,[6] criticized the Jews for their religious fanaticism; and the first pogroms against the Jews during the rule of Nicholas I were mostly religious in nature. In comparison with it, we could say, the reasons for further later pogroms were rather economic.

In contrast, Alexander II (1855–1881) who was the son and successor of Nicholas I after his ascension to the throne, took a liberal attitude towards the Jews. The period of his reforms brought changes that presumed the gradual emancipation of the Jews. For example, permission to leave the settlement zone applied first to guild merchants. From 1861, in time of the abolition of serfdom in Russia, holders of academic titles, craft guilds and later all who attended university or similar educational facilities could move.[7] This reform euphoria meant

[3] Johnson, 1988, pp. 344-345.

[4] Vydra, 2006, p. 23-24.

[5] Konstantinov, 2007, p. 16.

[6] Jewish Encyclopedia of Brockhaus and Efron, 1910, p. 710.

[7] Haumann, 1997, p. 81.

there was hope for Russian Jews to improve their situation. During the reign of Alexander II, the Jews began to engage in Russian society, the liberal spirit of the 1860s was reflected by the expansion of their economic activities and in the development of their cultural as well as intellectual life. However, the growing emancipation of the Jews brought with it a wave of anti-Jewish pogroms. Anti-Jewish prejudices grew out of the tradition of Christian anti-Judaism, inclusive of the traditional accusations of ritual crimes, which had its roots in Poland.[8] Gradually, with the advent of economic liberalism, the socio-economic elements of anti-Semitism grew.

After the assassination of Alexander II on 13 March 1881, anti-Jewish pogroms in Russia spread with incredible speed. Many were surprised by their boom and it was not clear who led them. There appeared theories that the pogroms were initiated by a state power. In his time, the prominent Jewish historian Simon Dubnov (1860-1941) was convinced that the pogroms were carefully prepared and planned, while the Tsarist government could be behind it. Dubnov referred to the open anti-Semitism of the new Tsar, thus Alexander III.[9]

State anti-Semitism and the difficult economic situation of the Russian Empire created the ideal conditions for the pogroms. Those who took part in the pogroms saw Jews as being in a primarily exploitative class. The Jews were perceived by the inhabitants as a greedy and parasitic nation, which at any cost was worth its own enrichment. Gradually and finally, the pogroms lost even their anti-Jewish (religious and national) meaning. The Jews became victims, simply from the economic and political discontent.[10]

A number of counter-reform measures from Alexander III devalued most of the steps taken by the previous government of his father, Alexander II. In 1882 onwards, drastic restrictions on Jewish rights began. Moreover, a new wave of bloody anti-Jewish pogroms came later, roughly between 1903 and 1907, during the rule of last Russian Tsar Nicholas II (1894-1917) and likewise in a situation which coalesced with the Russian Liberal Revolution from 1905.[11] Anti-Jewish sentiments forced the Jewish population to emigrate. The main destination of the mass emigration was to the United States of America.[12] Notwithstanding, another large part of this Jewish population chose to emigrate in another direction.

[8] Vydra, 2006, p. 28.

[9] Dubnow, 1918, p. 248.

[10] Klier, 2011, p. 273.

[11] Karlip, 2013, p. 29.

[12] Klier, 2011, pp. 169-170.

Between 1882 and 1903, there were 25,000 Jews from Eastern Europe arrived in Palestine within the framework of so-called first Aliyah. Many of them sympathized with Zionism, which was the idea of come-back of the return of the Jewish nation to its ancient native country, which from the last phase of the 19th century was strengthening among a part of the European Jews. However, the main factor for emigration was to escape the conditions from the Tsarist regime of the Russian Empire. Nearly all Jews from the time came from traditional religious Jewish families, many hoping to improve their lives and flee anti-Semitism.[13]

Afterwards, the second and the third Aliyah in the years preceding and succeeding the First World War which took place between 1914-1918, were again mainly from Eastern Europe (the space of Russian Empire), following new pogroms and outbreaks of anti-Semitism. These groups were greatly influenced by socialist ideals and many of their members were ideologically driven pioneers, known as *halutzim* (pioneers), trained in agriculture and capable of establishing self-sustaining economies.[14] As a result of World War I, Palestine saw the transfer of its rule go from the Ottoman Empire to the Great Britain mandate. These waves of immigrants made a huge contribution to the development of the future state of Israel.

At the same time, Russia, from 1914 engaged in the First World War which led it through an essential and dramatic transformation. The revolution in March (or still in February, according to old Julian calendar which was used in Russia under the spiritual influence of the Orthodox Church) 1917 led to fall of monarchy, thus the Tsarist regime was finished. This state take-over was followed by the new Bolshevik revolution in October (November) of the same year. This process was accompanied by a great civil war between the "red" Bolsheviks and their "white" adversaries of the former Russian Empire that finally in 1922 culminated in the establishment of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, which was a federal formation under the rule of Bolshevik (Communist) Party. Since this time, however, three generations of Russian Jews experienced massive pressure and the repression of their public and free expression of their Jewishness. During roughly seventy years, the Soviet Jews were dispossessed of their culture and left with only vague notions of Judaism.[15]

As a consequence of the territorial changes after the end of the Russian Civil War or other conflicts that had followed the Bolshevik state take-over, like the war between the Soviet

[13] Howard M. Sachar, 1998, pp. 42-43.

[14] Galili and Morozov, 2013, pp. 4-5.

[15] Bullock, 1991, pp. 453-469.

Russia and the renewed Polish state in 1920-1921, the second largest Jewish community in Europe (just after Poland) lived in the USSR: in 1923 there were 2,431,000 while in 1939 it had grown to a population of 3,028,500 Jews.[16] The Soviet Union was established as a federal and multicultural state under communism and proclaimed there was social equality among all. As early as November 2 (or 15), 1917 the revolutionary Soviet government had adopted the "Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia". This document proclaimed the equality and sovereignty of the people of Russia; the rights of the people of Russia to have self-determination, including secession and formation of a separate state; abolition of all national and religious privileges as well as restrictions; the free development of national minorities and ethnographical groups populating the territory of Russia. [17] Naturally, the actual situation coupled with the development of the next several years was truly somewhat different.

The Jews were officially defined as one of the Soviet nationalities, although they were denied an institutional, territorial and even a cultural setting of their own.[18] The first decade after the Lenin's Bolshevik revolution, the Jewish religious institutions, which were not allowed to flourish, were able to maintain almost unchanged. For example, *cheders* (traditional Jewish elementary schools) acted illegally. However, the punishment for violating the laws on teaching children religion was far from being as severe as it was later in the 1930s. In Ukraine, 90% of synagogues that had existed before 1917 remained open even after 12 years. Separate books in Hebrew were printed for the needs of synagogues and in 1928, the Soviet authorities allowed the publication of a religious journal, for the first and last time.[19] Moreover, Yiddish was a valid officially recognized language in Belarus and Ukraine, two of the Soviet socialist republics where traditionally there were numerous Jewish communities already living; also in 1928 the Soviet government made a quite specific step, when it decided to establish a special autonomous territory for the Jewish national minority, dispersed mainly throughout the European territories of the Soviet Union. Therefore, in the Russian Far East, the Asian part of the Soviet state, and in fact in harmony with the proclaimed federal principles, in 1930 the so-called Birobidzhan National Area was created (named according to its urban center). In 1934, this scarcely settled territory close to the frontiers of North China

[16] Prajsman, 2007, p. 456.

[17] Janovskij, 2010. p. 431.

[18] Ben-Rafael and Peres, 2015. p. 129.

[19] Bejzer, 2017, p. 165.

(Manchuria), where the Jewish population from various regions of the Soviet Union was being removed, changed into the so-called Jewish Autonomous Area.[20]

In such a situation, when the Soviet authorities built a new society while destroying everything that could interfere or were their ideological opponents and while adopting the atheistic doctrine of the Soviet state, religion in general was indeed at the top of the list of opponents. In 1929, a general tightening of the ruling Communist Party in the religious sphere began to be felt. On April 8, 1929, a new law regulating religious life was issued. It restricted the activities of all religious institutions and prohibited charitable activities of the religious communities.[21] It is possible to say, for many Soviet citizens, such an official attitude towards religion served, in fact, as a change of faith, when the ideas of the Communist Party became a certain "new faith".

During the strengthened rule of Stalin, in an atmosphere of general hysteria and the widespread search for enemies and spies, the Judaic clergy turned out to be a natural target. The arrests of the clergy began at the end of 1937 and became much more intense in 1938. In the situation when emigration was also banned, circumcision became a very difficult task in connection with the arrest of counseling specialists (mohel).[22] With the pervasive decline of Judaism, the Jewish activists of the Communist Party attributed to the anti-religious work during the first Five-Year Plan (1928-1932). They proudly stated that in 1933 hundreds of synagogues were closed, cheders were eradicated and that the overwhelming majority of Jewish workers did not observe the Sabbath in addition to not celebrating religious holidays.[23]

Under Stalin's regime (from the 1920s to 1953), the Soviet Jewry lived through one of the worst and most tragic waves of actual anti-Semitism. Thousands of Soviet Jews including intellectuals, writers, scientists, painters, musicians were murdered during those decades.[24] The ban on Jewish culture and the physical destruction of its prominent figures, the closure of the remaining cultural institutions, the persecution of the assimilated Jewish intellectuals, all that created the impression that the Jews were following in line "repressed, deported peoples", were affected as a wholes by the Soviet regime from the events of the Second World War (Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945), just like those who were Volga Germans, Chechens,

[20] Karlip, 2013, pp. 262-263.

[21] Janovskij, 2010, p. 472

[22] Bejzer, 2017. p. 171

[23] Idem, p. 170.

[24] Johnson, 1988, p. 547.

Ingushes, Kalmyks, Crimean Tatars, etc.[25] The closure of Jewish religious and cultural institutions had its consequences. Soviet Jews slowly but steadily started to lost their Jewishness. While many Jews tried to hide their nationality for protection, others were forced to forget their own culture and identity.

Moreover, in the meantime, the Jewish population in the European portions of the Soviet Union were confronted with the tragedy of the Holocaust (the Shoah). While in 1939-1940 the Soviet Union had annexed some territories, mostly forming parts of the Tsarist Russia until 1917 and also with numerous Jewish population again (like in the eastern, mainly Ukrainian and Belarusian parts of Poland, in the Baltic states of Lithuania and Latvia or in Rumanian Eastern Moldavia and Bukovina as another part of Ukraine), the invasion of Germany and her allies against the Soviet Union from June 1941 led to temporary German occupation of extensive Soviet territories (the Ukraine, Belarus, the Baltic countries, a part of proper Russia). Therefore, with this German war campaign and its cruelties against the civil population in Soviet space, the beginnings of the Shoah were in fact connected. It is said that up until 1945 about 1.25 million Jews originating from the Soviet territories occupied by Germany were killed by the Nazis or their local collaborationists.[26]

Nevertheless, Nazi Germany was defeated eventually, which was helped by the decisive role of the Soviet Union's military counter-offensive; and the Soviet Union grew during so-called "Cold War" into one of the world's great powers, along with the United States of America, in addition to other major contributors to winning World War II. Meanwhile, in Palestine which was left by the British troops, the new state of Israel was established in 1948. The Zionist ideals had culminated in the newborn Jewish state and at the same time they caused a problem as to the relations between the Jewish settlers and the local Arabs (Palestinian). Thus there rose a conflict with international dimension which has outlasted that of the Neat East during the next several decades. While the First Arab-Israeli finished in 1949, in the Soviet Union a new anti-Jewish campaign peaked in the last months of Stalin's life. At the end of 1952, the "economic" trials of Jews, who were charged with speculation, fraud and even undermining economic activity, took place. It was again shown to ordinary Soviet citizens that the perpetrators of their difficult economic situation were criminals of Jewish origin.[27] The culmination of this wave of anti-Semitism presented the so-called "Doctors'

[25] Bejzer, 2017, p. 277.

[26] Bullock, 1991, p. 959.

[27] Bejzer, 2017, p. 280.

Plot" when groups of predominantly Jewish doctors from Moscow were accused of conspiring to assassinate the Soviet leader.[28] The court trial was halted by the death of Stalin.

The death of Stalin, in March 1953, instilled for many hope for liberalization and among others the weakening of the terror and persecution of the Jews. However, not even after Stalin's death and after an official rejection of Stalinism, strikes in the USSR from 1956 and the discrimination of the Jews was stopped. For example, during the regime of Khrushchev, Jews experienced difficulty in entering prestigious universities (especially in humanitarian departments) and leading research institutes.[29] Otherwise, during the last period of Stalin's life, the situation of the Soviet Jews including the affairs of international politics as well as the question of relations between the Soviet Union and the newborn Israeli state, were reflected in the foreign policy of the USSR. These relations in a wider international reality of the Cold War and during Israel's conflict, relations with the Arab states had worsened. If at first the Soviet Union had hoped that Israel would become its ally in the Middle East, Israel's rapprochement with the adversaries of the Cold War, like the U.S.A. or West European powers, put an end to having a closer relationship between the USSR and Israel. In such a connection, the Jews in the Soviet Union which were grateful to the Soviet state for its role and defeat of Nazi Germany, had now begun to feel discrimination.[30]

In the era of Khrushchev, relations between Moscow and Jerusalem deteriorated sharply. While the USSR had opened a policy of the rapprochement with some Arab countries, there was on the other hand, a mutual sympathy between the Jews of the USSR and Israel which existed. In Moscow, they could not accept the solidarity of thousands of Jewish citizens with Israel, a state that had become closely connected with its Western adversaries.[31] Finally, with regards to the international situation, a new war between Israel and a group of Arab states (primarily Egypt, Syria, Jordan) in 1967, developed into the so-called "Six-Day War", which brought a deep diplomatic rupture between Israel and the Soviet Union (and some other European communist states) that sided with the Arab neighbors of Israel. Notwithstanding, at the same time the preconditions for a great wave of immigration of Soviet Jews to Israel

[28] Johnson, 1988, p. 547.

[29] Bejzer, 2017, p. 282.

[30] Rogovin, 2012, chapter four

[31] Prajsman, 2007, pp. 286-287.

under the Brezhnev's rule was a step towards relaxing the quota on applications for exit visas for the Jews and which had strengthened during the 1970s.[32]

During the time of Soviet anti-Israeli propaganda, coalescing with anti-Jewish propaganda in fact, the campaign against the Soviet Jews was conducted under the name "fight with Zionism," defined as a form of racism too.[33] Although anti-Semitism was officially condemned in vehement terms, anti-Zionism, as a new face of anti-Semitism, was loudly and actively articulated. The Jews faced discrimination more often, which closed the opportunities for them to fully realize themselves in the Soviet Union and deprived them of their equal rights. While propaganda, arrests and Soviet policy itself pushed Jews into the arms of Israelis and more Jews feeling that the Soviet Union was no longer home to them, began to think about leaving for Israel (that, otherwise, had been after the Second World War the destination of many European Jews who had survived the Shoah), the already cited decision of the Soviet leadership, relating to the quotas for grants of exit visas, had marked an Aliyah of the Soviet Jews to Israel. Though as early as the 1950s and 1960s, the Soviet regime had been allowing the departure of persons of Jewish origin from the USSR, though permits were limited (the standard number was a few hundred persons each year, together fewer than 12 thousand between 1948 and 1970).[34] Nevertheless, the new Soviet policy that had appeared since 1967 and that reflected an essential measure in 1971 caused 27 thousand applications submitted in 1972 of which more than 25 500 Soviet Jews able to obtain exit visas and the possibility to emigrate. All of these visas were designated for Israel. However, part of the emigrants in question retired to the United States of America or some other countries of the world (such as Canada, South Africa, or various countries of western part of Europe). According to a report from that time made by KGB (Committee for State Security) a major part of the Jews who had left the USSR in 1972 and in the precedent years had originated from Georgia, Lithuania and Latvia or from states such as Uzbekistan and only a small part from Moscow, St. Petersburg or Ukraine. Despite some hesitation in 1973, the Soviet authorities granted visas to leave even 35 thousand persons of Jewish origin. A report from the KGB mentions the low degree of qualifications or education among the emigrants from the last few which had

[32] https://forward.com/news/12254/declassified-kgb-study-illuminates-early-years-of-00966/ (last visit 7.08.2020)

[33] Rogovin, 2012, chapter 4

[34] Rogovin, 2012, chapter 5

decided to leave.[35] From all events, this migration wave in the 1970s presented the largest Jewish emigration from the Russian state since the Tsarist period at the beginning of the 20th century.[36]

It is possible to say that the decades of the Soviet regime radically changed Russian Jewry. The lack of promotion of Jewish culture, traditions and language was replaced by the Soviet culture while forcing them to adopt the main language of the Soviet state - Russian. Otherwise, it had been gradually demonstrated by the striking change in the linguistic aspect among the majority of the Soviet Jews, a shift from Yiddish to Russian as the main language used by them. As a precondition for a social rising this trend there had presented itself as voluntary in fact among the members of young generations of Soviet Jews as early as the 1920s and 1930s – and already in 1939, 55 % of the Russian Jews declared Russian as their mother tongue.[37] Russian Jews in the Soviet Union slowly started to immerse themselves in mainstream Soviet/Russian culture and eventually became ambivalent as to their Jewish identity.

Naturally, the prelude of a new situation in general there appeared with the policy of so-called "openness" (glasnost) and "restructuring" (perestroika), opened in the 1980s by Mikhail Gorbachev which became the new head of the Soviet Communist Party in 1985 who in 1990 became the first President of the Soviet Union too. This policy was accompanied by a certain political liberalization of the Soviet system in an era when Soviet communism was going bust and when in 1989 the communist regimes in the eastern portions of Europe, the Soviet sphere of power had collapsed while the Cold War was coming to an end. The process of the disintegration of the Soviet Union had begun. Along with these processes the failure of Soviet Communism and successive periods of economic and social transformations presented themselves with a deep economic decadence which was reflected by a worsened economic and social position of the masses of the Soviet population; and yet at the same time, before the consummated political disintegration of the Soviet Union in December 1991, in some parts of this gigantic state ethnic tensions and conflicts among the individual local nationalities had begun to appear.

[35] https://forward.com/news/12254/declassified-kgb-study-illuminates-early-years-of-00966/ (last visit 7.08.2020)

[36] Rogovin, 2012, chapter 4

[37] Karlip, 2013, p. 185.

Still before 1991 there was the opportunity for a more extensive migration of persons of Jewish origin from the Soviet Union or its succession states to Israel. This trend which started as early as the 1970s had taken on quite a new intensity. In reality diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Israel had stopped. Now there was a new Soviet concern to have economic relations with the United States of America. The Soviet state in 1989 decided to allow a large portion of its Jewish citizens´ to depart once again;[38] and various consequences of the changes in Soviet or post-Soviet space since the breakup of the 1980s and 1990s, liberalization, as well as the economic situation and individual local conflicts, had contributed to a large extent of such migration. On the contrary, already towards the end of the 1980s, the Israeli government of Yitzhak Shamir had seen a positive contribution from the expected massive arrival of new people of Jewish origin in its country.[39] Finally, in some cases directly Israel also manifested an interest in this displacement, on the basis of the "right of return", such as for example in 1994-1995 in the case of the Jewish community from Chechnya – Caucasus area struggling for its independence against the military forces of the Russian Federacy and where Israeli airplanes were evacuating hundreds of local Jews from within the framework of a rescue operation. Thus, also those pertained to the hundreds of thousands of people from the former Soviet Union, adopted roughly in the same decade by Israel. [40]

[38] https://www.haaretz.com/.premium-the-million-russians-who-changed-israel-1.5287944 (last visit 3.05.2020)

[39] Ibidem.

[40] https://www.spokesman.com/stories/1995/jan/10/israel-reportedly-evacuates-all-jews-from-chechnya/ (last visit 7.08.2020)

2 Russian speaking Jews and the big Aliyah to Israel 1990-92

The creation of the state of Israel gave hope to many Soviet Jews for the opportunity to live in a country where there would no longer be anti-Semitism and prejudice on ethnic grounds. Unfortunately, the Soviet government was not ready to just let go of such a large amount of its population. From the late 1960s on, all of the tiny minority of Jewish dissidents pushed politically to soften relations with the USSR and Israel's victory in the Six Day War lumped together to study Hebrew, basics of Judaism and distribution of Israeli materials. However their interests were mainly directed towards emigration (not necessarily to Israel) rather than recovering Jewish religion and tradition.[41] The Soviet government did a lot to suppress the tendency to emigrate. Between 1970 and 1974, 134 books were published with sharp criticism against Israel and Zionism, along with articles written by migrants returning back to the Soviet Union from Israel, disappointed with their experience, in the hope of protecting more Soviet Jews from making the migration to the Holy land, which they described as a 'Zionist hell'.[42]

The efforts of the Soviet regime were in vain and anti-Zionist propaganda did not work. By the end of 1989, almost all perennial refusers emigrated. Between 1989 - 2006 about 1.6 million Jews and their families left the USSR (since 1991 - the former USSR). Of these, about 979 thousand (61%) went to Israel, 325 thousand to the United States, 220 thousand to Germany. It is difficult to say which part of them ended up in Israel by choice, and which only because the United States had stopped automatically granting refugee status to any Soviet Jew and introduced a quota for immigration from the USSR.[43]

Before the big Aliyah came in the second half of 1989, Israel had a small (about 120,000) but well-established community of former Soviet Jews who had arrived during the 1970s.[44] The integration experience of the 1970s wave had been rather smooth and expedient; the professional skills of the new immigrants had been in high demand on the Israeli market as the still lacked locally trained doctors, engineers and scientists. Therefore, most immigrants had been successfully employed in their old Soviet professions. Most of them had switched to Hebrew as their primary language (or remained bilingual) and did not even try to speak

[41] Remennick, 2010, p. 2.

[42] Gitelman, 2010, pp. 250-251.

[43] Bejzer, 2017, p. 347.

[44] Remennick, 2007, p. 54-55.

Russian with their children. A lot of them even modified their names to Hebrew ones. In brief, they rapidly joined the Israeli middle class and blended very well into the secular Ashkenazi mainstream of the time.[45]

The big Aliyah of the 1990s almost destroyed this balance, at the very least it shifted it. The following waves of immigrants from the USSR had been not so idealistic. By the mid1980s, the link between Soviet Jews and Israel had been almost totally severed by the anti-Zionist propaganda which was very strong in the USSR.[46] Later, it became clear that all of these Jews mainly chose Israel just as an option to escape and to find a better life abroad. These waves were much further away from Jewishness and traditions. The more Soviet Jews came, the less Jewishness they took with them.

The integration of immigrants from the former Soviet Union in the 1990's in Israel was very complicated, primarily because of the large number of them. Israel has become the largest center of Russian speaking Jewry and according to the Israel Ministry of Immigrant Absorption and the Jewish Agency, approximately 1,100,000 Israel citizens had immigrated from the USSR/FSU by 1999, including the immigrants from the early 1970's and those who came after 1980.[47]

Research pointed out the existence of qualitative differences between the two Soviet waves of immigration – the 1970s when compared with the 1990s shows their unequal dimension and distinct nature. The two waves had been formed to a big degree by events in the USSR.[48] The first wave continued for more than two decades, from 1968 to 1988, while it brought with it 168,380 immigrants.[49] Beginning in 1989, the second wave of mass immigration streamed into Israel and by the end of the 1990s it had reached nearly 1 million.[50] Most of them held instrumental motives, as they sought to improve their personal and material situation. Research conducted in 1993 among Jews who had decided to emigrate from Moscow, Kiev and Minsk, while not only to Israel but also to other Western countries, suggested that emigration was more a case of the rejection of the Soviet Union than an attraction to other countries. For example, research from Ukraine in the 1990s shows the primary reasons for emigration: improving their life (34%), a desire for a higher standard of

[45] Remennick, 2007, p. 55.

[46] Idem, p. 122.

[47] Ben-Rafael and Peres, 2015, p. 130.

[48] Adoni, 2006, p. 91.

[49] Idem, p. 92.

[50] Idem, p. 92.

living (18%), family unification (16%), anti-Semitism (24%) and the quest for a Jewish way of life (7%). [51]

The social encounters between Soviet Jews and the Israeli mainstream was quite far from being smooth. There were many expectations and preconceptions about each other. Israel had anticipated to get a "historic gift" by receiving a million Zionist Jews but yet received a million Soviet atheists, together with single-parent families, non-Jewish spouses and quite a few criminals. On the other side, the immigrants anticipated living in a "civilized Western country, a southern version of Europe" but were in fact "half way between Medieval Jewish ghetto and noisy Oriental Bazaar".[52]

[51] Adoni, 2006, p. 93.

[52] Remennick, 2007, p. 67.

3 The main problematic issues of immigration from the USSR/FSU to Israel in 1990-1992 for Russian speaking Jews

This chapter will take a closer look at the issue of the Post-Soviet Aliyah in the late 1990's together with main motives of immigration, its problems and assimilation processes. The overall dynamics of immigration from the USSR (later from FSU) during the existence of Israel was as follows: about 50–70 thousand people arrived in 1948-1963; while it was about 180 thousand during 1970-1982 and finally in 1989-2002, the repatriation amounted to 932 thousand people. Herewith, two thirds of the immigrants came from Ukraine (33%) and Russia (32%), which was followed by Belarus (8%), Uzbekistan (7%) and Moldova (6%). The rest of the republic gave a combined 14% of returnees.[53]

Israel Central Bureau of Statistics calculated that 950,000 Soviet Jews arrived in Israel after 1989, increasing Israeli Jewish population by 20%.[54] Aliyah of the 1990-92 was a mass, unselected family movement across borders. Younger families immigrated together, or in chain, along with their parents and other relatives. As a result, the advanced age structure of Soviet Jewry had been 'transplanted' to Israel: middle-aged and elderly immigrants comprise a high percentage of the total (about 40% are over age 45 and 15% over 65, vs. 30% and 11%, respectively, in the Israeli Jewish population).[55] In the Russian-speaking community in Israel dominated people of middle and older age, at the same time the proportion of children and adolescents was relatively low - people under 19 years old made up 26% among people from the FSU countries and 35% among all Jews of Israel. The reason for the predominance of the older age groups among the Russian-speaking immigrants was because of the low birth rate. Women in the "Russian" community gave birth to an average of 1.7 children, whereas for women of the entire Jewish population of Israel this indicator was equal to 2.7 children per woman.[56]

Older immigrants were more prone to ethnic and cultural retention and had a lower potential for occupational, social and cultural integration (younger migrants are usually prone to faster social learning and greater adaptability, while better language command improved the chances for successful employment, informal networking with the locals, and an easier

[53] Fel'dman, 2003, p. 15.

[54] CBS, https://www.cbs.gov.il/en/publications/Pages/2001/Immigrant-Population-From-the-Former-USSR-Demographic-Trends-1990-2001.aspx (last visit 3.10.2019)

[55] Ibidem.

[56] Fel'dman, 2003, p. 16.

shift to mainstream cultural products). The age demographics of the immigrants were of an aged population. The Soviet Jews coming to Israel were older and the result reduced the chances of full integration.

One of the important aspects of any immigration will always be motive and for Russian speaking Jews it was not always stable. Comparing the immigration of the big Aliyah in the 1990s with the immigration of the 1970s – 1980s, a number of specific features can be identified. It should be noted that these immigration waves occurred in completely different periods of the internal political and socio-economic development of the USSR. The most important features of the Aliyah of the 70's was ideological life goals and the politicized value orientations of the majority of emigrants which was lost over time by the next wave of immigrants in the beginning of the 90s.

As a result, we see that for the immigration to Israel during the period of the late 80s and 90s that a large number of people were trying to leave the USSR at all cost. For many, emigration from the USSR to Israel did not occur out of Zionist convictions but primarily because of difficult and hard life circumstances. Unlike the immigration of previous years, the repatriates of the early 1990's were mostly people who were far from practicing Jewish religion, culture, traditions, language, Zionist ideology, knowing the history of their people and almost indifferent (especially the youth) to the problems of Jewish identity.[57] The latest immigration wave from the FSU was set in motion mainly by the 'push factors' (economic crisis, political instability, growing nationalism and anti-Semitism). Thus, for most, making the Aliyah was a pragmatic rather than ideological choice.

Escaping from unpleasant economic and political problems, Russian speaking Jews were faced with other difficult challenges. A significant part of integration in any country will likely be language. Throughout the multi-ethnic USSR, the Russian language was dominant as both the official and everyday language for Soviet Jews. The crucial role of Hebrew proficiency has already surfaced in the earlier discussion of occupational and economic mobility of Russian speaking immigrants. As opposed to Jews making the Aliyah from North America, Argentina or France, most of whom had Jewish schools and had some basic

[57] Fel'dman, 2003, p. 30.

knowledge of Hebrew, many of the former Soviet Jews were unfamiliar with any of the Jewish languages.[58]

The artificial suspension from the Jewish language has not always been the case for Soviet Jews. In his book, *Jewish population in USSR*, Viacheslav Konstantinov, provides interesting statistical material based on the results of the population census of the USSR (held in 1926, 1937, 1939, 1959, 1970, 1979, 1989.) regarding the Jewish languages (Yiddish, Juhuri, Judaeo-Georgian, Krymchak) among Soviet Jews.[59]

Table 1

The amount of Jews with a Jewish language as a mother tongue or who can fluently speak a Jewish language in Soviet republics from 1926 till 1989 (%)

	As a mother tongue						Can speak in general		
	1926	1939	1959	1970	1979	1989	1970	1979	1989
USSR total	**72.7**	**41.5**	**21.8**	**20.3**	**15.4**	**14.9**	**28.0**	**20.0**	**18.9**
Russia	51.5	26.7	13.5	11.8	10.0	10.4	21.3	14.9	14.0
(Russia without Caucasus)	(50.1)	(25.6)	(11.3)	(8.9)	(7.9)	(7.0)	(18.8)	(13.0)	(10.8)
Ukraine	76.1	45.3	16.9	13.2	9.0	7.1	20.3	14.0	11.1
Belarus	90.7	55.0	21.9	17.8	11.2	7.6	28.3	23.7	14.3
Moldova	…	…	50.0	44.7	33.1	25.9	52.2	39.1	32.8
Lithuania	…	…	69.0	61.9	41.0	35.7	63.1	43.0	37.7
Latvia	…	…	47.9	46.2	28.3	22.5	49.4	32.2	27.0
Estonia	…	…	24.8	21.6	15.1	12.4	24.8	17.5	14.7
Georgia	84.3	77.2	75.0	81.0	68.5	73.2	82.0	70.0	75.5
Armenia	44.8	32.2	…	21.0	13.5	25.9	23.8	15.6	27.8
Azerbaijan	64.6	46.8	35.2	41.3	40.0	46.8	46.5	42.8	48.4
Kazakhstan	…	36.2	23.1	22.8	19.6	19.2	27.6	21.7	21.1
Kyrgyzstan	…	…	30.3	26.7	23.2	16.5	33.6	26.9	19.9
Uzbekistan	86.1	66.8	51.3	53.6	46.9	43.9	58.4	51.5	48.0

[58] Remennick, 2007, pp. 93-94.

[59] Konstantinov, 2007, p. 40.

Tadzhikistan	…	71.6	52.2	62.3	55.0	49.8	64.2	57.3	55.6
Turkmenistan	…	…	28.8	30.4	30.0	30.3	36.7	32.9	31.3

Knowing the policy of the Soviet Union, Jewish culture for the most part remained under the ban, except for rare insignificant indulgences. From 1961 it was allowed to publish a Yiddish magazine, *Sovetish Heimland* (Soviet homeland), first once every two months and then monthly. However, even if the authorities allowed for widespread cultural activities in Yiddish, it is highly doubtful that it would be able to satisfy the Jews, because most of them did not speak, all the more they did not read in a language that, from the point of view of the authorities, was their national language. In 1959, during the course of the first post-war census (the previous one was in 1939), only 21.5% of Jews claimed one of the Jewish languages as their mother tongue.[60]

In 1926, more than 72% spoke Yiddish as their mother tongue but by 1989 only 14.9% considered Yiddish as their mother tongue. Using this statistic, we can see how Soviet Jews lost their connection with their language but on the other hand, they gained a new mother tongue – Russian. The Russian language and Russian-Soviet culture had played crucial role in the formation of Russian-Jewish ethnicity and later the Israeli Russian Community.

[60] Bejzer, 2017, p. 282.

Learning a brand new and difficult language from scratch was a major challenge for the middle-aged and older immigrants. Soviet Jews had been mainly monolinguals in comparison to different immigrants that could speak several European languages. The widely used "Hebrew in Hebrew immersion" method was good for some (younger and more linguistically able) but ineffective for many others, especially for older students. Many students had to miss day classes because they needed to work. For most Russian speaking newcomers, Hebrew had not become one of their primary languages.[61]

In the families that had moved to Israel during the 1990s, school-age children became the most fluent in Hebrew. Most members of the middle generation had rather good oral command of Hebrew but preferred to speak Russian in the family circle.[62] Slowly, Russian-based vocabulary started to be spiced by Hebrew words – HebRush, where Russian started to mix with Hebrew in different way, for example - vklyuchi mazgan (включи мазган) – turn on (in Russian) air conditioning (in Hebrew) – this is only a small example of an enormously entangled linguistic hybrid of Hebrew and Russian that you can hear on the streets of Israel.

Lariasa Remennik in her book *Russian Jews on Three Continents* collected very interesting interviews with Russian speaking Jews, who could prove the sophisticated position of the Russian language in Israel before and after the big Aliyah in the 1990s. Lena, a 45 years old receptionist working in the municipal social service center said: "When we came here in 1991, being Russian was almost a dirty word, meaning miserable, unfit. My Russian accent was like a stigma, signaling that I was an alien. Over time, things improved, and I felt more secure; my Hebrew grew richer, now I can handle any topic. My accent became milder but it is still there, everybody knows I am Russian… Only I don't care anymore, I have no problem being Russian in Israel. This society has to accept us on our own terms." [63]

Semyon 46, who moved to Israel in 1977 at the age of twenty-one told: "Before the big Russian immigrant wave, we spoke Russian only at home, mainly as a secret language. And look at us today! My seventeen-year-old son told me the other day that his Israeli pals asked him to teach them a few lines in Russian to pick up Russian girls… Five years ago he would never utter a Russian word at all. That's a big change!" [64]

[61] Olshtain and Kotik, 2000, pp. 201-217.

[62] Remennick, 2007, p. 98.

[63] Remennick, 2007, p. 102.

[64] Idem, p. 104.

Olga 50, a teacher of Russian literature said[65] "Look at these shelves filled with Chechov and Bulgakov! We had naively believed that our kids would love these books the way we did! Alas – this is not part of their mental world today. Even if they study some Russian authors at school, they read them in Hebrew! When I look at these books, I often feel guilty that I wasn't persistent enough in my efforts to keep Russian for my children, who could pass it on their kids. Now it is too late."

In sum, research proved that bilingualism was an important instrument of social mobility and integration for the first-generation immigrants, permitting them to embrace different social roles and switch between alternative cultural codes. During the 1990s, the tendency to have socio-cultural autonomy which was typical of the former Soviets was compounded by their poorer instrumental integration at the workplace and other mainstream institution. The critical mass of Russian-speaking Jews has inevitably led to the formation of a self-sufficient ethnic community.

In addition, the general linguistic atmosphere was stricter when it came to non-Hebrew speaking immigrants who came during the 70's – 80's rather than later for the immigrants who came in the 90's. This reflects the fact that the revival of Hebrew as a modern language in Israel was not an easy process and the newborn country was trying hard to keep Hebrew as a first language and one of the communication tools for Jews who came from all over the world. Later on, after Hebrew took a firm position in Israeli society, a lot of people started to be afraid of monolingualism as it would look like a provincial country because of the lack of communication in what was a rapidly changing modern world.[66] This created a tendency to become more tolerant when it came to multilingualism in Israel.

The consequences of a big Aliya did not pass by Israel's political life. Not a single sector of Israeli society (neither left, right, religious, secular, Ashkenazi, nor Sephardic) were ready to accept new immigrants to the already existing social cells. The Russian speaking Jews found themselves in a maelstrom trapped inside Israeli society. The big Aliyah created favorable conditions for the establishment of a Russian – Jewish political community in Israel and creation of a new cell in Israeli society.

Russian speaking immigrants were inclined to become politically active. The institutional, social and economic infrastructure of the Russian-Israeli community developed rapidly and

[65] Idem, p. 105.

[66] Kotik-Fridgut, 2000, p. 190.

this development had the support of Israeli authorities (meant to facilitate the immigrations' insertion) and initiatives of the immigrants themselves in social, political, economic and cultural fields.[67] As a result of this influence, leading immigrant personalities advanced to the next phase, which was the establishment of political movements.

3.1 The political preferences of Russian speaking Jews

In spite of a meaningful role of some persons originating from the Russian Empire in the process of the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 and naturally, in spite of decisive activities of such persons on the Israeli political scene during the further decades too, it could seem that during the next several decades until the 1990s, that the immigrants from the Soviet Union as a specific group did not play a large role in the political life of Israel – due to the fact that the process of immigration from the USSR in time was stretched over several decades and the repatriates from the earlier years had time to assimilate. Moreover, due to the relatively small number of repatriates from the USSR before, the Israeli state was able to allocate significant sums for absorption.[68] Some newcomers from the USSR took part in political activities, but did not create their own parties.

With the arrival of a large number of Russian speaking Jews in the 1990s, the political views of immigrants began to change. These Russian Jews arrived in a period of relative balance between the left-wing and the right-wing broad political camps. Hence, immigrants from the Soviet Union and its succession states who did not have established political leanings and were characterized by political apathy as well as distrust of any formal organizations but had substantial electoral potential, were able to tilt this balance to either side. Moreover, in Israel, the Russian-speaking Jews understood that lobbying their own interests here is only possible through the formation of sectored or ethnic parties. The political views of new immigrants started to be valuable with the increasing of their population together with their interest in political life of Israel. The voting behavior of the Russian immigrants became critical both in the electoral success of the Israeli Labour Party in 1992 and on the contrary, when it came to the victory of Likud and Benjamin Netanyahu during direct elections for prime minister in 1996.[69]

[67] Ben-Rafael and Peres, 2015, pp. 140-141.

[68] Fel'dman, 2003, p. 269.

[69] Khanin, 2011, p. 57.

These newcomers began to feel that they were also an important part of their new country. Some events such as the political turmoil stirred up by the Oslo Peace Accords of September 1993, referring to the situation in Arab Palestinian territories and their inconsistent implementation or the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin who was Israeli prime minister of the Labour Party in November 1995, boosted the political engagement of many Russian immigrants on both sides of the barricades of Israeli politics, nevertheless, the shift was mainly to the right.[70]

Otherwise, during the 1996 elections the situation was radically different. Knowing the weak points and fears of Russian-speaking migrants, politicians were quite often enticing them to be on their side. For example, Yitzhak Shamir who was the Israeli Prime Minister in 1983-1984 and again in 1986-1992, had remained confident that his party, the right-wing party called Likud, would attract the majority of immigrants' votes in the forthcoming election. Such confidence stemmed from several factors that appeared to work in favor of the Likud party and other parties to the right. The Likud party believed in the rejection of communist ideology, apparent in the very act of Soviet Jewish emigration, would supersede any frustration over the absorption process and negate any substantial support for the center-left parties in Israel.[71] Likud strategists believed that immigrants' experience of anti-Semitism in the USSR had conditioned them to accept a right-wing territorial agenda.[72]

The political orientation of Russian-speaking immigrants were significantly different from the positions of indigenous Israelis (or these who or whose ancestors had come before). Most Russian Israelis identified themselves with the right and center-right political camp. The main motive for political choice became the support of the party leader and solidarity with the party's position in the sphere of security and in relation to the Arab-Israeli conflict. It could be only natural that new immigrants from the USSR – in comparison with for example indigenous Israelis - were less familiar and tolerant of terrorist and rocket attacks, committed by the armed Palestinian movements.[73] The idea of a total threat from the Arab side, as well as a belief in the effectiveness of simple and radical solutions, was much more popular among those Russian-speaking immigrants than among indigenous or longtime-settled Israelis.[74]

[70] Remennick, 2007, p. 58.

[71] Jones, 1996, p. 181.

[72] idem, p.182.

[73] Kenigshtejn, 2009, pp. 308-309.

[74] idem, p. 311.

We could add in such a connection, towards the close of the 1980s, when a massive flood of immigrants from Gorbachev´s Soviet Union was expected, just this question was otherwise reflected also in the complicated Arab-Israeli relations. The chance to enlarge Israel's population coupled with the question of Jewish colonization of the territories occupied by Israel, in comparison with the expectations and ideas of Shamir´s government, there was a negative attitude and fear from the side of Yaser Arafat, who was chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, as well as from the governments of Egypt, Syria and Jordan.[75] Likewise, early opinion polls conducted among the Soviet Jews, demonstrated their identification of territorial interest with the political right. As early as October 1990, social research had shown that 55 % of these immigrants preferred the retention of the West Bank and Gaza Strip over any formal peace treaty.[76] A party whose manifesto called for the mass expulsion of the Palestinian population from the Occupied Territories was particular active among immigrant communities throughout the country. The Likud campaign amongst immigrants clearly placed emphasis upon the strategic benefits that Israel had accrued in continuing to hold territories captured during the June War in 1967 (the Six-Day War), inclusive of the already mentioned West Bank or Gaza Strip.[77]

In 1996, hopes for an economic boom withered, while heavy terrorist acts led to the fact that the new repatriates for the most part became an integral part of a pronounced national camp that supported the position of Benjamin Netanyahu and the Likud. The personalization effect of the above problems was the cause, while the blame for which was transferred to the Palestinian Arabs - they were considered to be the culprits not only of the terrorist acts committed by them but also for the failed economic heyday. Netanyahu drew the majority of new immigrants to his side.[78]

Afterwards, the Palestinian Second Intifada (Al-Aqsa Intifada) between 2000 and 2005, as well as the consequences of the First Intifada (which had broken out already in 1987 and lasted to the early 1990s), also shifted Russian speaking immigrants sharply to the right. There are 3 points that together explain the commitment of the Russian-speaking Israelis to the right wing:

[75] https://www.haaretz.com/.premium-the-million-russians-who-changed-israel-1.5287944 (last visit 3.05.2020)

[76] Jones, 1996, p. 183.

[77] Jones, 1996, p. 182.

[78] Fel'dman, 2003, p. 286.

• Love for the newly acquired homeland, pride for its creators, empathy for its problems, readiness for victims for the sake of its prosperity. It may be assumed that such patriotism is a reaction to the perennial humiliation and discrimination experienced by the same persons of Jewish origin in the Soviet Union.

• Pronounced xenophobia, specifically hostility towards Arabs.

• National egocentrism, a look at geopolitics exclusively through the prism of Jewish and Israeli interests.[79]

It could be said that perhaps such a social and historical determinism placed immigrants firmly within the orbit of the more extreme forms of right-wing Zionist ideology. Israel Ba-Aliya, headed by Natan Sharansky was formed before the 1996 elections, representing the own interests of a large Russian-speaking community. In 1999, there were already 5 Russian parties which had claimed seats in the Knesset. Among them, the "Our Home Israel" party, headed by Avigdor Lieberman, stood out among the most active.[80]

Political activities of the Russian-speaking Jews were associated with the hope of improving the material situation: such as social housing, increasing benefits, maintaining a system of scholarships for scholars of repatriates, expanding civil rights, including benefits for non-Jews such as introducing civil marriages and divorces as well as facilitating visa requirements for non-Jewish relatives.[81] Russian-speaking Jews had an address to file their claims, they received representation and hoped for solution to many of the problems related to integration into Israeli society. However, as a negative point: a certain violation of integrative and communication mechanisms in Israeli society led to the confrontation of cultures, slowing the pace of adaptation of the big Aliyah and the formation of sub-ethnic internally closed communities.[82]

By the early 2000s, it became clear that politicians from a number of new immigrants were not able to achieve real progress because of their limited weight when it came to the complex distribution of forces in the Knesset (conflicts between secular and religious parties). Mass disappointment in the "Russian" parties began and in the 2002 elections, the majority of

[79] idem, pp. 299-300.

[80] idem, pp. 278-279.

[81] Nosenko, 2008, pp. 177-178.

[82] Fel'dman, 2003, p. 282-283.

repatriates voted for the general Israeli parties again - mainly for Likud and Shinui.[83] The era of the "Russian" politics in Israel ended without much success and those who wanted to gain a foothold in the political arena should have created a national program and learned to play by the general rules.

Although the immigrants of the former Soviet Union did preserve some elements of the political culture of their original homeland, Israel's "Russian" politics predominantly reflected the Israeli experience rather than old Soviet legacies. The Russian-speaking Jews clearly demonstrated the desire to adopt an Israeli political agenda while at the same time tending to their own community's interests. Hence, a belief in the possibility of integration into the host society while simultaneously preserving the culture of origin is still a dominant trend among the Russian-speaking Israelis.

3.2 Religious aspect of integration for Russian speaking Jews

The Jewish people and the religion of Judaism were an indivisible whole. The formation of Judaism had created a unique type of culture, mentality and vision, as well as a strong bond connecting the Jews around the world. Judaism plays the most central role in defining and maintaining Jewish identity; and hence, the lower levels of religiosity are associated with a weaker sense of Jewish identity.

In May 1948 the state of Israel had been proclaimed, whose two chief representatives became David Ben Gurion as the Prime Minister of its government and Chaim Weizman as the President of state. Later in 1950 the Israeli Knesset passed the Law of Return, which enshrined the right of any Jew from the diaspora in the world to emigrate to Israel. This civil law defined a Jew as anyone who could claim to have been born to a Jewish mother, could provide proof that at least the female grandparents were Jewish or who had converted to Judaism. Later in 1970, in response to the expansion of the ethnic composition of the Jewish population of diaspora countries, the right to enter and settle was extended to people with one Jewish ancestor and a person married to a Jew, regardless of whether he is considered a Jew

[83] Nosenko, 2008, p. 178.

in the Orthodox interpretation of Halakha.[84] Hence, by means of amendment to the Israeli Law on Return (Article 4-a) that granted the right to repatriation to the immediate non-Jewish relatives of the Jews, spouses, children and grandchildren with spouses, in addition to non-Jewish spouses and children of non-Jewish mothers had that right to reside in Israel.[85]

Thus, although Halakha recognizes only matrilineal descent, the amended Law of Return qualifies anyone who has a Jewish grandparent or who is married to a Jew the possibility to immigrate. As a result of this discrepancy, Israel faced an immigration wave that included many people who were not considered Jews according to Jewish religious law. One of the main challenges that has confronted Jewish societies is undoubtedly the increasing number of exogamous marriages and the blurring identity that they have caused.

Today in Israel it is easy to find citizens who consider themselves Jews, who speak Hebrew and whose children serve in the Israel Defense Forces, but who are not considered Jews either by the Israeli rabbinate or by the state of Israel. Some were born in Israel; nevertheless, a lot of them arrived in Israel, under the Law of Return and its amendment of 1970, just after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s. Almost a third of the million immigrants who in those times arrived in Israel from the USSR or after its succession states were recorded in the Israeli Foreign Ministry as non-Jews. In 2007 the Central Bureau of Statistics claimed the number to be 310 thousand people.[86] We already know that these people could be non-Jewish spouses of Jews from the Soviet Union or the children of these mixed couples in which the mother is not Jewish or again, non-Jewish children born in mixed couples who married one or two generations ago to the Soviet Union and who could use the Law of Return, even if only one of their grandparents was of Jewish origin. The wave of immigration from the Soviet Union and former Soviet republics since the end of the 1980s brought a large number of immigrants not considered Jewish under the definition accepted in Israel.

Israel's initial idea of a Jewish state was a jeopardy. The non-Jewish element could disrupt the social harmony. Therefore, the Israeli government tried hard to prevent social and religious disbalance. Within the parameters permitted under the Law on Return, the Jewish Agency was acting in strict mode to determine the legality of the applicant's right to

[84] Jones, 1996, p. 134.

[85] https://www.knesset.gov.il/laws/special/eng/return.htm (last visit 7.08.2020)

[86] CBS https://www.cbs.gov.il/en/publications/Pages/2001/Immigrant-Population-From-the-Former-USSR-Demographic-Trends-1990-2001.aspx (last visit 5.10.2019)

immigrate to Israel. This required potential Soviet immigrants to submit documentation confirming their Jewish identity (like birth and marriage certificates and internal Soviet passport that listed Jew as comprising the nationality of the holder) to Agency staff across the USSR.[87]

A large number of non-Jews among Soviet immigrants should not seem so surprising if we have a look at the features of the development of Soviet Jews before immigrating to Israel. The ethnic mixed marriages were one of the main reasons and at the same time, the result of the assimilation of the Jews in the Soviet Union. The tendency of mixed marriages in the USSR was considerable even earlier. In the 1920s and 1930s, there was a serious disproportion in the sex ratio, which stimulated the growth of mixed marriages. For example, in the Russian Federacy (the greatest and, in fact, the chief out of so-called "Soviet Socialist republics") in 1936, 44.2% of Jewish men and 57.1% of Jewish women were in mixed marriages. The growth of mixed marriages was promoted by such factors as resettlement from the former Pale of Settlement, raising the status of Jews in the Soviet elite and the level of education among Jewish youth, depriving religious ceremonies of legal status.[88]

The process of assimilation through mixed marriages, which had fully begun in Soviet Russia and the Soviet Union as early as 1920-1930, created such a situation that in 1989, there were 44% of married Jew men and 30% of married Jew women in mixed marriages, while 30% of the children of Jewish mothers and 55% of the children of Jewish fathers were born in mixed marriages.[89] Moreover, in such mixed families, only some of the children were registered as Jews upon the receipt of a passport.[90]

One of the preconditions for the assimilation of Jews in the USSR came from the policy of the Soviet authorities which aimed at separating the Jews from their ethnic and religious roots, as well as from their national culture and religion. However, despite this the Soviet Jews did not lose their national identities – this was primarily due to the fact that state authorities, as well as representatives of other ethnic and national groups, identified Jews as a special national community. In the conditions of the Soviet Union, in general the anti-religious regime, fundamental changes also affected the religious aspects of the life of Soviet

[87] Jones, 1996, p. 134.

[88] Prajsman, 2007, pp. 692-693.

[89] Prajsman, 2007, p. 702.

[90] Konstantinov, 2007, p. 52.

Jewry. The 1937 census showed that only 10.4% of Jews over the age of 16 stated that they were religious.[91]

Thus, perceptions of belonging to a certain ethnic group were created, in which, however, there was no connection with national tradition and culture. Among the Jews, the educational level had risen sharply. The state was stimulating the growth of professional staff, which combined with the traditional desire of Jewish families to educate children - though, on the other hand, religious and national restrictions in the field of education were lifted. Under the conditions of the Soviet regime, such important elements of Jewish identity such as the connection with religion and Jewish traditions were almost lost.

3.3 Higher education and future occupation

Alexander Solzhenitsyn, in his book Two Hundred Years Together, gives us an interesting view on the situation of a Jew in the USSR. Intellectuals in Stalin's era were under big political pressure, this included any Jews in the academic fields, for example: during an anti-Semitic campaign the term 'rootless cosmopolitan' was used to describe intellectuals who were accused of expressing pro-Western feelings and a lack of patriotism; Jews played the central role. Oppression was in almost every academic field, in the Academy of Science, Moscow State University and also in technical fields which were considered a quite calm and supportive of Jews. There were also restrictions for Jewish students. Solzhenitsyn demonstrates how unfair the oppression was towards the educated and intellectual Jews in the Soviet Union.[92]

Despite the fact that Soviet government was trying to get rid of the Jews in high positions within politics, economics and also education, still the great number of Soviet Jews were educated and were striving for education. The following statistics (in the table below) shows the differences between the number of Jews with higher education in 1989/90 between the USSR, the US and Israel. This table[93] shows the percentage of Jews with higher education in the USSR (1989) 46.4%, in the US (1990) 53.1% and in Israel (1990) where the percentage of Jews with higher education was only 16.1%.

Table 2

[91] Prajsman, 2007, p. 695.

[92] Solzenitsyn, 2011, pp. 413-415.

[93] Konstantinov, 2007, p. 102.

The level of education among Jews in the USSR and in other countries from the end of the 1950s till the beginning of the 1990s (%)

	Higher education	Secondary specialized education	General secondary education	Lower than average education
USSR (20+):				
1959	26.6	12.6	16.5	44.3
1970	33.1	15.3	19.1	32.5
1979	40.3	17.5	18.8	23.4
1989	46.4	21.5	16.5	15.6
France (15+):				
1975	25.4	18.3	20.3	36.0
USA (25+):				
1957	17.7	13.0	39.9	29.4
1971	33.7	19.9	30.2	16.2
1990	53.1	19.3	21.5	6.1
Canada (15+):				
1971	25.0	8.0	…	…
1991	47.8	16.5	11.9	23.8
Israel (15+):				
1961	6.4	2.7	37.0	53.9
1972	9.1	4.9	41.5	44.5
1980	12.1	6.7	48.3	32.9
1990	16.1	9.5	53.2	21.2

The preferences and achievements in the educational field of Soviet Jews indirectly reflect the historical and social aspects of this or that period. Successes in studies and careers meant there was hope to decrease hostility from Jews and guaranteed economic stability. The same goals could have been set by future Soviet-Jewish immigrants upon arrival in Israel. However, research and statistics do not show an optimistic picture in such a respect since higher education and prestigious work in the Soviet Union did not guarantee ease of integration into modern Israeli society.

Educated Jewish professionals came from major cities in the USSR and later, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, from its succession states throughout the early

1990s and over time more and more families from smaller provincial towns in poverty-stricken areas or who were unemployed or had witnessed ethnic conflicts came to Israel too. In parallel, the share of educated immigrants with white-collar professions had dropped from over 70 percent in 1990-1992 to less than 40 percent in 1999-2002, while the share of core Jews plummeted to about 30 percent.[94]

In 1972, when the USSR was considerably enlarging the emigration's possibilities of its citizens of Jewish origin, the Soviet authorities introduced a new tax on education, a so-called "diploma tax" on would-be emigrants who had received higher education in the USSR. They decided to do this because they were upset about all of the intellectuals getting higher education in the USSR for free and then taking this knowledge abroad with them. People who wanted to move abroad would have to pay anywhere between 3600 rubles, up to 9800 rubles, depending on which university they attended. At that time, 3600 rubles was a year's salary for an academic worker.[95] Notwithstanding, according to a report already cited from the KGB of that period, among the Soviet Jew emigrants till at least 1972 there wasn't too many people with high education; and this "diploma tax" became a mark of the criticism in the United States of America, whose Congress had been preparing the Jackson-Vanik Amendment. This U.S. act was declared the prohibition of the extension of trade benefits towards some states limiting emigration (in relation with the question of human rights, in fact). Considering that Brezhnev's leadership didn't want to worsen the Soviet commercial relations with the U.S.A., it was advantageous economically in practice that the "diploma tax" wasn't being claimed – despite its initial defense from the side of some Soviet representatives, like, for example, Yuri Andropov, who was the head of the KGB (later, in 1982-1984, Brezhnev's successor for the position of General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party).[96]

In the "post-Soviet" Aliyah of the 1990s, most of the newer immigrants in Israel expected to receive a positive and enthusiastic welcome, employment in their occupations as well as opportunities to continue their Russian cultural lifestyle. Naturally, these expectations could not be fully realized, while it was especially frustrating for the second wave of immigrants. One of the primary reasons of this disappointment consisted in the absolute and relative number of immigrants in relation to the country's population (in 1990, the number of Israel's

[94] Remennick, p. 59.

[95] Solzhenitsyn, 2011, p. 499.

[96] https://forward.com/news/12254/declassified-kgb-study-illuminates-early-years-of-00966/ (last visit 7.08.2020)

population was 4.66 million).[97] Also, Israeli educational and cultural systems were insufficiently prepared for such an extensive immigration.[98]

The early arrivals had created the infrastructure for the institutions of the ethnic community but had found neither their place nor an audience in the host society. Only a few of these artists, authors, poets or musicians overcame the obstacles of absorption. The few examples of successful integration by new immigrants into Israel's system of higher education, cultural and art scene were instrumental in learning about host society's basic apathy or even resistance to the new immigrants. As in past waves of immigration over Israel's history, the host elite did not move quickly enough to absorb the intellectual capital offered by the new immigrants.[99]

Across post-Soviet Jewish diaspora, the share of professionals who could regain their original occupation in Israel was probably around 30%. Occupation adjustment was especially hard for members of humanistic and culturally-dependent occupations (highly prestigious in the countries of the former Soviet Union but often useless in the West, or in Israel in this specific case) who could not make a living as educators or journalists in the new cultural milieu.[100]

According to statistical data[101] it is obvious which occupations were prestigious in the USSR. There was a drastic change for some professionals that could not find fulfillment in particular occupations in Israel. For example, in 1992 in the post-Soviet countries, there were around 36.2% of Jews before the moving to Israel, working in scientific and academic fields. However, in 1995, after the arrival of the same persons to Israel, we can see that this number here had reduced to only 2.3%.

Table 3

Fields of occupation among the whole population and among Jews in the Russian Empire and later in the USSR from 1897 till 1989 (%)

[97] Geografický místopisný slovník světa, 1993, p. 331-332.

[98] Adoni, 2006, p. 94.

[99] idem, p. 94.

[100] Immigrant Scholars write about Identity and Integration. Vol. 12, 2007, pp. 8-9.

[101] CBS https://www.cbs.gov.il/en/publications/Pages/2001/Immigrant-Population-From-the-Former-USSR-Demographic-Trends-1990-2001.aspx (last visit 5.10.2019)

	1897	1926	1939	1959	1979	1989
Jews:	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**
Industry	40.8	40.2	38.2	37.8	31.2	30.8
Construction/building	…	1.7	3.9	8.0	9.8	8.8
Agriculture and forestry	2.7	12.0	7.7	1.3	0.9	1.0
Transport	3.4	3.1	3.6	3,3	4.1	4.3
Connection/relation	…	…	…	1.0	1.1	1.0
Trade	34.9	23.5	17.7	12.6	7.8	6.6
Housing and communal services	12.9	4.6	2.9	4.0	4.7	4.9
Information and computer services	…	…	…	…	…	1.0
Health and sport	…	…	7.4	9.8	9.5	10.3
Science	…	…	…	4.9	10.6	11.3
Education	5.3	14.9	10.5	10.4	11.1	11.8
Culture and art	…	…	…	1.5	2.9	3.4
Government agencies	…	…	8.0	5.5	6.3	4.9
Total population:	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**	**100**
Industry	17.2	7.9	19.8	24.6	31.1	30.4
Construction/building	…	0.7	4.3	6.7	9.0	8.5
Agriculture and forestry	60.6	81.0	55.4	40.6	21.7	18.6
Transport	3.7	2.9	4.6	6.6	6.5	7.0
Connection/relation	…	…	…	0.8	1.3	1.2
Trade	4.2	2.3	5.0	5.4	7.2	7.5
Housing and communal services	11.0	2.3	1.1	1.5	2.8	3.3
Information and computer services	…	…	…	…	…	0.3
Health and sport	…	…	2.2	3.5	4.4	5.3
Science	…	…	…	1.6	3.1	3.2
Education	3.0	3.0	4.2	4.5	6.8	8.2
Culture and art	…	…	…	0.7	1.1	1.3
Government agencies	…	…	3.3	3.5	5.2	5.2

In 1989 the Jewish population in the USSR was mainly represented in such fields as industry – 30.9%, science – 11.3%, health and sport –10.3% in contrast to the rest of the Soviet population: industry – 30.4%, science – only 3.2%, health and sport – only 5.3%. The number of Jews that were occupied in trade reduced from 23.5% in 1926 down to 6.6% in 1989. It is interesting to note that the number of Jewish farmers was always very low in USSR: 1959 – 1.3%, 1979 – 0.9%, 1989 – 1% when the rest of the Soviet population was much more engaged in agriculture: 1959 – 40.6%, 1979 – 21.7%, 1989 – 18.6%.[102]

It was highly traumatic for educated immigrants, who overnight found themselves in the bottom tier of the workforce. The feelings of social displacement were augmented by an

[102] Konstantinov, 2007, p. 212.

overarching sense of insecurity – financial (due to having unstable income and mounting debs), physical (reflected in the ongoing military conflict and acts of terror) and psychological (reflected by the poor command of Hebrew, misunderstanding local norms and the loss of support networks).[103]

Table 4

Immigrants aged 15 and over grouped by sex, occupation in the USSR, labour force characteristics and occupation in Israel, about a year after immigration.

Immigrants who arrived from the USSR
in October – December 1990 and in
October – December 1993

	Women		Men		Total	
	1992	1995	1992	1995	1992(1)	1995(2)
TOTAL – THOUSANDS	**35.0**	**7.4**	**29.0**	**6.2**	**63.9**	**13.6**
Labour force characteristics						
TOTAL – PERCENT	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
• In the civilian labour force	49.0	41.7	67.2	65.9	57.2	52.7
• Not in the civilian labour force	51.0	58.3	32.8	34.1	42.8	47.3
IN CIVILIAN LABOUR FORCE – TOTAL	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
• Employed	57.6	84.3	76.6	89.3	67.7	87.2
• Unemployed	42.4	15.7	23.4	10.7	32.3	12.8
Occupation in the USSR (3)						
PERSONS EMPLOYED IN THE USSR						
THOUSANDS	**21.9**	**25.5**	**21.9**	**4.2**	**43.8**	**8.0**
PERCENT	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
• Scientific and academic workers	40.4	25.5	32.0	18.9	36.2	22.0
• Other professional, technical and related workers	25.9	27.9	11.8	13.8	18.9	20.4
• Skilled worker in industry, mining, building, transport and other skilled worker	8.4	9.7	33.6	38.2	21.0	24.8
• Other or unknown occupation	25.3	37.0	22.6	29.1	23.9	32.8
Occupation in Israel (3)						
(about a year after migration)						
PERSONS EMPLOYED IN THE USSR						
THOUSANDS	**9.9**	**2.6**	**14.9**	**3.6**	**24.8**	**6.2**
PERCENT	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**
• Scientific and academic workers	5.7	…	8.0	3.6	7.1	2.3
• Other professional, technical and related workers	14.3	6.5	5.1	24.4	8.8	5.3
• Skilled worker in industry, mining, building, transport and other skilled	14.3	18.2	46.5	43.4	33.7	32.9

[103] Remennick, 2007, p. 58.

worker • Other or unknown occupation	65.7	75.0	40.4	48.5	50.5	59.5

1 In January – April 1992, immigrants who arrived in October – December 1990 were investigated

2 In March – June 1995, immigrants who arrived in October – December 1993 were investigated

3 According to the Standard Classification of Occupation. 1972.

Throughout this period, just over a quarter of the Russian speaking Jews holding academic degrees from the USSR worked in their original professions. The small and saturated white-collar labor market of Israel could absorb only a small fraction of the skilled immigrants, while the rest had to turn to retraining or downgrade to manual occupations. The Central Bureau of Statistics in Israel shows that among the arrivals of the 1990s from the USSR there were all in all around 38,000 teachers; 30,000 physicians, dentists and nurses; 18,000 musicians and music teachers; 12,000 scientists. Yet specialists in different fields of engineering and technology were the largest professional group, numbering over 82,000 members (IMIA, 1998). During most of the 1990s, only 25-27 percent of Russian-speaking professionals were working in their original specialty. Others had to opt for retraining in another field which was more in demand.[104]

To begin technology and engineering was one of the few professional tracks which was relatively open for Soviet Jews. The demand for technical specialists had always been high within the huge Soviet industry as well as technical research and construction. An engineering diploma promised a stable job and little involvement with the ruling ideology, which made Jewish parents propel their children towards engineering colleges.[105] Nevertheless, besides their sheer numbers, the employment prospects of Russian speaking engineers in Israel were aggravated by several structural features of engineering education and work in the FSU.[106] Many immigrant engineers discovered that their experience was non-applicable outside the Soviet economy and they had to find alternative occupational tracks.

Engineers:

[104] Remennick, 2007, p. 75.

[105] Remennick, 2007, p. 77.

[106] Idem, p.76.

On the positive side, the mass influx of qualified engineers in Israel coincided with, and greatly contributed to the rapid expansion of high-tech industries during the 1990s. By the year 2000, over 40 percent of the employees of Israeli high-tech companies in Israel were Russian immigrants. [107] L. Remennik in her research[108] mentioned that only around 35 percent of all immigrant engineers have found engineering posts in Israel, either in their old specialty or in a new one after retraining.

Physicians:

Doctoring has been another traditional occupation for Jews, including Soviet ones, as over 15,000 Russian-speaking physicians and dentists, as well as over 25,000 nurses made the Aliyah to Israel since 1990 (IMIA, 2000).[109] They cannot work with their Soviet diplomas, MOH and IMA established new accreditation rules for foreign medical graduates. It is an interesting aspect that over 70 percent of those who had applied for the Israeli license at the outset managed to complete the accreditation and get a general medical license.[110] As a result of their mass entry into Israeli medicine, doctors with a Russian accent comprise half of all Israeli practitioners under the age of forty-five and one-quarter among those aged forty-five to sixty-five (MOH 2004). As a result, former Soviets form a large portion of the medical staff in most Israeli hospitals and outpatient clinics, especially at the lower levels of medical practice. Russian immigrant doctors in Israel succeeded against all odds on the small and saturated professional market.

Teachers:

Another occupational venue available to Soviet Jews was teaching. During the 1990s, about 40,000 schoolteachers arrived in Israel (85 percent of them women). [111] To allow these teachers to get back in practice, the Israeli Ministry of Education provided a series of university-based certification courses, aiming to adapt the skills of former Soviet teachers to the local curriculum and its demands. In the early 1990s, there were enough vacancies in those disciplines less dependent on language proficiency (especially math, the sciences, physical education, art and music), which were soon filled by immigrant teachers, despite

[107] Idem, p.78.

[108] Remennick, 2003, pp. 701-721.

[109] Remennick, 2007, p. 80.

[110] Idem, p. 82.

[111] Remennick, 2007, p. 85.

their imperfect Hebrew. The teachers of humanities and languages faced greater challenges – nobody was ready to employ an English or French teacher with Russian accent (given the abundance of native-speakers), let alone teachers of the Russian language and literature which were not taught in most schools.

Table 5

Immigrant population from the USSR (Former) – students in universities in Israel grouped by field of study[112]

	1991/92	1992/93	1993/4	1994/95	1995/96
Total number of students from former the USSR	**2894**	**3899**	**6296**	**6996**	**7659**
Engineering and Architecture	18.2%	17.9%	16.9%	15.2%	15.1%
Sciences and Mathematics	43.4%	41.2%	39.4%	38.2%	36.1%
Paramedical Studies	5.3%	6.3%	7.2%	7.6%	7.7%
Medicine	2.8%	2.6%	2.9%	2.8%	2.4%
Social Sciences	11.2%	12.5%	12.1%	11.8%	15.3%
Humanities	18.6%	18.6%	20.3%	22.4%	21.9%

The information from the Central Bureau of Statistics in Israel regarding students in universities from the former USSR shows the popularity of such fields as sciences and mathematics. It can be counted as a continuation of the tradition of the Soviet Jews in the USSR where these fields were the most suitable and safe for Jews. Slowly, the Russian speaking Jews in Israel started to feel more confident and decided to study humanities and social sciences (they were also the more challenging fields when it came to language). Traditionally medicine was a very Jewish occupation in the USSR but here suddenly we see that the interest was not so big among newcomers from the former USSR.[113]

It is possible to say, education, be it religious or secular, has always been a priority for the Jews. In the conditions of the Soviet Union, the limited religious education helped to preserve their culture and identity, while the correctly chosen field of secular education sometimes

[112] CBS. Publication number 1076. pp. 111-112.

[113] Solzhenitsyn, 2011, p. 436.

even helped Soviet Jews survive. If religious education was almost eliminated by the Soviet authorities, secular education often gave a chance to become a full member of society. The policy of the USSR, however, made its own adjustments sending young people to the educational sectors that were necessary for the country, where the needs of the country were put first and a student's preferences last.

Conclusion

Israel is perhaps, in a certain sense, one of the purest cases of an immigrant society with an extreme diversity among its Jewish population originating from more than 100 countries. Over the years, Israel's society has been agitated and continues to be stirred by different waves of immigration that, in turn, have shaped its character as well as its socio-demographic and cultural texture. The waves of immigration to Israel from the Soviet Union in the 1970s and later in the 1990s from the states of the former Soviet Union, created a surge of more than

1.2 million people – nearly 20% of the entire Israeli population. The consequences of the new immigration upset society, creating a new situation and a new social phenomenon in both the society of origin and the host society. In practice, the traditional Jewish lifestyle of Russian-speaking Jews based on religious observance was destroyed. After seven decades of socialism, most Soviet Jews raised in major cities defined themselves as atheists or agnostics. They were socialized by the Soviet system of education and young movements (like Pioneers and Komsomol), while they spoke Russian as their primary language. However, there were still few of them maintained some remnants of the Yiddish lore, Jewish holidays and domestic habits from their youth. However, these were typically kept private and never shown to outsiders to avoid any anti-Semitic backlash.

The identity of the Russian-speaking Jews was the product of historical processes in the Russian Empire/USSR resulting from interactions between Jews and non-Jews, interaction between Jewish and Russian culture. The Jewish-Yiddish culture almost disappeared, however, it had been transformed within a national form that persisted while emptied of its religious and cultural Jewish content. The perception of the Jews as a nationality became a pervasive and constant factor in the lives of Soviet Jews. Many knew very little about Jewish religion and culture but they continued to be identified themselves as Jews.

The Russian language and Russian-Soviet culture played a crucial role in the formation of Russian-Jewish ethnicity. Across the multi-ethnic USSR, the Russian language was dominant as both the official and everyday language for most urban residents, especially for educated professionals. Soviet Jews counted in their ranks many prominent writers, poets, journalists, actors, theater and film directors, media and show business people, i.e. they belonged to the core of Russian intelligentsia and took on an active part in the very creation of the Russian-Soviet culture of the 20th century. This phenomenon of involvement in Russian culture did not leave many Jews even after their arrival to Israel. Many found it difficult to leave Russian culture and accept the Israeli one. Therefore, some newcomers were less likely to develop a strong Israeli identity and had lower motivation for studying Hebrew as well as assimilation in the host society.

The main reason for migration during the post-Soviet Aliyah was due to the unpleasant economic and political situation in the USSR. The huge movement of Jews from the Soviet Union to Israel showed the relaxation of restrictions on the freedom of movement from the USSR, deepening the political disintegration and economic crisis in the USSR. At the same time, a change in U.S. immigration policy during 1989 barred emigrating Soviet Jews whose

ostensible destination was Israel, from claiming asylum and refugee status in the United States of America. Any identification with Judaism, Zionism or other Israeli values among this group of immigrants was rather weak. For many of them, Israel was a less desirable destination than America or any other western countries. For most, making the Aliyah was a pragmatic rather than ideological choice.

Based on this thesis, here are the main problematic points that prevented smooth assimilation for Russian-speaking Jews in Israel during the time of post-Soviet Aliyah:

- the huge number of newcomers which arrived in such a short period
- transformation of Jewish identity, lack of Jewishness
- atheistic views
- strong fixation to Russian culture
- monolingualism
- emigration was rather economical factor than ideological

For the Russian speaking Jews, the integration was a complicated process with its pluses and minuses. In general, it is possible to divide this mass into two groups, on the basis of their approaches: the segregationist ghetto approach and the assimilationist approach. As to the segregationists´ approach, the Russian speaking immigrants were just a social enclave in the new society, like Israeli Arabs, Sephardic Jews, ultra-orthodox Jews or Ethiopian Jews. As in the case of other enclaves, the Russian immigrant community had succeeded in exploiting the segregated Israeli social reality, in order to establish itself as a separate sector in the endless social negotiation over the allocation of national resources.

The Zionist ideology of having only one linguistic and cultural identity did not work with such a group of immigrants. On the other hand, the segregation approach emphasized the Russian immigrants' resistance against such an idea. This approach highlights the system of smaller, internal Russian niches that evolved with Israel, interrelating via cultural, familial, commercial and political connections. As it developed, this system began to provide for a greater number of this minority's needs: from newspapers to food, from entertainment to education. The Russian speaking Jews created a strong branch of their own mixed culture with its Russian language, shops and food.

The segregation of Russian-speaking Jews created a world with its own culture and language which was strange and alien for Israelis. This approach created more incomprehension and unwillingness for assimilation. Here is where the social stigma appeared that the Russian-

speaking Jews remained to be seen as Russians in Israel. They were viewed as a kind of foreign element in Israeli society.

The second way of living in a new country as an immigrant is through assimilation. It is a complex phenomenon. The complexity of identity allows for individuals to adapt to changes. In the Soviet Union, the Jewish component of the hybrid Russian-Jewish identity offered two roles. On one hand, it exposed its carrier to prospective manifestations of anti-Semitism, while on the other hand, it symbolized belonging to a selected minority and having a connection to Jewish communities beyond the borders of the Soviet Union. Immigration to Israel changed the relations between the components in the previous identity. The Jewish component suddenly endeared immigrants to their new surroundings and provided a higher status, whereas the Russian component transformed from an asset to a burden. Slowly this group became involved in and began to identify with what was happening in Israeli society. The hybrid identity turned out to be an essential resource for the integration of the immigrants into the new society.

These newcomers started to feel that they were also an important part of this country. By and large, the former Soviet Jews who were always ready to face adversity and negative attitudes of the surrounding majority, learned to manipulate the laws and regulations to their own advantage. Successful integration usually emerges in a form of biculturalism, based on bilingualism. Immigrants' ability to integrate in the new society hinges on the human capital they are endowed with (education, professional and linguistic skills), as well as the amount of social support (from both personal and institutional sources) available to them during the initial difficult years of re-adjustment.

The newcomers from the former Soviet Union usually had a lack of knowledge when it came to language and finding a big Russian speaking community in Israel, as they were not in any hurry to integrate into basic Israeli society. The tendency to get higher education, which was a priority for many Jews in the USSR, was still quite high among the Jews who emigrated from the USSR in the 1990s. Newcomer students slowly started to rethink their future occupations and an increasing number decided to choose humanities and social studies as their main field, despite the fact that in the USSR these fields were partly closed for Jews but they were very prestigious.

A dramatic change for many professionally skilled workers was the need to start working as ordinary workers (manual, unqualified jobs). On the one hand, Israel was not ready to accept so many doctors, engineers and teachers in such a short period of time. On the other hand,

many of the newcomers were not ready to study a new language and so they preferred to stay in their own little ghetto within the Russian speaking community.

Every historic wave of newcomers was met by an established community with a mix of hostility and disappointment while they experienced a fair share of negative stereotyping. The post-Soviet Aliyah of the early 1990s was perceived by older generations of Israelis as a mixed blessing. On the one hand, the post-Soviet Aliyah brought a huge number of educated professionals which was an increase for Jewish population. On the other hand, there was quite unenthusiastic attitude towards the Russian Jews from native Israelis due to the fact that newcomers had what was perceived as a lack of Zionist sentiment and a commitment to chief Israeli values. They were detached from Jewish traditions and had no interest in learning them. The continued use of the Russian language and which was a detachment from the Hebrew-based collectivity.

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